In *Democracy and Its Critics* Robert Dahl observes that in the nineteenth century the idea of representation “transformed democracy from a doctrine suitable only for small and rapidly vanishing city-states to one applicable to the large nation-states of the modern age” (Dahl 1989, 29). “Yet,” he adds, “the change in democracy resulting from its union with representation created its own problems. An entirely new and highly complex constellation of political institutions, which we are only beginning to understand, superseded the sovereign assembly that was central to the ancient conception of democracy” (Dahl 1989, 30).

Democratic government means government by the people. Representative government means that policymaking itself is carried out by specialized office holders instead of by the people directly. Democratic representation means that the actions of these policymakers are supposed to be responsive to the wishes of the people. Moreover, as Pitkin (1967) and others have stressed, simple correspondence between what citizens want and what policymakers do is not enough. A benevolent dictatorship is not a representative democracy. The latter depends not only on correspondence or responsiveness, but also on institutionalized arrangements that reliably create such connections. In the representative democracies of contemporary nation-states, competitively elected national assemblies, and supportive freedoms, information availability and so forth are supposed to constitute such arrangements. The most essential and irreplaceable of these institutions is the free and competitive national election in which all citizens can participate equally (Pitkin 1967, 232–34).

Virtually all research on citizens, elections, and policymaking in contemporary democracies is relevant to democratic representation broadly conceived. Rather
than attempt a grand synthesis, it seems more useful here to report on two large bodies of research, emergent research programs, that have explicitly addressed important representative connections between the citizens and their elected policymakers.¹ The commentators on this essay ably point out some other relevant elements in a full treatment of democratic representation. Gary Cox offers a helpful depiction of the “representational loop” that identifies discrete stages of connection between citizens and policymaking through elections. As he observes, the research contributions discussed here elucidate initial connections in the larger loop. Later connections must take account of other forces that shape the making and implementation of public policies, as well as citizens’ responses to these.²

The first body of research, on “procedural” representation, begins with citizens’ votes for parties in elections. Party voting is then linked to party representation in the legislature through aggregation of party votes into victories. Democratic representation means that votes for parties should correspond to the seats those parties win in the legislature. Much of this research has focused on the way different election laws shape such representation. The second body of research, on “substantive” representation, begins with citizens’ preferences, rather than with their votes. Voter choices under electoral competition link citizens’ preferences to the preferences and behavior of legislative representatives. Parties and candidates take positions on issues and these electoral commitments shape their policymaking after the election. Democratic representation means that citizens’ issue preferences should correspond to the positions or behavior of their representatives.

The language of principals and their agents is sometimes useful. In a representative relationship we can conceive of the citizens as the principals who are represented by agents to whom the citizens temporarily delegate the power to make public policies. In a democracy the citizens should be equal to each other in this relationship. Various normative standards can be applied to specify the desired relations between the principals and their agents in detail. Empirical theories explain what shapes these relations in different countries and elections.

While political science attempts to develop cumulative, tested empirical theories of the factors shaping democratic representation, such research cannot but reflect some normative assumptions. Each of the components in the representative relationship—the citizens’ wishes, the policymakers’ positions, and the correspondence between them—is complex and susceptible to alternative conceptualizations. Thus, perhaps more than most political science research, representation studies are affected by specific, often normative, assumptions: how to treat uninformed or ephemeral citizen opinions; whether to link citizens to legislative advocates or executive policymakers; if the fit should match majorities or full distributions on both sides. In reviewing the approaches and findings I shall try to pay attention to the normative stances that imbue them.
Procedural Representation:  
Citizens’ Votes as the Starting Point:  
The Vote-Seat Paradigm in the Comparative Politics Literature

Let us begin with what seems a highly simplified formulation of the problem of democratic representation: the relationship between the votes for political parties that citizens cast in elections and the partisan composition of legislatures that emerge from those elections to represent them. This is a relatively coherent body of theory and research, which has made substantial progress in understanding one element of democratic representation. Typical of scientific progress, it has made headway in part by simplifying a broad, normative problem into a limited empirical one. It deals with (or evades) perhaps the hardest empirical and normative problem in representation analysis, citizen preferences, simply by assuming that all we can or need to know about those preferences is the partisan votes that citizens cast in competitive elections.

Election Laws

The study of votes, rules, and their electoral consequences has, of course, a very long history. John Stuart Mill was well aware that rules with single member or winner-take-all districts tended to advantage the largest parties (or perhaps “a few large sectional minorities in particular places” (Mill 1958 [1861], 111). The family of election rules called “proportional representation” was invented to create greater proportionality in vote-seat correspondence. In his classic work Political Parties, Maurice Duverger discusses the putative advantages of PR rules for vote-seat proportionality and also notes their variations and limitations in practice (Duverger 1954, 373).

But vote-seat studies in the last thirty-five years have been dominated by Douglas Rae’s wonderful empirical study, The Political Consequences of Election Laws (Rae 1967, 1971). Rae’s elegant little book systematically distinguished a variety of types of electoral laws, identified some of their important properties, introduced systematic measures of vote-seat disproportionality and the creation of legislative majorities, as well as the fractionalization of party systems, and performed other essential services on the way to analysis of the empirical consequences of election laws in 115 elections. Rae demonstrated that the critical feature of election rules shaping vote-seat translation in these elections was their “district magnitude” (the average number of representatives per district), which dwarfed the still significant effects of differences in computation rules and other relevant features (Rae 1967, 138–40). The widely used election rule with the greatest tendency to disproportionality is the single-member district plurality rule (hereafter, SMD) used in the United States, Britain, New Zealand, and Canada.
Rae’s landmark empirical contribution has been elaborated and developed in a variety of different kinds of studies, empirical and methodological (for example, Loosemore and Hanby 1971; Lijphart and Gibberd 1977; Gugkin and Taylor 1979; Grofman 1983; Lijphart 1985; Grofman and Lijphart 1986; Taagepera 1986; Blais and Carty 1987; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Lijphart 1990; Cox 1991; Cox and Shugart 1991; Gallagher 1991, 1992; Benoit 2001). Such studies, and others to be found especially in *Electoral Studies* but in many other political science journals as well, have greatly extended Rae’s account of the variations in election rules and their consequences. One line of analysis has also integrated Rae’s work with the long-suggested idea of a “cube law” in vote-seat connections in SMD systems (e.g., Tufte 1973; Johnston, Pattie, and Fieldhouse 1994). The concept of proportionality itself contains alternative normative versions, reflected in part in different PR counting rules, as pointed out by Michael Gallagher (1991). Specific rules are also adapted in various ways to achieve different practical purposes, including political stability and the partisan goals of the rule writers, as various studies of particular countries have elaborated. In 1994 Lijphart and his colleagues replicated and expanded Rae’s original work using additional data, variables, and measures of disproportionality. Lijphart’s (1994) conceptualization and measurement of an “effective threshold” provides a single measure that takes account of a number of specific features of election rules, including both district magnitude and formal minimum thresholds. It proves to be the most powerful predictor of vote-seat disproportionality (also still significant are the PR calculation formula and the size of the assembly). Also, see Katz’s 1997 reanalysis on a still larger data base (Katz 1997, chap. 9).

**Geographic Distributions**

While the analysis of election laws has dominated work on vote-seat correspondence, two other important variables have also emerged in comparative research. One of these is the geographic distribution of the votes themselves, which is increasingly important for proportionality when the election rules have low district magnitudes, above all in single-member district (SMD) systems. Naturally enough, American, British, and New Zealand scholars whose work has been primarily within such systems have long been sensitive to the role of geography, which is often ignored by scholars working in systems with large magnitude PR rules. In 1942 E. E. Schattschneider provided a particularly clear account of the impact of geographic distribution on outcomes in SMD systems, concluding that, “In an extreme case the party in question might win all of the seats or it might win none at all merely by virtue of the fact that it had received 25% of the total vote” (Schattschneider 1942, 70).

Some insight into the source of variation is provided by the work of political
geographers, who visualize the division of the country into districts as a map superimposed over a map of the distribution of preferences (Gudgin and Taylor 1979; Taylor and Johnston 1979; Taylor, Gudgin, and Johnston 1986; Johnston, Pattie, and Fieldhouse 1994). In a two-party situation, the resulting intersection of geographic party preferences and district boundaries can be described by a curve graphing the distribution, which will usually take the form of a normal, bell shape. Unevenly lop-sided districts are found in the tails; more even distributions are more frequent and in the center of the distribution. The standard deviation is a measure of dispersion, with large standard deviations reflecting relatively fewer evenly balanced (“marginal”) districts and more lopsided ones. Taylor, Gudgin, and Johnson (1986) show how the standard deviation is shaped by areal clusters of opinion in relation to the district sizes and boundaries. As smaller standard deviations mean more evenly balanced districts, this kind of map will produce more “wasted votes” coming from the losers in these districts (and will also produce larger seat swings from marginal vote swings, a point to which we return in a moment). The addition of more parties can produce more wasted votes, if it means that the winners are carrying districts with less than 50 percent of the votes, or if it means that there are fewer lopsided victories of any kind. Geographically concentrated parties may not create that effect if they simply mean uneven local contests between different parties.

