Candidates holding positions opposed by a majority of voters frequently triumph in American politics. Such outcomes challenge the premise underlying what Doug Arnold (1990) calls the most fundamental question facing students of political science: To what degree can citizens in a democracy control their government? Outcomes in which minorities triumph over majorities lead us to question whether citizens can control their government at all. This book develops a general theory of representation that explains why and how candidates take the positions they do. It is among the first to apply behavioral insights from psychology to Congress and representation. It holds that candidates appeal to groups rather than to individuals to overcome the apathy and ignorance that limits the degree to which most individuals participate. The theory reconciles a series of puzzling findings in the representation literature including: the lack of policy congruence between legislators and constituents; the inadequacy of issue salience as a mechanism for influencing responsiveness; as well as the perplexing finding that representation differs according to state diversity.

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I.

At a glance the man selling limes on the busy street corner in Little Havana looked like any other vendor. But something set him apart. Perhaps it was the large bills passers by stuffed in his pockets, while leaving their limes behind. Or maybe, it was the reverence with which the buyers treated him. No, this man wasn’t just a fruit peddler, this man was a hero. This man was Orlando Bosch.

Bosch took up selling fruit on the corner of Flagler and LeJeune in protest. After violating probation for firing a bazooka from Macarthur Causeway—the busy road linking downtown Miami and Miami Beach—at a Polish freighter, a judge refused to allow him to travel for work while under house arrest. The lime peddler did over $2000 worth of sales in just two days and brought traffic to a halt. Clearly, Bosch still had the support of the community despite a long history of illegal activities designed to overthrow Fidel Castro. Perhaps he was a terrorist, but he was their terrorist.

The passion of the Cuban-American community is hard to overstate. For decades, those seen as even mildly accommodating toward Castro were vilified in Miami’s Cuban community where even innocuous statements invited violence. For example, in 1972, the crowd listening to singer Julio Iglesias rioted during his performance at a nightclub after he commented that he wouldn’t mind singing for Cubans. Iglesias left under police escort, and most local radio stations dropped him from their play lists. In 1975, Valentin Hernandez murdered Luciano Nieves, a local writer who advocated dialog with Castro. Nine years after his conviction, Governor Bob

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1 For an extensive account of Orlando Bosch’s activities, see “The Man Who would Save Cuba.” Bragg and Font (1991). Bosch had violated parole in the bazooka incident by fleeing the U.S. He later returned illegally, at which time the INS tried to deport him. However, 31 countries refused him entry.
Graham received over 6,000 letters calling for his early release. In 1994, a local lawyer, Magda Montiel Davis, made the mistake of complimenting Castro as “a great educator” during a pro-dialog conference. She returned home to death threats and protesters. Her entire office staff quit. As recently as 2004, Larry Klaman, a Republican senate candidate, ran on the slogan “Quitemos Castro Ahora!”—Take Castro Out Now!

Given these reactions, politicians are understandably sensitive to the intensity of Cuban Americans. Despite making up only 5.2% of Florida’s population, politicians such as Senator Bill Nelson, regularly stop in Miami seeking approval from leaders in the Cuban community before traveling to Cuba. And despite the indifference of most Floridians on issues pertaining to Castro’s Cuba, not a single state official opposes the positions of the Miami hardliners who advocate increased restrictions on travel and trade. Even Democrats like Bob Graham and Bill Nelson, who would seem to have little to gain from courting the votes of the heavily Republican Cuban American community, support the “hardliners’” positions.

Moreover, these patterns extend well beyond Florida’s border. In 2004, most Democratic presidential candidates supported the hardliners’ positions despite the fact that most Americans support the liberalization of ties with Cuba. Studies show that over 66% of Americans and over 55% of Floridians oppose the travel ban.

2 For instance, one judge described Bosch as “….a leader of the Coordination of United Revolutionary Organizations (CORU), which was linked to more than 50 possible bombings and some possible assassinations” (Bragg and Font 1991).
6 Frank Davies. 4/18/2001. “Poll finds Americans Support Business with, Travel to Cuba.” Miami Herald. Also see Bill Rufty. 3/21/1998. “Ease sanctions on Cuba, Poll Shows.” The Ledger. Lakeland Ledger Publishing Corporation. While state level polling data on Cuba are scarce, the question wording conflates travel to Cuba with business there and is consequently a very conservative estimate of opposition
opinion seems to have influenced politicians outside of Florida, as separate bills repealing the embargo have passed both the House and Senate in the past few years. John Kerry concisely summarized this apparent contradiction with his admission that foreign policy on Cuba is dictated by “the politics of Florida.”

