

The Pitkinian Public: Representation in the Eyes of Citizens

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What does it mean for citizens in democracies to be represented? Does it even matter? Representation theories and studies have mostly emphasized the representatives, giving only limited attention to the represented. In this paper, we address this lacuna by adopting Hanna Pitkin's multidimensionality of representation and the act-for/stand-for tiered structure she posits, along with a reconceptualization of dyadic and collective representation as a matrix (rather than a dichotomy). We develop theoretically (and examine empirically) how citizens perceive all of Pitkin's dimensions concurrently and their tiered structure at two points on the dyadic-collective matrix: representation by a politician/party and representation by the parliament. We develop a novel set of questions, based on in-depth interviews and designed to capture Pitkin's theoretical concept of representation empirically among citizens. Utilizing the 2019-20 Israel National Election Studies, we find that citizens' subjective patterns of representation are Pitkinian - multidimensional and tiered - across dyadic and collective representation. We further find that these patterns contribute to citizens' overall feeling of representation, and that multidimensional representation, especially by the parliament (where they feel less represented), promotes support for democracy. Our study calls for more focus on representation from the citizens' standpoint.

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Contemporary democracies are first and foremost *representative* democracies. The most straightforward definition of representation is simply “to make present again” (Pitkin 1967, 8). Thus, “political representation is the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives ‘present’ in public policy making processes. Political representation occurs when political actors speak, advocate, symbolize, and act on the behalf of others in the political arena” (Dovi 2018). Representation is defined as something political actors, the representatives do. But what does it mean to be represented? How do the represented, the citizens in democracies, perceive political representation? Does it even matter?

Citizens' attitudes toward democracy are a crucial factor in the crisis of democracy, which by definition is the crisis of representative democracy. Recently, Claassen (2020) has shown that support for democracy in 135 countries over a period of 29 years has been significantly and positively associated with subsequent changes in democracy, especially with the endurance of democracy, once it has been established. Foa and Mounk (2017; 2019) demonstrate that erosion in democratic support is associated with subsequent declines in the actual extent of democratic governance and system-level democratic backsliding as well as increase in support for non-democratic alternatives. Despite the significance of citizens' democratic attitudes in the crisis of democracy, no comprehensive theory-driven framework has been developed for understanding citizens' perceptions of representation and their role in democratic backsliding.

In this study, we follow a long tradition in the representation literature of combining political theory and empirical research to offer such a framework and test it empirically. The representation scholarship has long benefited from a constructive engagement between political theory and political science, revitalized in the past two decades, following Jane Mansbridge's influential call for “[r]ethinking representation” (2003). Empirical research on how legislators relate to their constituents, especially in the American context, paved the way to a myriad of innovative concepts of representation that enriched our understanding of representation (Disch 2011; Dovi 2020; Mansbridge 2003; Rehfeld 2006; Saward 2010) and inspired, in turn, new approaches to empirical studies of representation (de Wilde 2020). Still, most of this work has focused on the representatives – their anticipation to represent future constituents (Mansbridge 2003), the claims

they make (Saward 2010), how they mobilize and construct their constituency (Disch 2011), and what makes them good representatives (Dovi 2012). The represented and their perceptions of representation received only little attention, notwithstanding the notions of *audience* (Rehfeld 2006; Saward 2010) or the citizens' standpoint (Disch 2015), that have been introduced into the evaluation of the quality, legitimacy, and democraticness of representation. The conceptualization of representation in the eyes of the citizens remains limited, leaving a theoretical and an empirical void in the study of representation.

In this paper, we address these two voids. We go back to the foundations of representation – Pitkin's classic concept of representation (1967), buttressed by Weissberg's distinction between dyadic and collective representation (1978). With these basics, we connect theoretical and empirical bodies of knowledge on representation into a joint framework for citizens' perceptions of representation. Specifically, we adopt Pitkin's multidimensionality of representation and the act-for/stand-for tiered structure she posits, along with the concepts of dyadic and collective representation. The two latter concepts – and especially collective representation – received little theoretical attention and a diversity of empirical interpretations (e.g., Golder and Stramski 2010; Hurley 1982; Weissberg 1978), a fact that highlights the need for an analytical framework. We thus suggest that in order to better understand how citizens perceive their representation, dyadic and collective representation should be seen as a matrix (rather than a dichotomy) along two axes, of the represented and the representatives. We adapt these concepts to develop theoretically (and examine empirically) representation in the eyes of the public.

In so doing, we study how citizens perceive *all* of Pitkin's *dimensions* concurrently and their tiered structure, when represented dyadically by a politician/party and collectively by the parliament. To study the theoretical concepts from the citizens' standpoint, we developed an original set of questions, based on in-depth interviews with citizens, designed to measure citizens' dyadic and collective subjective sense of representation over Pitkin's four dimensions of representation (formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive). Employing the 2019-20 Israel National Election Studies (INES), we show that the formalistic and substantive dimensions are most important to citizens, corresponding to Pitkin's tiered structure of act-for vs. stand-for representation. However, the dimensions that are important to citizens are not necessarily those they feel most represented on. Furthermore, people's sense of representation is multidimensional;

and it is collective rather than dyadic representation, that matters - for both their overall perception of representation and for their support for democracy. However, this is exactly the representation that citizens perceive to be in deficit.

We conclude that citizens' subjective patterns of representation are *Pitkinian* - multidimensional and tiered - across dyadic and collective representation. The congruence between Pitkin's normative prescription of representation and people's subjective patterns of representation is striking. The problem, it seems, lies not in the perceptions of representation but rather in its realization - the extent to which citizens actually feel represented. The theoretical framework and the empirical examination provide significant tools to better understand the role of citizens in representation, and further establish the value of joining political theory and empirical research in the study of representation.

Subjective Representation: Why should We Care About Representation in the Eyes of the Public?

The bulk of representation theories and studies have entertained a top-down approach to representation, in their focus on the representatives: what makes them more or less representative, good or bad at representing (Dovi 2012). Hanna Pitkin in her classic conceptualization of representation warns against a "reductionist realism" of representation to people's belief that they are represented: "It seems likely that men who are in fact represented will feel represented; but they need not, and some may have the illusion of being represented when an objective observer would say that they are not" (1967, 10). She thus encourages scholars to put aside the "psychological feeling" of representation among citizens, what Harden and Clark call "the demand side" of the representation relationship (2016, 248).

