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*The Delegate Theory of Representation**

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The delegate theory of representation posits that legislators ought to reflect purposively the preferences of their constituents. We show that this form of representation does take place on salient issues when the theory's two fundamental conditions are fulfilled simultaneously. First, legislators must think of themselves as delegates. Second, constituencies must provide consistent cues regarding district preferences to their representatives. The absence of either or both conditions seriously disrupts delegated representation.

The central question posed by theories of representation is that of the proper relationship between the representative and the represented (Wahlke et al., 1962; Pitkin, 1967). Numerous answers to this question have been proffered, but the idea of the elected representative as an instructed delegate exercises a powerful appeal to the democratic imagination. The normative ideal is simple in conception.

A mandate theorist will see the representative as a "mere" agent, a servant, a delegate, a subordinate substitute for those who sent him. The representative, he will say, is "sent as a servant," not "chosen with dictatorial powers," and so the purpose which sent him must have been the constituents' purpose and not his own. They sent him to do something for them which they might have chosen to do for themselves, which they are perfectly capable of doing and understanding. Hence the representative was sent to pursue his constituents' will and not his own (Pitkin, 1967, p. 146).

The delegate theory of representation, in short, posits that the representative ought to reflect purposively the preferences of his constituents.

Despite its prominence as a normative ideal, the delegate theory of representation has received only modest support as an empirical condition

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describing the process of representation (cf. Fiorina, 1974). Miller and Stokes (1963) found that representatives neither perceived constituency opinion very accurately nor reflected that opinion closely in their roll call voting. Even those who professed to be delegates were found to be no more likely, and possibly even less likely, to gauge constituency opinion accurately or to act in accordance with their perceptions (Hedlund and Friesema, 1972; Erikson et al., 1975). Indeed, Friesema and Hedlund (1974, p. 417) felt compelled to offer this extreme conclusion:

It is clear to us that this first effort to link legislative orientations with legislative roll call behavior has produced results which throw into serious doubt the continued value of an important research effort of legislative scholars. For if ostensible legislative delegates do not know the will of their districts, and do not even vote according to their perceptions about their constituents' views as much as other legislators, this role category is virtually useless in accounting for legislative behavior. Further, the utility of representational role as an explanatory variable for legislative behavior or as a linkage mechanism between representative and constituent is probably nonexistent.

Kuklinski and Elling (1977) recently have challenged this conclusion by showing not only that issue saliency is a precondition for perceptual accuracy and policy agreement generally (cf. Miller and Stokes, 1963), but that delegates are more representative than nondelegates only when the issues are salient. They find the expected effects of representational role on an issue dimension of high salience such as contemporary liberalism, but do not on an issue dimension of low salience such as government administration. They go on to point out that the Friesema and Hedlund (1974) results were obtained on issues of relatively low salience to the Iowa electorate, while the Erikson et al. (1975) research supported the delegate notion most closely on busing—the issue of highest salience in their study.

Although introduction of issue saliency helps to explain the contradictory findings of existing research, we contend that the delegate theory of representation has not been examined properly in *any* of these studies because investigators have not specified fully the conditions under which the theory can be expected to operate. The following section delineates and discusses those conditions beyond saliency that are essential to make the delegate theory an empirical description of the representational process. We then present evidence that the theory is indeed an accurate predictor of representative perception and behavior when these conditions are fulfilled.

The Fundamental Conditions of the Delegate Theory

A close reading of the literature on the delegate theory of representation indicates that *two* conditions are central to it. As an empirical matter, delegated representation therefore can be expected to operate even for salient issue dimensions only when these two fundamental conditions are met simultaneously.

Condition 1. *The representative must believe himself to be obliged to behave in accordance with constituency preferences, i.e., he must consider himself a delegate.* This is the most obvious and familiar of the conditions, for delegate behavior cannot be expected to occur if the representative himself does not feel predisposed to do what his constituents want (Wahlke et al., 1962).

Researchers have concentrated their efforts heavily on this condition, for reasons that are readily understandable. For one thing, theorists, by centering on the activity of representing or "acting for," have displayed a preoccupation with those who do the representing. For another, determining whether or not representatives subscribe to the delegate role can be obtained readily from responses to interviews or questionnaires. As legislative elites became more accessible to researchers, obtaining such information became an increasingly easy task. While representatives may pronounce themselves to be responsive to constituency preferences, however, such information by itself is insufficient to test the delegate theory. The delegate theory of representation requires the presence of a second condition as well.

Condition 2. *The constituency must organize and express its preferences in a way that allows the representative to develop a reasonably accurate perception of constituency opinion.* Representation involves a relationship between representatives and the represented. When studying the process of representation, therefore, it is imperative to consider both sets of actors conjointly. While attention has been directed primarily at those who do the representing, several studies have emphasized the importance of specifying constituency conditions. Mayhew (1974), for example, emphasizes the electoral connection between the represented and the representative derived from district party competition. Similarly, Fiorina (1974) argues persuasively that the homogeneity or skewness of the distribution of opinion within districts conditions the representational process generally.

