

This article develops the dynamic implications of the Miller-Stokes model of constituency representation by exploring the extent to which there was constancy between two “generations” of French Socialist party candidates for the National Assembly from the same constituencies, in their perceptions of the opinions of their constituents. The data derive from personal interviews conducted with the candidates shortly after the legislative elections of 1967 and 1978. The phenomena discussed include the relationship between constancy of candidate perceptions and accuracy of candidate perceptions. The authors also examine the extent to which the candidates base their perceptions of district opinion on the political composition of their constituencies. That practice has daunting implications both for the comparative study of representation and for the representative process itself.

CONSTANCY OF LEGISLATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF CONSTITUENCY OPINION: French Socialist Candidates in 1967 and 1978

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This article explores the extent to which there was continuity between two “generations” of French Socialist party candidates for the National Assembly from the same constituencies, in their perceptions of the opinions of their constituents on several enduring political issues.

The perceptions that legislators and legislative candidates form of constituency opinion create the very possibility of representation. A representative’s awareness of constituency opinion is the key to all forms of

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representation that are not the accidental by-product of a similarity in views between the legislator and the constituency (Pitkin, 1967). Yet relatively little is known of how these perceptions form, how stable they are, and what causes them to change.

Our analytic framework may be specified by the design created by Miller and Stokes (1963) for their seminal work on constituency representation in Congress. That deceptively simple but rich design linked four essential variables: the opinion of the representative's constituency in a given domain of public policy, the representative's own personal opinion on the same issue, the representative's perception of the constituency's opinion in the matter, and the representative's legislative behavior in the form of recorded votes on specific items related to the same issue. Although Miller and Stokes were concerned only with cross-sectional analysis, their design is easily adaptable to dynamic analysis, as Figure 1 indicates. Figure 1 allows for only two points of measurement, but obviously the basic diamond can be linked to an indefinite series of additional measurements.

Within Figure 1, the essential elements of the representative process at time t , as set forth by Miller and Stokes, are represented by points a , b , c and d . The same four elements at time $t + 1$ are represented by points a' , b' , c' , and d' . The design allows for numerous analytic operations, but we will be concerned here with only two of them.

First, we will investigate the $c * c'$ link, between the 1967 and 1978 candidates' perceptions of their constituencies' opinions on the same issues.

Then, on a more limited basis, we will compare the $a * c$ and $a' * c'$ links relating to the degree of accuracy of candidate perceptions of district attitudes. We have independent estimates of constituency opinion across a range of issues only for 1967. However, we can construct tolerably accurate and comparable measures of one important district characteristic—its left-right composition—on the basis of the actual electoral returns for 1967 and 1978. Thus we can compare the accuracy of the candidates' perceptions of the left-right preferences of their constituents in the two years.

Finally, we will join these two analyses by exploring the role of candidate perceptions of district left-right location in affecting the candidates' perceptions of their districts' positions on other issues.

REPRESENTATION IN A DISCIPLINED PARTY SYSTEM

In a legislative environment dominated by the parties, the Miller-Stokes model of constituency representation is in some ways simplified and in other ways made more complex. Members of the U.S. Congress have complex and

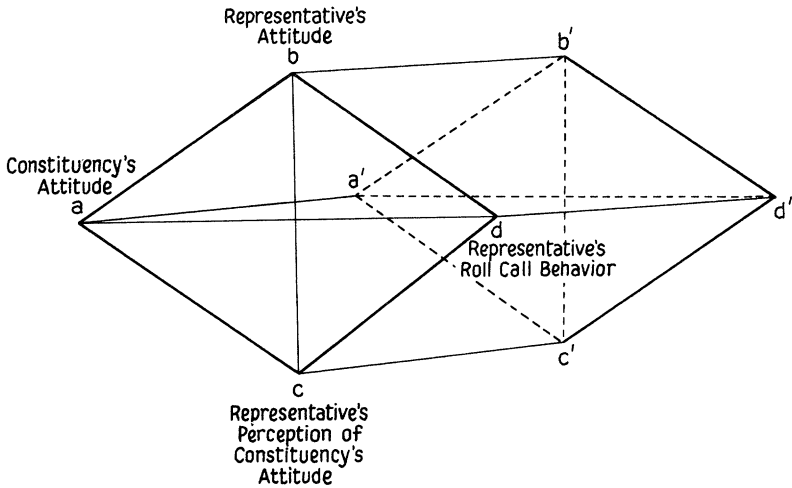


Figure 1. The Miller-Stokes representation design in longitudinal form.

