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Responsiveness, Representation, and Democracy: A Critical Conceptual Analysis and its  
Implications for Political Science

A Thesis Presented

By

JOSHUA A. BECK

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
Of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Political Science

Responsiveness, Representation, and Democracy: A Critical Conceptual Analysis and its  
Implications for Political Science

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JOSHUA A. BECK

Approved as to style and content by:

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Frederic C. Schaffer, Chair

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Timothy Pachirat, Member

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Jesse Rhodes, Department Chair

Department of Political Science

## ABSTRACT

### RESPONSIVENESS, REPRESENTATION, AND DEMOCRACY: A CRITICAL CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE

FEBRUARY 2021

JOSHUA BECK, B.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Frederic C. Schaffer

Over forty years ago, Hanna Pitkin expressed concern that social scientists were failing to give concepts the attention which they needed (Pitkin 1972, 277). This thesis takes up the same theme, asking how the concept of responsiveness is treated by political scientists. The goal is to reveal confusion that surrounds widely used concepts such as responsiveness. The analysis offered in this thesis has significance for the discipline of political science in three ways. First, it highlights confusion surrounding the concept of responsiveness itself. Responsiveness is a widely utilized concept employed throughout the social sciences; however, as this thesis shows, there is wide disagreement in how the concept is understood. This confusion is fueled by the frequent failure of scholars to critically analyze the concept and the assumptions which have been attached to the understanding of responsiveness. Second, by analyzing the related concepts of representation and democracy, this thesis suggests that there is a lack of attention to concepts which are employed for research that extends beyond responsiveness. Many other concepts that are foundational to our discipline warrant increased scrutiny. Third and finally, the thesis highlights the danger of ignoring the ideological commitments of political scientists, commitments that can shape in hidden but consequential ways how we study the world around us.

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

The discipline of political science functions on a set of conceptual building blocks.

Concepts are used to lay the groundwork for our research and build theories. Indeed, a concept like “democracy” is only able to function as a tool of inquiry or area of study because many concepts form the framework through which democracy is understood.

This thesis critically examines one of these supporting concepts, “responsiveness.” In studying responsiveness, this thesis also examines “representation,” a closely related concept. Together, these two concepts function as cornerstones of democracy in the eyes of many scholars and their presence in the world signals to many the presence of democracy. Whether such is, indeed, the case is the question that motivates this thesis. How synonymous are responsiveness and representation? Does responsiveness always signal the presence of democracy? For that matter why should representation signal democracy? To answer these questions, this thesis places its primary focus on responsiveness. Responsiveness is deeply, perhaps inseparably, connected to democracy. A responsive government, we have come to believe, must be some form of democratic government and a sign of good governance. While an unresponsive government is often considered to be a hallmark of bad governance. If responsiveness is inseparable from democracy and responsiveness is needed for good governance, then non-democracies simply cannot have good governance. The strength of such assumptions warrant close examination.

This assumption hints at the need to evaluate how the concept of responsiveness is being used within the discipline. This thesis takes up this task. Its first goal is to examine the concept of responsiveness as it used within the discipline. Through an examination of four exemplary articles, the study will seek to shed light on how responsiveness is conceived within the discipline and what is being missed about the nature of responsiveness. The second is to show the larger implications of critically examining responsiveness for the study of democracy. The third and final goal is to examine the broader implications for the discipline of political science, implications that point to a need for a significant reevaluation of how concepts are used and understood.

The design of this thesis was strongly influenced by Frederic Schaffer's book, *Elucidating Social Science Concepts: An Interpretivist Guide* (2015). The focus of Schaffer's work is on providing tools through which concepts can be studied and understood from an interpretivist perspective (Schaffer 2015, 1). There are three tools which he provides for this purpose (ibid., 22). First, we see "grounding" which is examining how scholars are understanding the concepts they employ. This practice can be seen in chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis. Second is the process of "locating" which examines the historic and linguistic background of a concept. I undertake this task in chapter 3. Third and finally, there is the practice of "exposing" which is, "[Bringing] to light how everyday and social science concepts are embedded in webs of power" (ibid.). Exposing is seen by enlarge in chapter 5 and is of particular importance to this thesis. It is the process of exposing that allows this work to be a critical conceptual analysis. This process is of crucial importance as the thesis becomes far more than simply an attempt to redefine a concept; instead,



as this thesis moves forward it will engage with and question the networks of power in which the concepts we examine function. This thesis pursues its goals over the course of six chapters. Chapter One, this chapter outlines the goals of the study. Chapter Two delves into exemplary articles that directly engage with the concept of responsiveness. It reveals a deep and somewhat confusing connection between responsiveness and representation. Chapter Three seeks to understand the connection between responsiveness and representation by looking at each concept's usage in ordinary language. It does this through a close examination of the Oxford English Dictionary and examples of usage from written works including, academic work, novels, poetry, and magazine articles. Ultimately, it shows that the meaning of the two differ significantly and that their use as synonymous by key political scientists raises questions about what they are failing to notice in their studies as a result. Chapter Four attempts to distinguish the concepts from each other by examining responsiveness in the context of authoritarianism, a context in which representation should not be present. That investigation suggests that the nature of responsiveness has been misunderstood within the discipline. Chapter Five surfaces the unconscious yet deeply present teleologic assumptions that undergird the use of responsiveness in the discipline. Chapter Six, the conclusion, summarizes the key arguments of the thesis and suggests several ways to address the problems which it revealed.

## Chapter 2 – Do Political Scientists Treat Responsiveness as a Distinct Concept?

Political scientists tend to treat as twins concepts which are closely related and consider questions about differences between them to be unimportant (Pitkin 1972, 277). Pitkin writes:

Social Scientists are as liable as philosophers to think in terms of broad dichotomies and avoid the seemingly trivial chore of fine distinctions. That is all very well where our object of study can be clearly identified apart from the words in which we speak of it (“study that thing, there, whatever it is”); but if identification depends on concepts, then confusion about terms will result, as Ardent has said, “in a kind of blindness with respect to the realities.” If you use distinct terms interchangeably or ignore fine differences, then as Cavell puts it, there is likely to be “something you aren’t noticing about the world.” (ibid.)

What are the concepts which political science literature treats as twins of “responsiveness” in the context of government? To answer this question, the chapter will look at two articles which exemplify how scholars within the discipline think about responsiveness. I focus on these articles for two reasons. First, they are two of the most widely cited works on responsiveness. The first has been cited 379 times and the second 136 times (this area of study seems to contain less literature than other areas. Perhaps

this should not be a surprise since it is a highly specific conceptual inquiry), they are articles which other scholars have deemed to have enough weight to either support their own work or to be worthy of combatting. Second, they exemplify the discipline by representing the two dominant schools of thought on governmental responsiveness.