We believe that the role of the represented is particularly important to the delegate theory of representation. Consider Pitkin's (1967) comments on the role of the represented:

Both "delegate" and "commissioner" (unlike "deputy") suggest that the representative is sent to the central government with *explicit instructions*, or to do a particular thing. He is sent with a commission; he is sent on a mission (p. 134; emphasis ours).

The delegate theory imposes responsibility on the representative, but empiricists may have overlooked the fact that it places an equal responsibility on the represented. Constituencies must instruct their representatives in a clear fashion if delegate behavior is to result. As one theorist concludes, "Seldom, if ever, can any person completely represent even another single person unless bound by definite instructions" (Fairlie, 1940).

As a practical matter, we cannot expect constituencies to instruct their representatives as clients would instruct their lawyers. The notion of political representation would be limited severely by such an extreme requirement. Constituencies can affect their representatives' abilities to carry out their delegate functions, however, by providing *consistent cues* regarding their preferences. Districts that react to related issues in a similar way provide more consistent cues to representatives than do those that express rather different preferences on those issues. Consistency of cue, then, is not a function of the average position of a district on a dimension. It is a function of the degree of variation about that average position.

Consider two districts, A and B, which espouse the same average opinion on five issues that tap a single dimension:

		District A	District B
Percentage Favorable	Issues		
To Dimension	A	67	59
	B	65	57
	C	56	55
	D	45	53
	E	42	51
	$\bar{X} =$	55	55
	S.D.=	± 10	± 3

While each issue stimulates a different level of support within each district, District B provides a much more consistent cue regarding its degree of support for this issue dimension than does District A. In other words, even districts that are quite divided in their preferences (i.e., heterogeneous districts) can be expected to be perceived reasonably accurately as long as

they are divided consistently. The clarity of a representative's perception is a function of the clarity of the district's cue.

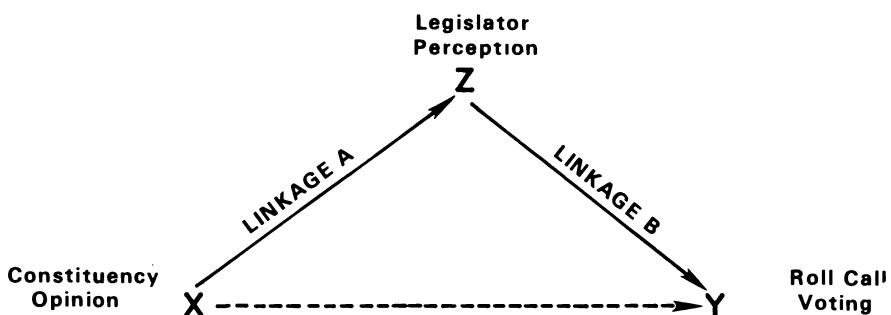
To reiterate, the delegate theory of representation imposes mutual responsibilities on the representative and the represented. The representative must feel obligated to respond to district preferences *and* the constituency must provide a consistent cue so that the representative can act in accordance with constituency opinion. In the absence of either or both of these conditions, the delegate theory breaks down. Only when both of these conditions are fulfilled simultaneously can we expect the theory to operate fully.

Data, Measurement, and Method

We shall test the delegate theory of representation developed above with data collected in California. Our basic unit of analysis is the state assembly district. Our research strategy is to determine the extent to which the presence or absence of the theory's two conditions affect the relationships shown in Figure 1. The theory predicts that the first condition, adherence or nonadherence to the delegate role, will affect linkage B. Dele-

Figure 1:

Diagram of Delegate Theory of Representative Linkages.



gates will be more likely than nondelegates to vote their perceptions of constituency opinion. The second condition, consistency of constituency cue, should affect linkage A. The relationship between a representative's perception of district opinion and actual district opinion will be greater for those districts that provide consistent cues regarding their preferences than for those districts that provide inconsistent cues.

Two categories of data are required to test these relationships: (1) measures of the three variables depicted in Figure 1, i.e., constituency opinion, the representative's perception of district opinion, and the representative's roll call behavior, and (2) measures of the two conditioning variables, i.e., representational role and constituency consistency of cue.