Of course, as Schattschneider (1942) and no doubt others before him had been well aware, the problem with achieving nationally proportional outcomes in systems based on geographic districts is what happens to the votes for the losers in each district. In an SMD system in which the districts are reasonably competitively contested and districts are of equal size, nearly half the votes will be cast by losers in their district. If we counted these losing voters as unrepresented, than we would see a very disproportionate vote-seat relationship, a matter that greatly concerned early PR proponents (e.g., Mill 1958 [1861], 111). From this point of view the amount of disproportionality is measured by the aggregation of “wasted votes”—that is, votes for candidates or parties who lost at the district election.

Following Rae (1967) the standard cross-national studies of disproportionality do not simply aggregate the losing voters from all the districts. Rather, they usually assume that party is a nationally meaningful concept for voters, and national vote-party relations define the appropriate representative linkage. Thus it may be that one party will lose in some districts and the other party will lose in others. If one party’s losers are canceled by the other party’s equivalent losers, a single-member-district-based system could yield a highly proportional outcome, even if it has lots of closely contested districts. In geographic terms this can happen if the distribution curve is highly symmetrical. However, a skewing of the distribution, such that one party loses a lot of districts by a small margin will, swiftly create much higher disproportionality. Thus, greater proportionality can emerge from
single-member district systems either from many highly unbalanced districts or from a very symmetrical distribution of partisan losses. Additional parties within districts will usually reduce proportionality by creating more losers.

This possibility of disproportionate results in one district being canceled by opposite disproportionality in another will, of course, be present in any system with districts. (And most real-world PR systems have some kind of geographic districts.) But PR systems with large district magnitudes will have fewer unrepresented losers in each district (subject to the number of parties competing, as explained below), and thus be less dependent on canceling of disproportionality in different districts. Thus, in larger magnitude districts the interaction between geography and vote preferences is less important. In small magnitude district systems it is critical because it will affect the canceling probabilities as well as the proportion of losers in the average district. (One way of understanding gerrymandering is as a practice of drawing the boundaries to be sure there isn’t an even balance of winners and losers on both sides.) On the geographic distribution effects, see Taylor et al. (1986); Taagepera and Shugart (1989); Powell and Vanberg (2000).

Lack of equality in the relationship between numbers of voters and numbers of representatives from each district may also affect disproportionality. This lack of equality may stem from the rules of representation themselves (as in the underrepresentation of urban districts in Spain), which is usually called “malapportionment.” It may also be caused by differential rates of turnout in different districts, as when a labor party gains proportionately greater representation because lower turnout in urban areas means its victories are based on fewer votes. Political geographers’ analysis of bias effects in two-party situations suggests that they can be disaggregated into four elements: turnout, malapportionment, third party, and distributional (intentional or unintentional gerrymanders). See especially Johnston, Rossiter, and Pattie (1999) and the references therein. While this work has thus far been dominated by scholars studying Britain and New Zealand, this may be changing, as reported in Snyder and Samuels’s (2001) review of malapportionment in Latin America.

Too Many Parties

Observers have also long been aware, from various perspectives, that “too many” parties is a problem for representation. Schattschneider (1942, 75ff.) suggested that in single-member-district plurality systems, the first party was advantaged; the second party was slightly disadvantaged; but additional parties had little chance and their voters were likely to be un(der)represented, unless they were “sectional” parties. Duverger also noted that effects of SMD election rules’ “exaggeration” of swings to the winner may become “much more capricious” if it encounters multiparty competition (Schattschneider 1942, 373). The effect of this
generalization on aggregate disproportionality depends, of course, on the “addi-
tional” parties being weak everywhere; if they have local areas of enough strength
to win some districts, this may make up for their underrepresentation in others.

Taagepera and Shugart (1989) show that the effect of too many parties on propor-
tionality is not limited to SMD systems. Rather, disproportionality tends system-
tically to increase with more competing political parties. They also observe
that as district magnitude increases, so does number of parties (as we might expect
from Duverger’s Law and from Rae’s findings about election rules and fraction-
alization of the party system), creating a somewhat off-setting effect on the decline
in misrepresentation that greater magnitudes create. They refer to this as a “law of
conservation of D (disproportionality)” (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 123).

In 1997 Gary Cox in Making Votes Count provided an appealing theoretical
framework into which to place the work on election rules, number of parties,
and disproportionality. Cox draws upon a large, purely theoretical literature on
strategic voting under different voting rules, as well as upon the empirical stud-
ies, to provide a model of the “microfoundations” of Duverger’s law. The work
of Gibbard (1973) and Satterthwaite (1975) had demonstrated theoretically, as
Leys and Sartori had suggested from empirical observation, that “strategic vot-
ing” (voting for a less preferred party or candidate because it has a better chance
of winning) can be rational under any kind of voting system. One way of under-
standing “Duverger’s Law” that we expect only two parties to compete under
SMD is as successful coordination to reduce the number of parties to match a
reasonable probability of winning the only seat available in a district. Such co-
ordination involves the strategies of party leaders, the election rules, and expec-
tations about voters. In SMD, when more than two parties compete and receive
votes in a district, some kind of coordination failure has occurred, (unless bal-
ance is very even). Different voting rules create incentives to reduce the number
of parties to varying levels. Explicitly, Cox suggests that the number of parties
should be reduced to the district magnitude plus 1 (Cox 1997, 31–32, 99ff.).

When coordination fails, and “too many” parties compete relative to the
threshold, we shall see increased levels of misrepresentation (assuming equiva-
 lent cross-district canceling effects). While any voting system will demand some
coordination, the coordination task is greater and the costs of coordination fail-
ure are higher in low-district magnitude systems. SMD is the extreme case, in
which a single party may receive substantial votes and yet fail to make the
threshold—thus depriving a substantial number of voters of representation.
Cox’s formulation explicitly provided a theoretical explanation for Taagepera
and Shugart’s empirically derived “law of conservation of D (disproportional-
ity)” and the general meaning and consequence of “too many” parties. Perhaps
more importantly, it suggested theoretically the conditions (of party objectives,
information, expectations, and rules) under which coordination failures should
occur—quite apart from the geographic issues. (It also suggests an additional hypothesis about the variance in vote-seat representation, supported by the subsequent work of Powell and Vanberg 2000.)

Standard Theory of Vote-Seat Representation

It now is possible to speak of a standard (though far from complete) theory of vote-seat representation drawing on these empirical and theoretical works. In this theory the citizens are principals whose preferences are expressed by their (first preference) vote for political parties. The agents are the collective party representatives in the legislature (regardless of which district chooses them). The comparison is between all the citizen votes and all the legislative seats with (various, similar) measures of proportionality as the standard of desirable representation. Representation is shaped by the interaction of competing parties, citizen’s choices, and election rules. More explicitly, important independent variables are:

1. The election rules, above all the effective thresholds

Increasing district magnitudes and/or lower thresholds usually lead to (diminishingly) improved representation because canceling effects are less critical and coordination problems ease. Explicit PR calculation formulae also make a (lesser) difference.

2. The distribution of citizens’ votes across geographic districts, as these interact with the election rules

The geographic distributions are increasingly important as district magnitude declines; in SMD systems they are critical. The balance and concentration of party support determines both the numbers of losers and cross-district canceling of winners and losers, even in two-party systems. Turnout across districts has an effect also. Gerrymandering of geographic boundaries based on expected preference distributions may deliberately exacerbate (or reduce) disproportionality in low-magnitude systems. Malapportionment in the representatives per district can also increase or reduce disproportionality.

3. The party system, especially the effective number of competing parties in relation to the election rules

The district magnitudes and thresholds in the election rules create an incentive for the parties to coordinate to limit their number and for voters to coordinate to avoid wasting their votes. Where both fail, additional (beyond geographic) disproportionality will result. Party coordination will be affected by party information about voters and voter expectations about other voters, but also by individual party long-term and short-term policy goals and competition goals.
Even in this standard form, the vote-seat paradigm is far from exhausted. Despite some excellent work by geographers, the problem of the fit between party support and geographic boundaries seems incomplete. These features are so important in low-magnitude systems that it is difficult systematically to make progress on other effects until they are in hand. Theory and research at the district level are underway to tackle this issue. Moreover, despite the helpful theoretical base offered by Cox’s microfoundations of Duverger’s law, the interactions between election rules, parties, and disproportionality are worthy of further development. The number of parties, which in turn affects disproportionality, is doubtless shaped by internal party organization features and histories (e.g., Kitschelt 1994), and the opinion and organizational diversity of the society (G. Powell 1982; Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994; Cox 1997, chap. 11) as well as by election rules and coordination problems.

