

DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND LEGISLATIVE  
BEHAVIOR: A STUDY OF LEGISLATOR-  
CONSTITUENCY RELATIONSHIPS.

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This study inquires into both the normative and empirical aspects of legislator-constituency relationships, attempting to relate normative conceptions of the proper role of the representative to actual legislative behavior. It is divided into three Parts.

Part I attempts to clarify the position of democratic theory regarding how a representative ought to behave. Attention is given to the nature of political theory and three meanings of "ought." Democratic theory is examined as a political "theory" which states how governments "ought" to be conducted--how it would be desirable to have them conducted. A distinction is drawn between substance and process desiderata. Democratic theory states rules by which governmental decisions ought to be made; it states process desiderata. Popular sovereignty, political equality, majority rule, and governmental responsiveness to popular desires are the four prime desiderata of democratic theory. They require that a representative reflect his constituents' wishes in seeking to promote the welfare of the state as a whole. He is to act as a State-Oriented Delegate. But students of representation frequently state that the representative ought to act as a Trustee, urging that his judgment be uninfluenced by popular demands. Moreover, the structural machinery designed to institutionalize democratic theory makes the representative

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accountable to his district, not the state. Contradictions and ambiguities are involved in the literature's prescriptions about the proper role of the representative. Political scientists' prescriptions of how a representative ought to act are poor descriptions of how he does act. Future research on representative-constituency relationships must be redirected toward the important empirical questions about those relationships.

Part II prepares for empirical inquiry into the topic by substituting the word "legislator" for "representative." Studies in the area of legislative behavior research resist cumulation and demonstrate little confirmed knowledge on legislator-constituency relationships. In large part, the weaknesses of this literature derive from a failure to give attention to individually-based variables and to conduct research within a general psychological framework. It is urged that legislative behavior research be directed towards explaining the purposes of legislative behavior and disclosing the specific motivational bases from which the legislator acts. Two kinds of motivational bases are involved in legislator-constituency relationships. Legislators who act from the motivational basis of role performance seek to perform their job according to their conceptions of what they ought to do. They may act as Delegates or Trustees, may be District- or State-Oriented, or may not adopt any well defined role at all. Legislators may also act from the motivational basis of re-election. "Politicos" do want to be re-elected; "Retirees" have no desire to continue their political careers. Some general hypotheses are presented which relate these motivational bases to mandate uncertainty and political ambiguity. Mandate uncertainty refers to the imperfect knowledge a legislator has about the desires of his constituents. Political ambiguity refers to his imperfect knowledge about the political consequences of his actions. But these hypotheses about legislators' responsiveness to constituency demands cannot be properly tested until survey data are gathered on constituents' desires. Part III attempts an indirect test of the validity of these propositions.

Part III reports data from 240 interviews with candidates for the 1961 Indiana state legislative offices. These data were analyzed according to the candidates' motivational bases. The findings of this study confirmed the relevance of these motivational bases for research in legislator-constituency relationships. Significant differences were found in the attitudes and perceptions of Delegates and Trustees, Politicos and Retirees.

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