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*Representational Role, Constituency Opinion, and Legislative Roll-Call Behavior**

Despite the attention given to representational role, few efforts have been made to measure its predictive capacity. Using three policy dimensions, it was found that on two salient dimensions, contemporary liberalism and taxation, delegates were more representative of constituency preferences in their roll-call voting than were politicians or trustees. In contrast, the relationship between roll-call voting and constituency opinions on the least salient dimension, government administration, was negative for both delegates and trustees. Furthermore, delegates were much more responsive to electoral competitiveness than either politicians or trustees on the two salient dimensions.

Since the publication of *The Legislative System* (Wahlke et al., 1962), the concept of representational role has been utilized extensively by students of the legislative process.¹ That representational role orientations have received sustained attention is not surprising, for the behavior of legislators vis-à-vis their constituencies is a central concern of democratic theory. In fact, it is their representative function which gives legislatures the legitimacy to act for the whole body politic. Identifying those factors, including role orientations, which might affect this function therefore becomes an important empirical concern.

Most studies, however, have not attempted to link the three representational role orientations—delegate, trustee, and politician—to legislative behavior. Rather, efforts have been limited primarily to identifying the determinants of the role orientations themselves. (Bell and Price, 1969; Davidson, 1969). The findings of such studies have been inconsistent at best, leading

*Kuklinski expresses appreciation to the National Science Foundation for a grant which made possible collection of the data. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1976 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association.

¹In addition to representational role, Wahlke et al. identified the following legislative roles: constituency, interest group, party, bureaucratic, purposive, and structural. For an excellent review of these roles, see Jewell and Patterson, 1973, pp. 405–437.

one legislative scholar (Jewell, 1970, p. 483) to opine that

the evidence concerning possible sources of legislative roles is fragmentary and sometimes contradictory. . . . It would be hazardous to draw any firm conclusions about the sources of roles. The evidence does suggest that no single variable offers an adequate causal explanation. . . .

Yet, as Jewell (1970, p. 483) notes, the uncertainty regarding the sources of role orientations almost ironically underlines the need to link the various representational role orientations to differences in legislative behavior:

The fact that so many variables appear to have some effect on (representational) role enhances (its) value . . . as an analytical concept. It is doubtful that we could ever measure with great accuracy the impact that a combination of these variables has on the attitudes and perceptions of an entire legislative body. Role provides a shortcut, a way of summarizing the total effect that these various forces have on legislators.

The usefulness of representational role, then, can be substantial—if relationships between the three orientations and relevant behavior can be identified. Conversely, continued investment of effort in a theoretical construct which offers little or no payoff in terms of predicting or explaining legislative behavior seems unwise.

Our purpose shall be to assess the utility of representational role as a linkage mechanism between representative and constituent. We shall address what is perhaps the most important question regarding the impact of representational role orientations upon legislative behavior: Do delegates more closely mirror constituency opinion in their roll-call votes than do trustees or politicians?

Representational Role as an Intervening Variable: Past Studies

While role theory suggests a positive answer to the above question, the weight of empirical evidence seems to indicate that delegates are not more representative than trustees or politicians of their districts' preferences. For reasons stated below, however, we believe that the few studies which have used representational role as an intervening variable have not convincingly demonstrated its lack of predictive capacity.

Sorauf's (1963) study was the first to utilize representational role as an intervening variable. Although the differences were small, he found that trustees were more likely than delegates to vote with their party. As Fiorina

(1970, p. 11) has noted, however, the employment of indices of party loyalty as dependent variables, with the implicit assumption that increased party disloyalty reflects a greater concern for constituency opinion, does not really allow one to assess the strength of constituency influence on representatives without supporting knowledge of the extent to which party and constituency interest are congruent.

