

Parties and Representation in the American Legislatures

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This paper seeks to join two widely held propositions about democratic politics. The first is that political representation is a central feature of democratic government. The purpose of elections and lawmaking by those elected is to insure that public policy is broadly responsive to the preferences of the citizenry. The second proposition is that political parties are fundamental to the operation of representative government in complex societies. We seek to bring these two generalizations together to provide empirical tests of the broad notion that strong, competitive political parties enhance the quality of representative democracy.

While the assertion that parties are good for representation probably would not draw many immediate challenges, that idea remains largely an article of faith rather than a demonstrated empirical proposition. We know a good deal about the relationship between constituency preferences and the policy voting of legislators, and we know a good deal about political parties, but the research in these areas has not shown if and how parties enhance the quality of representative government—at least not within the context of contemporary US political institutions. This paper draws on a new data set and adopts a comparative approach, new to the study of representation. Both these data and this approach allow us to compare systematically the degrees of policy representation across the legislative chambers of the American states as well as the US Congress, and at the same time, to identify the importance of parties as intermediary institutions linking mass preferences and the policy behavior of elected representatives.

The manner in which the representation and parties literatures seem to miss one another in addressing this question is nicely illustrated by classic works in each tradition from the earlier

days of the behavioral revolution. The seminal work on representation for US politics scholars is certainly the famous “diamond model” by Miller and Stokes (1963). In this, representation in the form of roll call voting is characterized as a function of constituency issue attitudes, the congressman’s policy preferences, and the congressman’s perceptions of his constituencies. The distinguishing characteristic for our purposes is the lack of any role for parties in the model. This is rather striking in view of the seminal work on voting in Congress published the previous year, in which Stokes and Miller demonstrated the substantial ignorance of voters about congressional policy positions and the large role of party identification in voting in the 1958 congressional election (Stokes and Miller 1962).

This model has inspired a great deal of subsequent work, including corrections of both method and specification (i.e. Achen 1977; Achen 1978; Erikson 1976; Hill and Hurley 1999; Shapiro et al. 1990). Parties have not, however, been systematically integrated into the ongoing research. Party affiliation of legislators is frequently included in statistical models for roll call behavior, but it is frequently conceptualized as either a factor competing with constituency for influence or as simply another factor which may be entangled with or reinforce constituencies (Kuklinski 1978; Shapiro et al. 1990). In other work, party is included as an indicator of subconstituencies which may be represented, as opposed to the representation of the median preferences of the district (Hurley 1991; Miller 1964; Uslander 1999; Wright 1989). Overall, most of this work on representation has not given a central role to parties as a link between constituency preferences and member behavior.

In the parties tradition, arguments for “responsible parties” call for distinct party positions, internal party cohesion and discipline, and a clear connection between voter preferences and party positions. Responsible parties then, according to its advocates, would give

us more effective and more democratic government; however, it is not clear at all how strong parties, which are the heart of a vigorous party system, relate to the dyadic type of representation that we have implicitly come to expect based on the Miller-Stokes model. The responsible party position promotes the benefits of coordination, efficiency, responsibility and accountability that are believed to flow from responsible parties, but the implications for dyadic representation are not at all clear, and they certainly are not addressed directly in the main statements of the model (APSA 1950; Ranney 1951). In fact, in his critique of the APSA Committee's report, Kirkpatrick makes passing reference to a possible conflict between party and individual accountability. He notes, "...in a heterogenous nation with multiple issues in every election, it might make more sense to hold individuals rather than parties responsible; that individual accountability to voters might make for better representation of the district...(1971)."

The ambiguity over the role of parties in bringing about representation is evident in *Statehouse Democracy*, in which one of us participated in making the argument that public opinion is well-represented in the states (Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993). The evidence for this representation, however, rests with a remarkably strong relationship between the liberalism-conservatism of state electorates and a measure of general policy of the states. The role of parties, particularly in the legislatures, appears to be indirect at best (Chap. 6). Indeed, in the conclusions it was explicit that we had not uncovered the internal dynamics by which electorates achieve general policy agreement with their preferences: "*These means of control are uncertain in any particular application [state], but accumulate to create a striking correlation between mean ideological preferences of state electorates and the mean ideological tendency of state policy*" (Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993: 247, emphasis added).

In short, we generally believe that representation and political parties are good for democracy, but it is not clear how these fit together in the world of legislative politics and policy making. In this paper, we use new data on constituency preferences and legislators' preferences in roll call voting in 101 US legislatures to examine the relationship between party dynamics and representation in the states. We find that in many cases, parties act as an integral link between citizens' preferences and legislators' policy actions, and we argue the development of this relationship theoretically and empirically is an important step in understanding representation in the states.

Representation and Levels of Analysis

We begin by laying out our theoretical argument about the relationship between constituent preferences and legislators' policy decisions. High levels of congruence between state ideology and state policy liberalism *across* the states, such as that demonstrated in *Statehouse*, would seem to imply reasonably clear constituency-legislator agreement *within* the states. However, that aggregate-level agreement is consistent with some quite contradictory models of the citizen-representative linkage. Only one of these models involves legislators being purposively and directly responsive to the voters in their districts as democratic theory would prescribe. Here we illustrate how a variety of constituency-legislator relationships--some of them quite undemocratic--can yield aggregate opinion-policy agreement. Here we will use two imaginary states in our abstract example to illustrate.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Figure 1.A illustrates our current state of knowledge about the relationship between state opinion and policy in the states.¹ It shows information only about mean state ideology and mean state policy conservatism. We know that more conservative states also have more conservative policies. In the figure this is shown as a perfect relationship for two states. In the *Statehouse* data, we found the correlation between state ideology and state policy liberalism was .82 for all states, and after correcting for measurement error in state opinion, we estimate the underlying relationship to be .9 (Erikson, Wright and McIver, 1993: 80-82).

What we do not know is what kind of representational mechanisms exist and the role legislative parties play in achieving this correspondence between aggregate opinion and policy. Let us now explore how the state opinion-policy relationship shown in Figure 1.A could result from a variety of different representational processes. One is a simple delegate model of faithful representation (Figure 1.B). The lines in the model are intended to represent the relationship (regression slopes) between district opinion and the liberalism-conservatism of legislators' roll call voting. For convenience, we have drawn it so that all the districts of State B happen to be more conservative than those of State A (in reality, of course, there is a great deal of overlap in district ideology among the states.) The important part of the model is that in both states there is a strong congruence between district opinion and members' voting; notice the representative ideology/district ideology line has a steep slope. We also can see that at the legislative level, this dynamic can replicate the aggregate relationship we see in Figure 1.A in that net policy outcomes match the mean constituency ideologies of the two states. Notice also that no distinction is necessary for party affiliation in this idealized version of the model, since any role party

¹ This is, of course, an exaggeration. We have several excellent studies of representation in individual states, such as: Erikson, Luttbeg, and Holloway (1975), Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993), Kuklinski (1978), Kuklinski and Elling (1977), Snyder (1996), as well as a good deal of informed observation about the representational processes from the perspective of the representatives, such as: Jewell (1983) and Jewell (1982).

affiliation of the member plays in a pure delegate view of representation is coincidental. If all elected officials are Downsian vote-maximizing delegates and nothing else matters, the preferences of constituents prevail. This model is implicit in much of the research on representation, including our thinking in *Statehouse Democracy*.