In the first article, "Government Responsiveness and Political Contestation in Comparative Perspective," Hobolt and Klemmensen view responsiveness as a result of competitive elections (2008, 309). While they do suggest that there are different possible explanations for why elections produce responsiveness, ultimately there is no question on their part whether responsiveness is actually stemming from elections (ibid., 310). Their study goes on to examine the conditions in which elections would produce more or less responsive governments. They pose five hypotheses ranging from how the form of the party system affects responsiveness to how uncertainty impacts responsiveness (ibid., 313-316). They then offer an empirical analysis of Denmark, Britain, and the United States. A focus on these cases allows them to test each of their hypotheses both internationally and intra-nationally over time. In their results section Hobolt and Klemmensen determine that their hypotheses and general theoretic expectations were met with some slight deviance (ibid., 323-331). The study is an excellent example of understanding responsiveness as a product of elections. Scholars who take this perspective are interested in understanding how elections produce and impact responsiveness. Most relevant to this thesis is the way that Hobolt and Klemmensen use the concepts of responsiveness and representation interchangeably.

In the beginning of the article, Hobolt and Klemmensen start by seemingly separating the two concepts, “in this ‘delegate’ view of representation, elected representatives are expected to act responsively to the needs of their constituents” (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008, 309). At first glance, it seems that they have explained, if minimally, the difference between representation and responsiveness. As we read, it becomes apparent that this distinction collapses, for instance when they suggest that they are contributing to the “literature on policy responsiveness” (ibid. 311), or when they state that this work “corroborates previous studies of representation” (ibid. 332). We are thus left with the question: does this study contribute to the literature on responsiveness or representation? Although the title as well as earlier sections would suggest that it is a work focused on responsiveness; by the conclusion, we see that they seem to be self-categorizing it as a work examining representation. This confusion begins to clear itself up when we look at some examples of the use of representation and responsiveness within the article itself. In the theoretic grounding of the article, Hobolt and Klemmensen consistently switch between the use of representation and responsiveness (ibid. 311 and 313). In one instance, the scholars explain that because there are few studies on responsiveness outside of the United States, there is little understanding of how “political contestation influences the degree of representation” (Ibid. 311). In a second instance, they argue that a plurality system of elections produces representatives who provide higher levels of “representation than a proportional system” which can be understood as a result of there being a higher level of “incentive for politicians to be responsive only to a narrow constituency of pivotal voters” in

plurality systems (ibid. 313). In each of these examples, we see that the concepts of representation and responsiveness are used interchangeably. This usage begs the question, why would they choose to use both terms, if contextually they seem to be appealing to the same meaning?

To answer the question, let us look back at their definition. Here is where we see Hobolt and Klemmensen separating the two concepts, “in this ‘delegate’ view of representation, elected representatives are expected to act responsively to the needs of their constituents” (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008, 309). Given the use of the concepts, it is clear that they have not, however, been successfully separated. On a closer look, it becomes apparent why this is. While it is true that they have explained what representatives are doing, they have actually defined representation as “acting responsively” and by doing this, have setup a conceptual quagmire making it almost impossible to separate the two concepts. This conflation leads to confusion.

Conceptually, representation and responsiveness should be distinct, but in the context of government, this distinction has been lost for these two scholars. As a result, it is unclear what they are actually studying. Perhaps, as the title and content suggest (ibid. 311), they are studying on responsiveness; however, since being responsive is what representatives do (ibid. 309), it is almost impossible to say whether in their use of the term, they actually mean that they are studying representation. This confusion is compounded when they claim to be contributing to the literature on representation in the conclusion (ibid. 332). While they may have planned and executed a powerful and even meaningful study, the failure to separate the concepts makes it difficult to

determine what this is a study of. It could as easily be a study of what causes higher levels of representation, as what creates government responsiveness.

Hobolt and Klemmensen are by no means the first authors to struggle with closely related concepts. Kuklinski and Stanga, in “Political Participation and Government Responsiveness: The Behavior of California Superior Courts,” (1979), make a similar although much less noticeable blunder. They are primarily interested with the ways that responsiveness is produced through non-electoral participation (Kuklinski and Stanga 1979, 1090). While they acknowledge that “It is natural that scholars should focus their attention on the most common form of participation” (ibid.), they are concerned with a lack of attention to other forms of participation. In this work, Kuklinski and Stanga examine responsiveness to public opinion from the California Superior Court System. Specifically, this study looks at responsiveness to public opinion in relation to prosecution for possession of Marijuana (ibid., 1091). The California Superior Court system makes an ideal subject for study. Even though some are elected, most of the judges are appointed by the governor and generally the judges and district attorneys who are elected are not engaged in a competitive election (ibid., 1096). As a result, electoral accountability does not seem to act as a strong explanatory variable for why the courts shift toward public opinion. In 1972 there was an initiative ballot proposition, brought forward by California voters, which would have legalized the possession and consumption of Marijuana for recreational use (ibid.). Ultimately, it was rejected by a majority of citizens during the general election but not without contestation. Although the proposition was rejected, the civil movement that created the proposition was a

clear form of participation. Kuklinski and Stanga examine the impact of this proposition on the judicial rulings in cases dealing with marijuana possession by examining the sentencing in all of the marijuana conviction cases from 1971 through 1973 to test for changes in sentencing severity (ibid. 1092). They find that public opinion seemed to have little impact on sentencing in the first two years, there was a noticeable shift toward more lenient sentencing in Marijuana related cases during the third (ibid. 1093). In contrast to the lack of extensive communication of public opinion during these first two years, in the third year, which immediately followed the ballot proposition, the judicial officials would be aware that there was extensive public support for more relaxed sentencing on marijuana offenses. While the outcome is intuitive, this study can only carry limited weight as the actual period of time being studied is rather short and it is limited to only one state. Admitting to this shortcoming, Kuklinski and Stanga suggest that this study will encourage deeper work into the connection between responsiveness and non-electoral participation (ibid., 1099).

Kuklinski and Stanga's treatment of responsiveness in their article is most interesting. In the article itself, they stress the importance of communication between citizens and officials to responsiveness (Kuklinski and Stanga 1979, 1090-1091, 1097).