Recent prominent theoretical contributions to the representation scholarship suggest a shift in focus, putting forward the *audience* as a critical - yet neglected - element in the democraticness of representation. Political representation, argues Rehfeld, "results from an audience's judgment that some individual, rather than some other, stands in for a group in order to perform a specific function. The audience uses a set of 'rules of recognition' to judge whether a claimant is a representative in any particular case" (2006, 2). Saward (2010) notes that the notion of the audience and the judgments citizens make on the ways in which they are represented remain neglected in

studies of representation. The audience, the constituents, and their interests, he contends, are not pre-given, but are constituted in the process of representative claim making – the representation maker constructs the audience. Taking on a normative stance, he stresses that any representation claim depends on the reception, rejection, disregard, contestation, or other forms of engagement by the “appropriate audience.” This conceptualization accords citizens the role of determining (normatively) whether a claim is democratically legitimate. Disch (2015) calls to understand representation from “the citizen standpoint” as a prolonged process, contextualized in history, culture, and power relations.

This renewed interest in citizens’ perception of representation does not amount, though, to a comprehensive theorization, nor to a framework for empirical studies. Indeed, citizens’ preferences, perceptions, and expectations of political representation have started to attract political scientists’ attention only recently (Jones 2016; Lauermann 2013; Best and Seyis 2021). Holmberg (2020) examines subjective representation using CSES cross-national data from 2001-2011. He finds that in the majority of the 46 countries in the study, a majority of citizens feels represented, either by a political leader or party, and this holds across social and political groups. Harden and Clark (2016) combine the examination of subjective perceptions with the distinction between dyadic and collective representation with respect to race and partisanship. They find that collective representation elicits a greater feeling of being represented, and argue that it provides better substantive and symbolic benefits than dyadic representation.

This line of studies further suggests that citizens’ sense of representation may matter for democracy, as “personal feelings of representation might strongly affect citizens’ intention to vote, their support for parties or the government, and their feelings of being well represented” (Dalton 2017, 189). A few recent studies indicate that citizens’ perceived responsiveness (Kölln 2016) and feelings of representation (Blais, Singh, and Dumitrescu 2014) increase voter turnout. Feeling represented by a party has been found to increase trust in the parliament (Dunn 2015) and satisfaction with democracy (Weßels 2011). These findings should be seen in the context of the long-term processes of growing disaffection, distrust and gaps between publics and their elected representatives and representative institutions; lower voter turnout and support of the mainstream parties; and rise in anti-establishment and populist parties and candidates (Dalton 2004; Kriesi 2014; Norris 1999, 2011; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Weßels 2015). However, no empirical testing

has been done of how multidimensional (rather than only substantive) perceptions of citizens regarding their representation matter for democracy.

We engage these considerations and undertake the study of representation in the eyes of the citizens. In the next sections, we develop a comprehensive conceptualization of *how* citizens perceive representation, integrating the foundations of multidimensionality, tiered structure, and dyadic and collective representation.

Pitkinian Representation: Dimensions and Tiered Structure

Hanna Pitkin's (1967) *The Concept of Representation* is considered the Archimedean point of contemporary representation scholarship. Pitkin sees representation as a jigsaw and outlines the various dimensions of representation and the act-for/stand-for tiered structure in which they are arranged. We pick up these two central aspects – multidimensionality and the act-for/stand-for tiered structure – to investigate citizens' perception of representation.

Pitkin posits four dimensions of representation: *substantive* representation of the public's policy preferences and interests; *formalistic* representation, i.e., the rules of the 'representation' game that define actual representation; *descriptive* representation in terms of the resemblance between the citizens and their representatives in various social categories; and *symbolic* representation which is closely associated with issues of identity. Pitkin conceives substantive representation as the highest form of representation: "only if it seems right to attribute governmental action to the people in the substantive sense do we speak of representative government" (p. 231). If this preeminent dimension of representation cannot be achieved, the other dimensions of representation become more important: "to the extent that [...] substantive representation breaks down [...] we seem then to fall back on descriptive representation; we choose a representative who shares our values and commitments [...] Failing that, we can retreat to symbolic representation; we can let ourselves be influenced by emotional ties in spite of our doubts about whether our interests are being served. Or, failing even that, we can cling to our formal and institutional representative arrangements even when they seem devoid of substantive content" (p. 213). Thus, the four dimensions not only encompass different aspects of representation, but they are interconnected and hierarchical, comprising *together* a comprehensive (yet tiered) notion of representation.

Pitkin's dimensions have provided a theoretical "map" for numerous empirical studies of political representation. However, the bulk of them focus only on one or two dimensions. The literature focusing on *substantive* representation emphasized policy preferences (see Wlezien & Soroka 2007 for an overview); that on the *formalistic* dimension - on accountability and authorization (Powell 2000; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 2012). An influential line of work related the formal aspect of electoral systems to the substantive or descriptive dimensions of representation (Powell 2000; Lijphart 1999; Htun and Powell 2013). *Descriptive* representation, studied in terms of sociological categories, was always part of the study of representation (Lijphart 1999; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978). It was reintroduced in the last two decades by theorists concerned with diversity and inclusion (Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995; Young 2000). In this normative literature the calls for women and minority groups' "presence" intermixed Pitkin's descriptive and symbolic dimensions of representation. The *symbolic* facet of representation has gained renewed attention in efforts to understand populist actors and appeals in recent elections in the U.S. and Europe (Cramer 2016; Reinemann, Matthes, and Sheafer 2017). Yet, empirical studies of symbolic representation are still scarce, even from the perspective of minority groups (Lombardo and Meier 2014; Marschall and Ruhil 2007; Sheafer, Shenhav, and Goldstein 2011).

Pitkin stresses that representation is not only multidimensional, but that the four dimensions form a tiered structure. The dimensions comprise a pattern of act-for (the formalistic and substantive dimensions) and stand-for (the descriptive and symbolic dimensions) representation (see Figure 1). Pitkin posits hierarchical relations between the two tiers, with the act-for dimensions being the important ones. The formalistic dimension is the foundation, a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for representation. Comprised of authorization and accountability, it concentrates on the formalities of the relationships between the representative and the represented: "anything done after the right kind of authorization and within its limits is by definition representing" (p. 39). The substantive dimension adds content to representation. The two dimensions are tied in the act-for tier because form alone cannot guarantee the substance, and substance alone will make representation a "moment-to-moment, short-range performance," lacking institutionalization that will make it systemic and sustained (p. 239).

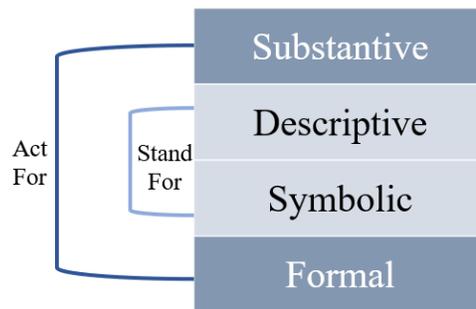


Figure 1: Pitkin's Tiered Structure of Representation.