differentiated views of the structure of opinion in their districts, views that not only give them policy cues for their legislative activities, but also shape campaign strategies and the “home style” of the legislator (Fenno, 1978). France, with its centralized political parties, obviously does not demand the same level of familiarity with district sentiment as does the American political system. Party cohesion in the legislature effectively eliminates regionalism from almost all votes on the parliamentary floor. In addition, French legislative candidates face substantial obstacles to familiarity with their districts. District-level polling continues to be a rarity in France, and it is not unusual for candidates to be “parachuted” into districts with which they have little familiarity or experience. Moreover, candidates’ contacts within the district are likely to be dominated by the local militants of their own parties. Candidates interact with self-selected and ideologically biased portions of their constituency.

Despite all these obstacles to knowledge of district opinion, it has been shown that in France “defections from party discipline serve to increase the congruence between district sentiment and representative roll-call votes” (Converse & Pierce, 1986, p. 708). This suggests that perceptual accuracy can play a significant role, even in the French context. There are a number of reasons for this. The balance between left and right parties in national elections has for the last generation been sufficiently close that each legislative contest becomes important. More critical from the point of view of the

individual candidate, the French voter has come to display an increasing amount of fluidity in partisan choice, as epitomized by the rise, fall, and partial recovery in the fortunes of the Socialist party during the 1980s (Pierce & Rochon, 1988). Even as the electoral security of American members of Congress has increased, the security of the French deputy in the National Assembly has eroded. In the increasingly competitive environment of French legislative elections, knowledge of district opinion may play a significant role.

In a disciplined party system, deputies are likely to express their perception of constituency interests within party caucuses rather than on the legislative floor. But candidates for the National Assembly are nonetheless interested in moving their parties toward issue positions that would be more attractive to the voters in their districts. In order to do so, they must have some notion of what would make them more popular as vote-getters. It is because of the disparity between incentives to know district opinion and opportunities for doing so that France is a good site for testing the generality of emerging theory concerning the factors that underlie candidate knowledge of district sentiment.

Research into the accuracy of elite perceptions of mass opinion is still in its early stages, but the findings indicate strongly that accuracy depends primarily on the clarity and stability with which mass opinion is expressed.¹ In France in 1967, perceptual accuracy among a representative sample of legislative candidates from all parties was greatest with regard to the districts' political composition in terms of left-right preferences and their attitudes toward religion (Converse & Pierce, 1986, Figure 20-2). More generally, even with regard to items on which perceptual accuracy was meager indeed, accuracy nevertheless correlated generally with the stability of district opinion on the issue. And in the United States, the perceptual accuracy of congressmen was greatest for district opinion on civil rights (Miller & Stokes, 1963), an issue on which individual-level stability was found to be comparatively high. In view of these findings, we would expect that longitudinal constancy of candidate perceptions of district opinion would be greatest for precisely those items for which district-level stability and clarity are greatest and, therefore, perceptual accuracy normally the greatest.

A TEST OF THE THEORY IN FRANCE

We will test these expectations with data derived from personal interviews conducted with French Socialist candidates shortly after the legislative elections of 1967 and 1978. Our 1967 data are part of a larger study of French

legislative candidates drawn from a random sample of 86 electoral districts. From these 86 districts, we drew a random subsample of 43 constituencies, conducting 37 interviews with Socialist (Federation) candidates in 1967 and 36 interviews with Socialists in 1978. Two generations of candidates were interviewed in 31 of the 43 districts; thus we have 31 panel districts.

Our measures of the candidates' perceptions of their constituents' opinions are based on questions that were posed in identical form in 1967 and 1978. The issues on which the candidates' perceptions of constituency opinion were ascertained include government aid to church schools, the nuclear striking force, the distribution of income, priority for education, foreign aid, independence in foreign policy, the protection of union rights, and the integration of the French army in a European army. In addition, the candidates were asked in both years to estimate the political composition of their districts in conventional left-right terms. The candidates' perceptions were obtained in the form of proportions of their constituents taking various positions (see appendix for exact question wording); these proportions were then converted into mean scores.²

With the exception of constituency opinion on the left-right scale, which we can estimate from the actual electoral returns, we do not have matching measures of constituency opinion in 1967 and 1978. Except for this one critically important element of the French political landscape, we cannot directly examine the relationship between the constancy of elite perceptions of district opinion, on the one hand, and the stability of district opinion, on the other hand. However, we do know how accurate candidate perceptions of district opinion were in 1967, and we know that accuracy of perception is related to stability of district opinion. We can, therefore, examine the relationship between constancy of perception and stability of district opinion indirectly.