Given their intensity, it is not surprising that in the fall of 2002, while national headlines focused on security, terrorism, and the President’s march toward war in Iraq, in Miami’s newly created 25th Congressional district, the race focused on Cuba. For the first time since Castro’s rise, a major party candidate, Democratic State Representative Annie Betancourt, supported ending the ban on travel to Cuba—a centerpiece of the policies advocated by Miami “hardliners”. While a broad national movement was growing to repeal the trade embargo in order to open Cuba as a market for American agriculture, in Miami, Betancourt’s stance was heresy.

While Betancourt’s stand was courageous, it was also calculated. Her opponent Mario Diaz Balart is Representative Lincoln Diaz Balart’s brother and son of Rafael Diaz Balart, who served as Majority Leader in the Cuban House from 1954-1958. Mario was politically connected and well funded. Even more daunting was the fact that Mario had drawn the newly created 25th district for himself. After term limits had forced him out of the state Senate, he took a step down and ran for the state House in order to chair the

to the travel restrictions. For instance, the same poll found that 53% of Hispanic Floridians (about half of whom were Cuban) opposed the travel restrictions.

7 Peter Wallsten. “Kerry Calls for Maintenance of Current Cuba Sanctions.” Miami Herald 9/1/03. This piece documents how John Kerry changed his position on Cuban issues.

8 The focus on Cuba was credited as making an uncompetitive race competitive at least for a short time. Polls showed that Betancourt closed to within 10 points of Diaz Balart in early October.

Redistricting Committee. In so doing, he set himself up as a heavy favorite to win the plurality Republican 25th.\textsuperscript{10}

However, the tide of opinion was with Betancourt. For the first time since Castro’s ascent, a series of polls showed that a majority (57\%) of Cuban-Americans supported ending restrictions on travel to Cuba.\textsuperscript{11} In the 25th district, which is over 63\% Hispanic, most of whom are Cuban, Betancourt’s move was not just courageous, it was politically astute.\textsuperscript{12} With a single announcement Betancourt set the agenda for the campaign, generated immense free publicity, and temporarily made the race appear competitive.

Ultimately, Diaz Balart’s advantages were insurmountable. Betancourt was trounced. In a district in which Al Gore took about 45\% of the vote despite a 43\%-35\% Republican registration advantage over Democrats, Betancourt managed a meager 34\%.\textsuperscript{13} While the candidates shared several important characteristics, including their Cuban-American heritage, their shared emphasis on Cuban issues was perhaps most surprising. As one editorialist put it “For a while it seemed like Diaz Balart’s only issue was his claim that Betancourt had only one issue.”\textsuperscript{14} Diaz Balart emphasized Betancourt’s stand on Cuba despite the fact that she propounded the majority preferred position.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{10} Betancourt was no slouch. She had been elected to the state House and was an able fundraiser.
\textsuperscript{11} Of those with opinions. See Bendixen and Associates. (April) 2002. “Public Opinion Survey of the Cuban American Community in Miami Dade County”. This was one of several polls showing this result.
\textsuperscript{12} A breakdown of the demographics of Florida’s Congressional districts is found at http://www.flsenate.gov/data/legislators/senate/DistrictData/CD/CD_Stats.pdf.
\textsuperscript{13} Zollo. 2002. The remaining 22\% are registered independents.
\textsuperscript{15} Betancourt supported liberalization on Cuba which relates to four distinct policy areas: dialog, travel, sending money, and the trade embargo. According to a variety of opinion polls, Betancourt’s platform reflected the majority held preference on each of those issues with the exception of the trade embargo. However, even on this issue, a solid majority (52-34\%) thought the policy was ineffective and needed to be replaced. See “Public Opinion Survey of the Cuban American Community” April 2002. Cuba Study Group. Bendixen and Associates, Miami, Florida.
While Betancourt’s support for liberalizing ties with Cuba may be viewed as a turning point in the politics of south Florida, it also serves as evidence of a more general political phenomenon. Betancourt lost while espousing the majority preferred view on the most highly salient issue in the election. Perhaps even more curiously, Mario Diaz Balart, the candidate propounding the minority view, did his best to focus the race on that issue. In so doing, he directly contradicted prevailing theories of representation which suggest that Diaz Balart should have moderated his position on the travel ban in order to appeal to the largest number of voters.