The second idealized model posits a legislature of trustees. In this simplification, we assume that the legislators may take their cues from a variety of sources, but that no special weight is given to constituency opinion. These sources might include the legislators' perceptions of what is good for the state, their own values, the governor and the bureaucracy, or the recommendation of standing committees. Figure 1.C shows an example of a pure trustee model. Members individually do not reflect constituency preferences; notice the flat lines representing no relationship between district opinion and legislators' voting. We have drawn it so that in the aggregate the legislators still manage to produce policy consistent with mean state opinion, but there is certainly nothing in the trustee model that would require this. Instead, it might be that the elites who serve in the legislature simply manage, in the aggregate, to reflect the underlying values of their states, very much in the spirit of a "belief sharing" model. In such a model, state level congruence is more of a happy coincidence than a consequence of constituency demands and electoral pressures.

Finally, in figure 1.D there is a version of a responsible party government model. Within the legislatures the individual parties are cohesive (i.e. all Democrats are equally liberal and all Republicans are equally conservative), and there is considerable party polarization (i.e. in both states, the Republicans are markedly more conservative than the Democrats). There is also, in both states, a strong tendency for the more conservative districts to elect Republicans and the more liberal districts to elect Democrats. Out of the clash between the parties comes policy that

is in tune with the overall preferences of the states. This idealization is consistent with most treatments of the Responsible Parties Model. Not shown, but easily imagined is a case with strong legislative parties, but one in which the constituency link is severed. In this case, Democrats and Republicans are as cohesive as seen in figure 1.D, but the distributions of members of the parties could extend across the full range of constituency opinion.

We see, then, that representation at one level, for instance at the state level, does not necessarily say anything about the processes of representation between constituencies and legislators that give rise to that overall agreement. To investigate these four possible explanations of the process, we adopt what we call a “party model of representation” which explicitly provides for the possibility that parties have a crucial role as a linkage mechanism in the representation process.

A Party Model of Representation

It is helpful to conceptually convert the idealized relationships presented above into simple variations of what we call a “party model of representation.” It borrows from the tradition of the Miller-Stokes model, but rather than having the legislators’ attitudes and perceptions as intervening variables, we insert his or her party affiliation. We employ a simple three variable model of constituency preferences (C), the legislator’s party affiliation (P), and the legislator’s policy behavior, here measured as roll call voting (V). Our conception of representation here is simply to evaluate the strength of the relationship between constituency and roll call voting ($C \rightarrow V$) while allowing for the possibility that party may play a role in this relationship.

Our approach to analyze this model is twofold. The first step is to ascertain the strength of the representational relationship. That is, do patterns of roll call voting reflect differences in constituency opinion? If patterns of disagreement within a legislature reflect differences among constituencies, we will find a statistically strong relationship between constituency and roll call voting. However, if conflict in the legislature has its own life, independent of differences among the constituencies, we will find a weak relationship or no relationship. If this is the case, we can conclude that, whatever else may be going on in the legislature, the main lines of battle are not formed as a result of legislators representing the preferences of their constituents.

The second step in our approach is to determine the role of parties in this process. As presented in the party government model above, there are two places where parties play a role: in organizing electoral choice and in organizing behavior within the legislatures. To examine this first place, we use levels of party voting in legislative elections ($C \rightarrow P$) with the assumption in the party government model that this will be a strong relationship. To examine the second, we utilize levels of party voting within the legislature, with the party government assumption that this will also be a strong relationship ($P \rightarrow V$).

[Insert figure 2 here]

The theoretically possible combinations of relationships among the three variables of our party model of representation yield a rich variety of processes, each with quite different implications for how we understand and assess the nature of representation. Figure 2 shows four of these combinations. The upper left model is the party government model, in which constituencies achieve representation through voting based on party labels that subsequently structure conflict within the legislature. The configuration in the upper right provides for a direct influence of constituency opinion on legislative behavior, bypassing party altogether, and is a

version of the simple delegate model that might follow from a strict Downsian world in which candidates converge and the median voters vote randomly. Notice that representation can occur in both of these models, but party plays a role only in the first.

The bottom pair of models shows situations where constituencies are not represented. In the lower left model, conflict within the legislature is highly partisan; however, constituency preferences are not reflected in differences in the partisanship of elected representatives. This would be an instance of a “party elite” model in which the parties in government are active in policy terms, but the parties in the electorate do not have policy content. This could occur where voting is highly personal but not issue or ideology based, yet there are major policy differences between the parties’ candidates. The final model is another failure of representation, only here nothing explains roll call voting patterns in the legislature. In this model, legislative conflict is unrelated to differences among legislators’ constituencies and their party affiliations. We call this result democratic failure, since it implies legislators in this model ignore the wishes of constituents who are divided by party affiliation when voting on policies.

Our analysis below assesses the patterns of representation in the US in the terms of our party model of representation. We find substantial variation in representation as well as clear evidence that parties are indeed important in the dynamics of representation. Before presenting the analysis, we provide a brief description of our data and measures below.

Data and Measures

To determine the fit between our conception of the party model of representation and patterns of what happens in actuality, we need to select a population for study and measures of the key variables, and we need to decide how to relate these in fitting data to our models. Our

population for this study is the 99 chambers of the US state legislatures as well as both houses of Congress. These 101 chambers allow us to take a comparative approach necessary to determine how the quality of representation varies with the role of parties. If we followed the norm and studied just the US House of Representatives, we would find a given level of representation (however measured) and a level of strength of the parties in the House. But with an N of one, or even two if one includes the Senate, it is not really possible to determine whether, for example, stronger parties would enhance or retard the quality of constituency representation. Only by looking across different legislative settings in which the key components of party and partisanship vary can we hope to gauge the impact of parties on representation.

The concepts we need to measure are constituency preferences, the legislators' party affiliations, and their policy behavior. Over the last three years, we have been collecting these data. While public opinion measures for state and congressional district preferences would be nice, these do not exist. Our second best measure, therefore, is presidential vote for these districts. We use the results of the 2000 presidential election. The actual measure we employ is called the "Liberal Vote"², simply the sum of the votes for Nader and Gore divided by the sum for Nader, Gore, Bush and Buchanan and multiplied by 100.

This measure has reasonable face validity. We feel comfortable betting that just about any group of Nader-Gore voters are a good deal more liberal than corresponding groups of Bush-Buchanan voters. We also find that at the state level, presidential vote in 2000 correlates quite strongly with an updated version of the CBS/*New York Times* measure of state ideology. In addition, we find that nationally, and in many states, there has been an increasing alignment between partisanship and ideology, reflecting, and perhaps also contributing to, the increased polarization between the parties so evident in Congress.