Pitkin's stand-for representation is comprised of the descriptive and symbolic dimensions. In these dimensions, representation does not involve any kind of acting, “rather, it depends on the representative’s characteristics, on what he *is* or *is like*, on being something rather than doing something” (p. 61). This representation, therefore, “rests on emotional, affective, irrational psychological responses rather than on rationally justifiable criteria” (p. 100). For Pitkin, the stand-for dimensions are of lesser importance compared to the act-for tier.

Rehfeld (2006) makes a similar distinction to that of Pitkin’s act-for/stand-for tiers in his conceptualization of a general theory of political representation. He stresses the importance of the act-for dimensions and the connections between them, arguing that both are required for adequate representation. Saward, in his impactful conceptualization of representation as claim-making (2010), refutes this prioritization, contending that the act-for/stand-for schema undermines the *active* aspects of symbolic and descriptive representation and thus their importance. He stresses that since representation is always a matter of *making*, it always involves an act – a representative may claim to represent substantively, symbolically, descriptively, or formally her constituents. Thus, symbolic or descriptive representative claims may, in fact, be more effective and important than substantive or formal representative claims.

Despite the widespread citation and reliance on Pitkin’s multidimensional conceptualization of representation, there is almost no empirical research encompassing all dimensions (see Schwandt-Bayer and Mishler 2005, for a noteworthy exception), and research on the tiered act-for/stand-for pattern of representation is practically non-existent. We apply this multidimensional approach to representation in the eyes of citizens, and study *all dimensions* concurrently, as well as the structure they form. As we shift from the representatives’ perspective to citizens’ perspective, we move to

redefine the spectrum of representation – who represents and who is being represented. To do so, we develop the distinction between dyadic and collective representation into a matrix of represented and representatives.

Dyadic and Collective Representation: From a Dichotomy to a Matrix

Citizens are represented by a variety of representatives and institutions within the political system. Their perceptions of representation may, therefore, depend on who is the representative in question – a legislator, a party, the parliament, or the government. These different types of representatives have been classified by Weissberg (1978) into *dyadic representation* - the pairing of the (individual) representative and his constituency - and *collective representation* - the “institutions collectively representing the people” (p. 535). Dyadic representation has been the standard way to study representation in the thriving American Congress scholarship since the pioneering study by Miller and Stokes (1963). Collective representation as a “systemic property, located not in the behavior of individuals but in the overall functioning of the entire representative policy-making system” (Wlezien and Soroka 2007, 801) received considerably less scholarly attention.

Political theorists tend to focus on dyadic representation, often relating to representation in general terms, while in fact focusing on the dyadic relationship between a representative and her constituents (see the overviews of representation by Dovi 2018 and Mansbridge 2020). The institutional aspects of representation receive little attention in representation theories. Pitkin conceptualizes representation throughout her book in dyadic terms, but in the concluding chapter she observes that *political* representation, and especially act-for representation, is primarily public: “what makes it representation is not any single action by any one participant, but the over-all structure and functioning of the system” (Pitkin 1967, 221). More recently, Saward (2010) notes that democratic institutions may represent in various ways, because representation claims can be made by a single actor, a party, or a parliament.

When coming to evaluate representation in the eyes of the citizens, it is therefore important to consider how these perceptions may vary across different types of representatives. However, most of the theoretical and empirical literature blurs the distinction between dyadic and collective representation, employing a diversity of definitions and operationalizations of them. This leads to different identifications of the represented and the representative(s), and, at times, to seemingly

dissimilar findings (Andeweg 2011, Hurley 1982). This stresses the need for an encompassing framework for the notions of dyadic and collective representation as a matrix.

We posit that to better understand representation relations and how citizens perceive them, both the represented and the representative(s) should be viewed along a dyadic-collective *continuum*. On the represented side (the x-axis in Figure 2), the dyadic end is the voter or the constituent, the collective end is the electorate as a whole, and in-between we may find constituencies, party voters, or any other socially or politically based groups. On the representative(s) side (the y-axis in Figure 2), the dyadic end would include the elected single actor (a legislator or a party, depending on the regime and electoral system)¹ and the collective end would pertain to representative institutions and their policy outputs; in-between we may find multiple legislators or parties. Thus, we constructed a matrix (Figure 2) to encompass different types of representatives and represented, accounting for representation in terms of central tendency and distribution measures (Golder and Stramski 2010); representation by individuals and institutions; and representation by directly-elected representatives (a legislator or a party) and non-directly elected representatives (e.g., surrogate, parliament).

Taken together, the represented and the representative(s) dyadic-collective continuums create a matrix. At the bottom left dyadic corner of this matrix are studies that look at the single constituent and her representation by a single legislator or political party she voted for (one-to-one congruence in Golder and Stramski's terms, p. 92). At the top right collective corner, we have those who look at the entire electorate and the way it is represented by political institutions, such as the parliament, following Weissberg's proposal "to think of representation collectively, i.e., to consider the extent to which Congress as an institution represents the American people" (1978, 535; for exemplary studies see Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995; Soroka and Wlezien 2010).