Communication is so important to them that they put forward its linkage to responsiveness as the core of responsive governance. On the basis of this view, they propose two major implications for their work:

The first is that electoral accountability may not be, as sometimes is supposed, the sine qua non of political responsiveness... the second implication, closely

related to the first, is the one we wish to stress: *the communication to government actors of policy preference held by citizens may well be a central component if not the core of a responsive system of government.* (ibid., 1097)

As should be expected in a study of responsiveness, Kuklinski and Stanga find a connection between responsiveness and governance. They seem to consider responsiveness to be distinct from representation, at least superficially. Their confusion only becomes apparent by looking carefully at the work's theoretical base. When defining responsiveness, they describe their understanding of it as, "[according] with Pitkin's explication of responsiveness as an emergent property of a complex system of interactions among citizens and government officials" (ibid., 1091). However nebulous of a description, what is of most interest here are their citations. They cite Hanna Pitkin's 1967 work *The Concept of Representation* as well as Prewitt and Eulau's 1969 work "Political Matrix and Political Representation: Prolegomenon to a New Departure from an Old Problem." Although each work discusses representation, neither title suggests that the work is dealing with responsiveness per se. Even more troubling, while almost all citations in their work are linked to specific pages, in this instance, there are no page references included in the citations. The implication of this absence seemed to be that they were taking the works as entireties for the theoretic grounding. In order to confirm this suspicion, I read both works and found only a limited discussion of responsiveness. Beginning however with Prewitt and Eulau, it becomes clear that the actual way that Kuklinski and Stanga are thinking of responsiveness is in terms of representation. Prewitt and Eulau present responsiveness as responding to an individual



action (Prewitt and Eulau 1969, 428). Representation, in contrast, is based on the, “overall structure and function of the system” (ibid.). There is a clear misalignment between how Prewitt and Eulau are using the two concepts and how Kuklinski and Stanga are. This misalignment becomes even more clear as they cite Pitkin’s work.

Pitkin writes:

What makes it representation is not any single action by any one participant, but the over-all structure and function of the system, the patterns emerging from multiple activities of many people. It is representation if the people (or a constituency) are present in government even though they do not literally act for themselves. (Pitkin 1967, 221-222)

In this quote, it is not responsiveness that is generated by a “complex system of interactions” but instead representation. This view is in accord with Prewitt and Eulau’s understanding of representation. What we see developing is a conflation of the concepts by Kuklinski and Stanga. If they are drawing on Pitkin’s work, the way that Kuklinski and Stanga are thinking of the interaction between the California Superior Courts and the citizens they represent is in terms of representation rather than responsiveness. Pitkin’s understanding of representation is very much fixed on the systemic level rather than the individual action. This understanding can be seen clearly when Pitkin states:

The representative system must look after the public interest and be responsive to public opinion, except insofar as non-responsiveness can be justified in terms

of the public interest. At both ends the process is public and institutional. The individual legislature does not act alone, but as a member of a representative body. (ibid., 224)

While Kuklinski and Stanga look at the court systems decision making (Kuklinski and Stanga 1979, 1091-1092), they describe responsiveness at the systemic level which Pitkin would likely call representation. It would be fair for them to claim that, in accord with Pitkin, they are examining representation. Just as representation can and does happen at the systemic level, so does responsiveness. In the same way if they were studying specific incidents of responsiveness it would not be unlikely to see them instead view it as representation. The concepts are for them interchangeable.

I do not claim that Pitkin's understanding of representation and responsiveness is the clearest view. What I am pointing out is that based on their claim to hold to Pitkin's understanding, Kuklinski and Stanga have taken the two concepts and combined them into one. Responsiveness may happen at the systemic level but according to Pitkin this is not the case. With this problem in mind, what is seen is that Kuklinski and Stanga's article suffers from nearly the same issue as Hobolt and Klemmensen's article. Because they do not seem to have a clear grasp of the difference between the concept of responsiveness and the concept of representation, Kuklinski and Stanga would have a hard time arguing that they are studying responsiveness after making the claim that they are theoretically grounded in Pitkin's work. Where should we situate their work within the literature? Should we consider it to be a study of responsiveness or should we think of it as a study of representation? The answer is unclear. Because of this lack of

clarity, engaging their work in a serious examination of either concept would be ill-advised. While the content has value and could contribute to one of the conceptual inquiries, right now it likely should not be used in the study of either.

This connection between responsiveness and representation is problematic in these instances because they represent some of the key works on responsiveness within the literature. This seemingly common conflation raises the question: what is it about these two concepts that causes them to be confused for one another? If responsiveness is conflated with representation, what is it that we are missing about these concepts? It seems that there are grounds to view this confusion as being more widespread as we see a confusion of the two concepts in other works (Mair 2008; Cleary 2007; etc.). There are, of course, authors that do not make this connection and instead confuse responsiveness with another concept; however, this thesis will not seek out every example of conceptual confusion but rather precede by delving deeply into this single case of it.

## Chapter 3 – How are Responsiveness and Representation Distinguished in Ordinary Language?

In the previous chapter, I identified representation as a concept which is regularly confused with responsiveness. The confusion is not an explicit mix up of concepts but rather stems from a deeper and perhaps subconscious conjoining of the concepts. This conjoining can be seen in each study examined in the previous chapter, the authors attempted to distinguish between the two concepts but without success. This confusion leaves the question, what is it about responsiveness and representation that makes them hard to separate from each other? This chapter takes the first steps to answering this question by examining how each concept is used in ordinary language. I will look at each concept's respective definitions and ordinary use. By doing this examination I will lay the groundwork for discovering what about the world is being missed when authors are conjoining these concepts.

In the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) responsiveness is defined as, "The state or quality of being responsive" (OED 2010, responsiveness). While the definition simply redirects our attention elsewhere, by examining the example sentences we can learn something about the context and usage of our concept before looking to the root definition. The OED gives an example from a 2005 article in *Computer Buyer* where the author writes, "The machine felt snappy to use, with no real lack of responsiveness in any of the usual day-to-day tasks"(ibid.). Here responsiveness is used in a complimentary fashion to snappy. In context, a computers responsiveness is not dissimilar from it being snappy,

responsiveness is not communicating a new idea but instead reinforcing the existing statement that the computer is snappy. In contrast to non-responsiveness which would suggest a computer that is not ideal even for day-to-day tasks, responsiveness seems to be a positive attribute of the computer. A second exemplary sentence states, "If the slightest attention had been paid to propriety by Mr. Gibbon, to unity of design, and to responsiveness of execution" (ibid.). Interestingly, what we see is that responsiveness is again used in terms that suggest a quick reaction to something. Although it is challenging to say with absolute certainty that the issue was not the rapidity of Mr. Gibbon's response but instead failing to respond appropriately; we can say with certainty that "responsiveness of execution" is a positive characteristic and in turn its absence is negative. Between these two examples, it can be shown with fair certainty that responsiveness has a positive connotation. Additionally, when combined with the previous example, it does seem clear that responsiveness involves quick reaction to stimuli.