Our reasoning about the relationship between perceptual stability and perceptual accuracy takes the following form:

THEOREM: The accuracy of candidate perceptions of district opinion is associated primarily with the clarity and stability of district opinion.

HYPOTHESIS: The temporal constancy of elite perceptions of district opinion is associated with the clarity and stability of district opinion.

PREDICTION 1: There should be a positive correlation between the temporal constancy of candidate perceptions of district opinion from 1967 to 1978 and the accuracy of candidate perceptions of district opinion in 1967.

Further, we *do* have estimates of district left-right composition for both 1967 and 1978 that can be set against the perceptions of district left-right locations held by our successive generations of candidates. Therefore, we

can probe this single but fundamental domain more fully, not only by measuring constancy of perception from 1967 to 1978 ($c * c'$ in Figure 1), but also by directly examining accuracy of perception in both 1967 and 1978 ($a * c$ and $a' * c'$) and stability of district opinion from 1967 to 1978 ($a * a'$).

In particular, because data relating to the left-right composition of electoral districts are equally accessible to the elites across time, we can formulate a second prediction related to our hypothesis.

PREDICTION 2: The accuracy of candidate perceptions of district left-right composition in 1978 should approximate the accuracy of candidate perceptions of district left-right composition in 1967.

Before proceeding further, there is a methodological problem that must be settled. In rating the issues for accuracy of candidate perceptions in 1967, should we employ the perceptions of the entire sample of 1967 candidates, which provide a broad base for the ratings, or should we limit ourselves only to the perceptions of the 1967 subsample of Federation candidates, in order to bring the rating base into line with our 1978 sample of Socialist candidates? On which items should we expect Socialist candidate perceptions to be most constant, those which *all* the 1967 candidates perceived most accurately or those which the 1967 subset of Federation candidates perceived most accurately?

Fortunately, the issue is quickly disposed of. While a hasty judgment might suggest that because we are investigating the perceptual constancy only of Socialist candidates, we should make the 1967 accuracy rankings of the Federation candidates our baseline, to do so would operate directly counter to the underlying logic of our basic theorem, which holds that perceptual accuracy depends primarily on the characteristics of the *object* of the perceptions rather than on the attributes of the *perceiver*.³ Our theory of the sources of perceptual constancy is rooted in the nature of the issue, rather than in the character of the candidate. To be consistent with that position, we must base our empirical test on the ordering of the issues according to the perceptual accuracy of all the 1967 candidates, on the assumption that the degree of clarity and stability of district opinion on each of those issues is potentially equally visible to all candidates.

In conducting our test of Prediction 1, therefore, we opt for measures of the perceptual accuracy of all the 1967 candidates. That empirical base expresses more purely the logic underlying the theory of perceptual accuracy. By the very same logic, however, it should also be clear that we would not expect our results to vary greatly if we were to adopt the faulty alternate method. Because the source of perceptual accuracy lies primarily in the object of perception, there should not normally be wide variation in different

observers' perceptions of the same object.⁴ In the specific case before us, the perceptions of the 1967 Federation candidates of district opinion were generally most accurate on the same issues on which the perceptions of the entire 1967 sample of candidates were also most accurate. Nevertheless, there was some difference in the rank ordering, by issue, of the accuracy of each group's estimates of constituency opinion, and there would be some difference in the outcome of our test if we based it only on the perceptions of the 1967 Federation candidates rather than those of the entire set of 1967 candidates. We must choose, and we of course choose the theoretically sound alternative.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

PREDICTION 1

Table 1 presents the raw perceptual accuracy scores across a full sample of French legislative candidates in 1967,⁵ as well as the perceptual constancy scores of our small sample of two generations of Socialist candidates (Federation candidates for 1967). The data give general support to the proposition that perceptual constancy is related to the accuracy of candidate perceptions of district opinion on the issue. The two highest constancy scores relate to the two issues on which overall perceptual accuracy was highest at the earlier period. Of the five issues that generated perceptual accuracy scores of $r = .20$ or higher, four also have perceptual constancy correlations close to or above $r = .20$. By contrast, the four issues with perceptual accuracy correlations of $r = .10$ or less generate negligible perceptual constancy correlations. The correlation between perceptual accuracy and perceptual constancy across our nine matching issue items is $r = .66$, which is statistically significant ($p < .01$) despite the small number of cases.