In a more recent study, Hedlund and Friesema (1974) examined whether differences in representational role orientations were related to the ability of Iowa legislators to accurately predict the opinions of their constituencies on four referenda issues subsequently voted upon by the Iowa electorate. Contrary to what the literature on representational role orientation would suggest, they found that trustees, not delegates, were better able to accurately predict constituency opinion on the issues. Since the legislators were simply asked to predict majority opinion, however, there was no control for the possibility that the delegates' districts were more evenly split on the referenda, thereby making prediction more difficult.²

In a similar fashion, Erikson et al. (1975) measured the capacity of Florida legislators to predict constituency opinion on three straw referenda issues. Unlike Hedlund and Friesema, the authors did ask the legislators to predict the precise percentage point outcome. Trustees again were found to be more accurate predictors of constituency opinion than either delegates or politicians, leading Erikson et al. (p. 241) to note the irony of the fact that "the legislators who claim to pay the greatest attention to constituency preferences appear to be least able to determine what their constituents want."

Although the importance of legislators' perceptions in subsequent roll-call voting has been documented (Miller and Stokes, 1963), we again must emphasize the need to relate representatives' role orientations and actual legislative behavior. Our review of the literature reveals only one study which even begins to address this concern.³ Friesema and Hedlund (1974), in a follow-up to their original study, compared the consistency between legislative voting on the referral of the four issues to the electorate and the majority vote of individual districts on the propositions. They found that delegates had roll-call voting records which were far more inconsistent with their districts than did trustees or politicians. Delegates, furthermore, exhibited less consis-

² In fact, our preliminary analysis indicates that California trustees come from more homogeneous districts than do delegates. To the extent the same pattern might exist in Iowa, we would have at least a partial explanation of Hedlund and Friesema's findings.

³ There has been one effort to simulate role orientations and roll call behavior. See Hadley, 1974.

tency between their perceptions of constituency opinion and roll-call votes. The authors (p. 417) conclude:

It is clear to us that this first effort to link legislative role 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.

We would argue that this indictment of the concept of representational role on the basis of a single study is somewhat premature. At a minimum, the Friesema and Hedlund findings suggest the need for similar studies in different settings. Their measures, furthermore, apparently are not without shortcomings. First, it is somewhat difficult to attribute meaning to legislative votes on referenda issues. Are legislators voting on the substance of the issue vis-à-vis their constituencies or simply on the basis of whether or not constituents should have direct input into the political process via referenda votes?⁴ If the latter in fact is operative, it is at least conceivable that delegates might be more willing than trustees to support referenda—even if a majority of their constituents are opposed to the issue itself.⁵

Second, each referendum issue received only slightly more than 60 percent of the total presidential vote. The authors (p. 403) note that “the argument that these four issues are not sufficiently salient is . . . rejected because it begs the question. Notions of representation and democracy do not hold that a representative is to be responsive to his constituency on only the emotional issues.” We agree with this rather normative assertion. The important empirical question, however, is whether issue saliency somehow systematically interacts with the three role orientations. Are, for example, representational role orientations better predictors of legislator-constituency policy agreement on high rather than low saliency issues? In order to fully understand and to predict the impact of roles on voting behavior, relevant variables such as issue saliency ultimately must be taken into account.

⁴ While interviewing California assemblymen, for example, we found that a number of legislators felt that their districts were opposed to certain referenda, yet voted for them so that “the people would have an opportunity to voice their opinions.”

⁵ It may well be that delegates view referenda voting as the best mechanism by which constituents can instruct their representatives. If so, this might explain the greater inconsistency between perceptions and roll call votes exhibited by delegates.

The Measurement of Policy Agreement

Like the earlier work by Hedlund and Friesema and Erikson *et al.*, we define constituency opinion in terms of voting returns on referenda issues. Rather than rely on specific issues, we shall measure legislator-constituency policy agreement in terms of general evaluative dimensions. Specifically, we have factor analyzed referenda and initiative issues coming before the California electorate during the 1968, 1970, and 1972 general elections. Table 1 identifies three constituency policy dimensions: contemporary liberalism, taxation, and government administration. The contemporary liberalism dimension is characterized by the kinds of social issues, such as the legalization of marijuana and environmental protection, which became important during the 1960s. Issues loading on the taxation dimension are concerned primarily with developing an adequate and responsive state-local tax system. The government administration policy dimension involves questions of procedure and administration within the state governmental process.