District Opinion

Given our research purposes, it is particularly important to have a direct and accurate measure of constituency opinion. Since demographic characteristics have been questioned as valid measures of district preferences (Kuklinski, 1977) and survey research is rare and costly, an alternative procedure is necessary. Accordingly, district opinion is measured in terms of referenda and initiative voting returns on five issues placed before the California electorate at the 1974 general election.¹ These five issues were selected on the basis of earlier research (Kuklinski and Elling, 1977) that showed such issues could be arrayed along a single contemporary liberalism dimension, distinguishable from a taxation dimension and a government administrative dimension.²

Since it would be inappropriate merely to assume that these five issues comprise a single dimension, we applied a variant of a factor analytic technique first developed by the psychologist Charles Spearman (1904) to the inter-item correlation matrix.³ When the existence of a single factor is

¹ The constituency defined in district-wide terms is not the only one that can be identified. Miller and Stokes (1963), for example, identify partisan constituencies, while Fenno (1977) notes that representatives' perceptions of their districts are divided into four constituencies: geographical, reelection, primary, and personal. Although these various constituencies are important as empirical conditions, district-wide opinion is central to the delegate theory.

² A total of 17 propositions were presented to the voters of California at the general election of 1974. Since we needed to gather relevant perceptual information by interviews with legislators, we found it necessary to limit the number of propositions asked about in the interview schedule.

³ The unit of analysis for the matrix is the legislative district. The variables are the voting returns in percentages on each of the five propositions.

TABLE 1

**Factor Loadings on the Contemporary Liberalism Dimension,
Opinion and Perception Items**

	District Opinion	Legislator's Perception
Proposition 1: Provides for a \$150 million bond issue for the construction of public schools; loans and grants to be used in school districts unable to raise enough money to meet their classroom construction needs.	.95	.79
Proposition 5: Reduces the terms of U of C Regents from 16 to 12 years and raises the board's membership; a key provision provides that the board membership reflect the economic, cultural and social diversity of the state, including minorities and women.	.88	.79
Proposition 11: Eliminates masculine terms in the state Constitution and replaces them with sexually neutral wording.	.81	.89
Proposition 15: Repeals the requirement that every proposed low-rent public housing project within a local unit of government be submitted to the electorate.	.67	.86
Proposition 17: Adds sections of the Stanislaus River to the state's wild rivers system; designed to prevent construction of a proposed dam and thus preserve the river's wild or free-flowing state.	.48	.57

a viable hypothesis, as it is here, the Spearman technique is more appropriate than principal components or common factor analysis.⁴ Application of this technique to the proposition results indicates that the five issues comprise a single contemporary liberalism dimension very similar to that identified in the earlier work. The propositions and loadings on the dimension are shown in Table 1.

The five issues, among which are women's rights, public housing, and environmental protection, are also valuable for our purposes because they were salient to the California electorate in 1974. Since the media has given sustained attention to issues such as environment and civil rights, for example, it is not surprising that the propositions dealing with these types of questions received widespread coverage during the 1974 campaign. Moreover, while turnout on referenda voting is quite high on nearly all issues, voting on these propositions was particularly heavy. Saliency may be indicated by the ratio of votes cast on a referendum or initiative issue relative to the votes cast for governor. The average ratio for contemporary liberalism issues is .87, compared to .81 for the remaining twelve propositions. The two issues with the highest voter response are included on our dimension, and all five of our propositions scored above the mean turnout for the seventeen propositions.

Representative's Perception of District Opinion

The representative's perception of district opinion was ascertained through interviews with incumbent assemblymen running for reelection in 1974.⁵ The interviews were conducted in August, 1974, so our respondents

⁴ We are not suggesting that Spearman's factor technique is always more useful than either of the two more commonly used factor techniques. The more familiar techniques, in fact, have more general applicability. In this case, however, the items were chosen on an *a priori* basis (i.e., our earlier findings), which gave us confidence that they fit together. The Spearman technique involves a "theory" that there is one common factor underlying the variation in the data and that all other variation can be ascribed to specific factors defining the unique variance of each variable.

The use of this technique was suggested to us by Dr. Harry H. Harman of the Educational Testing Service. We would like to express our appreciation to him at this point for his valuable assistance. We remain responsible, of course, for any errors. Useful references include Thomson (1939), Fruchter (1954), and Harmon (1976), especially pp. 114-116.

⁵ We were able to complete interviews with thirty-eight of the sixty incumbent assemblymen who were contesting the election of 1974. The sample is very representative of all incumbents seeking reelection in both personal and district characteristics.

were anticipating the proposition results. For each of the referenda and initiative issues comprising the liberalism dimension of constituency opinion, the legislators were asked:

To the best of your ability, what percentage (to the nearest one percent) of your district's voters do you think will vote in favor of the proposition?

We asked the question in this form for two reasons. First, if we had asked merely whether a majority of the district will favor or oppose a proposition, we in effect would have punished the legislator for having a district with narrow majorities. Second, since the district's opinion is being expressed in ratio form, we wanted to measure perceptions in ratio form.

