

Multidimensional Representation

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Multidimensional Representation

Abstract: The study of representation is a major research field in quantitative political science. Since the early 2000s, it has been accompanied by a range of important conceptual innovations by political theorists working on the topic. Yet, although many quantitative scholars are familiar with the conceptual literature, even the most complex quantitative studies eschew engaging with the “new wave” of more sophisticated concepts of representation that theorists have developed. We discuss what we take to be the main reasons for this gap between theory and empirics, and present four novel conceptions of representation that are both sensitive to theorists’ conceptual impulses and operationalizable for quantitative scholars. In doing so, we advance an alternative research agenda on representation that moves significantly beyond the status quo of the field.

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The quality of democracy is closely bound up with the quality of representation. This widely-held belief animates the study of political representation, which has become a major research field in quantitative empirical political science. In tandem with this scholarship, there has recently also emerged an innovative conceptual literature on representation (esp. Mansbridge 2003, 2009; Rehfeld 2006, 2009; Saward 2010). This literature draws attention to multiple important dimensions of representation that were hitherto neglected by empiricists. Regrettably, however, quantitative scholarship has hardly engaged with the new sophisticated conceptions of representation that theorists have developed, thus missing an opportunity to better understand the complex representative processes that are central to our democracies (for exceptions, see e.g., Broockman 2013; Grose et al. 2015). Reacting to this, this article aims to make the insights of recent conceptual work on representation usable for quantitative empirical research, developing a shared language and operationalizable conceptual framework.

We first review recent advances in representation theory, demonstrate their lack of impact on quantitative scholarship, and highlight several domains of incompatibility between theoretical and quantitative research that may explain why quantitative scholars eschew the new representation theories. We then go on to develop four operationalizable conceptions of representation that are both faithful to political theorists' conceptual impulses and operationalizable for quantitatively-oriented empiricists. These are:

1. surrogation (claiming and choosing constituents and representatives);
2. justification (providing and demanding reasons for actions);
3. personalization (viewing the representative role as that of an individual vs. party agent);
and
4. responsiveness (acting out of and expecting sensitivity to electoral sanctions).

These conceptions of representation depart significantly from conventional conceptions that are used in quantitative scholarship, such as ideological congruence, policy responsiveness, ideal point matches, or descriptive representation. Whereas conventional conceptions compare either citizens' policy-related wishes or their descriptive characteristics with representatives' actions or characteristics, our conceptions focus on *how citizens want to be represented* and *whether representatives meet these expectations*. This takes heed of the recent "constructivist turn" in representation theory, according to which we should conceive of representation in mass democracies as a relationship that is created and shaped by both the representative(s) and the represented (Disch 2015, 489; Saward 2010, 52). Our ambition is to

show how theoretically-grounded quantitative research on representation can be sensitive to these ideas.

Before embarking, we would like to clarify that what we develop here is an empirical research agenda for quantitative scholarship on representation that is derived primarily from *theory*, rather than from empirical research itself. We do not deny that an alternative research agenda could be developed by looking at those conceptions of representation that are used in existing quantitative scholarship, but require further theorization.¹ However, we prioritize theory as a resource for concepts because we believe the main recent conceptual innovations have happened within the theoretical domain.

Representation theory since 2003

The starting point of what we will call the “new wave” of conceptual research on political representation was arguably Mansbridge’s seminal article “Rethinking Representation” (2003). Mansbridge’s express ambition was to move beyond Pitkin’s (1967) groundbreaking earlier work. Following the publication of Mansbridge’s article, several other scholars took up the task of developing new and better concepts of representation. Key figures are Rehfeld (2006, 2009), whose work is in part a response to Mansbridge’s, and Saward (2006, 2010), who set in motion the “constructivist turn” in representation theory (also see Disch 2011; Disch 2015). The work of Mansbridge, Rehfeld, and Saward is our focus in the short overview that follows.

In Mansbridge’s work, the ideal-typical distinction between “promissory,” “anticipatory,” “gyroscopic,” and “surrogate” representation has gained most attention (Mansbridge 2003; Mansbridge 2011). Briefly, while promissory representation is based on a sanction model in which principals reward their agents for holding the promises they have made in the authorizing election, and punish them for breaking these promises, and anticipatory representation presumes that principals look back to the past behavior of their agents in deciding whether to reward or punish them (again a sanction model), gyroscopic representation involves self-motivated agents whose interests are aligned with those of their principals, and who are selected by the latter. The final conception—surrogate representation—stands out from the others in that it does not take the form of a principal-agent relationship: it describes

¹ In fact, much recent theoretical work was itself initially inspired by empirical work (e.g., Mansbridge 2003, who draws on Arnold 1990 and Stimson et al. 1995).

representation by representatives with whom constituents have no electoral relationship, such as a representative in another electoral district.

Partly in response to Mansbridge, Rehfeld (2009) suggests an alternative way of conceptualizing representation, which unfolds along three different dimensions: (1) more vs. less sensitivity to sanctions; (2) self-reliant vs. dependent judgment; and (3) aiming at the good of the whole vs. aiming at the good of a part (Rehfeld 2009, 223). Rehfeld then distinguishes eight different ideal types of representative that correspond to these categories (in contrast to Mansbridge he describes *representatives*, not *forms of representation*), namely, “Burkean trustees,” “Civil servants,” “Madisonian Lawmakers,” “Anti-Federalists,” “Volunteers,” “Ambassadors,” “Professionals,” and “Pared-Down Delegates.” As this list of ideal types indicates, Rehfeld expands representation beyond electoral political representation, including also representation by unelected civil servants, volunteers, ambassadors, and even “lawyers, doctors, [and] financial advisors” (Rehfeld 2009, 223; also see Rehfeld 2006).