The first column of Table 1 suggests that there is a continuum of perceptual accuracy, presumably reflecting variations in the clarity with which district opinion is expressed on the various issues. However, the second column of Table 1 suggests the possibility that there may not be such a gradation of issue-objects, but rather two discrete sets of issues, which differ radically in their visibility to elite observers. On the one hand, there is the political composition of the district and district attitudes toward religion and religion-related issues. On the other hand, there are all the rest. There are few prominent, unambiguous, stable, and representative indicators of public opinion pertaining to the issues in the latter category. Accordingly, the accuracy of elite perceptions of local opinion on those issues ranges from

Table 1
Perceptual Accuracy (1967) and Perceptual Constancy (1967-1978)

Issue	Correlations between perceptions of district attitudes and estimates of actual attitudes, 1967 (All candidates in 86 sample districts) ^a	Correlations between perceptions of district attitudes of 1967 Federation and 1978 Socialist candidates in 31 panel districts ^b
Left-right composition	.48	.50 (30)
Government aid to private (church) schools	.47	.40 (23)
French army in European army	.37	.18 (23)
Distribution of income	.25	-.33 (23)
Protect union rights	.20	.19 (25)
Independent foreign policy	.10	-.02 (23)
Nuclear striking force	.09	-.01 (22)
Educational development	.06	-.01 (21)
Foreign aid	-.12	-.04 (22)

a. Source: Converse and Pierce (1986, Figure 20-2). Correlations are adjusted for small-sample attenuation. Case numbers approximate 270.

b. Number of cases in parentheses.

moderate to low, and the consistency with which successive elites assess the state of local opinion on the same issues is minimal as well. Indeed, for some of the issues in this category, both perceptual accuracy and perceptual consistency approach sheer randomness.

PREDICTION 2

Our second predictive test, relating to the accuracy of candidate perceptions of district left-right locations in 1978 as well as in 1967, requires that we have measures of those district locations for both years, against which we can lay the corresponding perceptions of our two generations of Socialist candidates. To satisfy that requirement, we constituted two sets of parallel, although not identical, variables which in effect transformed the electoral returns for each of our sampled electoral districts into district means on the left-right scale for each of the two years under study.⁶

Our second prediction is borne out rather handsomely. The zero-order Pearsonian correlations between the "actual" left-right locations of the districts in our 43-district sample and the perceptions of those locations are as follows:

<u>1967</u>	<u>1978</u>
.60	.69
(37)	(34)

The accuracy of the perceptions of the two successive generations of candidates certainly appear to “approximate” each other.

Moreover, in both 1967 and 1978, the accuracy of the candidates’ perceptions of district locations on the left-right spectrum is great when compared with accuracy on the other issues listed (for 1967 only) in the first column of Table 1. This result is entirely consistent with the terms of our hypothesis. This, it may be recalled, referred to both the stability and the clarity of district opinion. The left-right position of our sample districts is the one item of mass-level data that we have for both 1967 and 1978, and that allows us to test the stability component of our hypothesis directly for that item. The continuity correlation for the left-right location of the districts in which interviews were taken in 1967 and 1978 is a resounding $r = .85$. That degree of continuity across an 11-year period greatly exceeds the mean continuity correlations of .18 and .53 for the two-party presidential vote in the United States, by states, across the periods of 12 and 8 years, respectively, within the time frame between 1960 and 1976 (Clubb, Flanigan, & Zingale, 1980, Table 2.2).

The nature of the issue involved—the average left-right location of the district—also enables us to grasp more fully what promotes clarity in perceptual terms. The fit between candidate perceptions of the district’s left-right position and our measure of district location constructed from the 1967 electoral returns is better ($r = .60$) than the fit in that year between candidate perceptions and mean district location derived from self-reports of left-right position taken at the individual level and aggregated into district means ($r = .48$). This suggests strongly that candidates rely on electoral returns in constructing their perceptions of district political orientations in left-right terms. By using electoral results to model constituency opinion, we seem also to have modeled the candidates’ thought processes in gauging the political coloration of the district (as did Converse & Pierce, 1986, pp. 653-654). Electoral returns are the one piece of systematic evidence available to the candidates about the state of political opinion in their districts, so it is perhaps not surprising that candidates use the electoral returns to make estimates of the left-right distributions in their districts. This consideration leads to two further questions: Do candidates also use electoral returns in estimating district opinion about political issues more generally? And if so, how useful are electoral returns as a generalized estimator of district opinion?