If legislators perceive their districts' preferences in terms of a liberalism dimension, then the individual predictions should fall onto a single dimension similar to that found for constituencies. A factor analysis of the responses indicates that legislators indeed do view their districts in terms of such a dimension (Table 1).⁶

Roll Call Voting

A measure of contemporary liberalism on roll call votes taken in 1974 was constructed in two stages. First, to ensure the equivalency of content, we selected numerous votes that appeared to reflect issues similar to those on the referenda and initiative ballots. We were especially careful to include votes on water pollution, public housing, and discrimination in employment that were very similar to the propositions. Second, we used the Spearman technique to eliminate a few votes that did not fall on the single dimension. We were able to identify over twenty-five roll call votes that fell on a liberalism dimension.

Our sample, for example, is representative in terms of the potentially confounding characteristic of electoral competitiveness. The mean vote of districts in our sample is 63.9 percent for the winner, as opposed to 65.3 percent for all incumbent districts. In our sample, 58.8 percent of the districts were marginal (less than 65 percent of the vote), while 56.6 percent of all districts with incumbents were marginal.

Since reapportionment was implemented for the 1974 general election, the very few assembly districts that underwent substantial alterations were excluded from our analysis. Furthermore, each legislator was asked whether he perceived a change in his district; those included did not. Finally, the boundaries of the districts were known to the assemblymen throughout the entire session studied here. Since all legislators included in our analysis were incumbents seeking reelection, the relevant constituency was that one they would face in the general election.

⁶ Again, we used the Spearman solution.

Our success in identifying a similar liberalism dimension for all three variables—constituency opinion, perception of constituency opinion, and roll call voting—is especially encouraging for the study of the delegate theory of representation. To require legislators to vote the majority position of their districts on each and every occasion would be a needlessly restrictive requirement. Rarely, if ever, are legislators and constituencies expressing their preferences on identical motions. Comparing the degree to which legislators and constituencies share a pattern of understanding and agreement over a broad range of related issues is a more realistic endeavor.⁷ Our analysis of the interrelationships among these three variables, therefore, is based on the standardized factor scores, by district, generated by the Spearman solutions above.

Representational Role

We measured the representational role orientations of our legislators by asking them directly:

Two dichotomous roles are usually attributed to legislators: delegate or trustee. A delegate is defined as one who believes he should seek out his constituents' opinions and vote accordingly. A trustee is defined as one who believes he should vote according to his own convictions and judgments. Generally speaking vote according to his own convictions and judgments. Generally speaking, which of these roles do you feel best describes you?

Those few respondents who persisted in the claim that they performed both roles were designated as politicos. Since our purpose is to test the *delegate* theory of representation, we have collapsed the trustee and politico respondents into a nondelegate category. Sixteen of our thirty-eight legislators considered themselves delegates.⁸

Consistency of Constituency Cue

Our measure of cue consistency must be sensitive to the extent to which a district has similar opinions on related issues. Since we have shown

⁷ It is because of this conceptualization that we have not reported linkage on the specific issues. The use of policy dimensions, furthermore, has a long history in political science, set forth in the early work of MacRae (1958) and continuing in the work of Miller and Stokes (1963) and Clausen (1973).

⁸ Since the electoral connection specified by Mayhew (1974) may be an important factor in the representational process generally, we were concerned that our delegate role orientation findings reported below might be an artifact of party competition. Fortunately for the testing of the delegate theory of representation, we find that a delegate role orientation is unrelated to party competition ($r^2 = .00$). Delegates are no more likely to come from competitive than noncompetitive districts. Why some legislators adopt a delegate orientation and others do not is an interesting question for further research, but it is not the focus of this study.

that the five referenda and initiative issues comprising the liberalism dimension are highly related, we can construct a measure of cue consistency thus:

$\frac{1}{S_d}$, where S_d is the standard deviation of the percent voting liberal on the five propositions for a district.

This measure of cue consistency is based on the variance about each district's overall mean vote or opinion. The higher the value of the standard deviation, the less consistent is the district's opinion on the various issues comprising the liberalism dimension.⁹ Since we have taken the reciprocal of the standard deviation, the greater the value of this measure, the more a district is fulfilling the instruction condition of the delegate theory. For purposes of analysis, we have used the median to dichotomize the districts into those that provide more consistent cues and those that provide less consistent cues on these issues.

Construction of this measure of cue consistency emphasizes the utility of the broad liberalism dimension. Since we have shown in the factor analyses that both representatives and constituencies responded to the five issues used in this study as part of a common dimension, we may be reasonably confident that our measure fits the calculus of a representative who is trying to perceive district opinion correctly. Using a liberalism dimension to order their political worlds and perceiving district attitudes along the same dimension, representatives whose districts take somewhat

⁹ Our measure of cue consistency takes into account the fact that all districts will show some variance in voting across issues because the stimulus (the referenda questions) is different. The notion of consistency does not require the district to respond in an identical fashion to each issue. Inconsistent districts are those with unusually high variance compared to other districts.

