Representation in Congress

Representation in Congress provides a theory of dyadic policy representation intended to account for when belief-sharing, delegate, responsible party, trustee, and party elite–led models of representational linkage arise on specific policy issues. This book also presents empirical tests of most of the fundamental predictions for when such alternative models appear, and it presents tests of novel implications of the theory about other aspects of legislative behavior. Some of the latter tests resolve contradictory findings in the relevant, existing literature – such as whether and how electoral marginality affects representation, whether roll-call vote extremism affects the reelection of incumbents, and what is the representational behavior of switched-seat legislators. All the empirical tests provide evidence for the theory. Indeed, the full set of empirical tests provides evidence for the causal effects anticipated by the theory and much of the causal process behind those effects.

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Representation in Congress

A Unified Theory

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Contents

Preface

A reader will not have to proceed far into this book to learn that our work draws heavily on the wisdom of a few distinguished scholars who have written earlier on our topic. But we wish to explicitly acknowledge the value of their wisdom. Our biggest intellectual debt is to Warren Miller and Donald Stokes. Indeed, we take the fundamental insights for our theory of representation from their seminal paper on that topic published in the *American Political Science Review* in 1963 and from the book manuscript on this topic that they began but never completed. As we argue in Chapter 1, some of those insights have been long ignored, but they are essential for any comprehensive understanding of constituency representation.

There is also a personal element in our respect for Miller and Stokes. We knew both of them and found them to be as gracious as they were erudite. But our friendship with Warren Miller, which blossomed in the early 1990s, was particularly meaningful. Warren read and complimented our research from that period that was a precursor to the work here. His approbation especially encouraged us to keep working on the project.

Our work has also especially profited from the research of David Brady, Robert Erikson, Richard Fenno, James Kuklinski, Donald McCrone, Walter Stone, and Gerald Wright. They have all published research on representation that was literally arresting. Their contributions at times forced us to pause, think anew, and deliberate over how our work should accommodate their ideas and findings. Thus, we have benefited from their wisdom in ways that go well beyond the discussions and citations of it in this book.

We also have other personal debts – in particular, to Joseph Cooper and David Brady, who were teachers and mentors for Patricia Hurley and mentors for Kim Hill. If our work earns their respect, that will be a very important achievement for us. But this book has benefited in a related way from collaboration among its three authors. There is a common saying that some research in physics depends on the combined work of a theoretical physicist and an experimental one. The lines of intellectual contribution here, in contrast, are blurred. All three of us have contributed to theory construction, research design, data collection, and data analysis and interpretation. Each of us made distinctive contributions to one or more of those tasks, but the work is a collaborative effort. And it is far better for that collaboration than it would be if any one of us had not been on the team.

There is another debt that arises in much research but that at times goes unrecognized. Assembling the data for the verification tests of our theory of representation was a laborious effort that occurred over a long time period and benefited from the contributions of many members of the Department of Political Science at Texas A&M. Kim Hill and Soren Jordan did especially yeoman's work during the final run-up to the preparation of the book manuscript. Their work also accounts for the bulk of the data. But some of the data was collected for research projects going back into the early 1990s. And Juree Capers, Carla Flink, Stephen Hanna, Carl Klarner, Trey Marchbanks, and Alex Morin contributed to the data collection efforts for those projects.

While our work benefits from that of many prior scholars, its intention is to go well beyond existing research on this topic. As we explain in Chapter 1, the study of representation in Congress has not made notable theoretical or substantive progress in the last generation or two. Many finely crafted books and articles have been published in that period. But contemporary work has failed to offer a systematic characterization of representation *or* the foundation of a promising theory to account for it. Important theoretical and methodological insights in selected publications that might have led to the latter achievements have been ignored. Compromises in measurement and research design have also limited the value of many studies. As one reviewer for this book agreed, prior research on legislative representation "has been muddled due primarily to poor theory development." We agree with that characterization, and we argue in Chapter 1 that it can only be overcome by the creation of a comprehensive theory of representation. We present such a theory. Besides offering a theory to advance this line of scholarship, another goal

of this book is to demonstrate how such a theory can be derived from a disparate body of existing scholarship, what such a theory should "look like," and how it might be verified empirically. Thus, the intellectual reach of our work is intended to extend far beyond the study of legislative representation.

In our first chapter, we offer a characterization – one could say an intellectual history – of the research on this topic. That characterization makes a detailed case for the summary conclusions in the preceding paragraph. Chapter 2 presents a unified, axiomatic theory of dyadic policy representation. This is a *unified* theory because it offers an *a priori* explanation for when different "models" of representation – delegate, trustee, responsible party, and so on – will arise on specific policy issues. In addition, we present the criteria by which systematic theories should be judged and the specific prior observations in existing research on representation on which our theory is founded. We also explicate the theory in exacting detail, which is rarely done for many "theories" advanced in the social sciences.

In succeeding chapters, we offer a series of empirical analyses that offer verifying evidence for the theory. Some of those analyses are for the most fundamental predictions from the theory; others are for novel implications that can be intuited from the theory. All these verification tests – for which we have solid empirical data – provide support for the theory. Some of them provide evidence for causal effects anticipated by the theory and others provide evidence for the causal processes that lead to those effects.

We frequently offer the caution that no scientific theory should ever be considered fully verified. Continued research on every theory can offer new perspectives on it, adding new evidence for verification, for the bounds of the theory's explanatory power, and for whether it leads to new knowledge that might not have been anticipated when the theory was constructed. Thus, we do not claim our theory as presented here is an entirely complete intellectual creation. But we conclude it offers an original and especially comprehensive account of how dyadic representation comes about. It should also provide a foundation for much future research on this topic.