PERCEIVED LEFT-RIGHT LOCATIONS AS SOURCES OF CANDIDATE PERCEPTIONS OF DISTRICT OPINION

Candidates for legislative office have few reliable sources of information about the state of public opinion in their districts. On some matters, such as the degree of religious practice, there may be well-established traditions that are reflected in the relative size of public and private school enrollments or even in what the public squares in front of the churches look like on Sunday mornings. Further clues to constituency opinion may come from the occupational structure of the district. But there is usually little in the public behavior of constituents to provide politicians with clues about their political opinions. The only systematically collected, directly relevant political information available to the candidates is furnished by the electoral returns.

Of course, the extent to which an accurate assessment of the left-right coloration of a district, based on the electoral returns, leads to an accurate estimate of the state of district opinion on one political issue or another depends on the closeness of the linkage in the electorate's collective mind between left-right locations and particular issue positions. The strength of that linkage varies across issues; it is strongest for religion-related issues and some classic economic issues long associated with left-right positioning. It is much weaker for foreign affairs questions and domestic issues, such as nonreligion-related educational affairs, on which there are no long-standing, distinctive partisan positions (Converse & Pierce, 1986, chap. 7). Consequently, any across-the-board effort by candidates to translate voting returns into expressions of public opinion on specific issues, while it might well be accurate in the religious domain or with regard to some class-related policy matters, might also be far wide of the mark on other issues.

That does not mean, of course, that candidates—having little or nothing to go on other than electoral returns—do not engage in such translation efforts, if and when they try to assess district opinion on particular issues. We have mounted a simple test to determine whether the Socialist candidates in our sample of districts in 1967 and 1978 acted *as if* that is what they did, when they were asked to estimate opinion in their districts on various subjects. Table 2 presents the Pearsonian correlation coefficients for the relationships between the candidates' perceptions of the left-right composition of their districts and the same candidates' perceptions of district opinion on various specific issues.

The correlations that are highest in both years relate to unions and religion, two classic components of left-right orientations. Those that are lowest at both points of our longitudinal time span refer to education and foreign

Table 2

Correlations Between Candidate Perceptions of the Left-Right Composition of Their Districts and Candidate Perceptions of District Opinion on Specific Issues (French Socialists, 1967 and 1978)

Specific issue	1967	1978
Protect union rights	.55** (35)	.47* (28)
Government aid to private (church) schools	.52** (32)	.48* (29)
Foreign aid	.49** (34)	.21 (27)
Nuclear strike force	.32 (33)	-.02 (26)
Distribution of income	.25 (34)	.03 (28)
French army in European army	.12 (33)	.15 (26)
Educational development	.09 (35)	.21 (25)
Independent foreign policy	-.04 (35)	.23 (26)

Note. Number of cases in parentheses.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

affairs, for which the left-right dimension is an unsure guide in reality as well as in the perceptual fields of our candidates. It appears as though the candidates were basing their estimates of opinion on their perceptions of the left-right composition of their districts only for those issues that are conventionally associated with left-right positioning. The low correlations suggest that they employed some other method for assessing district opinion on education and foreign affairs.⁷

Comparing Table 2 with Table 1 indicates clearly that the accuracy of candidate perceptions of district opinion on particular issues through association with perceptions of left-right positioning depends not only on the accuracy of the candidates' estimates of the left-right composition of their districts but also on how tightly bound specific issue positions are to left-right locations at the district level. Table 2 shows that our samples of Socialist candidates appear to have regarded the left-right composition of their districts to be at least as good an indicator of district attitudes toward labor unions as of district opinion about government subsidies for Catholic schools. Table 1, however, shows that candidate perceptions of district attitudes toward unions were less accurate in 1967, and less stable from 1967 to 1978, than were candidate perceptions of district opinion about subsidies to Catholic schools. That is because the candidates exaggerated the closeness of the linkage between left-right locations and positions on unions at the district level. Political elites have a rich conception of the issue meaning of left-right

locations, and our candidate samples thought that the left-right coloration of their constituencies could be as directly associated with constituency opinion on unions as with attitudes toward subsidies for church schools. In point of fact, however, left-right locations at the mass level in 1967 were more closely linked with religion-related issues than with economic issues (Converse & Pierce, 1986, chap. 7).