We use the raw percentage figures for calculating the degree of consistency despite the fact that this weights some issues more heavily than others due to the greater interdistrict variance on certain issues. We believe this is the appropriate strategy, for even one startling deviation from regular patterns may catch the eye of the legislator. While we feel comfortable with this approach, we examined the standard deviations by issue and found little evidence of marked overemphasis on any one issue. To ensure further that our findings are not an artifact of our unstandardized measure of consistency, we weighted each issue equally by calculating a standardized measure based on standard scores for each issue. The standardized measure yields similar, if somewhat less striking results. See footnotes 13 and 15 below.

differing positions on two or more liberalism issues supposedly will find themselves less able to gauge accurately district opinion than those who represent districts that adopt a more consistent pattern of liberalism.¹⁰

General Relationships and Main Effects

The general relationships between constituency opinion, legislators' perceptions, and roll call voting on contemporary liberalism issues among all incumbent California assemblymen are depicted in Figure 2. More than one-fifth ($r^2 = .21$) of the variance in contemporary liberalism is explained by district preferences.¹¹ While hardly the sole explanation for roll call liberalism, constituency opinion is a significant factor. This finding is consistent with those of earlier studies that also found moderate levels of agreement between representatives' roll call voting and district preferences (Miller and Stokes, 1963; Kuklinski and Elling, 1977).

Perceptions are shown in Figure 2 to be an important mechanism by which district opinion is translated into roll call votes. As a group, assemblymen are reasonably accurate in their perceptions of constituency opinion ($r^2 = .23$) and they show an unmistakable tendency to vote in accordance with their reasonably accurate perceptions ($r^2 = .49$). At the same time, both the accuracy of perception of district opinion and the use of these perceptions as voting cues are sufficiently low that the two conditioning

¹⁰ We were also concerned that our subsequent findings regarding the effects of the consistency of constituency cue might be an artifact of the homogeneity of district opinion, defined as the absolute value of the sum of the deviation of each proposition from a 50-50 split (Fiorina, 1974). While homogeneity and consistency of opinion are conceptually distinct, we were concerned that empirically they might correlate strongly. We find little relationship between the consistency of cue and the homogeneity of district opinion ($r^2 = .06$). Districts may be consistently for, against, or divided on contemporary liberalism issues.

¹¹ While we will focus on the coefficients of determination in our discussion, we have also reported the bivariate unstandardized regression coefficients (Achen, 1977). For all districts, these coefficients are:

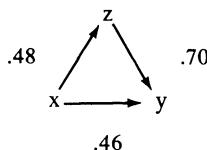
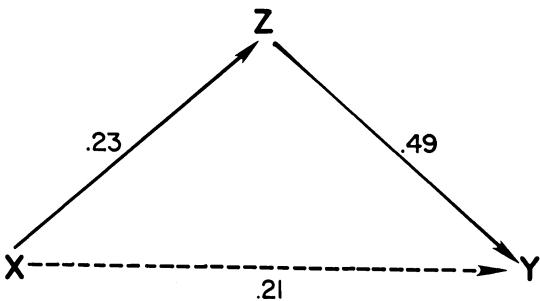


Figure 2:

Coefficients of Determination for Linkages on Contemporary Liberalism for All Districts (N=38).

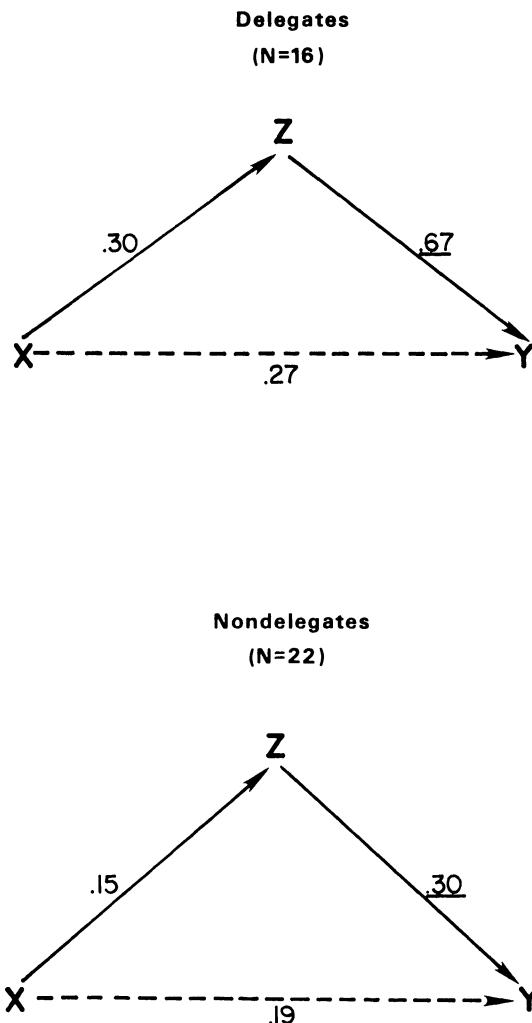


variables may have the effects predicted by the delegate theory of representation.