In order to provide a more grounded understanding of what makes responsiveness unique, I move on from an examination of responsiveness to the more foundational word "responsive." "Responsive" has several definitions provided in the OED most of which I will not delve into. I will not look at every definition provided, because it would be repetitive rather than helpful to examine them all and because I lack the technical knowledge to elucidate the usage of several. The first provided definition reads, "Of a letter: answering, responding; written in reply" (OED 2010, Responsive). This definition is supported by the second definition which describes responsive as, "responding,

making reply. Also with *to, against*" (ibid.). These definitions provide the most basic level of explanation for the concept. Being responsive involves responding or replying to something. We see that it could specifically be written letters; however, one of the samples of use provides a deeper insight, "There the grey heath lit the responsive fire" (ibid.). This example is particularly useful as it shows that things outside of written or spoken language can have the function of being responsive. With this knowledge it is easy to conclude that responsiveness can be any action or event that is a result of another. For example, a boy might run loudly through the woods behind his home as a responsive deer runs away from the noise.

At this point, we can see several clear characteristics of responsiveness. First, responsiveness suggests quick action. It is not just responding but doing so in a timely fashion. Second, responsiveness entails responding to something. Without some stimuli prompting a response, it is not possible to respond. Even in the example of someone scaring themselves, they are reacting to an internal stimuli telling them that something is off about their situation. Third, responsiveness can be a lingual response to non-lingual stimuli, a non-lingual response to lingual stimuli, or a non-lingual response to non-lingual stimuli. Fourth, responsiveness can come from either sentient or non-sentient actors. We see this distinction made between the example of Mr. Gibbon's lack of responsiveness and that of the fire's responsiveness. Fifth, responsiveness can come from either an individual or a group. This characteristic can be exemplified by looking at a church congregation. Many churches will have a time of responsive prayer or meditation in which the pastor will say a line of a Psalm or written prayer and the

congregation will reply with the next line. In this example we see both a group act responsively toward an individual's stimulus and the individual react responsively to a group. Sixth and finally, responsiveness can stem either from external stimuli as seen above or from internal stimuli. Internal stimuli can be harder to identify but are certainly still present. The human body provides a plethora of examples for this usage of the responsiveness. We see one such example in the article, "Cognitive Activity in Sleep and Responsiveness to External Stimuli." Burton, Harsh, and Badia write, "With appropriate instructions and/or training, sleeping subjects respond to both external stimuli presented by an experimenter and naturally occurring internal stimuli, e.g., rapid eye movement (REM) sleep onset" (1988, 61). Here we see internal stimuli take on the form of the natural function of the human body. It is easy to think of times when one wakes from sleep because of the need to use the restroom or perhaps as a result of laying on your arm wrong and putting it to sleep. The human body reacts to these internal stimuli and will wake up even though no alarm clock went off. Experiencing a head-ache and taking ibuprofen would be another example of acting responsively due to internal stimuli. There is no need for an outside source explaining the issue, it is entirely dependent on the individual recognizing the internal indications.

Responsiveness to internal stimuli can also be seen on a large scale through the nation state. The government of any state is responsive in several ways. First, they are responsive to internal stimuli from within the government itself. Second, they are responsive to stimuli from the populace of the nation. This responsiveness could be interpreted as either internal or external stimuli depending on both the structure of the

state's government and the situation it is responding to. And third, the government is responsive to external stimuli from other extra-state actors such as other nation states or potentially multi-national corporations. Ultimately, what is seen through all of this discussion is a basic template for the concept of responsiveness.

Returning to the dictionary, we now shift our attention to the concept of representation. The first definition of representation we are presented with reads, "The action of standing for, or in the place of, a person, group, or thing, and related senses" (OED 2010, representation). This overarching definition seems to distinguish the two concepts clearly from the start. Responsiveness relates to reaction to stimuli and representation does not. A sub-definition describes representation as, "Something which stands for or denotes another symbolically; an image, a symbol, a sign. Chiefly with of" (ibid.). for example, "Sleep is a certain ymage and representacion of death" (ibid.). here the symbolism in representation becomes apparent. In fact, the power behind this definition, or metaphor, seems to be stemming from the metaphors it creates. Erasmus gives weight to sleep by making it a symbol of death. We learn that through the symbolism behind representation, the image of the representative changes. Here sleep is not only the representative but also a symbol of death. This symbolism gives it a significantly different aspect than if sleep were metaphorically connected to peace, rest, exhaustion, or rejuvenation. Here we can see how responsiveness might become connected to representation. Metaphorical uses of representation make it easy to connect it to other concepts. In the Hobolt and Klemmensen article, we saw such a connection in their definition of representation. They state, "in this 'delegate' view of



representation, elected representatives are expected to act responsively to the needs of their constituents” (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008, 309). In essence what this statement says is that “representation is responsiveness;” however, in the same way that sleep is not death, representation is not responsiveness. Here we see the scholars distracted by the lure of their own metaphor. It takes little to show that representation, especially in the context of government, is not responsiveness. This separation will be shown clearly as this thesis moves forward.

Moving away from the purely symbolic, another definition describes representation as, “The fact or process of standing for, or in the place of, a person, group, institution, etc., esp. with the right or authority to speak or act on behalf of these; (in later use also) the action or fact of representing a party in a legal case” (ibid.). An example of this usage reads, “A High Commissioner... would be appointed to take over from the Viceroy duties connected with the representation of Britain in India” (ibid.). Clearly, representation moves beyond simply symbolism and takes on a practical role where an individual takes on the responsibility of expressing the will of either another individual or group of individuals. What is suggested by this usage is that representation is its own action. This characteristic is confirmed when the OED further defines representation as, “The action, fact, or right of being represented or representing others in a legislative or deliberative assembly; the principles or system associated with this” (ibid.). This function is further compounded when we see representation defined as, “The action of putting forward an account of something discursively; a spoken or written statement, esp. one which conveys or intends to create a particular view or impression” (ibid.). We learn a few

things from these definitions. First, representation is an action. Second, representation comes from an individual who acts in place of another. And third, representation can take the form of either speech or writing and has the potential to also be expressed non-lingually. For example, a gentleman representing the honor of a woman in a duel. This example is antiquated but none-the-less shows a way in which representation could be enacted outside of language.

From this brief examination several characteristics of representation are illuminated. First, representation is symbolic even in the case of an individual representing a group, they become a symbol of that group. Second, representation is an action. Third, representation could be the role of an individual, a group of individuals, or an object. In each of these cases, the representative is representing another generally much larger group and takes on the role of being the face of the group. Fourth, representation can be either lingual or non-lingual. Fifth, representation often gives the representative power to make decisions for the group as a whole, this power is seen in governance. a representative is chosen, that individuals decisions reflect the decision-making power of the whole group behind them while not necessarily consulting each member. And sixth, the metaphoric nature of representation makes the larger groups perception of the representative unstable.