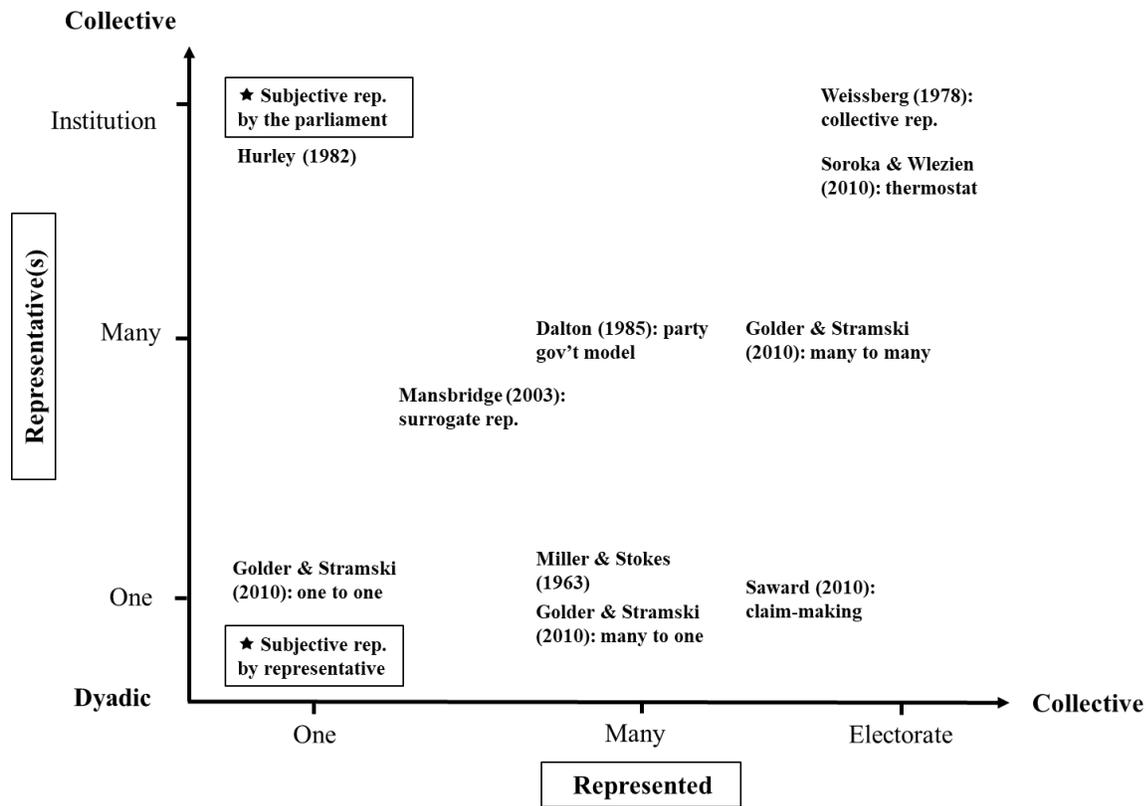


Figure 2: Position of Select Representation Literature on the Dyadic-Collective Matrix.
 Note: The stars indicate the focus of the current study.

The matrix allows to account for studies and conceptualizations that may not explicitly fit into the dyadic-collective dichotomy. A case in point is Mansbridge’s (2003) concept of *surrogate* representation, achieved by a representative among the many legislators, who may represent constituents or groups who are not in her constituency. Mansbridge connects this type of representation to Weissberg’s collective representation, but her conceptualization remains largely at the level of individual representatives, rather than the institutional one. In our matrix, surrogate representation is thus located between the ‘one’ and ‘many’ both on the represented and the representative(s) axes.

Furthermore, the matrix clarifies the conceptual and empirical ambiguity of collective representation. Hurley (1982), for example, follows Weissberg's focus on collective representation, but on the represented side she is interested in the *individual* vantage point, as an indicator for citizen satisfaction with the policy outputs from the representative institution(s).

Thus, Hurley and Weissberg share the notion of collective representation on the representative side, but differ in their approach to the represented (and indeed their empirical findings diverge). Dalton's prototypical study (1985) of correspondence between policy positions of (many) party voters and (many) party representatives falls in the middle of the matrix. Another notable case is Golder and Stramski's many-to-many concept of representation, which they distinguish from collective representation since it denotes distributions (beyond central tendency) of public opinion and (many) representatives (rather than the institution or policy outcome). The matrix clarifies that many-to-many representation is indeed not located in the collective end of the representative(s) axis (but rather at the 'many' point), but it is located near the collective end of the represented axis.²

The conceptualization of dyadic and collective representation axes in relation to both the represented and the representative(s) sides offers a refined mapping of key representation studies and theories. It also contributes to our endeavor of understanding representation in the eyes of public. Since our focus is on the represented point of view, our study is located on the dyadic end of the represented axis. The dyadic-collective continuum on the Y axis highlights that citizens are represented by any number of representatives, between the directly-elected legislator or party, through the many legislators in the parliament, to the parliament as a whole. We focus on the two end-points of the representative(s) axis – citizens' perception of representation by their directly-elected single representative and by the parliament as a whole (denoted by the two stars in Figure 2).

Moreover, we study these representation relationships across all dimensions Pitkin outlined. Dyadic and collective representation have been examined empirically mainly in terms of substantive representation. Extensive bodies of empirical work are the ideological or policy congruence studies (for a recent overview see Lefkofridi 2020), and those looking at the impact of public opinion on policy making (see Wlezien and Soroka 2007 for an overview). The latter line of work focuses on substantive representation in terms of policy output, and is thus concerned with collective representation (the top right corner of our dyadic-collective matrix), even though some of these studies do not place themselves within the representation literature, and many do not make use of the term 'collective representation' (e.g., Gilens and Page 2014; Page and Shapiro 1983; Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995).

Recently, some studies began to consider collective representation beyond the substantive dimension. For example, several studies substantiate the effect of collective descriptive representation in U.S. state legislatures of previously excluded or underrepresented groups on their turnout and sense of external efficacy (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Clark 2014; Rocha et al. 2010; Uhlaner and Scola 2016). Some of this work further shows that dyadic representation is not similarly effective in producing substantive representation. Rocha et al. suggest that descriptive dyadic representation, by the single representative, is insufficient to bring about policy outcomes for underrepresented groups, “unless it is coupled with substantial minority representation within the chamber as a whole” (2010, 891).

We concur that representative(s) along the dyadic-collective continuum represent citizens across the formal, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive dimensions, and are thus interested in how citizens perceive their representation by different types of representatives along these dimensions. The next section integrates Pitkin’s four dimensions with dyadic and collective representation into citizens’ viewpoint of representation.

Toward a Framework of Representation in the Eyes of Citizens

We adapt Pitkin’s four dimensions of representation and posit that each dimension may carry different meanings for people along the dyadic and collective matrix. The *formalistic* dimension relates to whether citizens feel political representatives and institutions are accountable and use the authority given to them responsibly; the *descriptive* dimension pertains to the extent to which citizens identify a representative or a party and the parliament as a whole as sharing their background and sociological characteristics; citizens’ perception of the *symbolic* dimension, we contend, stems from a representative or the parliament eliciting feelings of pride and belonging; and the *substantive* dimension relates to whether citizens feel the stances, laws, and decisions made by politicians, parties, and political institutions represent their policy preferences and views.

With this adaption of Pitkin’s dimensions, we ask how citizens think and feel about representation: do citizens perceive it as multidimensional? Do they discern between the different dimensions or perceive them as intertwined? Do they prioritize some dimensions over the others? In accordance with the dyadic-collective matrix, we inquire: do citizens perceive their representation along the representative(s) continuum differently, and which is more meaningful?

We are especially interested in the interplay between the importance of dimensions and the sense of representation on these dimensions as a potential explanatory factor in citizens' support for democracy. If citizens indeed distinguish between the different dimensions and hold a tiered structure of them (or at least prioritize some dimensions over the others), then the extent to which they feel represented on the dimensions important to them may affect their support for democracy. In addition, a multidimensional perception of representation, if such exists, may mitigate a possible deficit in representation on important dimension(s), as representation on other dimensions may compensate for such insufficiency.

We are further interested in the perceived importance of the act-for and stand-for dimensions in the eyes of the public. Pitkin, and following her, Rehfeld, prioritize the act-for dimensions over the stand-for ones. Furthermore, between the two act-for dimensions, Pitkin contends that formal representation enables substantive representation, while Rehfeld argues that substantive representation precedes the procedures of formal representation. From an empirical stance, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) find that Americans care about process and not policy when they evaluate their government, or in Pitkin's terminology – formalistic, not substantive representation.