There are two apparent anomalies in Table 2. On both foreign aid and the nuclear striking force, the candidates in 1967 aligned their estimates of district opinion with their perceptions of district left-right composition much more closely than they did in 1978. On both issues, this change parallels the evolution of the linkage between the party system and public opinion. In 1967, the Federation of the Left and the Communist party were in agreement that the foreign aid policies of the conservative majority amounted to neocolonialism. Similarly, the left offered a clear alternative to the Gaullist policy of building up the French nuclear force. With a united left on both of these issues in 1967, Socialist candidates in our sample associated the distribution of the vote in their districts with constituency opinion on foreign aid and the nuclear force. By 1978, the Socialists had come to accept the Giscardian approach to foreign aid, and both Socialists and Communists abandoned their opposition to the French nuclear force. The drop in the correlations in Table 2 between 1967 and 1978 on these two issues suggests that the Socialist candidates were willing to estimate district opinion on the basis of electoral results only when a clear polarization of party programs warranted such inferences.

DISCUSSION

Candidate knowledge of district opinion is important even in political systems characterized by highly disciplined parliamentary parties. We know comparatively little about elite perceptions of mass opinion, but the most firmly established proposition in that domain is that the accuracy of such elite perceptions is associated primarily with the clarity and stability of district opinion. The basic research on which that proposition rests has, in the main, linked elite-level and mass-level data in cross-sectional form. Here, we give a dynamic cast to the analysis by examining how successive generations of candidates from the same districts perceive opinion in those districts on identical issues at two moments 11 years apart.

Taking the one central proposition that we have as our basic theorem, we formulated two predictions, both of which were adequately fulfilled by the empirical tests we mounted.

The first test indicates that constancy of elite perceptions is related to the accuracy of elite perceptions. At least above some minimum threshold, the more accurate elite perceptions are at a given moment, the more likely a new generation of elites is to perceive district opinion on the same issue in the same way. Those issues on which district opinion is most visible to one generation of candidates appear also to be visible to a later generation of candidates. When district opinion is obscure, however, the perceptions of successive generations of candidates become more nearly random. It is as though, in the absence of firm clues as to what the public is thinking, the candidates must rely on whatever idiosyncratic formulas they may employ in trying to strike what amounts to a moving target.

The second test showed that our two sample generations of candidates not only tended to perceive the left-right coloration of their districts in similar fashion, but also perceived that orientation of their districts with what, by the few standards we have in this regard, are uncommon degrees of accuracy. It is virtually certain that this high level of perceptual accuracy obtains because the candidates are simply translating the electoral returns, with which they are very familiar, into the left-right shorthand that characterizes political discourse in France.

While translating electoral returns into more general expressions of district opinion works quite well with regard to left-right orientations, it is a less reliable instrument when applied to other issues. It seems that our samples of Socialist candidates based their estimates of district opinion, for some issues, on their estimates of the left-right location on their districts (and, by implication, on the most recent electoral returns). Moreover, it appears that they did so judiciously, in that they applied the formula only for issues that are closely related to the left-right dimension underlying the partisan structure. But that method of assessing district opinion produces accurate results only if the linkage between partisan choices and issue positions is identical at both the elite and mass levels. The most powerful and durable issues that fit that specification relate to religion, which to a striking extent continues to structure partisan cleavages in France at the mass level (Charlot, 1988; Pierce & Rochon, 1988; Wilson, 1988). The economic components of the left-right dimension, which are well understood at the elite level, lose clarity of definition at the mass level, and for these issues candidate perceptions of mass attitudes derived from the electoral returns can be wide of the mark.

In France, when the indicators of mass opinion are clear and unambiguous, as in the case of electoral returns, or where those electoral indicators can

be directly linked to opinion on other issues, as in our case of aid to church schools, perceptual constancy is comparatively high. And because the clarity of electoral data does not change from election to election (even though its content may), and the linkage in France between partisan choice and mass opinion on religion-related issues is comparatively stable, elite perceptions of mass political preferences on such issues also remain relatively constant, even across successive generations of candidates from the same districts.