Thinking back to the question posed in this chapter's title, we see that representation and responsiveness are distinct from one another. While it is possible to connect them through metaphor as we saw Hobolt and Klemmensen do, in a practical sense, this decision is problematic. Responsiveness deals with the way an individual or group

responds to stimuli. Representation, on the other hand, is dealing with an individual or group of individuals taking on the task of expressing the perceived will of a group. It is true that in the task of representation, responsiveness might be a key characteristic of a representative; however, that is uncertain. Take for example a monarch. He is the symbolic head of his nation state and the representative of the people, but that does not mean that he needs to be responsive to the desires of the populace. Historically, monarchs, even when pursuing the good of their people, rarely listen to the people they represent. Ultimately, by approaching the question of meaning from the dictionary, we have reached an impasse. The two concepts have room to interact, and it even makes sense for them to. However, interchangeable usage of the terms is simply inexplicable. The definitions and usage of each concept are clearly separate, and while there is room for interaction, there is no overlap in practical usage. In ordinary language, the two concepts are clearly separated. Because of this separation in ordinary language, another route of inquiry will be needed to explain the connection drawn between them by political scientists.

## Chapter 4 – Can Responsiveness be Isolated from Representation in Governance?

I have shown that responsiveness and representation are treated as the same concept in some exemplary pieces of political science literature. In ordinary language, there is no explanation for this; and through an examination of the dictionary it has been made clear that the two concepts do not share overlapping meaning. Responsiveness may be a part of representation, yet it is not necessary for representation. In turn, representation is not necessary for responsiveness. But in the realm of governance, is it possible to study responsiveness without also engaging representation? So far, this does not seem to be the case as each of the studies examined has been a study of a specifically democratic government. This chapter, however, will seek to isolate the two concepts by studying examples of responsiveness in an authoritarian context. In the context of democratic governance, we can expect to see responsiveness and representation both present. Representatives are supposed to be responsive to the demands of their constituents and generally that is what we see (Cleary 2007; Kuklinski and Stange 1979). In contrast, authoritarian systems of government are understood to lack representation and as a result there is not the same expectation of governmental responsiveness. Chen, Pan, and Xu (2014), clearly lay out that the response to public pressure can be either redistribution of resources to meet the peoples' demands or repression to silence the peoples' protests (ibid., 6). Of course, this does raise the question of whether repression would fall into the category of responsiveness. In the

event that it does, then there is likely no example of authoritarian governance that does not act responsively. Still the question remains, can the concept of responsiveness be studied in isolation from representation?

Before diving into the literature, three things should be noted: First, there are surprisingly few studies on responsiveness under authoritarian rule. Second, the work that does exist is relatively recent only going back roughly a decade. The implication from this is that until recently social scientists did not see responsiveness as being present at all under authoritarian rule. Third, the works which I examine have been selected as they are some of the most cited works in the literature around authoritarian responsiveness and are representative of the larger area of study. As before, I am only examining a few works as an in-depth understanding, of a few representative works, is more helpful for the purpose of this thesis than a larger number of surface level examinations. Depth of understanding rather than breadth is of utmost importance.

Chen, Pan, and Xu's 2014 article, "Sources of Authoritarian Responsiveness: A Field Experiment in China," is an excellent place to start the examination of authoritarian responsiveness. They do a thorough examination of county level governance in China in order to determine what the most likely causal factors leading to responsiveness are (ibid., 11). They state, "Our outcome of interest is responsiveness, and we measure responsiveness in four ways after the initial post was submitted" (ibid.). To collect data, the researchers put in requests for assistance to county governmental online portals in 2,227 of the 2,821 total counties in China. These requests fell into four groups: a control group; a group testing responsiveness to threats of collective action; a group testing

responsiveness to threats of reporting to higher levels of government; and a group testing for responsiveness to claims of party membership and loyalty (ibid., 10, 17-18). Through statistical analysis of the responses to the portal requests, the study finds that the threat of collective action and the threat of reporting to higher levels of government have a significant impact on the responsiveness of government officials. Interestingly, claims of party membership and loyalty have only a minor impact. The percentage of responses which directly address the issue brought up were 5.9%, 4.3%, and 0.3% higher than the control group respectively. It should be pointed out that the large majority of requests in each category were not responded to at all. The percentage left unanswered were 76.9% for the control group, 69.2% for the “collective action threat” group, 70.0% for the “tattling threat” group, and 73.5% for the “claims of loyalty” group (ibid., 26). The remaining percentage falls into responses that either defer the request, usually claiming that there is insufficient information, or referrals to other departments.

The actual treatment of the concept of responsiveness is relatively clean. However, they fail to define responsiveness while at the same time suggesting that what actually counts as responsiveness is in question. They explain that “broadly speaking, the regime can either repress or redistribute to prevent the masses from attempting to revolt” (Chen, Pan, Xu 2014, 6). In essence, they have stated that responsiveness could take the form of either repression or redistribution; however, they go on to dismiss this dual nature by explaining that “The aversion to social instability on part of the local agent... does not necessarily lead to responsiveness. It could as easily lead to repression” (ibid., 9). By not giving an operative definition they make an intriguing counternarrative

challenging to recognize. By giving a clear working definition, this risk would have been avoided. The question of a definition is particularly important in the discussion of the theory that Chen, Pan, and Xu base their work on. As they discuss the possibility of the government either redirecting resources or repressing the people to resolve perceived threats to legitimacy, there is a lot of room to question whether both of those actually fall under responsiveness (ibid., 6). Chen, Pan and Xu seem to view repression as falling outside of responsiveness; however, repression remains troubling as most of the work studying responsiveness is in the context of democracy where repression would generally not be part of the discussion and in turn is not viewed as a part of government responsiveness (ibid., 9). Still, repression seems to stand in juxtaposition to representation. As seen before, representation is deeply connected to responsiveness. Repression may fall into the same category, functioning as a deeply connected concept which may be inseparable from responsiveness. Citizen approved repression is certainly an active part of democratic governance. For example, citizens in the United States have agreed to let the government set restrictions on all forms of things, from speed limits to what substances an individual can legally consume. We have empowered the government to police the public in order to ensure that these restrictions are honored. I would contend that this action is a form repression, one which is under particular scrutiny currently with the Black Lives Matter and movements focused toward abolishing the police. Additionally, repression and responsiveness are often connected in ordinary talk. To give just one example, Ronald Aminzade writes that, “the new regime sought to eliminate political opposition by a greater reliance upon preemptive

rather than responsive tactics of repression...” (Aminzade 1981, 193). Aminzade is a sociologist at the University of Minnesota, the book which this example comes from is examining how the development of early capitalism transformed the political landscape in France during the mid-nineteenth century. This concept is important as it presents a clear example of political scientists rejecting the relationship between two concepts simply because acknowledging it would force a shift in how the concept of democracy is understood. This unwillingness to change how repression is understood as a concept points to a likely origin of confusion about responsiveness which as a concept is also deeply colored by the democratic context that the discipline operates in and studies. Chen, Pan, and Xu recognize the unwillingness of many scholars to adjust how a concept is understood within the study of responsiveness in authoritarian settings and address this issue in the last paragraph of their work (ibid., 29):

In contrast to existing literature where citizen engagement and protest are the catalysts for regime change, our results suggest that in an authoritarian regime capable of building institutions complementary to citizen engagement, citizen engagement could contribute to regime survival, or at the very least, citizen engagement is not necessarily a harbinger of the collapse of institutionalized single-party regimes (ibid.).