These preliminary findings thus provide a basis from which to assess the singular or main effects of each of the theory's two conditions—representational role and consistency of constituency cue. By partitioning our legislators according to role, we can determine whether self-proclaimed delegates are more likely than nondelegates to vote their perceptions of constituency opinion. Delegates may not be any more accurate than non-delegates in their appraisals of district opinion, but they ought to be more likely to rely upon their perceptions of that opinion. By partitioning the districts according to cue consistency, we can test the prediction that representatives' perceptions of constituency opinion will be discernibly more accurate for districts that provide more consistent cues than for those that provide less consistent cues.

The impact of the presence or absence of a delegate role orientation is reported in Figure 3. Consistent with the theory, delegates are much more likely than nondelegates to cast their roll call votes in accordance

Figure 3:
Coefficients of Determination for Linkages on Contemporary Liberalism Partitioned by Legislative Role.



with their perceptions of district opinion. The relative magnitudes of the relationships between perception and roll call voting for delegates ($r^2 = .67$) and nondelegates ($r^2 = .30$) leave little doubt that representatives who conceive themselves as fulfilling the will of their constituencies display behavior that reflects that role conception. Interestingly, delegates are also slightly more likely to gauge constituency opinion correctly ($r^2 = .30$) than are nondelegates ($r^2 = .15$). A delegate role orientation may not produce roll call behavior that is totally dependent on constituency opinion, but it does strengthen the ties between the representative and the represented.¹²

When the districts are partitioned by consistency of constituency cue in Figure 4, we find that the accuracy of a legislator's perception of district opinion is dependent essentially on the clarity of instructions provided by the constituency. Among districts that provide fairly consistent cues on contemporary liberalism issues to the legislators, perception and opinion are quite highly related ($r^2 = .61$). The relationship between perception and opinion is virtually nonexistent ($r^2 = .03$) among districts that provide less consistent cues.¹³ The relationship between perception and roll

¹² The unstandardized regression coefficients are:



¹³ The unstandardized regression coefficients are:

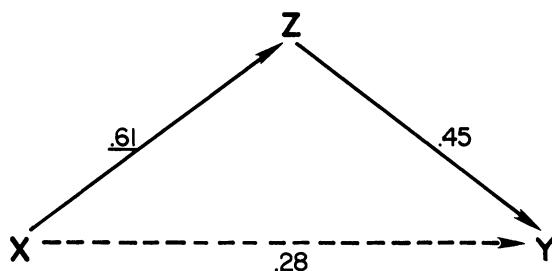


Using a standardized measure of cue consistency, the coefficients of district opinion and legislator's perception are: More Consistent, $r^2 = .35$, $b = .60$; Less Consistent, $r^2 = .01$, $b = .08$.

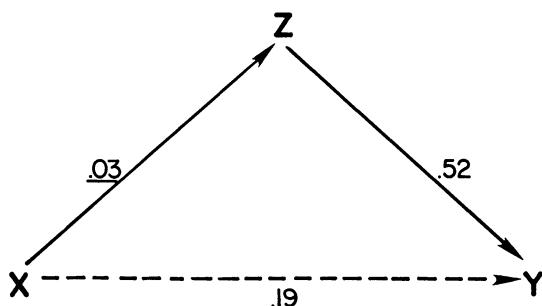
Figure 4:

Coefficients of Determination for Linkages on Contemporary Liberalism Partitioned by Consistency of District Cues.

**More Consistent
Districts (N=19).**



**Less Consistent
Districts (N=19).**



call behavior is not conditioned by cue consistency because that link is affected by the legislator's role orientation.¹⁴

The presence or absence of each condition separately has an almost identical effect on the overall level of agreement between constituency opinion and roll call voting. When the delegate condition alone is met, 27 percent of the variance in roll call behavior is explained by district preferences. Similarly, when the consistency of cue condition alone is met, 28 percent of the variance in roll call voting is explained by district opinion. Among both nondelegates and districts that do not provide consistent cues, a somewhat smaller 19 percent of the variance is explained by constituency opinion. The level of policy agreement is discernibly lower when either of the conditions is missing.

Thus we find that each of the conditions works separately, as the delegate theory of representation predicts. When either of the conditions is present, the appropriate link in the model is strengthened significantly, resulting in a higher level of policy agreement between the representative and the represented. The absence of either condition weakens the process of representation. Given this preliminary support for the delegate theory of representation, we need to consider the joint effects of the presence or absence of our two conditions.

The Delegate Theory of Representation Tested

To test fully the delegate theory of representation, we must examine the effects of four combinations of our two conditions:

- (1) self-designated delegates from districts that provide more consistent cues;
- (2) self-designated delegates from districts that provide less consistent cues;
- (3) self-designated nondelegates from districts that provide more consistent cues;
- (4) self-designated nondelegates from districts that provide less consistent cues.