A final set of innovations was proposed by Saward, who is associated first and foremost with the notion of the “representative claim” (Saward 2010). Saward breaks radically with the trustee/delegate dichotomy, and even departs from the idea that representative relationships usually take the form of principal-agent relationships. In his understanding, representation is essentially a *claim* which is put forward by an actor—a claim to be a representative of someone that those whom the actor claims to represent may or may not accept. By way of illustration, Saward routinely cites Bono, the U2 singer and political activist, as a paradigmatic maker of representative claims, in particular because of Bono’s well-known claim to “represent a lot of people [in Africa] who have no voice at all” (cited in Saward 2009, 1). The key point for Saward is that Bono is not authorized via elections or any other institutionalized selection procedure, and his claim is not necessarily accepted by the people he claims to represent—but he still presents himself as the representative of certain groups of people.

Saward’s work shares with Rehfeld’s that it also conceives representation expansively. As the example of Bono indicates, representation for Saward need not be based on electoral relationships; it need not even be political in the more conventional sense of directly relating to government or collective decision-making. Rather, representation denotes all sorts of formal and informal practices of claiming to speak or act on behalf of others, across society and even across different countries (Saward 2014, 732).

Incompatibilities between theoretical and quantitative scholarship

The conceptual innovations of Mansbridge, Rehfeld, and Saward provide us with a much richer understanding of representation than traditional theoretical or empirical models. Quantitative scholars of representation rarely engage with this theoretical literature, however. To demonstrate this, using *Google Scholar*, we identified all works published in seven leading American and European political science journals between 2013 and 2019, that contained the word “representation.” Out of these, we drew a random sample of 750 publications for further human coding, which identified 246 articles actually focusing on representation *and* using quantitative methods (coding instructions and details are in Section 1 in the supporting information). Analyzing this sample, Table 1 counts references of different quality to key works of the “new wave” of representation theory as well as Pitkin (1967), whose work represents the major theoretical contribution preceding the “new wave.” This reveals that quantitative scholars’ engagement with the conceptual innovations is minimal. Each “new wave” author is cited by less than 5% of quantitative articles on representation. In contrast, the engagement with Pitkin’s (1967) canonical work is considerably stronger with about 12% of articles citing her.

Note however that several of the earlier conceptions of representation that were first developed by Pitkin have gradually assumed some “life of their own,” becoming disconnected from their author. For example, the notion of descriptive representation has been debated and re-defined in feminist and multiculturalism scholarship (e.g., Phillips 1995; Williams 2000). Thus, counting citations alone might not give us the full picture: articles may deal with what ultimately are Pitkin’s conceptions of representation without citing Pitkin. To account for this, in Table 2 we also report how many articles include general mentions of “new wave” conceptions—terms such as “surrogate represent*” or “representative claim”—vs. “early” conceptions—terms such as “substantive” or “descriptive representation” (full lists of terms are in the supporting information). The results demonstrate that in contrast to “early” conceptions of representation (mentioned in 29% of articles), the “new wave” conceptions (mentioned in 2% of articles) have not made any inroads into quantitative scholarship at all.

---TABLE 1 & 2 ABOUT HERE---

As Sabl (2015) has argued, there are many possible reasons why quantitative scholars might ignore ideas that have been developed within democratic theory, and these need not have to do with how theories are constructed. For instance, empiricists may have their own, trusted representation models (e.g., Stimson et al. 1995; Arnold 1990) that have been used over time and allow them to compare their work to previous research. In this section, however, we want to discuss four features of Mansbridge, Rehfeld, and Saward’s theoretical work that impede using their concepts in quantitative empirical research. The discussion is not meant to provide a definitive explanation for why empiricists do not engage with “new wave” representation theory, but to highlight “dialogue-stoppers” that are built into the new theories themselves. Uncovering these problems will then guide us—and hopefully also future theorists—in constructing more empirically usable concepts.

Expansionism

The first dialogue-stopper is contemporary representation theorists’ tendency to argue for an all-encompassing understanding of representation that goes way beyond traditional electoral representation. According to Saward (2014, 732), analysts “should work with a systemic-societal basis of representation’s domain,” looking to the representative practices of “a wide array of local, national, and international groups and individuals, elected or chosen or not-elected and rejected” (also see Saward 2014; Rehfeld 2006; Mansbridge 2011; Mansbridge 2017). In principle, there is nothing problematic in expanding “the possibilities of representation and the signification of that term as broadly as possible” (Schweber 2016, 383): it simply involves adapting theorizing about representation to a changing socio-political context. Yet it is not at all clear how quantitative researchers could study more informal, non-electoral representative relationships using the tools and resources available to them.

Consider first that, in quantitative representation research, representatives’ behavior as well as citizens’ policy preferences—the major dependent and independent variables currently used—are regularly conceived as *latent concepts* that cannot be observed directly but must be unfolded or scaled from manifest variables. For instance, neither “policy liberalism” nor “policy mood,” which respectively measure central tendencies of policy output and citizens’ preferences in the U.S. literature, can be measured directly; they are estimated from hundreds of votes or survey items with multivariate measurement models (e.g., Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995). This creates “natural” resource

restrictions for the number of representative relationships that empiricists can study, given the costs of data collection for each indicator. Data demands are multiplied with the desire to assess representation on different kinds of preferences (e.g., not only policy mood), behaviors (e.g., not only roll-call votes), and over time (e.g., not only a single electoral term).

Moreover, studying informal, non-electoral representation quantitatively presents difficulties regarding sampling. Many quantitative scholars understand that it may well be worthwhile to study unauthorized representatives—such as Bono—and their relationship with claimed constituents. But what is the larger population Bono is a case of that we could define a sampling frame for and draw a representative sample from? Suppose the population is “celebrities involved in politics.” But how would we get a list of all these celebrities? Can all of them be sampled? Similarly, and perhaps even more challengingly: what is the sampling frame for Bono’s *constituents*? All people in Africa? The fans on his Facebook page? Arguably these problems are much less severe in the case of formal, electoral representation, which, due to its level of institutionalization (e.g., lists of candidates, members of parliament, resident registration), usually provides well-defined sampling frames.