Pitkin stresses that such apparent political disengagement by citizens does not imply an undermining of substantive representation. Instead, she presumes that with regard to substantive representation, the sum is greater than its parts, as “the voting behavior of people in a representative democracy can respond to issues and politics, even if many individual voters do not respond directly to them” (p. 224). This, she argues, is especially prevalent in collective representation. This is also the point of view of empirical scholars of public opinion as a political actor within the macro polity (Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002; Page and Shapiro 1992; Shamir and Shamir 2000) and is well captured in the thermostat model of representation (Soroka and Wlezien 2010; Wlezien, 1995). Thus, while Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's findings seem to suggest that the formal dimension of representation is predominant in citizens' representation preferences, system-level studies leave open the question about the importance of the substantive and formalistic dimensions to citizens.

In contrast to the perspective that prioritizes the act-for dimensions, Saward asserts that in representation as claim-making, the stand-for (descriptive and symbolic) dimensions of

representation, are no less (and even more) important than the substantive and formalistic dimensions. Drawing on and from this discussion, we explore which dimensions citizens perceive as important to them, which dimensions they feel more or less represented on, and to what extent the sense of representation contribute to their support for democracy.

We consider the above-mentioned multidimensionality and tier structure of representation with regard to the two end points of the dyadic-collective representative(s) continuum in our matrix. How do citizens perceive their representation by political institutions and how does it vary from their sense of dyadic representation? Which dimensions are more important to citizens in each case? We expect variation between the dyadic and collective end of representation in the eyes of the public. Specifically, since collective representation by institutions is the systemic context in which dyadic representation materializes (as Pitkin posits), collective representation should matter more to citizens, compared to their sense of being represented dyadically by their representative. Given the importance of – and erosion in – political representative institutions and the declining trust in politicians, political parties, and the representative institutions of democracy, the extent citizens see dyadic and collective representation as distinct or intertwined is an empirical question well worth studying, if for no other reason, then in reference to the crisis of democracy.

In what follows we employ this framework in an exploratory analysis of citizens' perceptions of representation. We focus on Israel as a case study. Our intention is to point at the importance of bringing the citizens back into the representation scholarship, both theoretically and empirically.

Political Representation in Israel

Israel is especially suitable for studying political representation in the eyes of the public through the framework we outlined above. Historically one can identify the centrality of representation in the vision and design of the political system, based on proportional representation (Galnoor and Blander 2018; Horowitz and Lissak 1989). Furthermore, representation remains on the country's agenda, with the political community and the citizenry playing an active role in these processes. Deep social cleavages, extensive issue divides, and underlying collective identity dilemmas have been challenging representation on all its dimensions, keeping concerns about it on the table and feeding its dynamics (Arian and Shamir 2008; Shamir and Arian 1999; Rahat and Malka 2012).

Israel has enacted significant electoral and party reforms, especially since the 1990s, and debates about them accompany Israeli politics since its inception up until the present time, around elections and beyond. (Hazan and Rahat 2000; 2010). Formalistic representation and its dilemmas are thus not hidden from the public eye, as well as the nexus between formal, descriptive, substantive, and even symbolic representation. All have been and still are on the political agenda, in particular with respect to women, Arabs, and Mizrahi Jews (Caspi 1981; Herzog 1984; Kook 2017; Shamir, Herzog, and Chazan 2020; Shapira et al. 2016; Sheaffer, Shenhav, and Goldstein 2011).

Israel is also a case in point in terms of the crisis of democracy. Disengagement from political parties and increasing dissatisfaction with politics, political institutions and politicians are evident in Israel (Hermann 2012; Sapanov 2002; *The Israel Democracy Index 2003-2020*; Yuchtman-Ya'ar and Peres 2000). Recent studies even claim that Israel is an extreme case among established parliamentary democracies in terms of decline of the large mainstream parties and personalization (Kenig and Tuttnauer 2017; Rahat and Kenig 2018). All these give rise to questions about the perceptions of representation by Israelis and their role in their support for democracy.

Looking at the Israeli electorate in the 2019-2020 Knesset election cycle, we study the meaning citizens attach to representation; their evaluations of the fulfillment of each of the representation dimensions; the relative importance of each dimension; the overall feeling of representation; variation in these appraisals with regard to dyadic and collective representation; and the effect of these perceptions on Israelis' support for democracy.

Methodology

We rely on the Israel National Election Studies (INES) data for the 2019-2020 election cycle, utilizing the April 2019 pre-election wave. The sample is representative of the Israeli electorate, and interviews were conducted by phone, by Tel Aviv University's B. I. and Lucille Cohen Institute for Public Opinion Research.³

Based on our proposed framework for representation in the eyes of citizens, we employ a set of questions uniquely designed to evaluate (1) how represented citizens feel on each of the four dimensions; (2) the most important dimension of representation for citizens; and (3) citizens' overall feeling of representation, beyond specific dimensions. These were examined both

dyadically, with regard to politician/party, and collectively, with regard to the parliament. Since no empirical study to date has explored citizens' perceptions of the four dimensions, in formulating these questions we relied mainly on Pitkin's definitions for each of them. We consulted with public opinion and election scholars on the best way to adapt these concepts to capture citizens' perceptions. In addition, we relied on 47 in-depth interviews with a diverse sample of citizens (in terms of age, education, gender, and religion). We asked these interviewees who represents them and followed up with open-ended questions about this representative to gauge on what dimensions they feel represented and the terms people use to talk about these dimensions. Employing these interviews as well as interviewers' input, and after pre-testing the survey, we honed the questions into their final formulation.

We drew on these formulations to evaluate citizens' perceptions of the four dimensions of representation, using four items for dyadic representation and four items for collective representation, each capturing the distinct characteristics of its respective dimension (for the full list of items see Table A1 in the Online Appendix, henceforth: OA). With items ranging between 'definitely no' (1) to 'definitely yes' (4), respondents were asked whether a political party/politician represents their view (substantive), share personal and background characteristics (descriptive), promote a sense of belonging (symbolic), and use their authority in a responsible manner (formalistic). The collective representation items use similar wording but refer to the Knesset (the Israeli parliament). In addition, we asked two general questions about their overall feeling of representation, not related to any specific dimension: one pertains to overall representation by a political party or politician and the other pertains to overall representation by the political system (see Table 1). We also asked respondents to rate the most important dimension to them.

Table 1: Mean Scores on Representation Dimensions

Dimension	Dyadic		Collective	
	M (SD)	N	M (SD)	N
Substantive	0.60 (0.33)	1,533	0.42 (0.29)	1,425
Descriptive	0.62 (0.31)	1,482	0.52 (0.32)	1,524
Symbolic	0.57 (0.36)	1,531	0.39 (0.35)	1,525
Formal	0.55 (0.33)	1,450	0.40 (0.30)	1,543
Overall feeling of representation	0.59 (0.34)	1,573	0.44 (0.31)	1,560

Note: all items were measured on a 4-point scale, recoded to range between 0 to 1.