The striking failures of large-district PR rules to generate proportional outcomes in a number of the new democracies of Eastern Europe, especially when too many parties compete relative to a fairly low threshold (typically 5 percent), underlines how important it is to specify more exactly how information limitations, party goals, and the lack of expectation constraints operate in new systems. (The failures also emphasize that these are genuine empirical theories, not, as sometimes asserted, mere tautological implications of PR rules.) Moreover, the inventions of new types of rules, especially those combining SMD and PR in various ways, create need for theories of party leaders’ incentives that take account of both of these (Moser 1999). Finally, despite some promising leads (Shugart and Carey 1992; Shugart and Taagepera 1993; Lijphart 1994, chap. 6), the analysis of interaction between party and voter behavior in the context of multiple levels of elections, especially presidential and legislative elections, has far to go. I may be overly optimistic, however, but it seems to me that these issues can in principle be handled with articulation of the current standard model.

**Variations on the Basic Vote-Seat Paradigm**

Moreover, there are emerging some interesting variations, which partially violate some (in part normative) assumptions of the standard exemplars, but which potentially enrich our understanding of representation of votes into politics:

1. **More features of the voting act/election rules**

The vote-seat literature has generally assumed that the voter side of representation is appropriately captured by a single, categorical ballot. Where election rules provide for ordinal rankings or multiple ballots, some simplification, such as the first preference, is usually used. In principle, though, voters are providing more information about their intentionally authoritative preferences in these systems. Not only
is there room for further work about the implications of ballot type for disproportionality, but also a more complex rendering of voter “preferences” should be taken into account. Similarly, with other features of different ballots, including systems that allow candidate as well as party preferences. (Also see below on this.)

2. Linking votes to executives and policymakers, not just legislatures

If we assume that the legislature is the decisive stage in policymaking, and that all legislators have equivalent influence, then it may be satisfactory to compare citizen vote distributions with legislative seat distributions. But if we accept that political and institutional features of the policymaking system imply that at least some legislatures play rather little role in policymaking, which is rather dominated by the executive, then perhaps citizen vote distributions should be compared with the way those votes are represented among those who effectively make the policies. Even if we are still considering the policymaking procedure (rather than substantive content), and are taking votes as our sole measure of the features of the citizenry to be represented, the convention that we end with the legislature seems arguable. Pinto-Dushinsky (1999, 123–24) has emphasized the overrepresentation of small parties in some parliamentary governments in PR systems; others have drawn attention to the virtually permanent role in government of large Catholic parties in Italy and the Netherlands from the end of WWII until 1994; others have noted the near permanent exclusion from government of “extremist” parties of both right and left.

Despite Rae’s initial demonstration that SMD rules were largely responsible for creating legislative majorities, and the more explicit suggestions and preliminary analysis of Taylor and Lijphart (1985), there was surprisingly little systematic work on the representation of voters through parties in governments (cabinets) before Powell (2000). (Also see Huber and Powell 1994.) Powell also ventures to estimate the relative influence of government and opposition parties in a combined “net policymaker” measure of the influence of all the parties. These analyses continue to show the net advantages of low-threshold PR-based systems over high-threshold systems and SMD, but raise many questions about the connections. They strongly suggest that further development along these lines should systematically incorporate theories of coalition formation, of the influence of opposition under minority governments, of policymaking rules inside the lower house of the legislature and of institutions outside of it. Fortunately, there is some excellent work developing in these areas, though most of it not (yet) attached to representation problems.

3. Alternatives to proportionality as the appropriate representation connection

The standard comparative literature has tended to assume that proportionality is the appropriate way to represent votes in legislatures. Interestingly enough, the bulk of recent American politics literature has assumed that a different relation-
ship is normatively preferable. What Gelman and King (1994) call “responsiveness” of seat changes to vote-changes emphasizes amplification of the impact of party vote shifts (around the party average) on party seat shifts in the legislature. This follows in a tradition in American and British political analysis emphasizing the values of competitiveness and swing ratios. (Also see Rae 1967, 26–27, 145.) Gelman and King explicitly contrast the American concept of responsiveness in amplifying vote shifts to the lesser responsiveness of proportionality as a value (Gelman and King 1994, 544–45). (Also see Rae 1967, 100–101 on SMD rules and “magnification” of vote shifts.) In one of the few studies explicitly to examine vote-seat connections from both views, Katz (1997) considers proportionality and “responsiveness” as competing democratic virtues. His comparative analysis finds that they “are influenced by much the same factors, but are inversely related” to each other (Katz 1997, 138–42).

Powell (2000b, chap. 6) follows a similar line of thought and suggests that “proportional” and “majoritarian” visions of democracy imply different relationships between votes and their legislative (or policymaking) representation. (Also see Powell with Powell 1978.) If we plot parties in elections on a graph with party votes received on the horizontal axis and seats won on the vertical axis, the proportional vision implies that the parties should fall along the 45-degree line, so that a given percentage of votes yields a corresponding percentage of seats or policymaking influence. The majoritarian vision, in his articulation, implies a sharp “S” curve, in which increasing numbers of votes result in limited influence until the 50 percent threshold is reached, then most of the policymaking power. Moreover, votes and seats are in this vision seen only as a way station on the road to policymaking power; it is correct majorities that count, not accurate correspondence of proportions well below or above 50 percent.

This majoritarian approach short-cuts the vote-seat connection, but is roughly consistent with the American “responsiveness” formulation, amplifying vote differences in the 50 percent region which the majoritarian vision imbibes with special significance. Substantively, Powell argues that majoritarian and proportional systems each perform fairly well by “their own” standards, and quite badly by the standards implied by the opposite vision. This is consistent with Katz’s finding and with the idea of a trade-off in the consequences of election laws. 3

However, Powell also finds that good responsiveness in the majoritarian systems usually requires counting the party winning the plurality of votes as entitled to unshared governing power, as very few parties win vote majorities. (Rae points out “a positive consequence of electoral law seldom analyzed; electoral laws may create majorities where none are created by the voters” (Rae 1967, 75). On the other hand, even in the proportional design systems, large parties tend to have larger shares in government than pure proportionality would propose (which Powell attributes to the use of majority rule in most legislative voting), an effect somewhat
mitigated by greater influence of the opposition in these systems (due to minority
governments and institutional features such as strong and proportional committee
systems). He suggests that in this sense, in both types of systems some “failures” by
one set of criteria tend to be salved by improved performance on the other set. But
the “unmitigated” failure of responsiveness that occurs when a party that comes in
second in the votes wins a majority in the legislature receives special criticism.
(This outcome appeared in over 10 percent of the elections in these “majoritarian”
systems.) There are, obviously, many ways to develop this line of analysis.

Even without its articulation and variations, however, comparative politics can
claim, I think, to have made important contributions to our understanding of the
vote-seat element in (or vision of) representation. We have a much more nuanced
view of different election rules beyond SMD, and beyond two-party competition,
inevitably the focus of American national election work. We have a dynamic frame-
work and findings about the interactive relationships among rules, geography, par-
ties, and disproportionality. There are some interesting variations on the “standard
model,” which can, I think, enrich it substantially while incorporating its approach.

A Fundamental Problem: “Party”

The most fundamental problem with using vote-based approaches to democratic
representation lies in the assumptions about the nature of the “political party” itself.
The aggregate comparison of citizen-vote distributions and legislative (or executive
or policymaker) representative distributions assumes that the same party means the
same thing to voters in different districts within a country. This assumption is ab-
solutely fundamental to a procedure that allows the unrepresented party losers in
one district to be compensated by overrepresented party winners in another district.
If the same party label means something different in the two districts, then a proce-
dure of “canceling” across districts is misleading at best and fundamentally wrong-
headed at worst. Parties that are merely coalitions of diverse local notables or
regional patrons, or that contain contentious policy factions, may fit the fundamen-
tal assumption of party homogeneity across districts rather badly. Moreover, if the
party representatives fail to coordinate in their legislative activity, the problem is
compounded. Such parties contrast vividly with parties presenting unified national
election programs and electing representatives who act cohesively in the legisla-
ture. The assumptions of the homogeneous party will fit the latter case far better
than the former. Which may be why this literature has focused upon the vote-seat
correspondences in older democracies in developed, largely parliamentary systems
and been of most interest to political scientists studying these modernized societies.