To construct equivalent dimensions at the legislative level, a variant of a procedure developed by Charles Spearman (1927; Harman, 1967) was employed. All 1973 roll-call votes which conceivably might fall onto one of the dimensions were aggregated. Each set of roll-call votes was then factor analyzed to eliminate those bills which did not fall onto the particular assumed dimension. By relating individual legislator scores and district scores⁶ on each dimension, we are able to measure the level of policy agreement or representativeness.

In light of findings regarding the flow of information from constituency to representative (Jewell and Patterson, 1973, pp. 355–367), the use of policy dimensions is especially appropriate to our present research concern. For even if a representative does not have knowledge of his constituents' sentiments on specific issues, he probably will be aware of their more general policy dispositions. And these dispositions can be used to guide his specific legislative acts. In essence, the relationship between representational role and policy agreement should be more clearly specified in terms of broad evaluative dimensions than specific issues.

Findings

The nature of the relationship between representational role orientation and policy agreement or representativeness on the three policy dimensions is

⁶Both district and legislator scores are standardized factor scores. For a fuller discussion of insuring legislative-constituency policy dimension equivalency, see Kuklinski, forthcoming.

TABLE 1
Constituency Policy Dimensions for Assembly Districts, Varimax Solution

	Contemporary Liberalism	Taxation	Government Administration
Removes state penalties for personal use of marijuana.	.956	...	...
Amends, deletes, and adds Penal Code statutes relating to obscenity; deletes "redeeming social importance test."	-.865	...	...
Authorizes use of revenues from motor vehicle fuel tax and license fees for control of pollution caused by motor vehicles.	.853	...	...
Creates State Coastal Zone Conservation Commission and six regional commissions. Establishes permit area and prohibits development within area without permit.	.821	...	...
Reimposes death penalty; death penalty shall not be deemed to be cruel or unusual punishment.	-.800	...	...
Sets forth permissible and prohibited labor relation activities of agricultural workers, employers and labor organizations; defines unfair labor practices.	-.788	...	...
Requires provision for primary elections for partisan offices, including open presidential primary; gives 18-year-olds the right to vote.	.725	...	...
Adds section to Education Code providing: "No public school student shall, because of his race, creed or color be assigned to or be required to attend a particular school."	-.689	...	...
Permits approval by majority, rather than two-thirds, vote to pass bond issue for repairing or replacing unsafe public school buildings.	.657	...	...
Provides for a bond issue of \$250,000,000 to provide funds for water pollution control, including grants to local governments; up to \$10 million of bond proceeds may be used as additional security for payment of principal and interest on any future			

state revenue bonds which finance local waste treatment construction.	(.610)	...	...
Authorizes legislative issuance of revenue bonds to finance installation of environmental pollution control facilities.	.585	...	...
Establishes ad valorem property tax rate limitations for all purposes except payment of designated types of debts and liabilities; eliminates property tax for welfare purposes; limits property tax for education.	(-.571)	...	...
Adds right to privacy to inalienable rights of people.	.485	...	...
Provides minimum tax exemption for owner-occupied dwellings; provides for grants to local government for lost revenue.	...	.969	...
Provides that lands located outside the county, city and county or municipal corporation (including any public district or agency) owning the same, which were taxable when acquired, shall be assessed in accordance with prescribed formula based on total population and assessed value in the state.	...	-.931	...
Deletes provision requiring two-thirds vote by Legislature to limit amount of taxes a county may impose on property; replaces existing provisions fixing minimum amount of money to be provided annually for support of public schools with requirement that Legislature grant basic state financial aid to each school district.	...	.880	...
Provides for a bond issue of \$250,000,000 to provide funds for water pollution control, including grants to local governments; up to \$10 million of bond proceeds may be used as additional security for payment of principal and interest on any future state revenue bonds which finance local waste treatment construction.	...	(.638)	...