To evaluate dyadic and collective *multidimensional* representation, we constructed two scales, using the four questions concerning Pitkin's dimensions in the respective type of representation. The two scales were recoded to a 0-1 scale. A higher score indicates a higher sense of representation on the four dimensions altogether. The mean score for the dyadic scale is .60 (S.D. = .26) and for the collective scale .43 (S.D. = .23). Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha: .78. for the dyadic scale; .75 for the collective scale.⁴

To assess support for democracy, we employ the widely used question about satisfaction with the way democracy works: "how democratically is Israel being governed today?", from the World Value Survey (WVS 2005-2020), assessed on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that it is 'not at all democratic' and 10 means that it is 'completely democratic.' This question is considered "an expression of approval of regime performance, located between diffuse notions of support for democratic principles and specific attitudes toward political actors" (Blais, Morin-Chasse, and Singh 2017, 86).⁵

Analysis

Patterns of Representation in the Eyes of the Public

Our analysis begins by identifying patterns of representation in the eyes of the Israeli electorate along the four dimensions of representation and with regard to dyadic and collective

representatives. Table 2 presents crossed frequencies of the most important dimension in dyadic and collective representation.⁶ These show that the act-for formalistic and substantive dimensions are most important to citizens: The formalistic dimension is most important to 37% of the respondents and the substantive representation is most important to 17% of the respondents on both dyadic and collective representation. For 16% of the respondents, the substantive-dyadic and formalistic-collective dimensions are most important, and for 6% the formalistic-dyadic and substantive-collective are the most important. Altogether 76% prioritize the two act-for dimensions in both spheres, and 85% prioritize one of them in each of the spheres. Only 6% consider the stand-for dimensions as most important in both dyadic and collective representation, and 30% in either one of them.

The distinctions citizens make thus correspond to Pitkin's tiered structure of act-for and stand-for dimensions, suggesting that citizens perceive representation in terms of substance and accountability as more important than in terms of shared characteristics and identity. This pattern holds in both representation by a dyadic representative and by the parliament. However, within this overall pattern, there is also an important distinction between dyadic and collective representation. In representation by the parliament, formalistic representation is the most important to 60% of the respondents, while the substantive dimension is much less important (only to 25% of the respondents). In representation by a politician or a political party, the two act-for dimensions weigh more similarly, with 47% choosing the formalistic dimension as most important and 38% stressing that the substantive dimension is the most important. The differences in the prioritization of the act-for dimensions in dyadic and collective representation echo Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's assertion that citizens emphasize formalistic representation over substantive representation, especially in the collective sphere.

Table 2: Importance of Representation Dimensions

		Collective representation				Total
		Substantive	Descriptive	Symbolic	Formalistic	
Dyadic representation	Substantive	261 (17%)	41 (3%)	31 (2%)	242 (16%)	574 (38%)
	Descriptive	16 (1%)	14 (1%)	9 (1%)	33 (2%)	71 (5%)
	Symbolic	21 (1%)	12 (1%)	50 (3%)	82 (5%)	165 (11%)
	Formalistic	86 (6%)	31 (2%)	29 (2%)	566 (37%)	712 (47%)
	Total	384 (25%)	98 (6%)	120 (8%)	921 (60%)	1523

Who are the citizens that prioritize the act-for dimensions over the stand-for dimensions? Table 3 presents the results of a logistic regression model with the dependent dichotomous variable distinguishing between citizens who prioritize the act-for dimensions versus the stand-for dimensions or combinations of stand-for and act-for. The independent variables include socio-demographic and political characteristics (identified to predict feelings of representation; see Holmberg 2020; Weßels 2011). We find that education and religiosity have significant effects, with educated secular citizens prioritizing the act-for substantive and formalistic dimensions of representation. Socio-economic status, gender, sector (Jewish or Arab), and political interest also contribute to the prioritization of these dimensions (although not statistically significant), with better-situated Jewish men who are interested in politics favoring the act-for dimensions. Notably, political ideology has no effect.⁷ These results are in line with the extant literature on the representation of women and other marginalized groups, which suggests that due to structural and institutional discrimination, standing-for, and not only acting-for, is paramount for representation of such groups (Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995; Young 2002). Indeed, our findings show that these groups put more weight on the stand-for aspects crucial for their representation compared to groups which are better integrated socially and more privileged.

Table 3: Who Are the Act-For Citizens?

	Act-for Citizens
Ideology (1-7)	0.053 (0.065)
Gender (1=female)	-0.251 (0.200)
Age group	-0.095 (0.077)
Education	0.281*** (0.085)
Religiosity	-0.388*** (0.116)
Sector (1=Arabs) ⁸	-0.272 (0.332)
Density of living	0.156 (0.102)
Political interest	0.362 (0.277)
Constant	0.516 (0.571)
N	682

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Overall, these findings support the tiered structure of act-for and stand-for in citizens' prioritization of representation dimensions. We now move to explore how people perceive their representation on the dimensions important to them. Do they feel represented on these dimensions, and by whom – the Knesset or rather politicians and/or parties? Table 4 presents the share of respondents who feel represented on each dimension and the share of respondents for whom this dimension is the most important.

We find important differences between perceptions of representation by a representative and representation by the parliament. First, a majority (over 60%) of the respondents feels represented by a politician or a party on all dimensions, with little variation across the dimensions. In terms of collective representation, on the other hand, we see considerable variation, with a majority (of

close to 60%) feeling represented on the descriptive dimension, while on the rest of the dimensions, only a minority (of about 40%) feels represented by the Knesset. Thus, citizens feel more represented consistently on all four dimensions by a politician or a party and much less represented by the Knesset. The only dimension on which a majority of citizens feels represented by the Knesset – the descriptive – is critically the dimension least important to them.

Indeed, there is very little correspondence between the importance of a dimension and Israelis' perception of representation on this dimension. The most striking difference is on the descriptive dimension – this dimension is the *least* important, both dyadically (4.6% of the respondents stating it is most important to them) and collectively (6.4% of respondents stating so). However, it is the dimension citizens feel *most represented* on – 70.8% dyadically and 57.7% collectively. In addition, citizens feel somewhat less represented on the formalistic dimension, the most important one for them (especially in collective representation).

Table 4: How Represented do People Feel?

		Dyadic representation		Collective representation	
		Feeling	Importance	Feeling	Importance
Act-for	Formalistic	61.6	46.7	40.9	60.4
	Substantive	66.8	37.8	44.2	25.2
Stand-for	Descriptive	70.8	4.6	57.7	6.4
	Symbolic	61.2	11.0	39.6	7.9

Note: 'Feeling' is the share of respondents feeling represented on each dimension; 'Importance' is the share of respondents prioritizing each dimension.