The paradigmatic vote-seat studies, and even their variants, provide few clues
as to how one might deal with this problem, or even what features of the vote or
party system one might investigate to see whether the assumption is met.4 To be
CITIZENS, ELECTED POLICYMAKERS, AND DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION

Sure, Cox (1997, chap. 10) points out that the theoretical basis for Duverger’s Law rests on district-level competition (i.e., only two candidates competing in a single-member district), as Duverger himself was well aware. He proposes, as have others, some empirical factors, such as a strong executive, that may promote intraparty coordination across districts. But his empirical analysis assumes the integrity of party votes and party seats. To see comparative research grappling with the heterogeneous meanings of support for a party we must turn to another type of research, one that begins with citizens’ preferences, rather than their party votes, as the starting point in analyzing democratic representation.

Another problem in the vote-based approaches is that they do not discriminate between parties on any other basis than votes received. Misrepresentation measures indicate only disproportionality in vote-seat ratios, not whether parties favoring some kinds of policies are advantaged. If a plurality winner (or even second-place finisher) gains a legislative majority because two other parties have split the vote, we have no idea whether the winner is substantively very far from positions favored by the other parties. These limitations loom especially large if we think the purpose of democratic representation is to ensure that public policies respond to the substantive preferences of the citizen majority.

Yet, the attraction of vote-seat representation research is not merely the (sometimes misleading) convenience of its available data. The citizens’ votes do have a special status. The election is the formal authorization step in the principal-agent relationship. Citizens who are markedly underrepresented relative to their votes may well feel that basic standards of democratic equality have been violated. Moreover, the vote does require citizens themselves to aggregate whatever different issues and concerns they may bring to the election into a single act. It does not rely on the researcher pulling together these concerns into some semblance of estimated coherence or to assume that one dimension or substantive area, such as the economy, prevails. In this sense the election reveals the preferences of the citizens with unique authority. Finally, even research that wishes to begin with citizens’ preferences (see the next section below) or wishes to look at governments as well as legislatures, needs to take account of the way party votes are aggregated under different election rules as part of the theory. For these reasons at least, the party relationship between votes and seats continues to seem an important feature of democratic representation.

Substantive Representation: Citizens’ Preferences as the Starting Point: The Issue Congruence Paradigm in the Comparative Politics Literature

Studies of substantive representation tend to assume that a serious claim of contemporary democracies is that policymakers are supposed to do, or at least take
account of, what the citizens want them to do. From this point of view, vote-based studies of representation capture, at best, only part of the complex processes linking citizens’ preferences and the policies of their elected policymakers. On one end is the connection between preferences and votes. Thus, we need a theory of voting behavior and empirical research to show the conditions under which policy preferences shape vote choice. But, even if votes are shaped by substantive policy preferences, rather than candidate personalities or individual payoffs, they are also constrained by the available choices offered by candidates and parties. Citizens may have no opportunity to express their ideal preference combinations in the voting act. This is not only a problem in assessing the absolute fidelity of linkages between voter preferences and policymakers, but potentially a problem in relative assessments. If some electoral rules and party systems offer more complete sets of choices, the votes may be a better guide to underlying preferences in these than in other systems (Lijphart 1994, 97). Thus, we need also a theory of party policy promises in the election campaign and empirical research on party strategies. At the other end of the process is the connection between preference distributions in the legislature and the policymaking process itself.

**Miller-Stokes as Exemplar in Substantive Representation Research**

In 1963 Warren Miller and Donald Stokes published their brilliant article “Constituency Influence in Congress.” They used a public opinion survey to ascertain the issue positions of citizens in different U.S. congressional districts and linked these to the preferences, perceptions, and behavior of the representatives of those districts. In this seminal paper they offered several alternative models of the requirements “to ensure constituency control;” addressed directly and thoughtfully the difficulties created by low levels of citizen information; considered relationships across several dimensions of public opinion; and discussed the role of political parties in the linkage process, other factors shaping the behavior of congressmen, and so forth. Subsequent work on the empirical study of representation has been profoundly shaped by Miller and Stokes’s work.

As Miller and Stokes were among the leading students of American public opinion, they were deeply sensitive to the limited degree of public knowledge of political issues. For this reason they devote substantial space in their article to the problem of comparing relatively uninformed citizens and sophisticated policymakers and to the conditions under which representatives would be expected to pay attention to citizens’ opinions. “What makes it possible to compare the policy preferences of constituents and Representatives despite the public’s low awareness of legislative affairs is the fact that Congressmen themselves respond to many issues in terms of fairly broad evaluative dimensions” (Miller...
and Stokes 1963, 47). Their technical solution was to measure citizen preferences in three domains of public opinion (race relations, social welfare, and foreign policy) from multiple citizen questions and to construct three roughly equivalent dimensions from elite survey responses to much more detailed and sophisticated questions. They then used a correlation coefficient to measure the relative correspondence between the mean opinion of each district’s citizens and the preference, etc., of its representative in each issue domain.

Miller and Stokes saw the election as the causal connection that could require representatives to be influenced by citizen opinion. Their empirical analysis indicated, however, that the nature of this electoral connection was different in different policy domains. “The representative relation conforms most closely to the responsible-party model in the domain for social welfare,” where the parties usually recruited candidates differing systematically in their policy stances (Miller and Stokes 1963, 371). In this domain they noted the much greater correlations between district majorities and winners, and negative correlations with losing candidates (Miller and Stokes 1963, 359–60). In the civil rights domain, on the other hand, their primary theoretical solution was to emphasize congressmen’s (and challengers’) perception of the potential citizen awareness of their congressman’s relevant behavior, exemplified through the mobilization of citizen awareness to defeat incumbent Congressman Brooks Hayes over his actions in the Little Rock desegregation conflict (Miller and Stokes 1963, 369–70). In this domain both incumbents and challengers usually anticipated and adopted the position held by the majority of citizens in the district. In the domain of foreign policy they reported very limited constraint on Congress by the citizenry.

The Miller-Stokes article was not followed by their promised book nor, immediately, by other published work in their footsteps. Both severe technical problems and scarcity of data limited follow-up work. A decade later, however, several critical essays appeared that helped shape subsequent analysis. Christopher Achen in a pair of articles (Achen 1977, 1978) demonstrated that correlation coefficients could be misleading estimates of representational connections. Variations within and across districts could constrain the correlations; high correlations could be generated even though the positions of the representatives and citizens were substantively far apart. Achen urged the need for multiple measures that would measure both absolute distances between the positions of constituents and representatives (“proximity” and “centrality”) and the relative degree to which knowing the citizens’ positions allowed prediction of their representatives’ position (“responsiveness”) (Achen 1978, 481–94). The absolute distance measures required, however, that citizen and representative opinions be measured on the same scale, as had not been done in the Miller-Stokes study, and which seemed to preclude comparing district preferences with roll call behavior. (However, see L. Powell 1982 for an ingenious solution using perceptions of activists.) Following
a different line of concern, Robert Weissberg (1978) showed that Miller and Stokes’s measures of “dyadic” representation, which linked district preferences and district representatives, could greatly misstate “collective” representation between the citizenry as a whole and the legislature as a whole. For example, losing citizens’ preferences could be represented by legislators from other districts (as in the assumptions of the standard vote-seat studies).

By the late 1970s, then, the Miller-Stokes article reigned supreme as the research exemplar for the empirical study of representation, but analysis and data collection requirements to extend their findings (longitudinally or comparatively) seemed severe. No single, simple measure of representation or misrepresentation seemed adequate to describe issue connections. Despite the difficulties, the first comparative fruits of Miller and Stokes’s work, often encouraged by them and their Michigan colleagues and foreign visitors, began to appear at about the same time as the publication of the methodological strictures.

**Applications of the Miller-Stokes Exemplar Outside the United States**

It was soon apparent that representation research in many other mature democracies would break fundamentally with one basic element in the Miller-Stokes exemplar: the selection of the district as the element identifying which citizens should be linked to which legislators in “dyadic” representation. Rather, the comparative research focused almost exclusively on political party representatives, rather than the district representative, as the appropriately conceptualized agent. This break appears consciously and explicitly in Barnes’s *Representation in Italy* (1977). It was forced in part by the election rules and associated election process in many European countries, in part by the high levels of legislative party discipline in most parliamentary systems.