Precisely because the outcome runs contrary to basic tenets of democratic theory—candidates supporting the position preferred by the majority of voters should be victorious—the example provided by the race for Florida’s 25th directly challenges the premise underlying what Doug Arnold (1990) calls the most fundamental question facing students of political science—To what degree can citizens in a democracy control their government? Outcomes in which minorities triumph over majorities lead us to question whether citizens can control their government at all.

While Orlando Bosch and the politics of south Florida are unquestionably unique, the counter-democratic example of candidate positioning on liberalizing ties with Cuba is not. Considerable evidence suggests that minority preferred positions often gain the support of popularly elected officials. Whether it is Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum supporting the criminalization of homosexual relations, President Bush opposing the

\[16\] On Santorum see: “Gay Issue Causes Little Pain for Santorum Quinnipiac Poll Finds; Pennsylvania Voters Back Bush over Likely Dems” which shows that voters think that homosexual relations between consenting results should be legal (45%-35%). 9/24/2003. QU DAILY http://www.quinnipiac.edu/x6163.xml
importation of prescription drugs from Canada,\textsuperscript{17} California Representative Henry Waxman promoting the regulation of vitamins and labeling in direct opposition to a district full of health conscious consumers,\textsuperscript{18} Florida’s Democratic senators repeatedly supporting restrictive Cuba policy, or Florida’s Governor Jeb Bush sending state police to seize the brain dead Terri Schiavo in order to have her feeding tube re-inserted,\textsuperscript{19} minority positions seem to frequently win when pitted against the will of the majority.

II. A Conventional View of Representation

The conventional view of representation in which the public demands policy from a legislature that responds has been described as the ‘Demand Input Model’ (Wahlke 1967).\textsuperscript{20} Members of this legislature are motivated by their proximate goal, which is reelection, thereby providing an imperative to reflect the preferences of the citizenry (Mayhew 1974, Fenno 1978). Legislators are responsive when their behavior is congruent with constituents’ preferences.

Scholars investigating representation tend to apply the Demand Input Model to questions of policy responsiveness and overlook the fact that it is only one of several facets of representation.\textsuperscript{21} However, there may be good reason for this. Most

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} On Jeb Bush’s order to the state police see “Sources say Police nearly faced off over Schiavo” Associated Press State and Local Wire March 25, 2004. On the poll results showing 63% oppose intervention in the Terri Schiavo case. See “Poll: 63% in Florida oppose intervention in Schiavo case.” Associated Press State and Local Wire. March 25, 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{20} By no means is the Demand Input Model the only explanation for legislator behavior. Alternative explanations challenge this conception suggesting, for instance, that legislators shape citizens’ attitudes and help them to develop their preferences (e.g., Hill and Hurley 1999, Eulau and Karps 1977).
\item \textsuperscript{21} Other forms include service responsiveness, allocation responsiveness and symbolic responsiveness (e.g., see Eulau and Karps 1977 for a review).
\end{itemize}
controversial findings about representation seem to arise from studies of policy congruence. Indeed, when we observe the average legislator, whether in committee pursuing allocation responsiveness (e.g., Shepsle 1978, Hall 1996), doing casework pursuing service responsiveness, or home in the district projecting a sense of ‘homestyle’ and pursuing symbolic responsiveness, we find them preoccupied with servicing their constituents (e.g., Mayhew 1978, Fenno 1978, 1996).

A central assumption shared by the overwhelming majority of representation studies is that legislators and candidates appeal to the preferences of the entire Geographic or Legal Constituency (Fenno 1978). The logic behind such behavior is often left implicit in studies of legislative behavior which is operationalized by examining the degree to which legislators respond to mean district or state preferences. However, studies of candidate positioning in campaigns have extensively examined and explicated this logic via the Median Voter Theorem as applied by Downs (1957). Indeed, the main difference between the subconstituency politics theory of representation articulated below and the Demand Input Model lies in the conceptualization of the role constituents play in the democratic process.