By introducing a longitudinal perspective, we are able not only to assess the degree of constancy in candidate perceptions, but also to strengthen our understanding of how elites make their assessments of district opinion. At least in France, they rely on the electoral returns, and this makes the issue content of electoral choices a central element in the communications process between the mass and the elites. For some issues, the elites appear to consider the issue implications of the voters' partisan choices to be stable. On others (such as the nuclear striking force), they appear to think that the voters follow cues offered by the parties themselves.

The implications of these findings, both for the comparative study of representation and for the representative process itself, are important. The legislator's knowledge of constituency opinion, on which representation depends, can be considered from two different vantage points: the capacity of the legislator to recognize constituent opinion and the capacity of the constituency to express its opinion. Both capacities are necessary, but the analyst can emphasize one or the other. On the elite side, one can investigate motivations, such as representative role orientations, and resources, including the size of the representative's constituency-based staff, the density of the links between the representative and various social-political organizations that reflect constituency sentiment, and the nature and duration of his or her electoral experience. The public's ability to express its opinion depends on an even more complex set of factors, including the role of parties and candidates as organizers of opinion and the role of elections in expressing it.

Our research points overwhelmingly to the need for concentrating attention on the capacity of the electorate to express its opinion. This is not to denigrate the relevance of elite motivations and resources. These are obviously necessary, especially between electoral contests. But we find that, at bottom, French legislative elites essentially consult the electoral returns and convert them into left-right form as a way of reading constituency opinion. That perfectly reasonable and legitimate process requires little in the way of resources. We would hardly expect much variation among legislators in their ability to recall the results of the last election in their districts.⁸ In these

circumstances, what matters to the representative process is not the legislators' resources but rather the extent to which the electoral returns produce an accurate rendering of the state of mass opinion on the broad political issues of the day.

It is an axiom of democratic theory that elections constitute the one periodic means by which all citizens who wish to participate may, by their choices of candidates or parties, communicate in a general sense their views on public policy to the political elites. We have evidence that French parliamentary candidates generally and French Socialist party candidates in particular treat elections in that very sense. It would be important to know whether the parliamentary elites of other countries do so and, if they do, just how they translate electoral results into presumed public attitudes. There is room for wide cross-national variation in this regard. French elites appear to transform electoral returns into left-right locations and then to match those with analogous locations on hypothetical issue scales. But that procedure has applicability only where the left-right dimension is a widely employed medium of political discourse. Legislators in other continental countries may well employ the same devices, but it is doubtful whether members of the British parliament or the U.S. Congress would do so. Left-right imagery has very weak currency in Great Britain (Butler & Stokes, 1969, pp. 200-208) and even less in the United States. U.S. legislators might employ a hypothetical liberal-conservative dimension the way French legislative candidates use the left-right dimension, although it would be a precarious device indeed. More likely, British and U.S. politicians would translate votes for one party or another directly into presumed issue positions, although that is a matter for empirical examination.

Whatever the findings eventually turn out to be, it is clear that a broad agenda of comparative research emerges from our own observations. We need to know far more than we do, on a cross-national basis and in longitudinal form, both about how legislative elites interpret electoral results and how accurately those results express mass opinion on major issues. This is a large, complex, and expensive task.⁹ But when new parties appear, new issues become salient, and even new basic cleavages are said to be emerging, a more complete understanding of the representative process requires careful attention to all the dimensions of the Miller-Stokes design for studying representation, extended to changes over time.

APPENDIX
Question Wording

PERCEIVED CONSTITUENCY POSITIONS (Candidates: 1967 and 1978)

LEFT-RIGHT PREFERENCE	Si vous deviez répartir, en gros, les électeurs de votre circonscription entre la Gauche, la Droite et le Centre, quel pourcentage attribueriez-vous à chacune de ces tendances?
	Pourriez-vous évaluer, en pourcentage, la proportion des électeurs de votre circonscription qui sont pour, ou contre, ou indifférents aux options politiques suivantes:
GOV'T AID CHURCH SCHOOLS	Les subventions aux écoles libres.
NUCLEAR STRIKE FORCE	La force de frappe nationale.
INCOME DISTRIBUTION	Une répartition plus équitable des revenus entre les ouvriers et les autres couches sociales.
MORE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT	Un plus gros effort pour l'enseignement.
FOREIGN AID	L'aide aux pays sous-développés.
INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY	Une politique étrangère indépendante de celle des Etats-Unis.
PROTECT UNION RIGHTS	La défense des droits des syndicats.
FRENCH ARMY IN EUROPEAN ARMY	L'intégration de l'armée française dans une armée européenne.