Here I take the phrase “building institutions complimentary to citizen engagement” as suggesting institutions which are both responsive to the citizenry and potentially representative in some form. While I am making an interpretive stretch, both the content of the article leading up to this conclusion and the context of the statement



itself would suggest that it is an accurate assessment. This is a telling observation as it completely changes what responsiveness to citizen engagement might suggest. It is also important in understanding the connection between responsiveness and representation. If responsiveness can only be present where there is democratic representation, then China could not have responsiveness unless of course the regime is weakening and transitioning to democracy. On the other hand, China clearly does have a form of representation, and Chen, Pan, and Xu's study points to it being responsive to public opinion (*ibid.*, 3, 5, 6.). While the study does a good job of avoiding direct engagement with the concept of representation, only mentioning it briefly in the beginning, it is hard to tell whether this is a result of a perceived lack of representation or simply a desire to avoid the complexity of navigating an unfamiliar variant of the concept.

Marquis and Bird's 2018 work, "The Paradox of Responsive Authoritarianism," examining the relationship between responsive authoritarianism and economic governance provides a revealing juxtaposition with Chen, Pan, and Xu's work. The study is a statistical analysis of the enforcement of environmental regulations based on civil outcry (Marquis and Bird 2018, 957). By examining the restrictions and penalties placed on all corporations listed in the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchange that are within the manufacturing, mining, or power generation industries, Marquis and Bird are able to get a fairly large glimpse of how environmental regulation is being enforced. The authors are most interested in how the form of civil outcry, the capacity of the local bureaucracy, and the restrictions on local media interact in encouraging enforcement of

and compliance with environmental regulation (ibid., 951-957). The results of the analysis show that there was a significant impact from both the form of civic activism and the size of bureaucracy. In locales with larger bureaucracies, civic engagement was met with strong environmental propaganda and businesses suffered from fewer restrictions and penalties as a result (ibid., 962). When the activism took the form of protests rather than comments to online portals, the local government was more likely to address the specific issues which were brought up (ibid., 960). This was extenuated in locales where the media had more freedom to report on protests. Interestingly, the actual impact on overall regulation was found to be generally negative (ibid., 962). In districts with a greater bureaucratic presence and or a greater level of media freedom present, issues that were being dealt with would be used to distract the public from other more significant violations (ibid.). Marquis and Bird argue that what is seen in the balance of tolerance and repression is a government which has given up control and liberalized in order to maintain legitimacy (ibid., 964). Marquis and Bird's study did suffer from several issues with data availability (ibid.). First, because of limited information on corporate compliance with environmental regulation, the measure for compliance was limited to only a rough measurement. Second, because letters are posted anonymously and content was often withheld, there is no way to tease out the level of grievance or determine the extent of overlap. Finally, to report on environmental protests, the researchers had to rely on what the media reported. Since censorship likely leads to underreporting, it is highly probable that the data collected does not represent the total number of public protests. The actual impact on the study

is rather hard to determine, especially because of censorship, but given the available data the study is well executed.

The conclusion of the study is somewhat disappointing. By pointing to the balance between tolerance and repression as a sign of increasing liberalization, the study sits in stark contrast to Chen, Pan, and Xu's work which suggests that this balance instead points to a more resistant form of authoritarianism (Chen, Pan, Xu 2019, 29). While the Chinese government has allowed its citizens increased freedom, outside of a literal understanding of liberalization as increased liberty, it does not seem to actually be liberalization in a western democratic sense. We certainly are not seeing a change in values which point to a coming shift to democracy in these articles, because of this the claim seems rather farfetched.

To refocus on the question posed in this chapter, I will now examine responsiveness as conceptualized in Marquis and Bird's study. This study is essential for the goals of this thesis insofar as it reveals an aspect of responsiveness that is ignored or dismissed in the other studies so far examined here (Marquis and Bird 2018, 949, 965). This study describes two forms of responsiveness (*ibid.*, 951). First, it describes responsiveness in the form of tolerance. This takes the form of legal routes for citizens to express concern about violations of environmental regulation. Second, it describes responsiveness in the form of repression. In this form, responsiveness takes the form of preventing environmental protest and restricting what letters of concern are shown and what is censored. Marquis and Bird observe:

Thus, the paramount goal of maintaining performance legitimacy leads to a paradox of responsive authoritarianism: the government solicits public opinion and tolerates change efforts to improve governance, while at the same time, it also resists threats from that information to retain control and sustain authoritarianism (Marquis and Bird 2018, 951).

Clearly, Marquis and Bird understand both tolerance and repression as a form of governmental responsiveness in this context. This interpretation is reinforced when the study deals with both tolerance and repression under the umbrella of responsiveness (ibid., 948 and 951). This understanding of the nature of responsiveness brings up some intriguing observations. In opposition to the Chen, Pan, and Xu article's understanding of repression, here it is clear that repression is a key form of responsiveness. In order to maintain the appearance of legitimacy, extensive restrictions and censorship are employed to give the appearance of a highly effective bureaucracy (ibid., 950-951). Additionally, responsiveness in the form of tolerance is clearly connected with representation. The government allows increased expression of concern by citizens and then responds to those concerns by taking action and increasing regulation severity around the concerns that are most prominent (ibid.). This is clearly government representation of citizens' policy preferences at a local level. The article's inclusion of repression as a form of responsiveness is the most significant outcome for the study of responsiveness. Marquis and Bird's article is the only one to directly suggest that repression is actually a form of responsiveness. This suggestion challenges the conventional understanding of responsiveness and forces the reader to rethink how

responsiveness is seen not only in authoritarian countries but also in the venerated western democratic world.

Both articles bring useful observations into the discussion of responsiveness. Chen, Pan, and Xu's article points out that increased tolerance does not necessarily mean that the country is liberalizing (Chen, Pan, Xu 2014, 29). Marquis and Bird point to repression as a viable form of responsiveness (Marquis and Bird 2018, 950-951). Each of these will be useful moving forward but for now they will have to go on a back burner. What is of most significance is that neither article isolated responsiveness successfully from representation. The articles approach the concept very differently. While Chen, Pan, and Xu are focused on the concept of responsiveness and directly address it throughout their work, Marquis and Bird are mostly interested in the practical implications of responsiveness. In both treatments, representation was an important aspect of responsiveness. Unfortunately, while this does point to responsiveness and representation being mutually present, Marquis and Bird suggesting that repression is a form of responsiveness makes it challenging to determine an actual answer.

