

To: Board of Overseers, National Election Studies

From: David W. Brady (University of Houston) and Charles S. Bullock, III  
(University of Georgia)

Subject: Congressional Election Research Conference

The classic article by Miller and Stokes (1963) hints at the utility of survey research for exploring the relationships between legislators and their constituents. While this paper has been widely read, especially among scholars interested in representation, there are certain methodological problems which have become apparent. Despite the limitations of the 1958 survey it remains extensively cited and these data continue to be re-analyzed. The National Science Foundation grant to CPS for the 1978, 1980, and 1982 surveys offers the potential for doing much needed research on elections as a linkage mechanism between the represented and the representative.

A difficulty with using the 1958 CPS survey and other national surveys to assess legislator-constituent linkages is that there are so few respondents per district. Miller and Stokes (1963) had an average of only 13 respondents in the 116 districts which they studied. And while techniques have been developed for estimating attitudes of state or district subsets using national surveys (Weber and Shaffer, 1972) it would be preferable to design studies which drew samples large enough to satisfy assumptions necessary if they are to be treated as random samples of individual district or states.

We therefore urge that in addition to including questions designed to tap the nature of legislator-constituent relations there also be oversampling in selected congressional districts. We suggest that the districts in which oversampling is to occur be selected so as to permit research on two phenomena.

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The first topic which we would like to see addressed in designing the survey instrument and in selecting the districts and States for oversampling is the phenomena of representatives who have voting records which on the basis of demographic data appear to be quite dissimilar from the policy preferences which would be expected for their constituents. For example, Bob Eckhardt (D-Texas) represents a Southern district which has a high concentration of individuals associated with Southern conservatism. There is little in the demographic data which would suggest that Eckhardt could continue to be reelected given his liberal voting record. Yet Eckhardt does continue to be reelected in spite of major well funded efforts to unseat him (\$450,000 was spent by his opponent in 1976). There are by our estimates some 30 to 50 representatives and Senators who fall into such a category.

Oversampling in several such districts should help us understand how representatives achieve re-election when they appear to be out of step with the prevalent views in their district. Questions should be constructed so as to determine whether the representative's record is indeed significantly different from the preferences of the bulk of his constituents who have opinions on several timely issues. Thus there should be questions aimed at determining constituent views and how they perceive their legislators. If there is an absence of agreement between legislator and constituent preferences, then it should be possible to determine the role of policy disagreements in the re-election of representatives. Two possibilities are that reactions to the representative as ombudsman more than offset negative evaluations based on his policy positions (M. P. Fiorina, 1977); or such representatives act as delegates on issues of great interest to their constituents and are free to be trustees on matters of low salience to most voting constituents. In sorting out these and other possibilities we can

get a clearer notion of the general salience of issues and the conditions under which issues become important. In short our argument is that we can learn far more about representation by carefully selecting districts than by national samples which treat Shirley Chisholm's district as a representational equivalent of Bob Eckhardt's.

A second aspect of representation which we would like to see probed is the phenomenon of a state simultaneously having a Democratic and a Republican senator. This situation is particularly well-suited for an exploration of the relative influence of party, candidates' personalities, issues, and incumbency on election. While a state's senators are not elected at the same time -- with a few exceptions when a special election to fill a partial term coincides with the six-year cycle of the other Senate seat -- they do represent the same constituency. No survey data addresses the question: "Why will the same constituency choose representatives of opposing parties within the span of only two years?"

One possibility is that the party split in Senate seats is a product of the same factors as the defeats of incumbents in the House. This is unlikely, however, in states in which there is a history of a party split between the Senators, e.g. Illinois.

Another possibility is that a state's two senators have developed different bases of support within the same geographic constituency. Oversampling in states which have or are likely to have a partisan split between their senators during the next three congressional elections should shed light on the variables which account for the phenomena. It should be possible to determine what types of voters support nominees of the same party for both Senate seats and which types of voters cross party lines between elections and the causes behind such switches. Having identified who supports each senator,

it may then be possible to demonstrate that differences in the roll call votes of a state's senators are attributable to the differences in the coalitions which elected them. Survey data will be far superior to attempts to identify differences in the coalitions supporting senators through the use of ecological regression (c. f. Bullock and Brady, 1977). In the same vein oversampling in House districts which are likely to switch the party representation can give us a handle on the relationship between constituents, representatives and policy. Three recently published works have suggested the importance of such a connection (Brady and N. Lynn, 1973; M. Fiorina, 1974; and G. Orfield, 1975). The cost of such sampling could be held down by scope sampling of the relevant constituent levels e.g., electoral constituency as opposed to primary constituency. (R. Fenno, 1977).

To summarize: We are concerned about both the nature of the questions to be asked and particularly about the sample. The answers to the central questions of representation are surely to be found in the nature of the relationship between constituent opinion of issues, candidates and parties, and the legislators' actual performance on the job e.g., ombudsman, policy maker, candidate. In order to best determine the nature of these relationships oversampling in districts and states which have special characteristics is essential. Our basic recommendations for such sampling are that oversampling be done in states which party control of Senate seats is split and in districts in which it appears that great dissimilarity exists between constituent and legislator preferences. Further refinements of oversampling can shed light on other questions of interest such as marginality and voting records (M. Fiorina, 1974.)

## NOTES

1. While this memorandum is being submitted by two people, travel expenses would be requested by only one author, should the Board of Overseers select this proposal for inclusion at the Congressional Election Research Conference. Professor Brady will be in New York on other business immediately prior to the Conference and therefore will not need travel support.

## REFERENCES

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