Observability

The second dialogue-stopper are problems with the observability of some of the more central phenomena representation theorists describe. While some phenomena in representation theory are latent but can be unfolded from observable indicators, others are “truly” unobservable, as they can neither be observed directly nor generate clear observable implications.

This chiefly applies to conceptions of representation defined by a representative who follows her own (principled) beliefs (e.g., on what is the right thing to do), rather than external incentives (e.g., electoral sanctions). Think of Mansbridge’s “gyroscopic representatives” (Mansbridge 2003; Mansbridge 2009; Mansbridge 2011) as well as Rehfeld’s (2009) “Burkean trustees” and “volunteers.” Gyroscopic representatives, for example, strive to do what’s best for their constituents for reasons of their own, following *any* kind of personal beliefs they may have. Unfortunately, however, it is unclear how intrinsic motivation of this sort can be reliably observed directly. For even if we had attitudinal data about how representatives see the motivations for their work, questions would arise about their credibility. Given elites’ strategic capacities (e.g., answering in socially desirable ways), surveying them about their inner

workings will often reveal little more than electoral rhetoric.² Moreover, as the gyroscope's inner motivations "remain a black box" (Mansbridge 2003, 521), this form of representation also lacks distinctive observable implications: virtually any observed behavior of a representative could be explained by some unobserved inner principle or belief the representative may have. This creates momentous obstacles for empirical measurement.

To be sure, empiricists have developed some methods to unveil subjects' "true" motivations, attitudes, and inner workings. In public opinion research, for example, "list experiments" have become a popular way of surveying people about their opinions and behaviors on issues that usually induce social desirability bias (e.g., Blair and Imai 2012). But it is unclear whether such methods work with political elites (i.e., whether they can be "tricked"). Given these complications and uncertainties, quantitative researchers may reasonably judge that there is little gain in engaging with some of the core concepts of recent representation theory, and focus instead on "traditional," more easily measurable concepts (cf. Rehfeld 2011, 219). After all, the just-mentioned problems do not arise in the case of, say, Pitkin's descriptive representation, which, at least in legislatures, is straightforwardly observable.

Weberianism

A third obstacle for quantitative scholars is what we call the "Weberianism" of much recent representation theory. By this, we mean theorists' focus on constructing "ideal types" of representative relationships or practices, where each type is a complex combination of multiple underlying dimensions (e.g., Rehfeld's "Burkean trustee" is highly self-reliant, advances republican aims, but is unresponsive to sanctions). This approach is found first and foremost in the work of Mansbridge and Rehfeld.

From the quantitative scholars' perspective, the task of identifying types suggests the use of multivariate measurement methods of the mixture or clustering model variety (e.g., latent class analysis, k -means clustering). Such models allow classifying observations into unobserved, latent sub-populations (e.g., "types") on the basis of a series of independent variables (e.g., capturing representative practices). However, these models are anything but straightforward. Results are often highly sensitive to small model specification choices (e.g.,

² This does not imply that it is unimportant what representatives say—see below.

inclusion of a variable or even starting values for algorithms). In addition, many methods demand a substantial amount of input data. But most importantly, in the (not unlikely) case that real-world representatives do not consistently behave in line with theorists' ideal types, these methods may not identify these types, and instead reveal other clusters and classes, or simply noise.

It is therefore not surprising that quantitative research often neglects ideal types entirely. Researchers may either lack data, receive arbitrary results, or results that do not correspond to the ideal types that figure prominently in theoretical work. In short, ideal types may be illustrative, but they are also over-specified and hence less useful empirically. Of course, some empirical work focuses on simple contrasts between *two* ideal types, notably the traditional distinction between trustees and delegates. But even where ideal types are woven into the analysis, actual classifications are rare. Sometimes results for certain sub-samples are identified as corresponding "more or less" to the one or the other ideal type (e.g., Juenke and Preuhs 2012). Similarly, some empirical research estimates the relative mix of certain aspects of two ideal types on a systemic level (e.g., anticipatory vs. promissory processes), again refraining from clear-cut classifications suggested by a nominal reading of the theoretical literature (e.g., Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Hakhverdian 2010; Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995). In any case, the problem with a focus on (at most) two selected ideal types is that such pairs are often similar on one or more underlying dimensions/distinctions of representation that are therefore effectively eliminated from empirical designs. In contrast, none of these problems plague the classic Pitkinite conceptions of substantive and descriptive representation: they represent single dimensions of representation rather than combinations thereof.

Americentrism

The fourth and final dialogue-stopper is the "Americentrism" of much theoretical work on representation. With this term, we refer to the tendency of representation theorists to construct concepts that are informed primarily by the distinctive realities of the U.S. political system. Similar to Weberianism, Americentrism is a feature of Mansbridge and Rehfeld's work.

Americentrism manifests itself in at least two important ways. First, most conceptions of representation suggested by Rehfeld and Mansbridge (tacitly or expressly) assume a single-member district (SMD) electoral system (Mansbridge 2003 and 2011; Rehfeld 2009, 2011).

But of course, most democratic countries have different electoral systems, which means that electoral representation also works differently. For example, the most common electoral systems in Europe are different forms of party-list proportional representation (PR) (e.g., Spain, Netherlands, Poland, Austria, and the Scandinavian countries).

An especially important dimension of representation where assuming SMD electoral systems is highly problematic is Mansbridge's (2003) concept of *surrogate representation*: "representation by a representative with whom one has no electoral relationship—that is, a representative in another district" (522). While this is a crucial conceptual innovation that quantitative scholars should take seriously, Mansbridge construes the concept too narrowly, neglecting complexities of surrogation that arise in non-SMD electoral systems. Most importantly perhaps, whereas in SMD systems surrogates are representatives in *different* electoral districts, in PR systems surrogation can or even can *only*—as in the case of a single nation-wide district—occur within the *same* district. While we do not think that Mansbridge's understanding of surrogate representation excludes such phenomena, the fact that she does not theorize them limits the applicability of her innovation to different institutional contexts.