² We use the terms "Liberal Vote" and "Left Vote" synonymously throughout the paper.

We have also collected a reasonably diverse set of constituency demographic characteristics, including the usual sets of socioeconomic indicators, a measure of urbanism and an array of measures of race, ethnicity and nationality. These can be employed in addition to our main indicator of constituency preferences, the Liberal Vote, to assess the strength of the link between constituency and legislative behavior.

To measure legislators' policy behavior, we rely on each legislator's NOMINATE scores derived from all competitive votes cast in the 1999-2000 session(s) of all 99 state legislative chambers as well as both houses of Congress. In a great majority of the chambers, overall voting cleavages are nicely captured by a single dimension (Wright and Winburn 2003), very similar to what Poole and Rosenthal (1997) report is the case for the contemporary Congress. There are some interesting exceptions (Wright and Osborn 2002; Wright and Winburn 2003), but in this analysis we will restrict our attention to the primary dimension of legislative conflict.³

Analysis

The first step in our analysis is to assess comparatively the overall levels of representation in our 101 chambers. Measuring representation using congruence indicators as we do here has known problems (Achen 1977; 1978), but nevertheless this measure can tell us a good deal about representation. Our measure of roll call voting is, as described above, the first dimension NOMINATE score based on all competitive roll calls in the chambers for the 1999-2000 sessions. Our measure of constituency preferences is equally broad; we use the overall constituency ideology as indicated in the vote patterns of the 2000 election. Our contention is

³ Our analyses indicate that the unidimensional structure of most of the legislatures is a function of strong, competitive parties. Where one party clearly dominates the legislature, or there is no party domination, as in Nebraska, the strong unidimensional structure is less adequate as a summary for voting cleavages (see Wright and Schaffner 2002, Wright and Osborn 2002, and Wright and Winburn 2003).

that for representation to be evident, the main pattern of conflict within the legislatures ought to reflect differences among the constituencies. If this is the case, then our congruence measures will show high levels of representation. If, however, roll call coalitions form independent of constituency differences, we will see little congruence, allowing us to conclude that there is little representation in the sense of constituency differences coinciding with legislative coalitions.

The measure we use here is the squared correlation coefficient between the Liberal Vote and NOMINATE scores.⁴ When these are calculated for the 101 chambers, we are struck with the tremendous variation in the importance of constituency differences in determining roll call voting. The adjusted R^2 s vary from -.04 to .79, with a mean of .40.⁵ Table 1 lists the chambers with the highest and lowest levels of representation. A view of the overall distribution of constituency representation is shown in Figure 3.

[Insert Table 1 here]

[Insert Figure 3 here]

It is evident that there is significant variation across the states in the relationship between constituency ideology and the main dimension of roll call voting in the state legislatures and Congress. For comparison purposes, we might note that the two houses of Congress encompass a substantial range themselves: the Liberal Vote-NOMINATE R^2 for the US Senate is just .16, while for the US House it is .56. An intuitive appreciation for the range of representational relationships we address is gained from a few example plots of the basic relationship. In Figure 4 we show the plots for four chambers: the US House and Senate, the New Jersey House, with a

⁴ The alternative of using unstandardized measures is not useful here because the metric of the NOMINATE scores is determined independently for each chamber, rendering the slopes for the dependent variables not strictly comparable.

⁵ If we add demographics to the right hand side, we raise the mean R^2 to .44. We will just deal with Liberal Vote here to keep the analysis manageable. The demographic variables that come into play appear highly idiosyncratic and, in any case, do not affect the general conclusions we arrive at here. In future analyses the demographic dimension will be thoroughly explored to assess the state-specific cleavage structures that relate to legislative behavior.

very high level of representation ($R^2_{VC}=.74$), and the West Virginia House, where there is no relationship between constituency opinion and roll call voting ($R^2_{VC}=.07$).

[Inset Figure 4 here]

The differentiation between the parties varies in interesting ways across these four chambers. The New Jersey House has the markings of party government. Republicans are elected from the conservative districts, Democrats are elected from the liberal districts, and there is substantial cohesiveness within the parties and a large ideological gap between them. The US House is more of a hybrid model in which legislators within the parties are only somewhat responsive to differences in district opinion, but there is a clear difference between the party delegations. There is a tendency for members of the parties to come from districts with differing ideological preferences, but that tendency is not nearly as clear as is the case for the New Jersey House. The US Senate shows what appear to be even more polarized parties and a weaker party-constituency relationship, demonstrating that either party can hold most Senate seats. The differences between the two houses of Congress lie in part, we believe, in the relative attenuation of constituency preferences in the Senate. There are no very liberal states in the sense that would mirror the large number of liberal House districts where the Gore-Nader combination garnered over two-thirds of the vote. The biggest contrast with these patterns is the West Virginia House, where we see almost no relationship between constituency and roll call voting over all, and within this relationship, the parties are not well differentiated on the main roll call cleavage of the chamber. Interestingly, these plots indicate parties may have a significant role in achieving representation. The one place (WV-h) where party is not operating in the electorate or in the chamber shows no overall relationship between constituency ideology and policy voting.

The next step in our analysis is to array the full set of 101 chambers in a scatterplot, in which the key linkages of the party model make up the axes. Thus on the Y-axis, we have the relationship between roll calls and party ($P \rightarrow V$), which we measure simply as the R^2 between the two variables. The chambers most divided in their roll call voting will be high on this axis, while those where party is not strongly related to roll call voting will be lower. On the X-axis, we have the linkage between constituency and party ($C \rightarrow P$), which measures the degree to which district ideology is related to the partisanship of the legislators they elect. States where constituents elect representatives that correspond to their ideological preferences will be high on this axis, and states where this link is weak will be low. For this measure we use the pseudo R^2 from the logistic regression of party on constituency ideology.

[Insert Figure 5 here]

On this scatterplot, presented in Figure 5, we include some arbitrary lines in the graph to indicate that legislative chambers can be classified easily using the four theoretical distinctions presented on pages 6 and 7. Thus, in the upper left quadrant we have chambers in which party sharply divides legislators' roll call voting, but constituency preferences are weakly related to the party affiliation of the legislators. These are, in effect, divided legislative parties without strong constituency bases. Again, we classify these as party elite systems because the elites are ideologically polarized even though this does not penetrate into the electoral side. Below these are a handful of chambers we categorize as weak party chambers. In these chambers, party does not play a large role either in structuring policy outputs within in the chamber or in relations between members and constituents electorally. The cluster of chambers in the upper right quadrant most closely matches our theoretical conception of strong, responsible parties. These chambers are sharply divided by party on both the constituency and the roll call sides, suggesting

voters are electing members who represent their views, and these legislators are in turn split by these party affiliations on the policies they vote on within the chamber. Perhaps most important is the fact that no chambers fall into the lower right quadrant. This quadrant represents what we termed above as democratic failure, in that a constituency divides strongly based on party (liberal districts only elect Democrats and conservative districts only elect Republicans), but no corresponding partisan division occurs within the legislature. We take this empty quadrant to be a “good” sign for the health of democracy in the states.