Governments can be exclusively repressive and fail to represent the citizenry at all, in cases like these, responsiveness would be isolated from representation. The difficulty is determining whether such a regime exists. While further study of authoritarian governments might reveal that there are countries with responsive governments that have no representation present, it would be a study far beyond the scope of this thesis. For now, we must be satisfied with the current literature pointing to an inability to

isolate representation from responsiveness. This leads us to our last question: what is the significance, to our discipline, of this outcome?

## Chapter 5 – Why Distinguishing Responsiveness from Representation Matters Politically

So far, this work has shown that exemplary pieces of literature within political science connect the concepts of responsiveness and representation. The concepts are clearly distinguished in ordinary language; however, they seem inseparable from each other in the context of governance. This inseparability makes it tempting to simply dismiss their connection altogether and point to it as insignificant. This chapter will tie together several issues that have been observed throughout this thesis and construct a larger argument about the significance of the connection between responsiveness and representation.

Failure to define and separate the concepts of responsiveness and representation creates confusion for both readers and authors. This confusion can be seen in the differences between each of the authors' understanding of responsiveness. Hobolt and Klemmensen define representation as acting responsively and use the two concepts interchangeably (2008, 309). They fail to satisfactorily address the concept of responsiveness at all. Ultimately, they see responsiveness as a prominent characteristic of representation that stems from elections (*ibid.*). Kuklinski and Stanga take the time to define responsiveness; however, their definition sits in an uneasy relationship with the works they cite as the source of the explanation (Kuklinski and Stanga 1979, 1090-1091). While the understanding of the nature and origin of responsiveness is different, the difficulty in identifying the difference between responsiveness and representation

remains. The rather nebulous definition they provide not only leaves the reader uncertain but points to Kuklinski and Stanga understanding the concepts as being synonyms. For both sets of authors, difficulty in situating their work within the literature and uncertainty as to what they are actually examining arises as a result of failure to separate the two concepts. This problem in turn resulted from a failure to define responsiveness adequately before pressing on and examining it. Additionally, Kuklinski and Stanga seem to have neglected to read their own sources. If they had more seriously attempted to define their concepts their attentiveness to the sources would never have come into question. The reason that this was not attempted is that representation has become so deeply connected with responsiveness that it is hard to find one without the other in existing work on governance.

Marquis and Bird point out that responsiveness can take the form of either representation or repression (Marquis and Bird 2018, 951). In making this observation, they show the necessity of separating and defining the concepts. Chen, Pan, and Xu take similar evidence and conclude that repression is not a form of responsiveness (Chen, Pan, and Xu 2014, 9). If the time is not taken to present some form of definition for your concepts, it is extremely challenging to determine what causes these disagreements between authors. Marquis and Bird could have stated at the beginning how they understood responsiveness and in so doing it would become much simpler for the reader to understand both their arguments and to compare them with another set of scholars. Unfortunately, providing definitions early on is not common practice within this area of the discipline. With the exception of Kuklinski and Stanga (Kuklinski and



Stanga 1979, 1091), who have their own issues, none of the authors examined in this thesis define the concept of responsiveness. Additionally, neither Kuklinski and Stanga nor Hobolt and Klemmensen adequately distinguish between responsiveness and representation.

The reason for the importance of providing working definitions goes beyond preventing confusion. When definitions are not provided, it becomes more challenging to determine what about the world the authors' understanding of a concept forces them to miss. Recall Pitkin's observation, "If you use distinct terms interchangeably or ignore fine differences, then as Cavell puts it, there is likely to be 'something you aren't noticing about the world'" (Pitkin 1972, 277). In this case, what seems to be widely missed is the potential for responsiveness to not only function through representation but, as Marquis and Bird observe, also through repression (Marquis and Bird 2018, 951). It is curious that something so significant could be so easily missed. To understand how such an important observation could be missed for so long or ignored even when it is visible in the research results, it will be necessary to step away from the question of definition and look at the ideological commitments of the researchers themselves.

Ideological commitments are important primarily because no researcher does work outside of them. All research is colored by the views of the researcher, I contend that this influence is especially present within our discipline of political science. Whether a researcher is primarily interested in quantitative research or qualitative research will dramatically impact the work they do. The difference between being a realist, constructivist, or interpretivist will have a huge influence on the form and outcome of

research. Even the university a researcher attended can affect the work they do. The influence of the individual extends beyond academic training. The religion one holds to, the political beliefs, and the culture a researcher grew up in will all influence the way that they will see and understand the world. The impact of these influences can be seen in the discussion of responsiveness. How scholars within the discipline understand the concept of responsiveness cannot but be shaped by the discipline's deeply pro-democracy roots. The concept of responsiveness is treated largely as a democratic trait of governance and is a purely positive trait. This reality can be seen in the treatment of responsiveness by authors like Matthew Cleary who view responsiveness outside of a democratic context as inexplicable given our current understanding (Cleary 2019, 297) or authors like Marquis and Bird who see it as a sign of democratization (Marquis and Bird 2018, 964).

At the same time, more recent scholars who are willing to accept responsiveness outside of a democratic context, find it extremely challenging to redefine what responsiveness is along with an expanded understanding of where it can be found. This difficulty is perhaps most evident in Chen, Pan, and Xu's article as they reject repression as a form of responsiveness even though all of the evidence seems to point the other way (Chen, Pan, and Xu 2014, 9). Additionally, rather than being treated in terms of the regime it is found in, responsiveness is widely taken as sign of liberalization and regime change. Chen, Pan, and Xu demonstrate well that in the context of China, it seems to simply be part of a more stable form of authoritarianism rather than a shift away from authoritarianism. This important outcome points to a flawed understanding of

responsiveness that is influenced more by the context the research is produced in, than by the research itself.

A further issue I see stemming from the unacknowledged ideological commitment of scholars is a teleological understanding of governance. It is most visible through the Marquis and Bird article. As they study the presence of responsiveness in China and its effect on economic regulation, they come to the conclusion that responsiveness is acting as a liberalizing force and a step on the road to democracy (Marquis and Bird 2018, 264). What points to a teleological view is that there is no question of whether something else is happening but instead the bold statement, and one well outside the scope of their research, that we are seeing the “authoritarian regimes’ struggle to balance liberalization with control” (ibid.). The assumption is simply that democracy will be the end result. The work of authors such as Kuklinski and Stanga reinforces this perspective even more as it assumes the necessity of democracy for responsiveness through communication to develop. The liberalization which would allow communication eventually will lead to democracy. From this perspective, there is some room to see responsiveness outside of a teleological lens. Authors like Hobolt and Klemmensen suffer from the most issues. In claiming that responsiveness is the result of competitive elections (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2007, 332), they lose the ability to explain its presence in a non-democracy other than to say that liberalization is taking place and we are seeing a shift in governance away from authoritarianism. From each of these perspectives, there is a strong suggestion of a teleologic understanding of governance where democracy, or perhaps republicanism, is the end form. In this thesis,

the only authors to suggest a non-teleologic view were Chen, Pan, and Xu; however, they had their own issue in that they rejected repression as a form of responsiveness even though their evidence should have suggested its inclusion. Ultimately, the trend that is seen suggests a tendency toward teleologic arguments, both implicit and explicit, when dealing with the concept of responsiveness.