The prevalence of PR outside the U.S. goes hand in hand with a much stronger role of political parties. This is the second way in which contemporary representation theory manifests Americentrism: political parties as agents and enablers of representation are virtually absent from the larger picture. This might have to do with the fact that parties are more loosely organized and hence less powerful as collective agents in the U.S. than in most other democracies. Yet, if we theorize representation without fully theorizing parties' contribution to it, we are inevitably left with a very incomplete understanding of representation. Notice first that, in pure PR systems, parties qua collective agents can effectively *replace* individual representatives. This is because voters cannot elect a particular individual, but have to choose a party, which provides a list of candidates for election. This to some degree depersonalizes representation and distributes the responsibility and accountability that in Mansbridge's and Rehfeld's models is attributable to a single person, to several candidates and indeed the party as a whole.

Furthermore, parties are the main organizers of surrogate representation in modern legislatures (see Cox and McCubbins 2007). The professionalization of Western democratic politics has meant that legislative politics takes place in highly specialized legislative committees, where representatives often work for decades on a narrow set of issues. Such legislative division of labor—the partitioning of the legislature in dozens of "mini" legislatures—allows members and parties to efficiently acquire information about specific

issue areas and enhance overall legislative productivity (e.g., Gilligan and Krehbiel 1990; Müller 2000; Strøm 1998). This also implies that virtually no (partisan) representative works on *all* the issues relevant to her district; rather, representatives make claims about the *subset* of constituents—within and/or beyond their territorial district—they aim to represent most (e.g., “I work for families focusing on family policy”). In this way, we argue, representatives act first and foremost as surrogates.

Because “new wave” representation theorists hardly address these issues, their concepts of representation are somewhat detached from the institutional realities of most democracies, where parties play a central role in making representation possible. As a consequence, quantitative empirical scholars studying countries other than the U.S. will find their conceptual apparatuses less helpful. Again, there are no comparable problems with traditional conceptions of representation like substantive or descriptive representation. These are not construed with any particular electoral system in mind, and can thus be applied to all sorts of country contexts.

Four operationalizable conceptions of representation

If the above analysis is correct, then conceptions of representation that are both sensitive to theorists’ conceptual innovations and can be widely used in quantitative empirical research must achieve at least four things. They must (1) treat representation in a more limited fashion than some theorists suggest, focusing mainly on electoral representation; (2) concentrate on dimensions of representation that are observable through manifest indicators or observable implications; (3) foreground single dimensions of representation rather than their combination in ideal types; and (4) be sensitive to salient differences in electoral systems, in particular the central role parties play in enabling representation in most democracies.

In this section, we seek to develop four conceptions of representation that satisfy these desiderata. These conceptions build on, but also move significantly beyond, key insights of the “new wave” in representation theory (Mansbridge 2003; Rehfeld 2009; Saward 2010). Specifically, our novel conceptions are: *surrogation*, *justification*, *personalization* and *responsiveness*. In choosing these four dimensions, we are not simply “cherry picking” from theorists’ work, but reconstructing those theoretical innovations that are feasibly

operationalizable for quantitative empirical research.³ The four dimensions cover what we take to be the most important aspects of (electoral) representation, allowing us to obtain a much richer picture of the practice than can be obtained using only traditional conceptions.

A core feature of our four conceptions is that they treat representation as a *relational* phenomenon, meaning a particular relation between representatives and citizens. Importantly, though, this relation is not unidirectional, with the representative taking a passive “principal or constituency as its reference point” (Disch 2015, 489). Instead, following the insights of the constructivist turn in representation theory (Saward 2010; Disch 2011 and 2015), we conceptualize the representative-represented relation as co-constituted by both sides. Accordingly, indicators relating to citizens *and* representatives should be considered when operationalizing representation empirically, and empirical research must be sensitive that it is the interplay between those indicators that constitutes a representative relationship in the first place.

This shift to constructivism also has important normative consequences for how we evaluate the practice of representation. What, then, is *good* representation on our account? Since quantitative scholars typically assume a close link between the quality of representation and the quality of democracy, this is a question of considerable importance.

We argue that if representation is fundamentally relational, then the most plausible normative criterion available for evaluating the quality of representation is the *congruence of citizens’ views of how representatives should act with representatives’ actual actions* (what they “say” and “do”) on our four dimensions of representation. So, the more representatives’ actions converge with citizens’ views of how representatives should act, the better representation is.

First, if we assume, in line with constructivism, that representation is not unidirectional, then what matters for good representation is not merely that representatives serve some assumed interests of the represented, but rather that the actions of representatives are actually accepted by the represented as being congruent with their expectations about what a representative should do. In other words, “congruence” so conceived is necessary for the constitution of good representative relationships.

Second, “congruence” tracks the widespread intuition that citizens ought to be taken seriously as autonomous agents, who can hold all sorts of different views concerning how their

³ There remain important questions that are better addressed by qualitative/interpretative scholars, but given space constraints we cannot address this point here.

representatives ought to act (e.g., (ir)responsive, (de)personalized). This intuition appears, albeit in different forms, in virtually all theoretical accounts of representation upon which our argument builds.⁴ Consistent with this, we also treat representatives as autonomous agents whose views and decisions are not merely a reflection of what their supposed principals want, but have to be assessed against this standard.