The patterns in Figure 5 show a great deal of variation in both linkages that constitute the party model of representation. Most chambers cluster toward the upper end of the Y-axis, with reasonably high prominence for party in differentiating legislators on the main dimension of roll call conflict. However, party clearly does not capture all of this variation and other factors are important. It would be nice to be able to clearly discern the character of these weak party states. At this point, we have not done this systematically and will treat the weak party cases thoroughly in future research, but we offer a few possibilities before moving on with the analysis. We have shown that when partisanship is strong in the electorate, the parties are always strong inside the legislature, but when parties are weak in the electorate they may or may not be strong institutionally. One possibility may lie in the diversity found within a state’s legislative districts. Where there is a great deal of difference across a constituency in terms of ideological preferences, constituency preferences should matter more. We do know there is a good deal of difference in constituency diversity. The US Senate and House (from Figure 4) offer one example of this. The standard deviation of the liberal vote measure in the US House is 14.3, compared to only 8.6 for the Senate. This means that the array of median voters to whom senators have to appeal is narrower than is the case for the House members. However, the

diversity of constituency interests for a chamber is a political fact of life, not a statistical oddity. Where there is little diversity of interests—there is not much between-district variance in constituency ideology—conflict cannot be structured by constituency differences. In this sense, the Senate is less representative in that the roll call cleavages there are less reflective of constituency differences than is the case for the House.

We are now in a position to answer our primary question: how do parties affect representation? Are systems with strong parties more representative? To address this we separate the 101 chambers into quartiles based on the overall constituency-roll call voting relationship. These quartiles are shown in Figure 6. The plot at the top of Figure 6 has the lowest 25 chambers in terms of the strength of the relationship (R^2) between constituency opinion (Liberal Vote) and roll call voting (NOMINATE scores). The next graph has the next quarter ordered by the R^2 measure of representation, and so on, so the chambers with the highest levels of roll call voting accounted for by constituency opinion comprise the bottom most graph.

[Insert Figure 6 here]

This set of graphs shows a dramatic movement from chambers we characterize as “weak party” and “elite party” to the “strong party” systems (from Figure 5) as the overall level of representation increases. Put simply, the highest levels of representation occur in strong party chambers, and the lowest levels of representation are found in the chambers with weak and elite party linkages. This is clear evidence that strong parties are associated with higher levels of representation, and systems in which party linkages have not developed tend to have substantially lower levels of representation.

What this tells us is that in most of the chambers where constituency opinion is mirrored well in the dominant roll call cleavage, most of the time this occurs via a strong party model.

That is, in most cases of strong representation, constituencies are connected to their legislator's policy voting by party affiliation. In those systems, more conservative districts elect Republicans and more liberal districts elect Democrats, and then we see strong party voting as the norm in these chambers. Notice that the lower right quadrant of the graph at the bottom of Figure 6 is empty, save one chamber that is on the line. This means that in all cases where there is a strong constituency linkage we also see strong party voting in the legislature. We find it most interesting, and encouraging, that this is an empty cell, and again, we see the absence of what we term as "democratic failure." These findings imply that where there is a strong constituency-party linkage, strong parties will form in the legislature, resulting in relatively high levels of representation.

[Insert Table 2 here]

Table 2 shows the differences in representation by the party system typology developed in Figure 2. The weak party systems average representation (R^2_{VC}) is just .26 compared to the strong party system, where it is .53. Clearly, there is a relationship between the strength of party systems and our measure of representation. The weak party system chambers are a heterogeneous mix, and we will return to them below, particularly the two systems that display high levels of representation even with relatively weak party linkages (the lower houses in Mississippi and Louisiana). These chambers most closely approach the delegate model discussed previously. There is a substantial direct effect of constituency opinion on roll call behavior in the weak party systems; whereas, in the strong party systems constituency opinion works through partisanship. The elite party system represents a different pattern altogether; there we find only weak correspondence between constituency opinion and the party of the elected legislators, but once in session, these parties square off into cohesive camps. These are strong

legislative parties that do not have deep constituency roots, and at least one of the parties in these cases tends to win seats across the full spectrum district opinion in the states.

The systems classified in Table 2 are nicely illustrated by returning to Figure 4. The New Jersey House is one of the clearest cases of a strong party system. Both the US House and Senate are party elite systems, although the House here is close to being one of the strong party systems (the constituency-party identification linkage (pseudo R^2) is .36 and we have arbitrarily drawn the line at .4 here). The West Virginia House is a good example of a weak party system that displays virtually no relationship at all between constituency ideology and legislators' positions in major roll call coalitions.

Additionally, we saw from the pattern in Figure 6 that most of the weak party systems display relatively low levels of representation. However, there are a couple of interesting exceptions, which deserve attention since they demonstrate a pattern so divergent from the modal strong parties link to representation. Notice that there are two weak party chambers in Figure 6 (one right on the line) that fall into the highest quartile in terms of the relationship between constituency ideology and roll call voting. These are the lower houses in Mississippi and Louisiana. Moreover, two of the three chambers with weak party systems in the graph immediately above, that with the second highest category of representation, are the upper houses in these two states.

[Insert Figure 7 here]

The explanation for these chambers becomes apparent when we look at the scatterplots of roll call voting with constituency opinion for each chamber. These are shown in Figure 7, with different symbols for Republicans (r), white Democrats (d), and black Democrats (x). In both states there appear to be three partisan groups, each with a different ideological center of gravity.

The black legislators represent the most liberal districts and clearly have the most liberal voting records, while Republicans anchor the conservatives on both counts. White Democrats are in the middle. We also see that black and Republican legislators tend to be from ideologically clustered districts, whereas white Democrats are from districts across the ideological spectrum, particularly in Louisiana.

Why does the party model work seemingly well for other chambers but breaks down in these cases? We can only speculate here, but we believe it is tied, again, to the tremendous diversity of district preferences that must be accommodated in these chambers. The distances spanned by the Democratic legislators make it difficult, it appears, for the party to maintain the cohesion we see in most of the high representation states. While we do not have space to pursue this here, we can draw from this that although strong party government is not a necessary condition for policy representation for the American legislatures, it is the norm.