(continued)

TABLE 1 (continued)

Establishes ad valorem property tax rate limitations for all purposes except payment of designated types of debts and liabilities; eliminates property tax for welfare purposes; limits property tax for education.	...	(-.555)	...
Requires meetings of U of C regents to be public.	...	...	.972
Provides Speaker of Assembly shall be ex officio member of any agency charged with administration of State College system.	...	...	.964
Continues existing civil service system, with revisions.	...	...	.962
Provides Supreme Court has exclusive jurisdiction to determine questions of vacancy in executive offices except Governor.	...	...	.954
Requires Governor to submit budget to Legislature within first ten days of each regular session.	...	...	.953
Provides that county governing body shall prescribe compensation of its members by an ordinance subject to referendum.	...	...	.949
Authorizes one additional Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction exempt from civil service.	...	...	.927

(Note: Variables with loadings less than .400 are omitted from this table, but did enter into the computation of district scores on each factor.)

() indicates variable loaded on more than one factor.

TABLE 2

The Correlation between Representational Role Orientation
and Legislative Representativeness

Policy Dimensions	Representational Role Orientation			
	Delegate	Politico	Trustee	All
Contemporary Liberalism	.56**	.42***	.29	.38*
Taxation	.54**	.18	.07	.17
Governmental Administration	-.27	.28	-.05	.02
	(N=12)	(N=18)	(N=24)	(N=54)

*significant at .01 level.

**significant at .05 level

***significant at .10 level

summarized in Table 2.⁷ In the case of both the contemporary liberalism and taxation policy dimensions, delegates are notably more representative than trustees. Whereas the correlation between roll-call votes and constituency opinion on the contemporary liberalism dimension is .38 for all assemblymen, it is .56 for delegates and only .29 for trustees. And while the correlation for all assemblymen on taxation issues is .17, it is .54 and .07 for delegates and trustees, respectively. As if to emphasize the point, neither of the associations for trustees is significant.

Furthermore, those assemblymen identifying themselves as politicos fall between delegates and trustees in terms of representativeness.⁸ We have, then, evidence that those who profess to look to their districts when carrying out their legislative functions are much more likely to vote in a manner congruent with constituency preferences. And politicos, whose reliance upon consti-

⁷Information on role orientations was gathered during interviews conducted with California assemblymen in August, 1974. Assemblymen were asked: "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, which of these roles do you feel best describes you?" Respondents were categorized as politicos only if they were adamant that they consistently performed both roles.

⁸This represents a worthwhile finding in itself, for there has not been agreement regarding the nature of politicos. Janda, for example, has argued that transitional concepts such as politico should not be used because their meaning is unclear. See Janda, unpublished manuscript. Our findings suggest that the politico role orientation in fact is useful in predicting legislative behavior.

tuency opinion as a guide is variable, occupy a position midway between the delegates and the trustees.

The relationship between role orientations and representativeness with regard to the government administration dimension presents a different picture. Not only is there a *negative* relationship between roll-call behavior and constituency opinion for delegates, but it is even more negative than is the case for trustees. Politicos, however, do continue to be more representative than trustees.

How do we account for this reversal in the strong relationship between the delegate orientation and representativeness? It is at this point that the notion of dimension saliency becomes important. Using voting returns, a saliency index was constructed for each assembly district on each dimension:

$$\text{Index of saliency} = \frac{\frac{P_1}{T} + \frac{P_2}{T} + \frac{P_3}{T} + \dots + \frac{P_N}{T}}{N}, \text{ where}$$

$P_1, P_2, P_3, \dots, P_N$ = total district votes on those propositions loading .400 or more on the particular dimension;

T = total district vote for president (1968 and 1972) or governor (1970);

N = total number of propositions with loadings of .400 or more on the particular dimension.

The importance of this index lies primarily in its ability to measure the relative importance of each dimension by district. Without exception, contemporary liberalism was found to be the most salient policy dimension in the 54 assembly districts included in this study. At the same time, taxation was nearly as salient in each constituency. For all districts, the mean saliency scores on contemporary liberalism was .94; the equivalent figure on taxation was .91, only slightly less. In contrast, government administration was much less salient in every district, as indicated by its .78 mean saliency score. And apparently this saliency level was viewed by legislators as sufficiently low to allow them to vote without regard to district opinion.