Third, one further advantage of our congruence criterion compared to other possible criteria is that it does not require citizens to be well-informed and politically competent. This is an advantage not least given prominent tendencies in mainstream political science to question citizens' political competence (e.g., Achen and Bartels 2016). We suggest that citizens in principle have to engage very little with daily political affairs in order to have a view on what "good" representatives should do. They only need an idea of what sort of character and qualities they want a representative to have and "trust their own capacities, honed over a lifetime of social interaction" to judge representatives accordingly (Mansbridge 2009, 381).⁵ Note that this also does not require that what citizens demand of representatives appears fully consistent from a third-person standpoint: citizens may want representatives to say or do different, ostensibly conflicting, things on different dimensions of representation, without it following that this is "bad" representation.

Of course, our congruence criterion cannot conclusively settle such complex normative questions as: What is minimally acceptable congruence?, How to evaluate cases where representative relationships are marked by high congruence on some dimensions of representation and low congruence on others?, or What is "good representation" when a constituency is deeply divided about how they want to be represented? Yet, because we know relatively little about citizens' varied representation demands, satisfying answers to these questions might at any rate require first studying the relevant phenomena empirically, and then developing normative propositions on the basis of empirical results (see Sabl 2015, 357). Notice also that the just-mentioned kinds of normative questions are hardly settled by existing normative criteria for evaluating the quality of representation (e.g., conceptions of ideal point

⁴ See Mansbridge's (2009) argument for overcoming the "hierarchical trappings" (387) of conceptions of representation that cast citizens as unable to make their own informed political judgments; Saward's (2010, 146-147) proposal to assess representative claims from the "citizen standpoint," asking whether a particular claim resonates with a particular constituency rather than evaluating representative claims using a context-transcendent standard; and Rehfeld's (2009, 229) suggestion that any meaningfully *democratic* scheme of representation invests citizens with substantial authority to decide not only by whom but also *how* they want to be represented.

⁵ That it might be easier for citizens to form such preferences does not imply that these preferences are necessarily easier to measure than their policy-related preferences. Thus, using our proposed conceptions of representation does not eliminate the general challenge of building appropriate measurement models for citizens' preferences.

matches, where the implications of divided constituencies remain unclear; Sabl 2015: 348). So, we are not replacing a clean standard with a messy one.

Below, we will discuss the specific meaning of congruence regarding each dimension of representation. To illustrate how empiricists can study our conceptions, we furthermore make references to a “proof-of-concept” study we conducted in the context of the 2019 United Kingdom general election. For this study, we surveyed citizens’ demands on how representatives should act on each dimension and compared them with proxies of parliamentarian’s (MPs) behavior to test some working hypotheses. The full study design and analyses are in Section 3 of the supporting information.

Surrogation

Surrogation is the conception of representation that is perhaps most under-researched, both in theoretical and empirical work on the topic (rare empirical exceptions are Angevine 2017; Broockman 2013). As noted, Mansbridge (2003, 522) defines surrogate representation as “representation by a representative with whom one has no electoral relationship—that is, a representative in another district” that one cannot vote for. This is what one may call a *territorial* form of surrogate representation, but there exist other species of surrogation that Mansbridge does not theorize. One obvious alternative is *partisan* surrogation, which occurs when a constituent considers as her representative a specific elected representative of a party that she did not vote for. In contrast to territorial surrogate representation, here the constituent may have had the opportunity to vote for the representative.

A third type of surrogate representation may be called *party list* surrogation. This occurs when a constituent identifies as her representative an elected legislator on the list of the party that she voted for. Since the electoral relationship between the constituent and the representative is only indirect here (at least under closed-list PR), we still think this is surrogation, albeit a “softer” form of it. There is certainly no direct electoral relationship that would indicate the absence of surrogation. *Territorial* and *partisan* surrogation can be found in SMD systems; *partisan* and *party list* surrogation are found under PR with a single district; and all three kinds of surrogation are possible in PR systems with multiple districts.

As with all of our four conceptions of representation, we conceive surrogation relationally. On the representatives’ side, we suggest surrogation denotes the degree to which formally elected representatives choose to represent constituents who have either not directly

or not even indirectly (e.g., by voting for a party) cast their vote for them. Conversely, on the level of constituents, surrogation refers to the degree to which voters expect representatives they did either not directly or not even indirectly vote for to represent them.⁶

Why do voters and representatives buy into such “imaginary” relationships? A major reason is: because of political parties. Parties, in particular those that aggregate and shape the preferences of diverse constituencies, allow representatives to decouple their legislative work from the profile of their district. In SMD systems, parties warrant their constituents that, even if their particular district representative may focus on issues that are entirely unimportant to them, another representative from the party elected in another district will focus on the issues that are important to them, and act in accordance with the wider party platform. In PR systems, parties determine the degree to which they organize representation as surrogation (presenting candidates as representatives of imagined constituencies, e.g., MPs for voters interested in certain issues or in certain territorial parts of the country), or whether they opt for non-surrogate representation (emphasizing that all of their representatives represent all of their constituents). In all types of electoral systems, intra-party mechanisms of candidate selection and party discipline act as safeguards for parties’ promises about surrogation.

Empirically, surrogation raises several interesting research questions. From a descriptive point of view, it is relevant to determine to what extent representatives see and portray themselves as surrogates. In Mansbridge’s (2003: 523) words, do they “*feel* responsible to their surrogate constituents in other districts”? Or do they rather focus on the constituents that have a “real” electoral relationship with them? The U.S. literature on “homestyles” of Congressmen partially addresses such questions by asking to what extent representatives address local issues from their districts (Fenno 1977). Recent advances in experimental work (e.g., sending requests to representatives) and text analysis (e.g., analyzing press releases of representatives) are particularly suited to investigate the degree to which representatives focus on certain constituents (e.g., Butler, Karpowitz, and Pope 2012; Grimmer 2013). Hence a lot of descriptive insights and potentially comparisons across systems can be gained. On the side of citizens, surveys can reveal whom constituents actually consider “their” representative(s) and demand representation from. In SMD systems, this is sometimes studied with regard to the

⁶ Clearly, the notion of surrogate representation opens the door to the sort of “expansionism” we earlier identified as problematic. Mansbridge (2011, 628) helpfully offers a way forward by distinguishing between a “systemic perspective”—which concerns the legislature as a whole with representatives one has and has not voted for—and a “broader understanding” of the representative system—which includes “nonelected, non-legislative representatives” from various societal organizations and the citizenry. To avoid the risks of expansionism, we adopt a “systemic perspective” here.

local MP, but we are not aware of any work that allows voters to freely choose among a number of elected politicians the one(s) they deem to stand in a representative relationship with. In our UK “proof-of-concept” study, we do exactly this and survey citizens to what extent they see several elected politicians as their representatives. We find that women demand less representation of MPs in other constituencies if their local MP is also female, suggesting descriptive representation could decrease demands for territorial surrogation.