Much of the comparative state policy literature focuses on inter-party competition following Key's (1949) insights about the consequences of one-party dominance in the South (Dawson and Robinson. 1963; Hofferbert 1966). Our analysis so far has examined the parameters of the party model to define "strong party systems" based on the constituency-party and party-voting linkages, but we have not examined the impact of competitiveness. Clearly the thrust of Key's analysis would include the idea that organized competitive parties would be more inclusive in their appeals to all citizens. Here we are concerned about how competition affects party cohesion as well as the party-constituency linkage in electoral arena. We believe that parties provide a default cleavage for legislators, and that the more salient the party differences the firmer will be this default cleavage. Thus we expect that where the parties are nearly evenly balanced, all members will be keenly aware that either of the parties could control the legislature,

and with this awareness we expect a heightened salience for party differences. In contrast, where one of the parties has a comfortable majority, both the majority and minority are well aware that the majority party is generally going to win. In this situation, the minority party has a choice of taking hard partisan stands on bills and in committee, or they can elect to be more accommodating toward the majority. Taking the hard partisan positions may please some party ideologues, but it also guarantees more salience for party labels in which the majority always wins and the minority gets nothing. A more conciliatory strategy, in contrast, may lower the salience of party labels, encouraging personal give-and-take so that some of the common ground that may be achieved can yield policy a bit more palatable to the minority.

The minority party has little such incentives for cooperation and conciliation when they are only a few seats from taking control. As control of the chamber becomes more at stake, partisan differences, we expect, will inevitably be more salient and both parties will have an incentive to hold their own members to the party line. For the minority, there is frequently the possibility of peeling off just enough votes from the other party to get the occasional win, or if they stay cohesive, they often can block almost any legislation—although this varies with chamber rules.

The implication of this discussion for our analysis is that party competition within the legislature should yield more cohesive and divided parties. We will measure competition here simply as the Democrat's percentage of seats held by the two parties. We expect the greatest degree of legislative partisanship to occur where this measure approaches 50 percent. We also expect that party competitiveness will be reflected in constituency voting behavior, largely as a result, we believe, of the polarization that competitiveness is believed to instill within the chambers. That is, as the parties are more frequently at policy odds within the legislatures, their

respective ideological positions are likely to become clearer to the electorate, and with this, we expect to find a clearer pattern of constituency ideology-party voting in the electorate.

To assess these hypotheses we regress our measures of party linkage on competitiveness (defined as the Democrat's share of the seats and the quadratic of that quantity). We expect a curvilinear relationship with the estimated party-voting linkage to peak when the parties are evenly balanced. We estimate the constituency-party linkage the same way, but use the estimated R^2 from the logistic regressions of the legislators' party affiliations with constituency ideology. The results are shown in Figure 8. The top figure shows the impact of party competitiveness (seat balance) on legislative partisanship, and the lower figure shows the relationship between party competitiveness and the strength of the constituency-party linkage.

[Insert Figure 8 here]

The relationships are unmistakable and in the order that we anticipated. In the upper graph, party competition has a marked relationship with legislative partisanship; party voting clearly is stronger in the chambers where the parties approach numerical parity and falls off greatly where one party dominates the chamber.⁶ There is, of course, a good deal of variance in the strength of the party model linkages that is not accounted for by competitiveness, and this is not surprising.** In future research, we will be turning our attention to the factors that influence both the strength of the party model and the strikingly differing levels of representation we find across the 101 chambers of America's legislatures.

⁶ The regressions underlying the graphs in Figure 8 are, for the Roll call-party linkage :

$$Y = .016 + .035(DS) - .00036(DS^2) + e \quad R^2 = .363$$

and for the party-constituency linkage

$$Y = .040 + .015(DS) - .0002(DS^2) + e \quad R^2 = .099$$

and all coefficients are significant ($p < .001$).

Conclusions

Overall, we find in places where constituents elect legislators that match their partisan preferences, legislators' policy preferences often fall strongly along partisan lines. Under these two conditions, there is a healthy representational relationship. Moreover, parties bolster this link between constituents in the electorate and legislators in the institution. As this party link weakens, good representation may or may not occur. In our future research, we plan to examine systematically the components of "elite" and "weak" party systems to identify what drives the dynamic processes of representation. Perhaps most importantly, we show that democratic failure does not exist in any of the American legislative systems.

The patterns in our findings have important implications for our understanding of representation and the role of parties in connecting citizens and their legislators. Much like Key (1949), we find that partisan composition is an integral component of a healthy party system and democratic representation. By revisiting classic works on representation and the role of parties, we argue that parties fulfill a necessary and important function in the representational link between legislators and their constituents.

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Table 1. Chambers with the Highest and Lowest
 Levels of Representation
 (R^2 Constituency Opinion with Roll Calls)

Low Representation		High Representation	
Chamber	R^2	Chamber	R^2
HI-s	-0.04	TX-s	0.68
RI-s	-0.02	TX-h	0.71
NE	0.00	NJ-h	0.74
WV-s	0.01	NY-s	0.78
RI-h	0.01	LA-h	0.79

Table 2: Levels of Constituency-Roll Call Congruence Across Party Systems

Representation	Weak Party Sys.	Elite Party Sys.	Strong Party Sys.
Bottom Quartile	56%	35%	0%
2d	17	39	13
3d	17	19	35
Top Quartile	11	7	53
Total	100%	100%	101%
Mean R^2_{VC}	.262	.343	.529
N	18	43	40