This disconnect is notable on the individual level. Citizens' feeling of representation on each dimension is essentially detached from the importance they attach to it. The correlations between the importance of each dimension and the sense of representation on it are all very low, most of them close to zero and even negative (see correlations in Table B1 in the OA).⁹ This rules out the concern that responses on the survey representation items are induced by “social desirability” whereby people rank high a representation dimension on which they feel gratified or convince themselves they feel represented on a dimension which they value highly. The incongruity between the importance of the dimensions and the sense of representation on them begs the questions what

in citizens' perception of representation affects their overall feeling of representation? And what affects their support for democracy?

Multidimensional Representation and Support for Democracy

We begin with the assessment of the contribution of feeling represented on a single - most important dimension, versus feeling represented across all dimensions (multidimensional representation) to citizens' general sense of representation (beyond specific dimensions). As described in the methodology section, we construct two scales comprising the combined sense of representation on all dimensions – one scale for dyadic representation and another scale for collective representation. Figure 3 presents the share of respondents who feel represented along these two scales. More respondents feel more represented in the dyadic sphere, while collective representation is more bell-shaped, with most respondents in the middle of the scale, and a sharp decline in the higher portion of the scale.

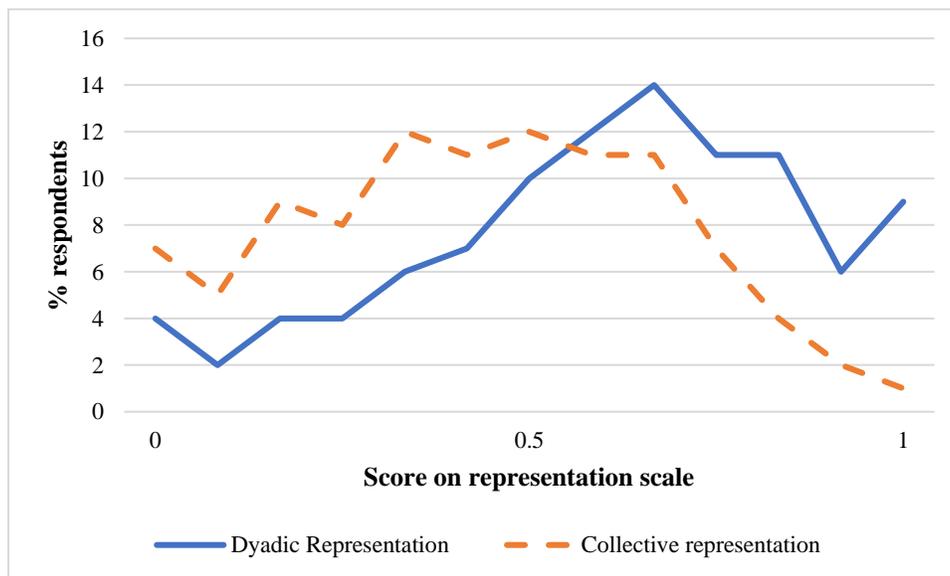


Figure 3: Percentage of Respondents Who Feel Represented on the Multidimensional scales of Dyadic and Collective Representation.

Table 5 shows linear regression models for the overall feeling of representation as dependent on representation on the most important dimension and on representation on a multidimensional scale that includes all dimensions. We use a question on the overall feeling of representation by a

politician or a party for the dyadic model, and a question on the overall feeling of representation by the political system for the collective model. We find that although both representation on the most important dimension and multidimensional representation contribute to the overall feeling of representation, the contribution of the multidimensional scale is larger. In fact, the coefficients of the multidimensional scales are double the size of the coefficients for the most important dimension, and those models explain overall feeling of representation much better. This is a considerable difference even if we take into account that the multidimensional scale is comprised of multiple items. The higher contribution of multidimensionality to the overall feeling of representation is evident both in representation by a party or politician and by the Knesset. This suggests that for citizens, much like Pitkin prescribes, representation does not revolve around one aspect but is rather multidimensional.¹⁰

Table 5: Feelings of Representation Are Multidimensional

		Overall feeling of representation			
		Dyadic		Collective	
Dyadic representation	Most important dimension	0.515*** (0.025)			
	Multidimensional representation	0.860*** (0.025)			
Collective representation	Most important dimension	0.429*** (0.027)			
	Multidimensional representation	0.744*** (0.032)			
	Constant	0.305*** (0.017)	0.095*** (0.017)	0.270*** (0.014)	0.126*** (0.016)
	Observations	1,432	1,254	1,447	1,262
	R-square	0.262	0.442	0.177	0.311

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

The importance of citizens' multidimensional perception of representation is further evident in its role in support for democracy. Table 6 presents linear regression models of our satisfaction with democracy measure regressed, first on representation on the most important dimension, and second on multidimensional representation. Much like with the overall feeling of representation, while both indicators of representation contribute to democratic support, here too, the sense

representation on all dimensions contributes more to satisfaction with democracy than the sense of representation on the most important dimension. This means that there is a compensating effect of the various dimensions of representation - especially meaningful when citizens are not represented on the dimension(s) important to them.¹¹

Table 6: Feelings of Representation and Support for Democracy

		Support for Democracy				
		Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V
Dyadic representation	Most important dimension	0.120*** (0.035)				
	Multidimensional representation		0.265*** (0.051)			0.006 (0.052)
Collective representation	Most important dimension			0.314*** (0.034)		
	Multidimensional representation				0.566*** (0.045)	0.560*** (0.053)
	Constant	0.552*** (0.024)	0.461*** (0.033)	0.484*** (0.018)	0.357*** (0.024)	0.363*** (0.035)
	Observations	731	636	745	635	556
	R-square	0.021	0.060	0.133	0.238	0.234

Standard errors in parentheses; Dependent variable: “how democratically is Israel being governed today?”, rescaled from 0 (“not at all democratic”) to 1 (“completely democratic”).

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 6 establishes one more important aspect of citizens' perceptions of representation. What matters for their support for democracy, is their sense of being represented by the parliament (collective representation) rather than feeling represented dyadically, as the comparisons of models I and III and of models II and IV show. Feeling represented by the parliament – on the most important dimension and across all dimensions - is more meaningful for democratic support. Model V, which includes both dyadic and collective multidimensional representation, reveals that it is only collective representation that is significant in terms of citizen democratic support, and that the effect of dyadic representation is spurious.

Indeed, the correlation between the two multidimensional scales is .47.¹² Collective and dyadic representation perceptions are significantly related, but they are distinct enough. We presented other indications that they are different: majorities of citizens feel represented dyadically, but only minorities feel represented by the parliament on all representation dimensions but one. We also identified significant differences in which dimensions are prioritized across dyadic and collective representation: in the collective sphere a sizable majority prioritized formalistic representation, whereas in terms of dyadic relationships the formalistic and substantive dimensions are much closer in their importance. And, of the two, it is the sense of collective representation that counts for support for democracy, not dyadic representation.