In large, multimember districts, such as those Barnes was describing in Italy, the district’s voters are not choosing a single representative, but a set of representatives (about twenty per district in Italy). Voters supporting relatively small parties gain (proportional) legislative representation. Empirically and conceptually the average citizen preference in the district as a whole was not strongly related to the average preferences of its representatives (Barnes 1977, 121–22). Moreover, as Barnes found in looking at the elite questionnaires, in most cases the representatives of each party all gave similar opinions, regardless of geographic district (Barnes 1977, 119). This combination of multimember districts and relatively homogeneous party behavior led Barnes and most subsequent analysts to focus on the collective legislative party as the appropriate agent of party voters, who are its principals. Also see Farah’s dissertation on “Representation in West Germany” (1980). In a country such as the Netherlands, in which the whole country is a single district, there was little alternative (Irwin and Thomassen 1975).
Following the suggestion in Miller and Stokes about American representation in the social welfare domain, as well as the apparently natural logic of multi-party competition in Europe, the comparative representation work has been theoretically inspired primarily by some version of the “responsible party government” model of representation. (See, e.g., Dalton 1985, 268–71; Converse and Pierce 1986, 698ff.; and the statements by Thomassen 1994, 1999.) As Dalton points out very clearly, voters choosing between parties offering alternative policy packages create a theoretical model of citizen influence to underpin collective voter-representative correspondence (Dalton 1985, 278). Dalton’s study of the representativeness of candidates for the European parliament of their party voters on a variety of substantive issues provides an excellent example of providing multiple measures of empirical issue representation, emphasizing closeness of voters and representatives (centrism), as well as correlations and regression coefficients, and collective correspondence (1985). He also finds PR election rules and party diversity related to centrism.

By the late 1990s issue correspondence data in the (party dyadic version of the) Miller-Stokes tradition had been collected for national legislatures in a growing number of countries. Most of the studies presented analysis within single countries: Netherlands (Irwin and Thomassen 1975), Italy (Barnes 1977), Germany (Farah 1980; Porter 1995), France (Converse and Pierce 1986), Australia (McAllister 1991), Britain (Norris 1995), Sweden (Holmberg 1989; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996), New Zealand (Vowles et al. 1995, 1998); and Norway (Matthews and Valen 1999). Most of these studies share at least two virtues with their Miller-Stokes exemplar. One is the serious consideration of multiple political issues. They report, generally, measurable but uneven correspondence across different issues between voters and their party representatives. A second is concern with the problems of citizen opinion formation, low levels of citizen knowledge and constraint, and how to contrast these with invariably much more sophisticated and structured elite opinions. They offer great insight into the citizen context in each country and sometimes into comparative differences (often contrasting their results with American analyses).

On the negative side, however, the touchstone “responsible party government” model has been offered primarily as a normative model and has usually lacked development of what must be an essential part of any empirical model of party linkage: theory and analysis of party electoral strategies. This lack has probably encouraged failure to consider the possible role of convergent party offerings (along the lines of Downs 1957 or Miller-Stokes’s civil rights domain). A second problem following directly from the adoption of Miller-Stokes dyadic analysis, largely ignoring Weissberg’s argument, has been lack of systematic consideration of how appropriately to aggregate the constituency (individual party) connections into comparison of citizenry and legislature as a whole. It is
particularly striking in contrast to the vote-seat literature that these studies have seldom worried about the implications of disproportionate seat representation of different parties in the legislature for issue representation.

Moreover (like the vote-seat literature), the issue representation studies have focused almost exclusively on parties in the legislature. Miller and Stokes’s original (1963) article mentioned presidential influence in the foreign policy domain, but gave no consideration to the president as an elected representative of the people. Similarly, Converse and Pierce’s impressive analysis of representation in the French legislature (1986) entirely ignores the democratically elected and influential (especially in the years of their analysis) French president. The studies in parliamentary systems have similarly ignored the distinctive influence of the government.

The Explosion of Comparative Substantive Representation Studies in 1999–2000

After so long a period in which single country studies were the dominant mode of analysis, it is striking that 1999–2000 witnessed the publication of explicitly cross-national comparative studies involving at least five different research programs in substantive representation. While many of the individual country studies had offered comparisons with American findings, these cross-national studies have been forced to confront the great methodological difficulties in comparative measurement and specification and have tried to analyze the effects of system-level features, such as party systems, election rules, and historical context on issue representation.

Mostly obviously in the Miller and Stokes tradition is the ambitious collection of original analytic essays edited by Warren Miller himself, *Policy Representation in Western Democracies*, and published shortly after his death (Miller et al. 1999). The coauthors attempt to take advantage of the availability of the emergent group of studies of citizen-legislator representation within five countries explicitly to test cross-national hypotheses derived largely from the “responsible party government” model. However, they conceptualize and measure their representative relationships differently and reach diverse conclusions about, for example, the relative success of more or less structured party systems in creating correspondence on the average issue. (See, e.g., Pierce 1999, 31; Holmberg 1999, 94; Thomassen 1999, 45–51; Wessels 1999, 148–51.) It is difficult to tell if the divergent findings reflect somewhat different, and often flawed, data sets or different approaches to analysis of issue representation.

Schmitt and Thomassen’s *Political Representation and Legitimacy in the European Union* (1999) is much more than a study of substantive issue representation. But the normative model of “responsible party government,” creating issue
linkages through parties offering coherent policy choices, plays a large role in their conception of the development of “European level” representation. Their surveys of citizens and candidates in the 1994 European parliamentary elections asked questions about self-placement on the left-right scale and three issues of European community politics (employment, open borders, and common currency). Thomassen and Schmitt’s chapter on “issue congruence” (which should be read in conjunction with their 1997 article), examines the linkages between party voters and candidates of the same parties on these issues (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999, 186–208). Their two presentations show effectively a very strong relative responsiveness connection between voters and representatives on the left-right scale, created apparently by voter choices and party alternatives (both national- and European-level parties) consistent with the “responsible party model” conditions. (They do not explore Dalton’s 1985 hypotheses about effects of party system and election rules on the connections.) The candidate positions on the three European issues are also strongly structured by their left-right positions; the voter-issue positions, far less so. There is some relative congruence between voters and candidates on the substantive issues (as shown by correlation coefficients, etas, and scattergrams), shaped both by party and (more strongly) by country of origin (Thomassen and Schmitt 1997, 175; Schmitt and Thomassen 1999, 200–5). But the voters and parties are far apart on absolute positions on the European issues, with most of the candidates far more pro-European on borders and common currency than their voters. (These results are, of course, consistent with referenda and opinion polling on these issues.)

A third very recent cross-national analysis in the Miller-Stokes tradition appeared in Esaiasson and Heidar’s *Beyond Westminster and Congress: The Nordic Experience* (2000), a work whose chapters systematically analyze comparative data on various aspects of legislative behavior. Soren Holmberg’s chapter on “Issue Agreement” utilizes at least eight issue questions (5-point scales asked identically of citizens and legislators) to compare positions of party voters and their MPs in Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden (Holmberg 2000, 155–80). Holmberg also presents dichotomized results showing agreement/disagreement of the majorities of party voters and their MPs and, refreshingly, he also reports when citizens and legislatures collectively (as opposed to voter-party dyads) have agreeing/disagreeing majorities.

Holmberg focuses primarily on differences across the political issues, a familiar theme in this literature. He expects better correspondence between voters and party representatives on “salient and politicized issues at the center of political discourse” and finds this generally true on four issues associated with the “left-right” dimension. (Also see Thomassen 1994, 1999.) There seems to be both good absolute and good relative issue agreement. Still, even on these issues the majorities of citizens and their party representatives in Denmark, Norway,
and Sweden did not correspond in fifteen of seventy-two pairs (21 percent).
What is especially striking in Holmberg’s data is the near unanimity of majority
positions within each party’s MPs. Virtually all the Left and Social Democratic
MPs took leftist positions; virtually all the Conservative and Progress MPs took
rightist positions. Although there is a general increase in the average support for
conservative positions among citizens as we move from left to right across the
parties, the citizens are generally more divided than their representatives. For
many parties this implies that there is a substantial minority of voters in each
party who favor positions represented in the legislature exclusively by represen-
tatives of other parties. (Many of the individual country studies have also shown
this kind of pattern.)

The most striking failure of correspondence came on immigration policy.
Voters of most parties (except for Progress and the Swedish Conservatives) were
in sharp disagreement with their MPs. In Sweden only 17 percent of MPs ex-
pressed the opinion that fewer refugees should be admitted, as compared to 70
percent of eligible voters. (These results are reminiscent of the European policy
results reported in Thomassen and Schmitt 1997, 1999.) As the issue has been
highly politicized, with several parties taking sharp positions, the discrepancy
cannot be attributed to voter ignorance of it. An extremely interesting pattern
also appeared on the pornography issue, where there was good agreement at the
country level, but not (except for small Christian parties) at the party level. Both
voters and (most) party representatives in Denmark are more opposed to restric-
tions than their counterparts in other countries, but this is not apparently an out-
come of differentiated party competition. Holmberg infers again, as in his 1999
e ssay, that “there are no major differences in terms of issue agreement across
most any democratic political systems.”

Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Toka’s Post–Communist Party Sys-
tems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation (1999) dis-
cusses the emergence of partisan politics in the new democracies of Bulgaria,
Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in the mid-1990s. While substantive rep-
resentation is only a small theme in their larger analysis (Kitschelt et al. 1999,
primarily 309–44), the theoretical formulation and methodological implementa-
tion is both impressive and valuable. Kitschelt et al. take to heart Achen’s
(1978) argument that both absolute (distance) and relative (responsiveness)
properties of representation should be considered. In the comparative tradition
they apply these to party voter-representative dyads, rather than to geographic
districts, and calculate centrism distances, intercepts, and slopes, as well as cor-
relations as a goodness-of-fit measure. They do not forget to take account of
party size in using the statistics as aggregate properties of representation for
each issue (and the left-right scale) in each country. Theoretically, they argue
that any significant, positive regression slope (relative responsiveness) consti-
tutes democratic representation. Low absolute distances between average party voter and representative, slopes close to 1.0, and small intercepts, which mean close proportional correspondence on issue positions between party voters and party representatives, are perfect “mandate representation.”

But they suggest that two other patterns can also be important alternative forms of democratic representation: (1) “polarized trusteeship,” in which greater distances, high slopes (over 2.0), and negative intercepts mean that party representatives are spread to right and left of their voters;14 (2) moderating trusteeship, in which greater distances, lower (but still positive and significant) slopes, and positive intercepts mean representatives closer to the center than their supporters. Rather than assuming any of these as a normative baseline, they suggest the consequences of each for such aspects of democratic performance as citizen mobilization, effective policy leadership, and intensification or diffusion of political conflict (80–88, 340).

Kitschelt et al. analyze the origins of observed representative patterns on different issues and countries in terms of the differing legacies of Communist rule found in the different countries. Beyond the cross-national differences associated with these legacies, in general they find strong patterns of party linkage, with polarizing trusteeship especially notable on salient political issues. Moreover, they go on to analyze the distances between governing parties and the mean and median voter, contrasting “universalistic” correspondences with larger distances associated with a polarized trusteeship form of “responsible party government” (Kitschelt et al. 1999, 329–36). Interestingly, they find that on the general left-right scale there is closer absolute as well as relative correspondence between voters and party representatives.

Finally, Powell’s Elections as Instruments of Democracy (2000b) examines both procedural and substantive representation in some twenty democracies over the last twenty-five years, focusing on images and practices in “majoritarian” and “proportional” constitutional designs. The last third of the book analyzes substantive representation at the whole system (collective) level, using (only) the left-right scale, which is assumed to be a summary of various specific issues salient in the discourse of competition of each country. (Also see associated work in Huber and Powell 1994; Powell and Vanberg 2000.) The median citizen position is estimated from surveys near the time of the election and compared to the party positions of the legislature, government, and weighted policymakers. The latter are estimated from expert surveys, where expert observers were asked to place the parties in each country (Castles and Mair 1984; Huber and Inglehart 1995).15 The work explicitly builds from theories of strategic party competition and government formation in majoritarian and proportional systems. The empirical analysis tries to show where expectations about party connections are realized and where they break down.
Powell and Vanberg (2000) show significantly better correspondence of legislative and citizen medians in low threshold PR than in higher threshold PR or, especially, single-member-district election rules. (They also found this PR advantage using party manifestos to estimate party left-right positions.) The poorer correspondence in the SMD systems apparently resulted from the frequent failure of one or both large parties to converge to the median, perhaps because (contra Duverger’s Law) the number of parties seldom reduced only to two, an outcome consistent with Cox’s prediction of greater coordination problems with these rules (Cox 1997, chap. 12). When the disproportional election outcome creates an absolute legislative majority for one of these large parties, the result is a legislative median well off the citizen median. Powell (2000a) goes beyond the legislature to show significantly better correspondence between the citizen median and the cabinet government in the proportional systems (as do Huber and Powell 1994). However, complexities of the government formation, especially the presence of minority governments, led to average governments somewhat off the legislative median even in multiparty PR systems. Because governments and their oppositions were usually both some distance from the median and on opposite sides of it, political and structural features that encouraged governments to take greater account of opposition influence (more often associated with the PR electoral systems) tended to improve correspondence between citizen median and policymakers (Powell 2000b, chaps. 2, 9).

Obviously, both problems and opportunities abound if the new cross-national data sets are to be fully exploited and the conflicting approaches and findings of the 1999/2000 studies are to be unified and reconciled with each other and previous work. Wessels, Kitschelt et al. and Powell agree that we can theoretically explain differences in the causes and consequences of substantive representation. It remains to be seen whether that optimism will be justified. The other authors are much less sanguine.

Standard Theory of Issue Representation: With Moderately Structured, Largely One-dimensional Citizen Preferences

In the case of the vote-seat research program it is possible to infer a “standard theory,” which posits the basic effects of several independent variables (election laws, geographic distributions, and number of parties) on the standard measure of vote-seat disproportionality, as well as some variations on that standard theory and some of its limitations and problems. The substantive representation program, as developed and adapted from the Miller-Stokes work, does not permit such clear-cut summation. The bulk of the studies are still based on single countries, which makes inferences about such systemic features as election rules and party systems quite difficult. Most of the new studies that are genuinely cross-national with com-
parable designs have only a handful of countries in each and these may not have much variation in the systematically interesting properties. For these reasons it is not surprising that leading scholars who have worked directly on these issues draw contradictory inferences about the effects of system-level variables. Recognizing these limits, let me nonetheless try to make some tentative suggestions about what a “standard theory” connecting citizen preferences and positions of legislators through competitive elections might look like at this point.

Public opinion studies in many democracies have shown that even in educated societies with developed partisan discourse, citizens tend to have only weakly structured preferences. That is, our ability to predict a citizen’s opinion on one issue by knowing his/her opinions on other issues is fairly limited. Similarly, the connection between the issue preferences and party preferences is typically not very strong, although shaped by partisan competition itself (Granberg and Holmberg 1988). Nonetheless, through aggregation in electoral competition, moderately one-dimensional opinion structures of citizens can be linked to partisan representation. Most of the empirical work has been done in settings in which citizens do have preferences on a number of issues that are loosely “structured” together and linked to differentiated offerings by the political parties. So, I’ll take that kind of configuration as the first condition, suggesting what a standard theory of issue representation might look like in such a setting. The issue representation studies described above illuminate a good deal about this situation.

1. The dyadic party issue congruence studies suggest that relative issue representation (responsiveness) is greater on the issues more strongly linked to the general dimension of party competition. Indeed, this has become virtually a stylized fact (e.g., McAllister 1991; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Holmberg 2000). An important research question becomes how (and if) the linkage between specific issues and the general dimension of competition emerges. 17

1a. Statistically, the slope of the regression of party representatives’ positions on (mean) party voter’s positions can reveal a causal connection emerging through partisan choice. The steepness of the slope may reveal something of the nature of the process. It may also have significance in some normative models, such as the majoritarian-proportional contrast and have consequences for expression of political conflict, as suggested by Kitschelt et al. (1999).

1b. However, in the comparative literature little attention has been paid to issue positions that are eschewed by all the parties because unacceptable to voters generally (as Miller and Stokes suggested was the case with the civil rights domain). Under these circumstances we might find little relative responsiveness on the issue, as the parties do not offer contrasting choices, yet
close proximity of voter and representative positions. Influence would emerge from party anticipation of voter response, rather than as outcomes from voter choices. Downsian models would expect this in two-party systems. But it could also emerge in multiparty systems if few voters favor a position. (Empirically, the pornography issue in Holmberg’s (2000) Nordic systems seems to look something like this.)

2. The studies of issue preferences and partisanship repeatedly suggest that the preferences and positions of party representatives are usually much more structured (predictable from their partisanship across a wider range of issues) than the preferences of average citizens. The reasons for this are worthy of further work, but it presumably comes from a combination of the opinion formation effects of participation itself and the processes of elite recruitment. (See, e.g., May 1973; Kitschelt 1989; McAllister 1991; Kitschelt 1994; Norris 1995.) This structuring, in turn, has several implications:

2a. First, that on some issues, representatives’ opinions will be strongly linked to their partisanship while citizens’ opinions will not, potentially creating serious misrepresentation on these issues. Where citizen preferences are not strongly held on the secondary issues, this outcome seems a mere curiosity. Indeed, it may disappear if we look at more involved and active citizens. But there also may be issues of intensely felt, but poorly structured, citizen preferences (as in the immigration issue in Scandinavia). This may mean, in turn, that on some issues voters for one party may be better represented by MPs of another party. It is unclear what are the long-run electoral dynamics of this situation. (But see Holmberg [1997] for an exploration in Sweden.)