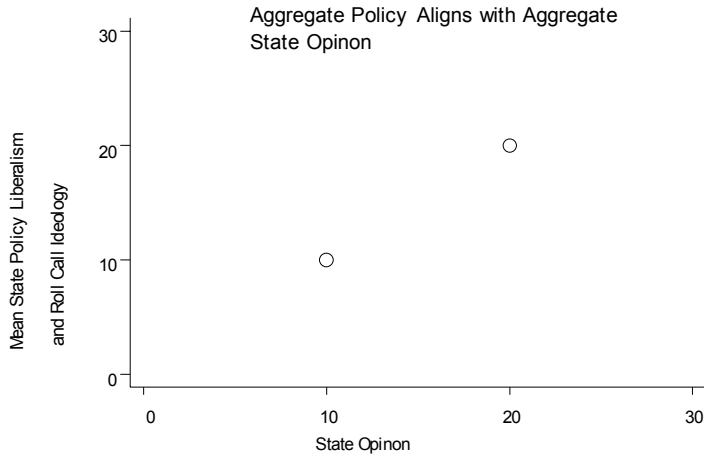


Fig. 1.A: State Level Model

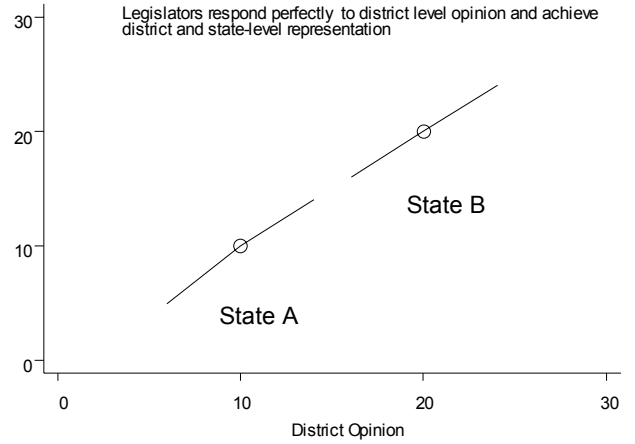


Fig. 1.B: Pure Delegate Model

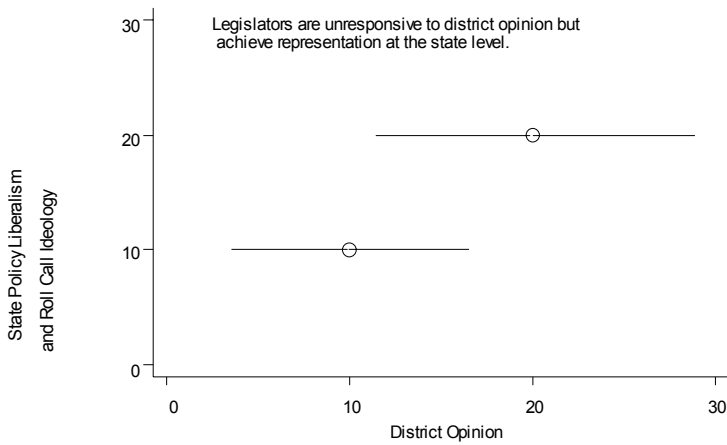


Fig. 1.C: Pure Collective/Trustee Model

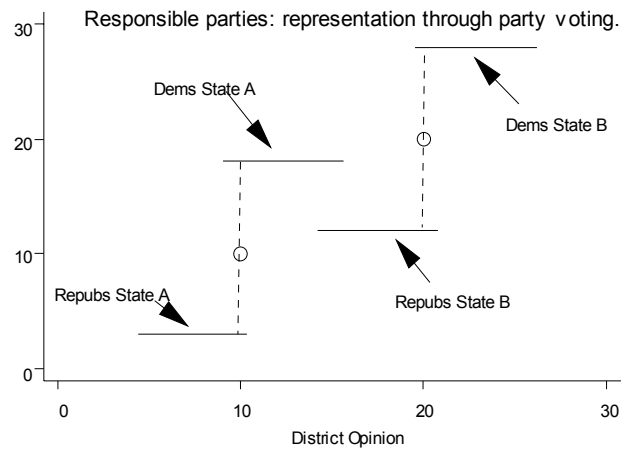
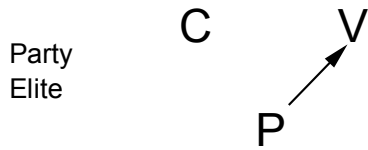
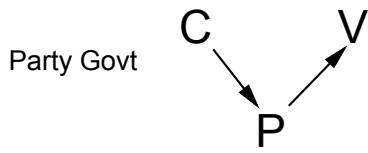


Fig 1.D: Party Government Model

Figure 1: Idealized Models of Representation for Two States

Party Models



Non-party Models

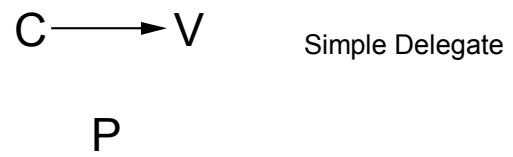
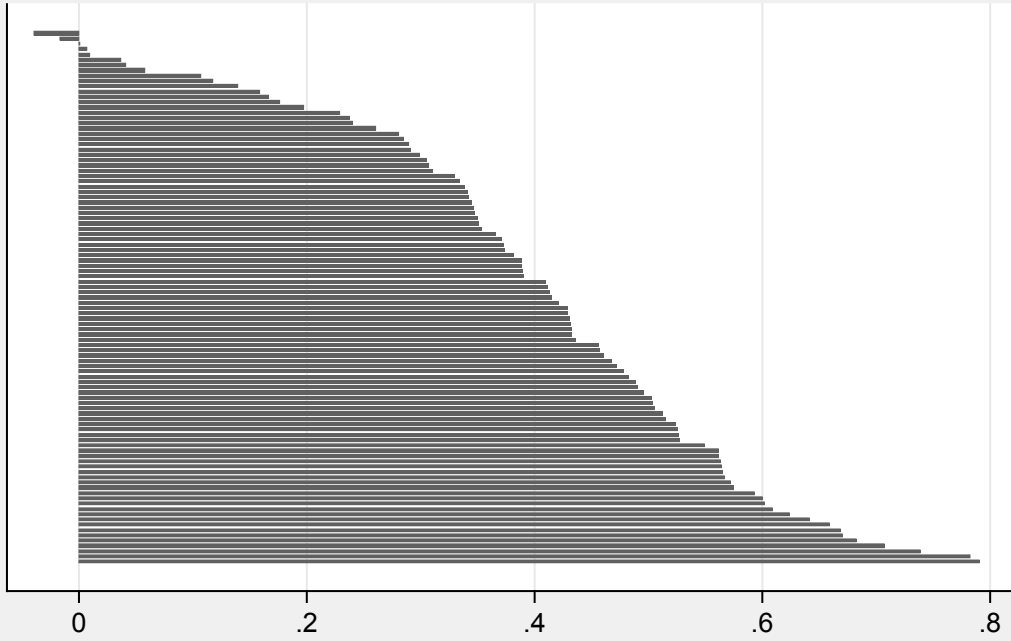


Figure 2. Variations of the Party Model of Representation

Figure 3: Distribution of Constituency-Roll Call Congruence
Adj. R-sq of Left Vote with NOMINATE Scores