Thus, it would appear that representational role, as a predictive concept, becomes valuable when the issues or policies under consideration have some minimal level of saliency among the constituents. This observation also begins to reconcile our findings with those of Hedlund and Friesema and Erikson et al. As we noted above, each of the referenda studied by Hedlund and Friesema received about 60 percent of the total presidential vote. By their own admittance, these issues were not salient to the Iowa electorate, just as

government administration was not particularly salient to the California electorate.⁹ Similarly, Erikson et al. found delegates most accurate in their perceptions relative to trustees on the most salient of the three issues—busing. Since they combined delegates and politicians to achieve cell entries of adequate size, it is possible that the delegate-trustee differences on the busing issue are even more in accord with our findings than is indicated.

A Further Test

As a further indication of the explanatory value of representational roles, we shall briefly explore how such role orientations specify the nature of the relationship between district competitiveness and legislative representativeness. Given the alleged greater sensitivity of delegates to constituency demands and desires, we would expect that electoral competitiveness, a variable usually seen as heightening legislative responsiveness, would have a greater impact on delegates than on trustees or politicians.

To test this proposition, each legislator's predicted score was determined by regressing 1973 legislator scores with district scores on each of the three policy dimensions. These predicted legislator scores were subtracted from the actual scores and the absolute differences were then correlated with the competitiveness of the corresponding districts. Competitiveness was defined in terms of the winner's deviance from 50 percent of the total two-party vote cast in his district at the 1972 general election. That is, the greater the deviance, the less competitive the district.¹⁰

Results are shown in Table 3. On all three dimensions, delegates display a greater sensitivity to electoral competitiveness in subsequent roll-call behavior than do trustees or politicians.¹¹ On the most salient dimension, contemporary liberalism, the correlation between representativeness and competitiveness is .60; the equivalent association for trustees is a low and insignificant .17. While the correlation on taxation is .41 for delegates, it actually is slightly negative for trustees. In fact, on only one dimension does the sensitivity of the three role orientations not follow the expected pattern. And, again, this

⁹ We do not purport to weight the relative saliencies of the four Iowa referenda and the California government administration dimension. It does seem reasonable, however, to assume that all were rather unimportant to the electorate.

¹⁰ More accurately, we have used linear transformations of these measures, i.e., representativeness = 10 - |differences| and competitiveness = 1/(deviance from 50%).

¹¹ The three types were nearly equally distributed in terms of competitiveness. Safe Districts: Delegates = 9, Politicians = 12, Trustees = 18; Competitive Districts: Delegates = 3, Politicians = 6, Trustees = 6.

TABLE 3

The Correlation between District Competitiveness and
Legislative Representativeness, by Representational Role
Orientation

Policy Dimensions	Representational Role			
	Delegate	Politico	Trustee	All
Contemporary Liberalism	.60**	.39***	.17	.28**
Taxation	.41***	.29	-.04	.15
Government Administration	.43***	.14	.30	.25
	(N=12)	(N=18)	(N=24)	(N=54)

**significant at .05 level

***significant at .10 level

dimension, government administration, is much less salient to the California electorate.

Conclusion

In this paper we have attempted to demonstrate the utility of the concept of representational role as an intervening variable which can help us explain and predict overt legislative behavior. In particular, we have found, as the usual definition of each role orientation would lead us to expect, that those California assemblymen who are delegates are more representative of constituency opinion than are those who are either politicians or trustees. This relationship was especially strong for those policy dimensions which were salient to constituents. Finally, we have shown that representational role specifies the nature of the relationship between district competitiveness and legislative representativeness.

Although far from definitive, we nevertheless would argue that our findings indicate that representational role orientations have at least some value in attempting to explain and predict legislative behavior. And this is especially so if we have adequate measures of (1) both constituency and legislative policy positions and (2) those variables, such as policy saliency, which might systematically interact with the role orientations.

Manuscript submitted 3 May 1976

Final manuscript received 21 July 1976

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