NOTES

1. See Clausen (1977) for a review of the literature to date, Karps (1978) for the U. S. case, and Converse and Pierce (1986, chap. 20) for the French case.
2. For both 1967 and 1978, candidate estimates of district opinion on various issues were converted into means on the basis of the following formula:

$$\frac{XF + YI + ZC}{100}$$

where F is the percentage of the district thought by the candidate to be *for* the issue, I is the percentage perceived to be *indifferent*, and C is the proportion perceived to be *against* the issue. X, Y and Z are scaling factors equal to the cutoff points on the mass-issue response distribution for the mean pro, con, and indifferent proportions estimated by the *entire* sample of 1967 candidates. The same scaling factors were used for 1978 as for 1967, since we had neither a mass sample nor a full candidate sample for 1978. However, the 1967 scaling factors tend toward uniformity regardless of the issue item, with Y tending toward the midpoint of the mass distribution, and with X and Z tending to bisect the two tails of the distribution. We cannot be certain without the opportunity for proper testing, but under the circumstances, it seems doubtful that our assumption that the scaling factors are constant has seriously biased our 1967-1978 district perception correlations.

3. Actually, in the French case, subject attributes count for something in perceptual accuracy but much less than the attributes of the object (Converse & Pierce, 1986, chap. 20).

4. The perceptual phenomenon is complex. In some circumstances, there can be staggering variations in intra-elite perceptions of the same phenomenon. As a general proposition, however, intra-elite judgments of district opinion tend to converge, with highest agreement attaching to the issues on which mass opinion is clearest and most stable. (Converse & Pierce, chaps. 15 and 20.)

5. Achen (1978) and others have suggested the use of proximity scores, rather than correlation coefficients, to measure representation. The basic argument, which also applies to measuring perceptions of constituency opinion, is that high correlations may mask uniform inaccuracies in congruence and that low correlations do not preclude close proximity. This may occur particularly when the variances of mean district opinions are not the same across issues. The case for use of correlation coefficients has been argued thoroughly in Converse and Pierce (1986, pp. 507-511, 603-606, and 971-972).

6. The basis for the 1978 computation was Rabier and Inglehart (1980), which contains data from a survey in which the respondents' own left-right locations (on a 1-10 scale) were ascertained as well as their hypothetical partisan vote "if there were a general election tomorrow." We assigned each party the mean left-right self placement of the respondents who indicated that they would vote for that party. District means were then drawn by weighting the partisan left-right scores by the distribution of the actual partisan vote in each district at the 1978 election. The 1967 mass survey ascertained left-right locations on a scale running from 1 to 100, and we assigned each party the mean left-right score of the respondents who reported that they had actually voted for it at the first ballot in 1967. The left-right partisan scores were then weighted by the actual vote on a district basis similar to the procedure followed for 1978.

7. One plausible hypothesis is that attribute to their districts attitudes similar to their own, a phenomenon known as projection. Clausen (1977) believes that projection is an important source of representation when the legislator's own opinions resemble those of the constituency. When

the resemblance of legislator opinions and constituency opinions is more modest, projection would work to attenuate the fidelity of representation. Converse and Pierce (1986, pp. 649-653) investigated the extent to which projection played a role in French candidate perceptions of district opinion in 1967 and found that, for position issues, it was most apparent with regard to foreign affairs, much weaker concerning domestic issues, and virtually absent with respect to the left-right composition of the districts.

8. To test this rather obvious point, we ran the Pearsonian correlation between the number of local party workers available to the candidates in 1978 and the accuracy of their perceptions of the left-right mean locations of their districts: It is a modest $r = .24$ (ns). Similarly, the candidates in our 1978 sample who were mayors or deputy mayors were slightly *less* accurate in their assessments of the left-right standing of their districts than were those who did not hold mayoral positions.

9. The expense of research into the representative process is an issue that political science researchers are going to have to face squarely sooner or later. The funds available for political science via the National Science Foundation are derisory compared, say, to those available for research by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

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