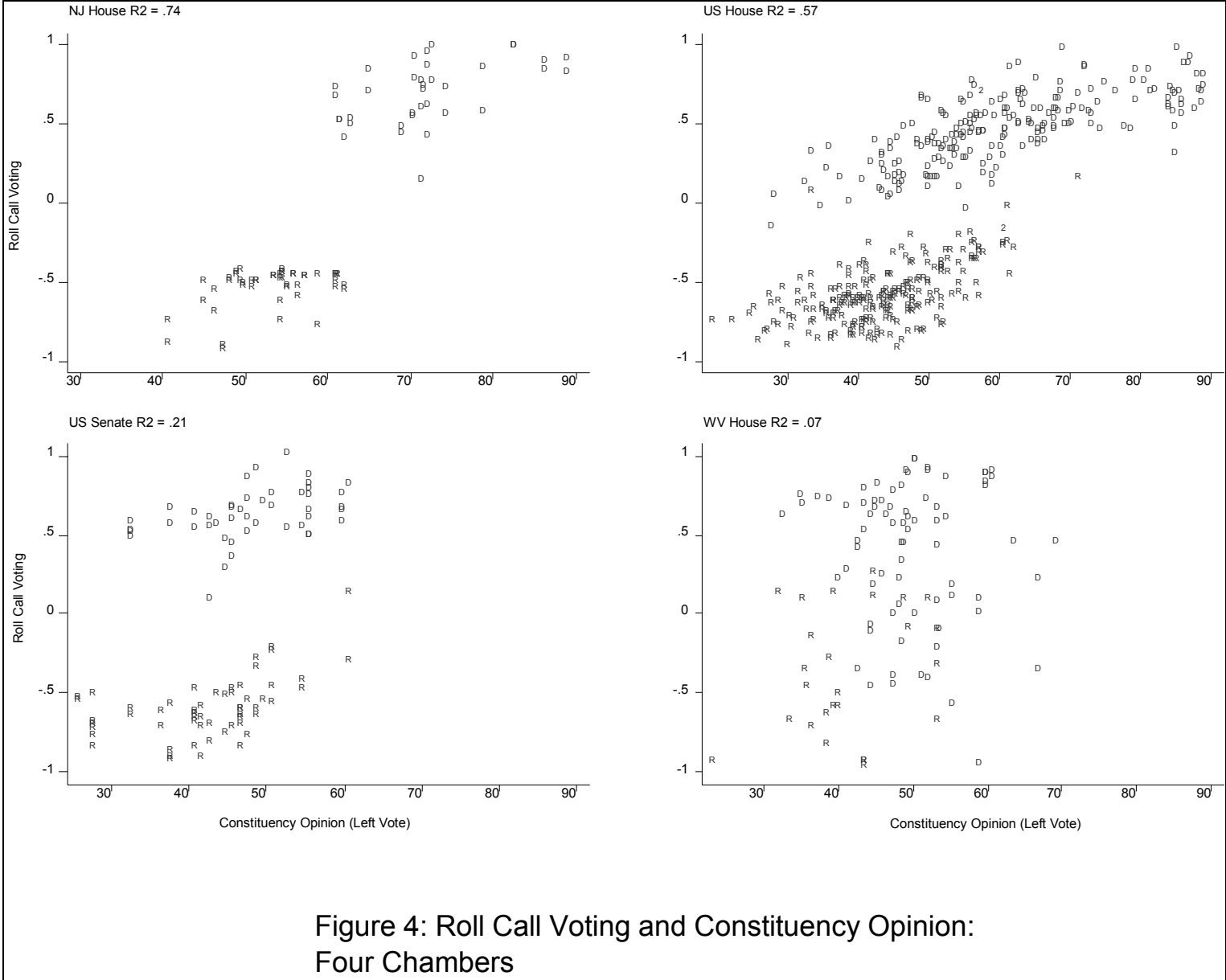


Figure 4: Roll Call Voting and Constituency Opinion:
Four Chambers

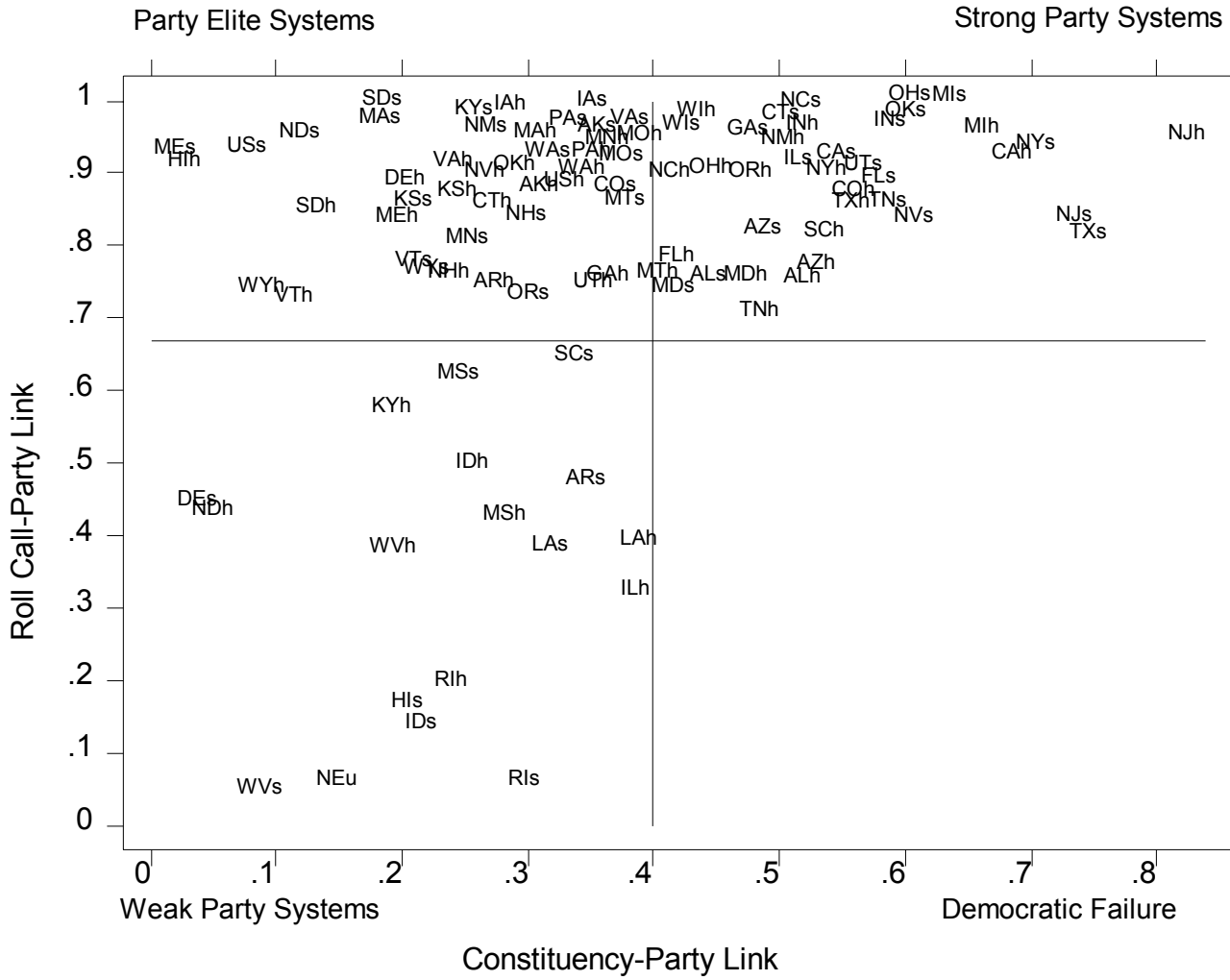


Figure 5. Typology of Chambers Defined by Strength of Party Linkages