These findings carry great weight for the crisis of democracy debate. They echo Pitkin's overall portrait of representation and substantiate Weissberg's speculation that citizens may be more concerned with collective than dyadic representation (1978, 545-547). They suggest not only that it is important to consider representation in the eyes of the citizens, across different representation entities, but also that it is especially important to consider citizens' multidimensional perceptions of collective representation.

Conclusion

The role of citizens in democracy, their competence, their democratic understanding and commitment, as well as readiness to be involved in politics have been the subject of recurrent scholarly debate in Political Science. Representation theories and studies have mostly emphasized the representatives, giving only limited attention to the represented. We focus on representation from the citizens' standpoint. Putting forward a theoretical framework and studying it empirically, we find *patterns of representation* in citizens' appraisals: a tiered structure of the dimensions important to them, with act-for dimensions overriding stand-for dimensions; a multidimensional sense of representation; and a distinction between representation actors along the dyadic-collective axis, where collective representation is the more consequential. Strikingly, our findings suggest that citizens' representation appraisals fit Pitkin's normative prescription of representation, although she herself thought individuals' perceptions are not important and not worth studying.

We postulate the patterns of representation we uncovered imply a much more democratically optimistic view of the citizenry than is now in fashion. Citizens recognize the importance of the

substantive and formalistic dimensions (act-for), but are also able to differentiate this importance from their sense of representation. Indeed, we find that while citizens value the act-for dimensions, they do not feel well represented on these dimensions. Moreover, we find that citizens' appraisal of representation has clear bearing and obvious consequences with regard to the crisis of (representative) democracies. Consider the multidimensionality of citizens' perception of representation, found to be important to their overall perception of representation and support for democracy. Representation from citizens' vantage point thus suggests that the combination of dimensions, which means some balancing among them, and taking them all into account rather than approaching representation lexicographically is required for *democratic* representation. Future studies may further conceptualize and explore citizens' perspective on different combinations of dimensions and the desired balance between them, and relate them to real-world representation processes and to democratic support.

Our results with regard to collective representation call for attention to a neglected area in the representation literature. Representation by the parliament is particularly significant in the eyes of the public but it is underdeveloped in representation theory, and consequently, theoretical analyses of citizens' representation across the dyadic-collective axis of representative(s) are also scarce. Empirical studies of citizens' perceptions of representation are also tilted toward dyadic representation. These lacunas need to be addressed as a joint undertaking of political theorists and empirical researchers. We find for example that citizens feel most represented by parliament on the descriptive dimension, but this dimension is the least important to them. Previous studies as well as normative theories have suggested that descriptive representation, especially in the representative institution(s), are of importance for substantive representation. In our study, while a majority of citizens perceive themselves as represented *descriptively* by the parliament, a majority does not feel represented *substantively*. Furthermore, this low sense of substantive collective representation, in conjunction with our finding that many more citizens feel substantive represented by a political party or politician, does not square with Pitkin's and Weissberg's accounts that collective substantive representation can be brought about even if individual representatives fail to do that. All these call for theoretical development and empirical exploration of representation by representative institutions and its interrelations with representation by individual (and many) representatives, while incorporating citizen perceptions thereof.

The empirical examination of the proposed framework in this paper is limited to one country and one election cycle. Further research is needed to evaluate the applicability of this encompassing theoretical framework beyond the Israeli case. It is noteworthy however that several American studies we have brought here present results concurring to ours even if only on specific points. In any case, our study fleshes out the importance of creating and developing an analytical framework of elements of representation that have been neglected thus far, namely, citizens' perception of representation and the dyadic-collective representation nexus. In a 2004 contribution, Pitkin weighs on the intricate relationship between representation and democracy and observes that "the arrangements we call 'representative democracy' have become a substitute for popular self-government, not its enactment" (p. 34). If Pitkin is right, and representation has replaced democracy (instead of serving it), we have to bring citizens back into our (democratic) theories of representation, especially with regard to collective representation by political institutions, and entertain at least some level of active role of the represented in the dynamics of representation. We submit that taking such perspectives 'from within' will shed new light on the crisis of representative democracy as well as on the question whether it is a crisis at all.

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¹ Studies of representation in the American Congress, based on Single Member Districts (SMD), view dyadic representation in terms of individual legislators (paired with their geographic district). Under the "responsible party government model" dyadic representation is defined by reference to political parties (Dalton 1985, 277-279).

² Since Golder and Stramski's typology ignores the distinction between individual and institutional representation, in our scheme, their many-to-one category in effect refers to many (constituents)-to-one, single representative (see Fig. 2) but can also relate to one institution, which then locates it also in the upper part of the matrix (2010, 92).

³ <https://www.tau.ac.il/~ines/2019.html>. The April 2019 pre-election wave was in the field between February 24 and April 8, 2019. N=1,614 respondents (1,347 Jews, 267 Arabs). We replicate our analysis on the March 2020 pre-election wave, which was in the field between January 29 and March 1, 2020. The analyses for the March 2020 election are reported in the Online Appendix as robustness tests since they are very similar. For all analyses we rely on the weighted data.

⁴ We restrict our scales to respondents who provided responses to all questions making up the scales, and end up with 1,274 observation in the dyadic scale and 1,291 in the collective one.

⁵ We replicate the analysis with a scale of five other items pertaining to satisfaction with the political system and trust in political institutions (Norris 2011; Van Ham et al. 2017). The results remain robust. See full list of items in Table A2 and full analysis in Table B4 in OA.

⁶ For March 2020 crossed frequencies see Table C1 in OA. The distribution is highly similar.

⁷ The results in March 2020 vary somewhat: The significant effect of religiosity disappears, while the effects of sector (Arab) and age group become significant (maintaining the same direction). See Table C2 in OA for full regression results.

⁸ We also checked the effect of Jews' ethnic origin and found no effect.

⁹ See Tables C3 and C4 in the OA for similar analysis for the March 2020 sample.

¹⁰ These results remain robust when we run the same models with socio-demographic control variables. Self-identification as left on the ideological scale and being Arab decrease the overall sense of representation, and being older increases the overall sense of collective representation. See Tables B2 and C5 in the OA for full regression results for April 2019 and March 2020, respectively.

¹¹ The results remain robust with socio-demographic control variables. See Tables B3 and C6 in the OA for full regression results for April 2019 and March 2020, respectively. We replicate the analysis with a scale of five other items pertaining to satisfaction with the political system and trust in political institutions. The results remain robust. See the full analysis in Table B4 in OA.

¹² The correlation between the collective and dyadic multidimensional scales in the March 2020 data is 0.60.