Finally, *congruence* on surrogation may be assessed by investigating whether the imagined surrogation relationship is affirmed both by representatives and constituents. Empiricists could study the degree to which views about surrogation match: if a certain representative claims to represent certain constituents, do these constituents agree that the representative making the claim is “their” representative, or have they chosen other representatives?

Justification

Our second conception of representation derives from Rehfeld’s (2009) distinction between pluralist (aiming for the good of a group) vs. republican (aiming for the public good) aims of representatives that is also endorsed by Mansbridge (2011: 626). We follow White and Ypi (2011: 384) in rejecting the idea of a third-person standpoint from which we could judge whether a stated aim of a representative is objectively “pluralist” or “republican.” As they put it, “at stake is not whether, in the eyes of the observer, a political grouping reliably *does* serve the public good (this will be a matter for political debate), but whether it *seeks* to do so given the kinds of argumentation it pursues” (384). Accordingly, distinguishing republican from pluralist aims is a reduced-form question of how representatives justify their actions in communications in the public sphere. We therefore call our second dimension “justification,” defined as the degree to which representatives, when justifying their actions, refer to the good of the whole citizenry, as opposed to particularistic goods of some societal group(s). From the perspective of constituents, justification relates to the degree to which constituents wish their own preferences to be advanced as republican vs. pluralist aims in the public sphere (e.g., “extending child care serves us all” vs. “serves single parents”).

On its face, it may seem that surrogation and justification overlap conceptually—for example, strong surrogate representation with imagined relationships between groups of constituents (e.g., the poor, women, ethnic groups) and single representatives may induce both

sides to justify representation in more “pluralist” terms. While this may be common empirically, it is not a conceptual necessity: it is not difficult to imagine that even small groups of constituents stand in an imaginary relationship with a representative, and that both sides view that relationship in republican terms, claiming that the representation of this group’s interest is contributing to the common good (e.g., “to build a society of mutual trust and respect, LGBT issues must be taken more seriously”).

Again, parties play a central role for this dimension of representation, for they are the main promoters of republican aims in justification. Party platforms, which integrate a host of policy aims into a larger vision of the common good (White and Ypi 2011), provide resources on which even representatives with rather narrowly defined imagined constituencies (e.g., farmers) can draw to portray their actions as geared towards the greater good. Platforms allow representatives to make references to the party’s broader ideology, thus linking specific political proposals to a broader, public-minded justificatory story (Ebeling and Wolkenstein 2018). All of this lends credence to their republican justifications.

Even though justification is a central dimension of representation, to our knowledge the quantitative empirical work on justification is rarely linked to debates in representation theory. Studies like Steiner et al.’s (2004) seminal work on discursive quality in legislatures provide an emblematic example of how representation scholars could study whether representatives promote pluralist vs. republican aims; but due to their emphatic focus on deliberative norms these studies hardly touch upon questions of representation (see also Bächtiger and Hangartner 2010).

On the constituents’ side, we are not aware of any work from the field of public opinion research that investigates whether citizens expect their representatives to promote pluralist or republican aims. To be sure, a plethora of studies examines public views of whether representatives should espouse the interests of their constituency or of the nation as a whole, which seems to tap into the distinction between pluralist and republican aims (Brack, Costa, and Pequito Teixeira 2012; Doherty 2013; Eulau et al. 1959; Méndez-Lago and Martínez 2002; Vivyan and Wagner 2016). But equating constituency interests with pluralist aims and the interests of the country/nation with republican aims presupposes that constituency interests are necessarily at odds with the common good. Thus, this research commits to the sort of third-person standpoint we are trying to avoid.

What we suggest instead is to empirically investigate the arguments that representatives use to justify the pursuit of certain aims (e.g., statements about who benefits from a policy) as well as citizens’ approval of these “justification styles.” On the representatives’ side, recent

advances in the automated and semi-automated analysis of political texts (Grimmer and Stewart 2013) should make such questions empirically tractable, even for large corpora of texts such as floor speeches, media coverage, or press releases. Methods include dictionaries of words that are more frequent in one or another justification style, supervised classification methods to identify justification styles based on human-coded reference texts, or crowd-sourced text analysis by human crowd workers (Benoit et al. 2016). Tools like Steiner et al.'s (2004) discourse quality index (DQI)—a coding scheme for quantifying the properties of political justification—could provide a useful starting point for research of this kind. On the constituents' side, future work should study whether citizens want representatives to use republican or pluralist justification styles. In our UK study, we ask respondents whether their representative should refer more to “society as a whole” or “people like me” when justifying policies. Interestingly, respondents who strongly demand republican justification identify with MPs that appear more frequently in national media, and so likely use more republican justification styles to appeal to a national audience.

Lastly, on the dimension of justification, congruence denotes a match between the aims that representatives put forward and the aims constituents approve of. Arguably, it would be normatively problematic if representatives claimed to speak in the name of the whole, but constituents considered this “whole” devoid of meaning (cf. Rehfeld 2011, 632-633; Schweber 2016, 391-392).