According to the delegate theory, the representative function should be

¹⁴ Clausen (1977) has suggested that researchers consider a variety of measures of perceptual accuracy. Accordingly, for each subgroup reported in this paper, we also compared the percentage differences in estimates of constituency opinion. Our substantive conclusion remains intact: consistency of cue conditions perceptual accuracy in the predicted direction.

fulfilled most completely under the first combination of circumstances. The delegate theory requires both a delegate role orientation from the legislator and consistency of cue from the constituency. In the absence of *either* or *both* of these conditions, the process of representation should be weakened.

The power of the delegate theory is delineated clearly in Figure 5. The two causal linkages in the model are impressively strong when both limiting conditions are present simultaneously. Among delegates who represent districts that provide relatively consistent cues, the accuracy of perception approaches perfection ($r^2 = .85$). These reasonably accurate perceptions of constituency opinion, in turn, exert a powerful influence on roll call voting ($r^2 = .76$). The result of this process of representation is a high level of policy agreement between the representative and the represented ($r^2 = .45$).

The need for both conditions to be fulfilled simultaneously is emphasized when we consider delegates who represent districts that provide less consistent cues. Despite adopting a delegate orientation, the legislator is unable to gauge district opinion; the accuracy of perception of constituency opinion plummets significantly ($r^2 = .12$). The inability to perceive constituency opinion accurately, however, does not reduce the legislator's attempt to behave as a delegate. He is far more likely than the nondelegate to base his roll call voting on his perception of district opinion. In fact, the relationship between perception and roll call voting ($r^2 = .64$) is nearly as strong as that for delegates from districts with more consistent cues. The one break in the linkage process nonetheless reduces the level of policy agreement between district opinion and roll call voting by over half ($r^2 = .20$).

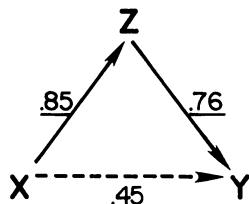
The representational process among nondelegates in Figure 5 is also consistent with the prediction of the delegate theory of representation. Both categories of nondelegates are far less likely than either group of delegates to pursue what they believe to be prevailing opinion. The causal link between perceptions and roll call voting is weak for nondelegates from both more consistent districts ($r^2 = .25$) and less consistent districts ($r^2 = .31$). The importance of a consistent cue from the constituency is also reemphasized. Nondelegates who receive a consistent cue are reasonably accurate in their perceptions of district opinion ($r^2 = .46$). Very much in accordance with the delegate theory, they are even more accurate in their perceptions than delegates from districts that provide less consistent cues. Nondelegates from districts that provide less consistent cues are

Figure 5:

Coefficients of Determination for Linkages on Contemporary Liberalism Partitioned by Consistency of District Cues and Legislative Role.

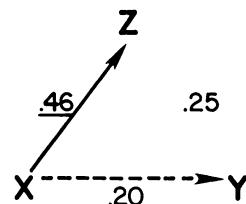
More Consistent -

Delegate (N=7).



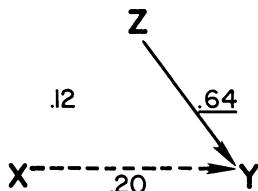
More Consistent -

Nondelegate (N=12).



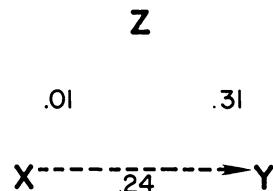
Less Consistent -

Delegate (N=9).



Less Consistent -

Nondelegate (N=10).

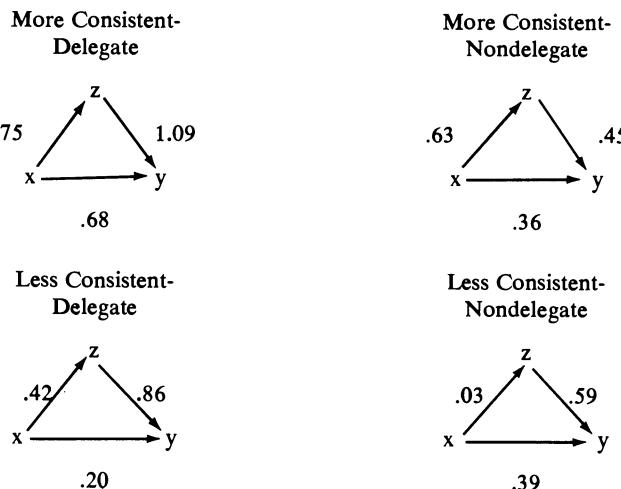


completely unable to perceive district opinion accurately ($r^2 = .01$). The level of policy agreement for nondelegates, therefore, is similar to that of delegates from districts with inconsistent cues whether one link is weak ($r^2 = .20$) or both links are weak ($r^2 = .24$). The interaction between role orientation and the clarity of district cues is clear.¹⁵