In many ways, the traditional view of representation is quite satisfying. After all, when we observe legislators closely, they seem to work hard to satisfy the demands of their constituents (e.g., Mayhew 1974). While they are not always responsive on policy, viewed as a whole, the standard propounded by Hanna Pitkin (1967), the system seems quite responsive overall. The implications of this perspective imply that pluralist democracy is alive and well. The elected work hard to respond to the preferences of the citizenry.
Three Puzzles

If as Dahl says, politics is the study of “who gets what when and how” then clearly the provision of policy is a central, perhaps even the most important, form of representation. If policy representation occurs, then the actions of the elected should reflect the preferences of the citizenry. However, the description of legislative representation advanced through this perspective is inconsistent with the observation of contemporary politics. Moreover, policy responsiveness is the most carefully studied aspect of representation. The failure to explain legislator behavior on this dimension is a major drawback for the traditional theory. As commonly expressed, the Demand Input Model advocates a view that leads to three puzzles of representation that are unexplained by existing theory—a fact that implies a fundamental misunderstanding of our political process.

First, studies examining the policy congruence between legislators’ behavior and constituents’ preferences reach conflicting results that are unaccounted for in the traditional theory (see Bishin 2000 and Uslaner 1999 for reviews). While some studies find that legislators reflect constituents’ policy preferences, numerous others find that legislators are responsive only sometimes, or not at all (e.g., Bernstein 1989). Post hoc explanations for these results, such as the issue salience thesis—which holds that legislator responsiveness increases with issue visibility—are untested and at best leave us with an impaired theory of representation unable to explain the majority of behavior in Congress which is of low visibility to the public (e.g., Miller and Stokes 1963).

A second puzzle arises from the study of candidate positioning in campaigns. The Demand Input Model which underlies much of contemporary representation theory holds
that, for various reasons, candidates should appeal to the average voter in the district.

And the Median Voter Theorem formally leads to the same prediction all else equal (e.g., Downs 1957). However, observation of legislators in Congress and candidates in campaigns is inconsistent with such predictions. Indeed, an entire literature has developed that seeks to explain why candidates diverge from this apparently optimal position (e.g., Burden 2004).

A third puzzle emerges from recent work on the influence of diversity on legislative responsiveness. In a study with far ranging implications, Bailey and Brady (1998) find that senators from homogeneous states are far more responsive to their constituents than are those in heterogeneous states who rely more on their personal ideology or party cues. This work suggests that the process of representation differs according to the diversity of a constituency and is puzzling because there is no other study of the Congress that suggests that the factors that influence legislators vary depending on the diversity of a constituency.

The existence of these puzzles suggests that the traditional conceptualization of the Demand Input Model inaccurately describes the representation process. One solution to these puzzles may be found in a reformulation of the Demand Input Model called the Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation (SCP) in which groups of intense and active citizens rather than the citizenry as a whole constrain legislator behavior.

Toward A General Theory of Representation

While scholars increasingly recognize the importance of subconstituencies, such as Cuban-Americans, no theory of representation exists that adequately explains why and how politicians appeal to intense subconstituencies rather than the district as a whole.
Moreover, existing representation theories seldom account for politicians’ behavior across the electoral and institutional environments, in which they act. Scholars focus a great deal of attention on legislator behavior in campaigns, in committees, and on roll call votes, but seldom develop theories that simultaneously explain behavior in all of them. As a result we have learned a great deal about particular aspects of the democratic process but the generalizability of our findings is limited. Seldom do theories explain how representation works across the different aspects of the democratic process, for instance, via position-taking in campaigns and through roll call voting in Congress.

The purpose of this book is to develop and test a theory of representation based on “subconstituency politics”. The theory aspires to solve the puzzles articulated above, overcome the limitations of past representation research, and provide a basic logic of how and why politicians sometimes appeal to minorities rather than majorities. I argue that owing to differences in their level of intensity, under a wide variety of circumstances, the will of minorities is often represented at the expense of the citizenry as a whole. To build coalitions of intense supporters who are more likely to participate, politicians appeal to the preferences of passionate subconstituencies.

This approach has several benefits for the study of representation. First, it provides a unified explanation for a candidate’s behavior both during a campaign and in office, as explanations of politicians’ behavior need to stretch across the two arenas (e.g., Fenno 1978, Jacobson 1983). Second, it provides a theory of representation that explains behavior across the four different aspects of representation identified by Eulau and Karps (1977). Third, the theory provides explanations for each of the three puzzles of
representation described above. Finally, it is consistent with the observations of seasoned students of campaigns and legislator behavior.