2b. Second, the greater consistency of representatives’ opinions, which emerges in many issue congruence studies, will often make them be, or appear, much more extreme than their voters. There may be high levels of relative “responsiveness,” such that party representatives are differentiated from each other the same way their supporters are, but the representatives are much more consistently “left” or “right” than their respective followers. This pattern, which is what Kitschelt et al. (1999) call a “polarized trusteeship” connection, appears in many of the empirical studies (e.g., Holmberg 2000). The frequent appearance and importance of this connection suggests the need for knowing both relative and absolute correspondence (as originally suggested by Achen 1978), and also closer investigation into its bases. Consistency across related issues, intensity with which preferences are held, and substantive distance from the “center” on single issues can all contribute to this pattern, but have different implications for advocacy, conflict resolution, and policy satisfaction.
2c. Another implication is that if we care about both relative and absolute positions, we need to be very careful about using different questions and issues to estimate citizen and elite positions. We also need to be careful to choose comparable sets of issues across countries.

3. *Election rules, party systems, and opinion structuring.* Theory of party competition in a one-dimensional issue space leads to several predictions that should affect the degree to which opinions on specific issues will be linked to partisanship. Under pure two-party competition Downsian theory predicts convergence of the parties to the position of the median voter. (But other theory and empirical work disagree.) Under multiparty competition there may be no single equilibrium, but if there were, the parties should disperse on the space, with roughly equal numbers of voters between them (Cox 1997, chap. 12). *These expectations would lead to weaker relative issue-partisan connections under two-party competition than under multiparty competition,* affecting elements (1) and (2) in the standard theory. This lesser structuring leads to lower relative, but not necessarily lower absolute, correspondence (responsiveness) between citizens and their party representatives on the partisan-linked issues. If PR election rules encourage multiple parties and SMD rules encourage two parties, we might expect weaker partisan issue effects under SMD. Note that empirically, there is some support for these expectations (e.g., Dalton 1985; Wessels 1999), but others disagree.

**Variations: Collective Preference Connections**

The Miller-Stokes approach does not generally, despite Weissberg’s suggestion, consider collective linkages between citizens and legislatures (or policymakers). However, some of the recent work attempts to make such connections.

Cox (1997, chap. 12) distinguishes between two forms of representation. What he calls policy “advocacy” defines good representation as reflecting into the legislature the full and proportionate range of citizen opinion. Every part of the opinion distribution should be having a chance to influence policymaking. (Also see Dahl [1989] and Powell [2000b] on citizen influence versus control.) “Policy advocacy” corresponds to the kind of representation that the standard vote-seat research takes for granted as appropriate: it links the entire citizenry and the entire legislature with proportionality as a standard. Cox’s alternative form of representation, “enacted representation,” also involves the entire citizenry and legislature, but focuses on the single most preferred position (rather than the range of positions) emerging from the electoral and policymaking processes. Which of these forms is more important is in part a normative judgment, one that is linked to, but not identical to, images of the democratic process more generally.
As we have already seen, Cox generalizes Duverger’s law to predict the effect of election rules on the maximum number of competing political parties. He then extends the analysis to predict the effect on advocacy and enacted policy representation (Cox 1997, chap. 12). Given proportional representation rules with at least fairly large district magnitude (low threshold), multiple parties should emerge and in any equilibrium their competitive promises should distribute fairly evenly across the (one-dimensional) space of competition such that an equivalent number of voters is between each party. If coordination between parties (or voters) is good, there will not be too many parties at any one position to run into threshold problems, thus a range of positions will be represented in the legislature, roughly in proportion to the number of citizens at that position. This will create good policy advocacy, but leave the enacted policy dependent on the policymaking process in the legislature.

Processes of government formation and policymaking need to be incorporated into the PR rules and multiple-parties model, if it is to deal with enacted policy. If the party at the median dominates policymaking, then final policy would correspond to the median voter, which is normatively the preferred outcome. Representation processes will break down if either too many parties compete for given positions (as in the vote-seat analysis above) or if legislative policymaking favors parties other than the voted median. (See Powell 2000b, chaps. 8, 9).

With single-member district election rules, Duverger’s Law predicts only two political parties. Downs (1957) (and some other formal theories of somewhat greater generality) predicts that with two parties there will be convergence to the position of the median voter. If both parties offer promises close to the median, or one does and wins the election, then a legislative majority will be at the position of the median voter which is, again, the (enacted) representative ideal. Thus, the SMD rules and two-party competition configuration would be predicted to create poor policy advocacy (off-median preference positions poorly represented in the legislature), but good policy enactment (close to the citizen median). As legislative majorities are directly elected, there is no need for incorporation of processes of government formation into the theory. However, demands for coordination are greater with single member districts, as the emergence of an additional party (for any of a number of reasons) can greatly diminish the incentive to converge to the median. Moreover, strictly, Duverger’s Law only predicts two-party competition at the district level. National legislative outcomes will depend on the relationship between district and national medians, further complicating the possible representational connection.

For these reasons, we might expect problems or inconsistency in creating good correspondence between median voter and median legislator (or government) in SMD systems. The work of Powell and his colleagues using only the
left-right scale preferences and positions is consistent with this expectation. Moreover, examination of the Australia 1984, Britain 1992, and New Zealand 1993 studies suggests that not only are the respective Labour, Conservative, and National MPs more extreme than their own voters on many issues, especially those linked to the primary “left-right” dimension of competition, but that vote-seat distortion gave their parties (disciplined) majorities even further from the median citizen. (See the tables in McAllister 1991; Norris 1995; Vowles et al. 1995). The shift in New Zealand to PR in 1996 did not greatly change the relationship between party voters and their representatives, but it greatly lessened the distortion of party representation and apparently improved the fit between the legislative median as a whole and the average voter on issues associated with left-right competition. (See Vowles et al. 1998, 2, 143–50.)

Problems: Alternative Configurations of Citizen Preferences—No Considered Preferences

If citizens have no considered preferences, we can elicit questionnaire responses, but we cannot expect voting to reflect these. Survey research has consistently shown that even in highly educated societies many citizens on many issues have no “opinions” in the sense of considered views taking some account of attaining desired objectives in the context of available circumstances.

Yet, most democrats think that citizens do have some fundamental preferences about political directions. In normative theory one of the advantages of representative democracy is that citizens have agents who are supposed to find out about the details of public choices and make decisions in line with what citizens would want if they become reasonably informed. Representative democracy not only overcomes the practical difficulties of getting together an implausibly large number of people to be the equivalent of the sovereign assembly, but of allowing some specialization of information-gathering and context-evaluating activities. But in empirical analysis comparing the preferences of citizens and the congruent positions of policymakers, how are we to determine the relevant preferences of the former?

Under What Conditions Does Programmatic Discourse Emerge?

Whether or not low levels of specific citizen information are a problem for representation through elections seems to depend on whether citizens can participate in, or relate in a considered way to, a general partisan, programmatic discourse. Emergence and penetration of such a discourse probably depends on both elites and citizens (Zaller 1992). As Kitschelt argues, it is up to the political parties to bundle together specific issues in a way to make general packages of
policy alternatives available to citizens (Kitschelt 2000). (Similarly, see Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996 on “Representation from Above.”) Aldrich (1995) suggests that this is one of the two fundamental functions of political parties. Reflecting on the early experiences with democracy, Bryce observed that no large democracy had been able to do without political parties as the vehicle for organizing and structuring elections (Bryce 1921, vol. 1, 119).

However, parties’ incentives to do this will be encouraged or discouraged by the presence or absence of personalistic elements in the election rules, nationalization of communication patterns and information, and power relationships in the society (Kitschelt 2000). Research on the emergence of a national partisan discourse must be an element on the agenda of substantive political representation studies. (Also see note 17 above.)