Conclusion

The delegate theory of representation has an honored tradition in political science. Starting with the premise that the theory has not been properly tested, we have shown that even on a salient policy dimension the operation of the theory requires the simultaneous fulfillment of two limiting conditions. First, legislators must think of themselves as delegates who are obligated to represent the preferences of their constituencies. Second, constituencies must provide consistent cues to their legislators regarding their policy preferences. When the requisite conditions are met, district opinion is a rather powerful determinant of roll call behavior. Conversely, the absence of either one of these conditions seriously interrupts delegated

¹⁵ The unstandardized regression coefficients are:



The coefficients of district attitude and representative's perception for the four subgroups when using the standardized measure of cue consistency are: More Consistent—Delegate, $r^2 = .42$, $b = .66$; More Consistent—Nondelegate, $r^2 = .29$, $b = .47$; Less Consistent—Delegate, $r^2 = .09$, $b = .23$; Less Consistent—Nondelegate, $r^2 = .00$, $b = .00$.

representation; the link between public preferences and public acts weakens significantly.

The major conclusion to be drawn from this study is that the notion of delegated representation is more than a normative democratic ideal. *If* a policy domain is salient, *if* the representative sees himself obliged to carry out the dictates of his constituency, *and if* the constituency provides adequate instruction, the delegate theory is likely to work. Given the conditions that must be met simultaneously, however, delegated representation may be difficult to achieve with any frequency in large-scale democratic systems. The delegate theory of representation, in short, may have limited applicability in the real world of American politics. Ultimately, this question itself is open to empirical investigation.

Although our findings relate directly only to the delegate theory of representation, they have several implications that extend beyond the single theory. The fact that delegated representation is seriously weakened by the absence of even a single condition warns that testing the utility and limitations of role theory requires a careful specification of the conditions under which a role orientation can be expected to influence behavior (Gibson, 1978). We cannot justifiably expect legislative, judicial, bureaucratic, and other roles to have strong direct effects on behavior regardless of circumstances. A political actor may have certain predispositions, as measured by a role orientation, but he may be unable to carry them out because of limiting factors. Using role as predictor of behavior necessitates accounting for factors that are likely to facilitate or impede the behavior predicted by the role.

At a more general level, our findings caution that researchers take care to consider theoretical conceptions in their entirety when putting them to an empirical test. The findings reported in this study point directly to the inherent danger of not doing so. Not only may conclusions be erroneous, but important conceptions of representation may be rejected (or accepted) on invalid grounds. Yet, undertaking full examinations of theoretical conceptions of representation is a difficult matter, simply because the requisite data often are unavailable. This creates an agonizing dilemma for researchers, as those who have studied the representational process well know. We do not feel capable of offering a solution to this dilemma, but one is clearly needed if there is to be a marriage of theory and empirical research in a way that expands the horizons of both.

Yet another—and probably the most important—implication of our findings is this: the study of political representation must take into account simultaneously the behavior of both legislators and their constituencies.

Representation is a complex process of interaction between representatives and represented; to ignore one of the actors is to do injustice to this complexity, and thus to the representative process itself.

In this study we have tried carefully to consider one behavioral aspect of constituencies, i.e., the extent to which they provide consistent cues, because the delegate theory of representation required us to do so. We have documented the importance of constituency instruction to delegated representation. But in terms of understanding more generally the phenomenon of representation, this effort is limited. Ours is a static analysis of a single theory. We need to study the interaction of representative and represented as a dynamic process over time.

We believe that such dynamic analysis ought to occur at two levels. On the one hand, attention should be given to the broad, aggregate nature of the district. The extent to which a district is consistent in its positions on related issues is one such characteristic. Other relevant factors might include district homogeneity and partisan composition. Looking at changes in these and other district attributes over time should provide insight into the ways they condition the representational linkage. These broader characteristics are also important in a theoretical sense. It is no accident, for example, that Pitkin (1967) employs a district-wide definition of constituency in her treatment of representation.¹⁶ As a theoretical matter, legislators represent whole districts; how they relate to them is important.

To remain at this level of analysis, however, is to ignore the dynamic intricacies of the representative process. Thus researchers must also focus on the interactions of constituents and representatives within the district. Fenno's (1977) analysis of U.S. House members is an excellent step in this direction. His efforts undoubtedly will stimulate additional work.

In short, we have shown in this paper that the delegate theory of representation "works." Given its long tradition, the study of delegated representation is important. But it falls far short of leading to a total understanding of the phenomenon we call representation.

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¹⁶ On the other hand, both this paper and much of the literature ignore the majority vs. minority question. Efforts to look at representation in terms of this perspective are sorely needed.

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