The theory is grounded in Social Identity Theory (Turner et al. 1987) with the benefit that the individual level assumptions on which the Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation is based have been extensively validated. It also offers a solution that simultaneously addresses each of the three puzzles identified above. Finally, the subconstituency politics theory of representation provides an explanation for the behavior observed in the everyday actions of politicians including those of Mario Diaz Balart. In sum, subconstituency politics explains that politicians appeal to minority preferences over those of the majority when the benefit of advocating the minority’s position substantially outweighs the cost of alienating the less interested majority. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to defining and explaining the Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation (SCP) and laying out the plan of the book.

The Challenge of Politics

Getting votes from a citizenry that is politically uninterested and inactive is a difficult challenge. Yet, candidates’ careers depend on their ability to transform passive citizens into active supporters despite financial and time constraints. Appealing to groups of voters within the legal or geographic constituency called subconstituencies, helps solve this problem. Once elected, their behavior reflects the positions of the groups to which they appeal. The central tenet of the subconstituency politics theory is that candidates build a coalition of supporters by developing platforms that activate intense groups of constituents. Groups are activated on the basis of candidates policy and non-policy (e.g., symbolic) positions. Once an identity is activated, individuals who share this social
identity view issues in the context of the group, thereby leading to shared preferences and intensity. Candidates try to develop coalitions of intense groups of individuals who care so strongly about a particular issue that a candidate’s advocacy guarantees those individuals’ support and participation in the next election. Groups are disproportionately valuable to candidates because their members are not only more likely to vote, but groups also provide other important resources to the politician.

By assembling a platform of positions that appeal to various groups, candidates build a coalition of intense support groups. In a sense, the SCP merely articulates a phenomenon long described by politicians and observed by journalists, but too frequently overlooked by social scientists—that politicians see constituents not as individuals, but as groups. For many voters, an issue may exist such that a political candidate’s position on that issue will determine the voter’s support. While both share the basic characteristics of the Demand Input Model, the different views of constituency generate different implications. A summary of the differences between traditional representation theories and the SCP is seen in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Differences in Characteristics of Representation Models</th>
<th>Subconstituency Model</th>
<th>Traditional Models</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politicians’ Proximate Goal</td>
<td>Re-Election</td>
<td>Re-Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Influence on Behavior</td>
<td>Intense Groups of Citizens</td>
<td>The Average Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Responsiveness Vary Across Issues?</td>
<td>No—but the group to whom they respond varies.</td>
<td>Yes—depending on the visibility of the issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Knowledge Required of the Average Citizen for the Theory to Work?</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Influences on Politicians’ Behavior when Citizens’ lack Meaningful Preferences</td>
<td>Ideology, Party</td>
<td>Ideology, Party</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main difference between these theories lies in the way the model accounts for constituents’ influence. Rather than appealing to the constituency as a whole, politicians appeal to groups of citizens who are likely to be intense on particular issues. Through the course of this book, I show how this crucial distinction serves to explain the puzzles described above and comports better with the observations of political observers.

I lay out the SCP in the following manner. I begin by defining the concept of the group and describing the context in which candidates take positions. Understanding the context in which positions are adopted is essential to understanding the difficulties candidates face in appealing to voters as individuals. Next, I explain how appealing to groups overcomes these difficulties. Finally, I describe how external factors restrict the issue positions politicians can take, and consequently the groups from whom politicians can draw support.

Subconstituency Politics: The Nature of Groups

In studies of politics, the term group usually refers to organized interests. In The Governmental Process, David Truman (1951) outlines the pluralist definition of groups as people who interact, the product of which leads to shared attitudes and beliefs. The foundation of Truman’s definition is the physical interaction among individuals. While people may share opinions or attributes, it is only through their interaction that an organization of political consequence can be formed. Truman’s definition is also consistent with the traditional view of groups from the perspective of Social Cohesion Theory which stresses group members interdependence and interaction. Similarly, in The Logic of Collective Action, Mancur Olson (1965) defines groups in the context of
organizations which are characterized by a desire to further the interests of their members.