Personalization

Our third conception of representation captures the extent to which representatives and constituents see representatives *as individual persons* as opposed to *agents of their party*. We call this dimension “personalization.” Strong personalization implies that representatives emancipate themselves from their party. They may present themselves as capable of making the right decisions individually and without guidance from the party, or as resolute followers of their constituents, who are ready to go against the party line. At one end of the continuum, there is the “representative-as-party-member,” who acts in accordance with the platform of her party or the commands of her party leader; at the other end, there is the “representative-as-individual,” who presents herself as “independent leader,” “spokesperson of her constituents,” or even “party rebel.”

On the constituents' side, personalization relates to a preference that representatives act as (principled) individuals, who make decisions independently of their party. Thus conceived, personalization is loosely related to Mansbridge's (2009, 381) idea that constituents select representatives "on character," and choose the "good man" or "good woman," who is trustworthy and a person of integrity. But note that, even if preferences for strong personalization likely flow from constituents' evaluation of the representative's character, personalization, as we conceptualize it, does not necessarily imply a "trustee-like" representative relationship, in which citizens elect a person who only follows her own conscience and principles. Instead, representatives can also emancipate themselves from their party by listening to their constituents' views rather than their own principles. Strong personalization need not imply weak responsiveness to constituents.

From the representative's perspective, personalization also relates to what Rehfeld (2009) refers to as the "source of judgment," that is, the distinction between self-reliance vs. other-reliance. The representative-as-party-member necessarily relies on the judgment of her party, and therefore on others, whereas the representative-as-individual *may* rely on her own judgment. However, the representative-as-individual may also rely on others, for instance on her constituents. Our understanding of personalization therefore does not simply replicate Rehfeld's consideration of judgment sources. Ultimately, we contend that "sources of judgment" as features in the representative's cognitive process are difficult to observe, and thus hard to integrate in an operationalizable conception of representation.

Personalization has important implications for surrogate representation. Recall that parties can enable and stabilize surrogate representation. For this, they require however that their representatives follow the party's common political platform to some degree, thus acting as representatives-as-party-members rather than representatives-as-individuals. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how systems of representation that are strongly based on surrogation could work when representatives are unwilling to follow the party's wider agenda. Hence, there appears to be a trade-off between personalization and surrogation. Representatives who emancipate themselves from their party therewith undermine the party's capacity to facilitate surrogate representation. Notice, though, that this is a trade-off for the *system* of surrogation and not for a single representative, who can perfectly see herself as a surrogate representative of, say, the poor, while becoming a rebel who defects from the party line to better represent these very constituents.

Compared to surrogation and justification, significantly more empirical work has addressed personalization, especially on the side of representatives. Researchers have

examined the institutional, situational, and personal factors on the representatives' side that make rebellion and defective behavior against their party possible and likely (e.g., Benedetto and Hix 2007; Kam 2009; Proksch and Slapin 2015; Slapin et al. 2018). Moreover, some recent work investigates how representatives attempt to personalize election campaigns (e.g., Balmas et al. 2014; Bøggild and Pedersen 2017). On the constituents' side, some work has demonstrated that defective behavior towards the party can appeal to voters, as it is interpreted as a signal of integrity and trustworthiness of the representative (e.g., Campbell et al. 2016; Carson et al. 2010). Constituents have also occasionally been surveyed about whether they prefer representatives to follow the party line or other considerations (e.g., Méndez-Lago and Martínez 2002; Carman 2006; Önnudóttir 2016; Wolak 2017).

But the relational aspects of personalization that we foreground here have barely been investigated empirically. Rather than studying *either* what representatives' do, *or* what constituents want, future work should thus study personalization relationally, correlating in one study constituents' demands for personalization measured through surveys, and representatives' efforts to differentiate from their party in roll-call votes, speeches, or campaign advertisements. Do varying preferences of citizens on whether their representative should be a principled individual vs. a party official correspond with representatives' behavior? In our UK study, we ask respondents whether they want their representative to act and speak independently of her party. On average, those that favored more independence identified with MPs with more rebellious voting records against their party in the House of Commons. From a normative angle, it is this congruence between representatives' practices of personalization and constituents' wishes concerning personalization that should be at the center of scholarly attention.

Responsiveness

Our fourth conception of representation—"responsiveness"—is perhaps the most familiar one (Sabl 2015). Construing it relationally and following Rehfeld (2009), we understand responsiveness, first, as the degree of electoral sanction-sensitivity of representatives. Second, on the constituents' level, responsiveness refers to citizens' demands that representatives are responsive to their views vs. their willingness to accept unresponsive policy-makers and to refrain from replacing them based on trust that the representative's behavior will be in their interest in the long-run. So again, we move beyond unidirectionality.

Note that responsiveness so conceived is not about whether representatives follow the views of their constituents *per se*, but whether they do so to forestall electoral sanctions. Consider a representation system with very low levels of personalization, where most representatives tend to follow the line of their party. If a match between constituents' opinions and representatives' behavior occurs here, then it likely occurs independently of whether the representatives *themselves* are driven by the threat of electoral sanction. What matters are the decisions of the party as a group agent. Likewise, a match of views that occurs due to "electoral turnover" (Stimson 1999; Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995) or selection (Mansbridge 2009)—that is, because constituents *choose* representatives that share their opinions—is *not* responsiveness, since it reveals nothing about representatives' sanction-sensitivity. This also underscores that responsiveness is distinct from personalization. Yet, while conceptually distinct, in highly personalized electoral systems such as SMD, high sanction-sensitivity of a representative may well induce her to behave more like the representative-as-individual, who is "spokesperson of her constituents," than the representative-as-party-member. (This does not apply vice versa: some very personalizing, party-independent representatives—for instance "technocrats"—may be totally sanction-insensitive.)