This outcome begs the question, is responsiveness unique in generating a teleological argument or do other concepts create the same tendencies? While any rigorous answer is beyond the scope of this work, I will present an argument based on the observations made so far. First, scholars do not thoroughly understand the concepts they are working with. This lack of understanding is then compounded by their basic ideological commitments influencing how they are willing to understand a concept. As a result, they are either unwilling or unable to recognize when conceptual understanding fails to fit the world they are studying. Because of this inability, rather than reshaping the concept around the evidence presented, they interpret the evidence based on the existing concept. At this point, unintended teleological arguments form which are necessary for the concept to remain static. The argument becomes 'for this concept to be present here, we must be seeing some emerging shift that fits our pre-existing understanding of the concept.' The end result is a teleology which is remarkably resilient and hard to locate.

In this work, I point to the concept of responsiveness as an example of this process. I contend that the framework for its creation is far more widespread. While examining more examples of this process in a thorough manner is beyond this thesis, I do point to

both representation and repression as prototypical examples of teleologies being created. Where there is representation, democracy must be present. Where there is repression, authoritarianism must be present. Admittedly, this treatment is an extremely rough overview of these concepts and how they are treated, but the goal is to suggest a starting location rather than a worked-out example. Regardless, there is still one final question which needs to be answered. How can scholars push back against the creation of concept-fitted teleologies?

## Chapter 6 – Conclusion: How Can We Avoid Concept – fitted Teleologies?

In the previous chapters, this thesis has asked and answered four primary questions. Chapter two asked, does the literature within political science treat responsiveness as its own concept? By examining exemplary articles that deal with the concept of responsiveness, it was shown that responsiveness is often confused or used interchangeably with representation. This observation led to chapter three's question, How are responsiveness and representation distinguished in ordinary language? By examining how the concepts are dealt with in the dictionary, this thesis was able to determine that although there is room for interplay between the concepts, there is no crossover in meaning. The two concepts are completely distinct in ordinary language. This somewhat concerning outcome brought the next question which is found in chapter four. Can responsiveness be isolated from representation in governance? Because there was little reason for the concepts' interchangeable usage, this work attempted to identify an example of responsiveness without the presence of representation. Ultimately, this effort proved unsuccessful as even in authoritarian governments, where responsiveness was seen there was generally representation present with it. In the process, what was determined is that responsiveness did not need to take the form of representation exclusively, it could also take the form of repression.

At the same time that repression was acknowledged as a legitimate form of responsiveness, it became clear that the concept of responsiveness was connected not only to representation but more importantly directly to democracy. Responsiveness was either a signal of democratic governance or of a shift toward democracy within a non-democratic government. What was of most significance in the moment however was the fact that responsiveness and representation really were not separable. All of this information combined to bring the final question. Chapter five asks, what does the relationship between responsiveness and representation reveal? The chapter goes on to point out several issues that are revealed through an examination of conceptual linkage. First, because of inadequate working definitions, scholars are not understanding the concepts they are working with. Second, linking concepts makes it difficult to see other concepts which one or another of the linked concepts may interact with individually. Third, although responsiveness is present in democracy, it is also present in other forms of governance. This presence is easily missed however, because it has been so deeply connected to representation and democracy. Fourth and finally, deep and unquestioned connections between concepts can and does lead to teleological arguments in order to justify what is being seen. We have seen the argument that because there is responsiveness in China, and responsiveness is democratic, then China must be transitioning to democracy. Democracy becomes an inevitable next stage. These issues are connected into a causal chain that shows how the process which led to a teleological argument developing out of an uncompromising understanding of responsiveness, can lead to other concepts suffering from the same problem.

This work will answer one final question and then conclude. This chapter asks: how can we avoid concept-fitted teleologies? First, we need to give more attention to how concepts are being defined and why they are being defined the way they are. Second, we need to give concepts which are attached to specific forms of governance special attention. Simply accepting that a concept can only manifest in specific governmental circumstances sets researchers up to miss when that concept manifests elsewhere. Third and finally, the ideological commitments of those in the discipline need to be acknowledged and questioned. Some scholars within the discipline have already begun thinking about the impact of the researchers own commitments on the study and use the term positionality to refer to the entirety of a researcher's context and commitments.

The goal of recognizing one's positionality is to encourage scholars to acknowledge how their own commitments and position in networks of power impact the research they are conducting. While it may be impossible to acknowledge every personal commitment or power relationship contributing to positionality, even attempting to recognize these commitments radically changes how one must conduct research. Take for example Timothy Pachirat's essay, "The Political in Political Ethnography: Dispatches from the Killing Floor" (Schatz 2009, 143-161) In it we see Pachirat grapple with the reality of shifting positionality and the impact on both how his study was conducted and also what was revealed in it (ibid., 147). As he moved from one position in the slaughter house to another and then finally left it and conducted outside research, his perspective changed and he learned more about how industrialized violence is normalized than if he



had attempted to maintain a single position of power for the entirety of the study (ibid., 156-157). Ultimately, he demonstrates how powerful a tool one's own position can be in the hands of a self-aware researcher. Positionality is not limited to one's physical location or position. It can be deeply connected to how one chooses to engage with a study. My own positionality in this work is of significance. I made the decision to examine responsiveness outside of democracy and instead look to an ostensibly dissimilar context. The goal was to see what is revealed by asking normal questions in an unusual context. The result is a revelation that responsiveness is supported through a teleological argument. This example is important not because I achieved an examination of my own positionality perfectly but rather because it demonstrates that positionality has significance for conceptual studies and is not limited to the examination of physical or visible phenomena.

To conclude, this thesis contributes to the discipline by challenging the conventional treatment of concepts in research. It shows that there is a need for more thorough work on responsiveness and suggests that the issues seen with this concept likely spread to many other widely used concepts. The largest contribution is in pointing out a way that teleological arguments are created which then spread out and percolate widely within the discipline. Similar research on other concepts which have either been connected with each other or been deeply connected to specific forms of governance would be needed to see how far this issue extends. Additionally, research looking for the presence of concepts manifesting in places we would not usually expect them may further our understanding of the concepts, their function, and their boundaries.

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