Figure 6: Party Systems by Levels of Constituency-Roll Call Congruence

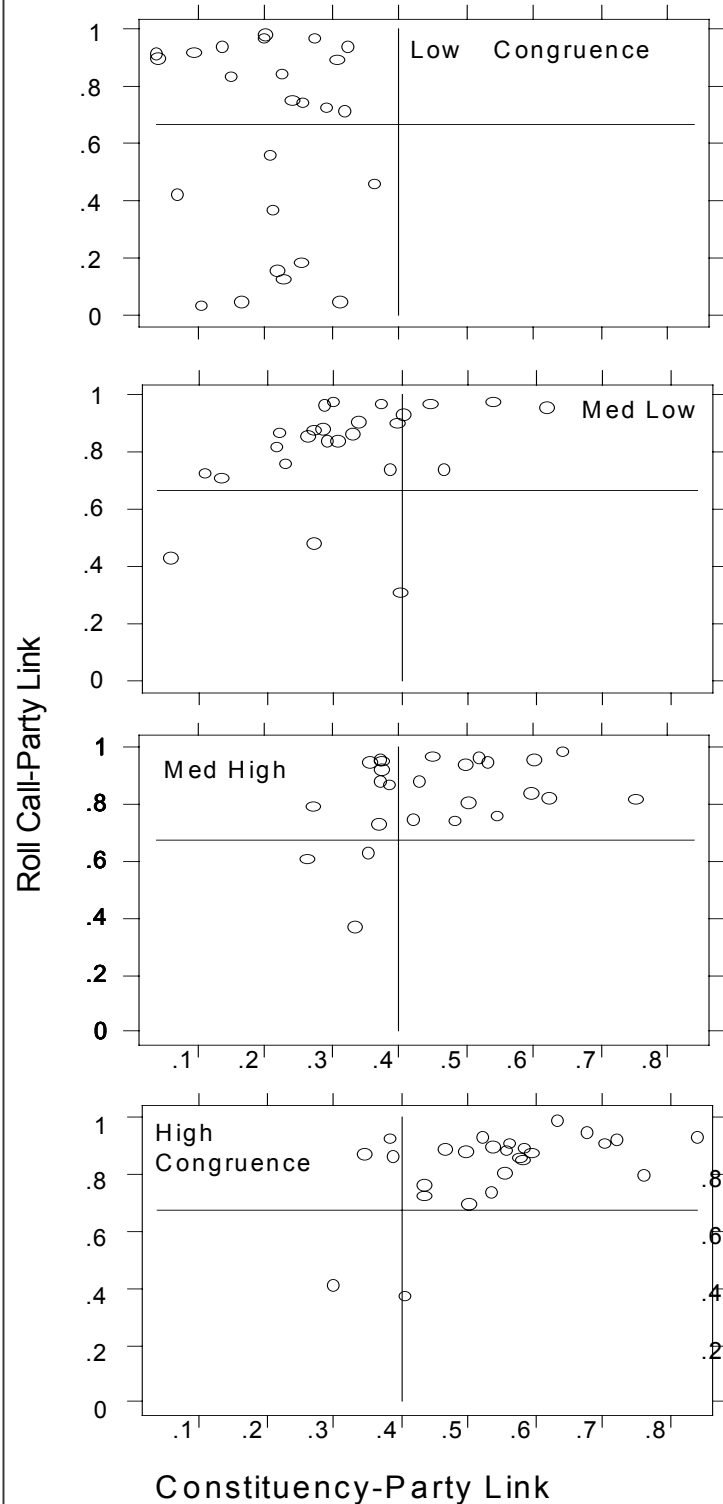


Figure 7. Roll Calls and Constituency in Two Weak Party Chambers.

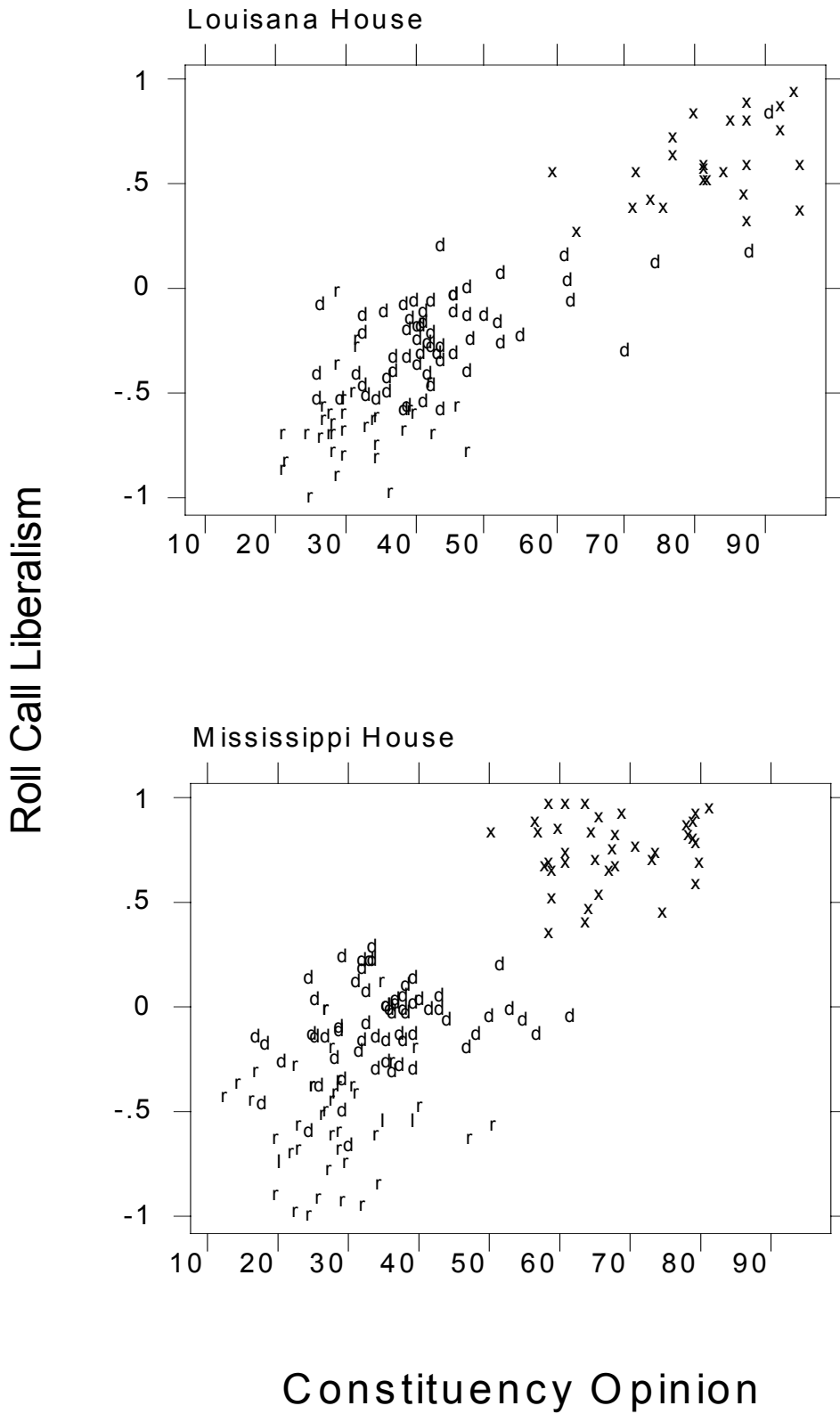


Figure 8. Effects of Party Competition on Party Model Linkages