The implications for empirical research are as follows. First, empiricists ought not assess the normative quality of responsiveness simply in terms of the degree to which *policy preferences of representatives and constituents match*—as in traditional conceptions of ideal point matches or ideological congruence—but rather as a match between constituents' and representatives' views of the *conditions under which representatives should behave in a sanction-sensitive fashion*. Importantly, on this view a *perfect* reactivity of representatives to citizens' wishes (as some political scientists understand responsiveness) only equals good representation to the extent that citizens desire it. This follows from applying our normative congruence standard to this conception of representation.

In light of all this, the primary task for empirical research is to ascertain whether representatives represent constituents' opinions on issues due to sanction-sensitivity or due to other motivations. While this is not trivial, analysts can investigate observable implications. For instance, they can test whether correlations between representatives' behavior and constituents' views significantly increase over the electoral cycle, as electoral sanctions become more imminent (e.g., Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004; Elling 1982; Lindstädt and Vander Wielen 2011).

Second, even existing work on the sanction-sensitivity of representatives that takes seriously the relational character of responsiveness could be improved in light of our

conceptualization of responsiveness. A good deal of research on citizens' perceptions of representatives' roles asks whether citizens' opinions should be directly translated into representatives' behavior and policy (Bengtsson and Wass 2010; Bowler 2017; Carman 2006; McMurray and Parsons 1965; Rosset et al. 2017; Wolak 2017). Some surveys have even asked whether this should be done in case the representative *disagrees* with public/district opinion. However, none of this work has considered whether variation in public demand for responsiveness can explain weaker vs. stronger correlations between constituents' views and representatives' behavior. As a first step, in our UK study, we show that respondents who identify with MPs holding marginal seats, and thus have more reason to be sanction-sensitive, demand more strongly of their representatives to "follow voters to win or retain votes" than respondents identifying with MPs in "safe" seats. Attention must be paid to the relational character of responsiveness: are constituents' demands for responsiveness actually congruent with the observed levels of responsive behavior by representatives?

Conclusion

The four new conceptions of representation we have developed in this article—surrogation, justification, personalization, and responsiveness—satisfy all of the desiderata that conceptions of representation must satisfy in order to be usable in quantitative empirical research. First, they are not compounded ideal types but represent individual dimensions of representation. Second, they focus on observable phenomena that can be measured with minimal assumptions about the "inner workings" of representatives (or citizens). Third, they avoid what we call "expansionism" by limiting their scope to elected representatives one has and has not voted for, in legislatures. Finally, our four conceptions flexibly apply to a range of different institutional configurations across established democracies, in particular to various forms of electoral systems, beyond SMD. Whether the suggested conceptions can be fruitfully employed in non-Western contexts, let alone in authoritarian political systems, is something we remain agnostic about.

---TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE---

Table 3 summarizes our conceptions and suggests some generic forms of suitable data for empirical projects. While we have suggested a number of different possible research strategies throughout the article, we stress that, at bottom, using our four conceptions of representation in empirical research is not about adopting particular research designs, forms of data, or methodologies. It is about asking new questions and taking a relational perspective that compares citizens' representation demands with representatives' practices—either to ascertain congruence for evaluative purposes, or to investigate mere correlations, or indeed to identify potentially reciprocal causation.

To provide further impulses for future research, we reviewed 30 articles of those included in our article analysis (see Tables 1 and 2) and provide specific suggestions as to how each project could be developed further in line with our novel research program in Section 2 in the supporting information. Moreover, we provide three fully-fledged research designs that illustrate in more detail how our four conceptions of representation can be used in quantitative research in Section 3 in the supporting information (the first design is our UK “proof-of-concept” study). With all of this, we hope to provide the cornerstones for a more conceptually refined research agenda that does justice to the full complexity of representative practices. In sum, we think that if we assess political representation on the four dimensions of surrogation, justification, personalization, and responsiveness, we will be better-placed to assess the quality of, and emergent possibilities for, democracy in the complex societies we inhabit.

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Tables

To copy editors: Tables 1 & 2 share a common note and should be placed together

Table 1: References to theoretical works in quantitative articles on representation

	<i>“New wave” works by...</i>			<i>Earlier works by...</i>
	<i>Mansbridge</i>	<i>Rehfeld</i>	<i>Saward</i>	<i>Pitkin</i>
No reference	235 (96%)	243 (99%)	244 (99%)	217 (88%)
Only brief reference	7	3		18
Weak conceptual reliance	3		2	7
Strong conceptual reliance	1			4
TOTAL	246	246	246	246

Table 2: References to theoretical conceptions in quantitative articles on representation

	<i>“New wave” conceptions</i>	<i>“Early” conceptions</i>
Mentioned	6 (2%)	71 (29%)
Not mentioned	240	175
TOTAL	246	246

Note: The sample was drawn from articles published between 2013 and 2019 in seven leading political science journals (see Section 1 in the supporting information for details).

Table 3: Four Operationalizable Conceptions of Representation

		SURROGATION	JUSTIFICATION	PERSONALIZATION	RESPONSIVENESS
DESCRIPTION		Representation by a representative with whom one has no electoral relationship	The expressed reasoning underpinning representatives' actions	The representatives' self-presentation as individual agent vs. agent of her party	The sanction-sensitivity of representatives
DATA	Representatives	Floor speeches, press releases, media data, personal websites on representatives' references to constituents	Floor speeches, press releases, media data on representatives' frames in justifying their behavior	Floor speeches, voting data, biographical data, campaign advertisements revealing representatives' efforts to personalize	Voting data, expert interviews, floor speeches, press releases on representatives' legislative behavior; opinion surveys' on constituents' policy preferences and attention
	Constituents	Opinion surveys on constituents' perceptions of their relevant representative and trust/confidence in surrogation	Opinion surveys on constituents' preferred justifications for representatives' actions (pluralist vs. republican)	Opinion surveys on constituents' preferred relationship of the representative to her party (e.g., preference for rebellious behavior)	Opinion surveys on constituents' orientations towards the desired level of responsiveness (e.g., justifiable lags, gaps)