Multidimensional Preference Representation: Theoretical and Empirical

Perhaps the most serious lacuna in comparative studies of preference representation is the absence of both theory and empirical analysis in multidimensional context. In terms of policy advocacy, it would seem that PR election rules with large magnitudes and multiple political parties should be able to represent a multidimensional citizen preference configuration in the legislature. Thomassen’s analysis of the self-placement of Dutch voters and MPs on economic policy and abortion issues suggests just this kind of multidimensional correspondence (Thomassen 1999, 46). In a more limited way, we see some specific parties apparently reflecting such multidimensionality on the immigration (Left and Progress parties) and pornography (Christian parties) issues in the Nordic countries (Holmberg 2000). It would seem to be more difficult for a system with small magnitudes and few parties to do this. (See McAllister 1991 on Australian configuration.) However, we lack systematic comparative empirical studies. When we move beyond policy advocacy to policy choice, the situation is even murkier. Theoretically, social choice theory seems to show that under majority-voting rules a multidimensional preference configuration can often yield almost any configuration of outcomes. In turn this situation seems to imply not only instability in the processes, but lack of a normatively preferred outcome against which to assess empirical results.

Concluding Comments

It seems to me that each literature has made “progress” in the way that we might expect from the paradigm/research program view of scientific progress (Kuhn 1970; Lakatos 1978). That is, they have made notable progress by converting a very general problem to very specific, self-defined, self-limited research pro-
grams. The vote-seat studies have not worried about how to estimate voter preferences and the intricacies of greater structure in elite preferences. They have made progress on their own terms by assuming that all we want to know about citizens is how they voted, examining the consequences of those votes interacting with rules, geography, and partisan competition. Issue correspondence studies, on the other hand, have seldom worried about election rules and collective preference aggregation; the simplifications of dyadic correspondence have allowed them to concentrate on the problems of preference comparisons.

Substantively, our understanding of the larger problem of political representation, even constrained to the empirical connections between voters and legislators, eventually needs to incorporate results from both lines of research. We can see that vote-seat analyses that take no account of the differing meanings of “party” to different voters, or which do not differentiate between centrist and extremist parties, can’t answer some important questions or deal with some contexts. We can see that dyadic issue comparisons that pay no attention to artificial and distorted legislative majorities will be missing important parts of the larger picture. Overview accounts of political representation and even, eventually, the two research programs themselves will need to incorporate elements of each other. Moreover, each will need fully developed theories of party competition and of voter choice, including understanding the conditions for integrating multiple issues into a unified political discourse.

Similarly, thus far comparative studies have offered surprisingly little additional articulation of the normative models that create the interest in democratic representation in the first place. However, it isn’t clear at what point this merging and increased normative range will be helpful for the dynamics of research. Progress on vote-seat representation has probably benefited from the simple assumption that proportional correspondence between votes and seats is a desirable standard. It overlooks normative alternatives, such as majoritarian responsiveness, and ignores the fact that most legislatures make policy (and choose governments) using majority-voting rules. Complex voting rules, party competition strategies, and geographic configurations have created a sufficiently hard problem when linked even to simple dependent variables. Is it yet time to move beyond them? The thread in the issue correspondence studies that considers “responsible party government” as a normative ideal, rather than one form of partisan competition that can create correspondence, seems to me thus far to have been more of a distraction than a help.

Research progress will be determined by the hard work of the scholars “on the ground,” not by reviewers. It is the working scholars who will choose where to go next. It is sufficient here to report the continuing progress and vigorous possibilities in these two research programs contributing to the study of political representation.
Notes

1. Space precludes me from considering several other, less extensive research programs that can also play a role in citizen-policymaker connections. One of these is an analysis of “social” or “symbolic” representation that focuses on demographic correspondences, such as gender, race, and class, between citizens and their representatives (e.g., Norris 1996; Vowles et al. 1998). Another is the analysis of “accountability” and retrospective voting, emphasizing conditions under which voters penalize policymakers for poor performance (variously measured in office (e.g., Powell and Whitten 1993; Cheibub and Przeworski 1999; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999).

2. Research on the role of campaign commitments, such as candidate promises and party manifestos, in government policymaking (Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge 1993; Royed 1996; Stokes 1999; Thomson 2001) addresses another important connection. Indeed, studies of the impact of political parties on public policies in democracies constitute a large research program worthy of extensive consideration in any complete treatment of democratic representation. (See the references and the metanalysis of the findings of such studies in Imbeau, Petry, and Laman 2001.)

3. These normative alternatives can also be considered from retrospective and change versions, as per Powell (2000b, chap. 3) on effect of vote losses on party seat losses and the difference in “slopes” in the majoritarian and proportional systems.

4. Rae mentions corruption as a possible problem, but clearly he has in mind inaccurate reporting of vote totals, or false calculations from them, not the corruption of the voters (Rae 1971 [1967], 68).

5. While Achen’s point seems undeniable, its substantive implementation remains controversial. It is often interpreted as the need to use the same question wording in interviewing both citizens and representatives. While failure to do this certainly raises cautionary flags about representation inferences (as in Miller et al. 1999 and Kitschelt et al. 1999 discussed below), it is by no means certain that the average citizen and her legislator will interpret an identically worded question in the same fashion. Moreover, when citizen responses are aggregated to the level of district, party, or country they are much more likely to include guesses and error than are the elite responses, which creates further difficulties interpreting levels of correspondence.

6. Converse and Pierce (1986), working in the only single-member district system outside the United States that has thus far been the object of a major representation study, do keep the constituency-individual representative dyad, although they recognize, of course, the importance of party connections as critical linkages, documenting the highly (although not perfectly) cohesive party voting of the French Assembly members.

7. The British and Australian voter-MP candidate issue studies are focused on somewhat different sets of issues. They only touch indirectly on the responsible party model, yet the data presented bear directly on the arguments in issue representation studies. Each presents average party-voter positions on a range of issues and compares those to parliamentary candidates of the party. Both studies find much more structuring (fewer issue dimensions and closer links to party) of issue positions among the elites than the voters, especially, but not exclusively, on economic and welfare issues and that the elites tend to hold more extreme and unified positions on these issues. As in the European studies, there is substantial relative
consistency in “left-right” placements of voters and party leaders, consistent with representa-
tional connections.
8. Also see Manion’s remarkable study of semicompetitive elections in China (1996).
9. Admittedly, some foreshadowing of these research programs appeared in Huber and
Powell (1994) and Thomassen and Schmitt (1997). Too late to be included in this discussion,
my attention was also recently drawn to a sixth program: Miller et al. (2000), a published
study with citizen-representative issue comparisons in Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania in
1995.
10. For example, a number of these studies still use the 1958 Miller-Stokes data set for
analyses involving absolute issue distances between citizens and representatives, despite the
dissimilarity in the questions asked of citizens and representatives.
11. Perhaps the most innovative work in this ambitious comparative enterprise is Holm-
berg’s interesting examination of the shapes of preference distributions among voters and
their representatives, considered both by party and collectively. The Swedish results stand
out for the very great unimodality of preferences within party representatives, absolutely and
in comparison to their voters. Relative to their voters, this was also true of the Dutch and
French party representatives as well. When all the representatives are considered together,
the Swedish and French legislatures, and to a lesser extent the American, showed more “U”-
shaped polarization than their respective electorates, which rarely, if ever, demonstrated that
kind of distribution. Holmberg suggests that this indicates a polarizing, rather than consen-
sual, pattern of representation as an outcome of the partisan discourse mechanism.
12. Holmberg’s chapter on “Wishful Thinking,” describing the (mis)perceptions of their
voters by members of the European Parliament, also contains some very interesting material
(Holmberg in Schmitt and Thomassen 1999).
13. However, the data upon which the Kitschelt et al. (1999) analysis is founded contain
some serious limitations, especially as their distance measures for the issues use standardiza-
tion of different questions asked of citizens and elites. They are well aware, moreover, that
their single snapshots of very dynamic and complex situations could be misleading.
14. This “polarizing trusteeship” pattern also is consistent with a “majoritarian” form of
representational connection; see Powell (2000b, chap. 6) and Powell with Powell (1978).
15. The use of experts to place the parties on the left-right scale breaks with the Miller-
Stokes paradigm’s use of opinion surveys of representatives’ self-placements. However, as
pointed out by Dalton (1985), Converse and Pierce (1986), and others, elite self-placements
in Western Europe have tended systematically to be relatively to the left (by about a point on
the ten-point scale) of their voters. (The reasons for this are disputed.) The expert attributions
do not seem to be displaced in this way.
16. However, also see the Mays’ Law line of research, and the analysis of internal party in-
centives generally arguing that patterns of recruitment will generally produce party representa-
tives more extreme than party voters (e.g., May 1973; Kitschelt 1989; Norris 1995).
17. For a highly suggestive analysis of the affect of issue evolution on issue representation
in the American context, see Hurley and Hill (2001), who suggest the complexity of issues
and their relationship to lines of partisan cleavage as essential to the nature of election con-
nexions. See their references to the American literature on issue evolution, especially Gerber
and Jackson (1993).