While these definitions seem appropriate for the study of organized interests, it overlooks the frequently informal nature of groups and is thus inconsistent with empirical social psychology research. In particular, the traditional definition cannot account for a process in which politicians advocate policy positions on the basis of both organized and unorganized citizens’ shared views or self-perceptions. Consequently, traditional definitions of the group overlook an important aspect of political participation—that individuals who have never met or formally joined an organization may share identities stemming from shared experiences and interests that lead to similar attitudes. Groups need not be organized to be influential.

The Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation provides an explanation of how politicians overcome the problem of individual disinterest. Politicians exploit a widely accepted characteristic of individuals—people coalesce around common experiences, outlooks and interests—by energizing groups around issues. This view of how representation works relies heavily on the Self Categorization Theory (SCT) of social identity (e.g., Turner et al. 1987) which holds that, at various times and to varying degrees, individuals categorize themselves as either unique individuals or as group members depending on the circumstances and context.  

Instead of requiring interaction, interdependence or affinity, groups merely consist of individuals who share some social identity. Identities form in response to the

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22 Despite their overwhelming similarities, social psychologists draw some important distinctions between social identity theory and identity theory which differ on whether the “group” or the “role” provides the basis for an individual’s identity (e.g., Stets and Burke 2000, Brewer 2001). Such questions lie beyond this scope of this project.
social environment and thus are largely a product of life experiences. Stets and Burke summarize the SCT view of a group as “….a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category…..” (2000, 225). Group membership serves as a source of esteem and causes people to “….think, feel and behave and define themselves in terms of group norms rather than unique properties of the self.” (Terry, Hogg and Duck 1999, 284). Moreover, “self categorization leads to psychological group formation—subjects demonstrate collective behavior in the form of shared responses…” (Turner et al. 1987).

These characteristics allow for the concept of the group to be determined beyond the reach or discretion of the individual. This increases the chance that shared commonalities can be exploited by outsiders, in this case a candidate, in order to evoke a shared response. Skilled candidates try to overcome the problem of individual disinterest by activating the group identities they think will disproportionately benefit them relative to their opponent.

To summarize, then, a group is a constellation of people, either organized or not, who share a social identity owing to a common experience that leads to shared concerns and preferences. This definition reflects the fact that individuals can identify as part of a group despite having never met. Or it may include those belonging to well organized groups with members that meet the criteria described above. Further, an individual’s identification with a group can be active or latent.

The existence of a group by this definition necessarily means that there is a shared social identity. However, that identity may not always result in shared views that are politically useful. For instance, veterans share a general experience of having served in
the armed forces of the United States. And they seem to share preferences on a wide variety of topics. However, recent work shows that they do not seem to have shared political preferences (Bishin 2004). For political purposes, veterans are a latent group. Ultimately the degree to which groups share views is an empirical question that can, at least theoretically, be examined on a case by case basis.

By recognizing that skilled politicians can activate latent identities to create or activate new groups, this definition of group goes beyond the specific cases of issue publics and interest groups, which refer to active and generally longstanding associations, to provide a more general explanation of why groups are so powerful.

This definition also allows for recognition of the fact that the role and meaning of the concept of the group has different implications for individuals than for candidates. For the individual, the importance of the group lies in the benefits that accrue from membership. These need not be financial or even tangible, but may be psychic. On some issues, group membership may even provide a heuristic shortcut.

For candidates the importance of the group lies in the implications that stem from shared perceptions. Shared self-perceptions offer ambitious politicians a cue for understanding how to gain group members’ support. The importance of this distinction is illustrated by example. Among Cubans immigrating after 1990, the experience of the Mariel boat lift, and for many, internment at Guantanamo Bay, frames their outlook on issues relating to Cuba. At a minimum it provides a heuristic short cut to decision making on relevant issues. For candidates, this shared experience provides an opportunity to develop policies, such as relaxing travel restrictions for those with relatives in Cuba, that may activate the support of these immigrants.
A particularly important aspect of SCT is that individuals have multiple group identities stemming from their categorizations, roles, and experiences. As Stets and Burke put it “Each person, however, over the course of his or her personal history, is a member of a unique combination of social categories; therefore the set of social identities making up that person’s self-concept is unique.” (2000, 225). The strength of these identities varies, and may often be latent, with their existence occasionally going unrecognized (Turner et al., 1987). The political relevance of these associations varies depending on the context and on the strength of an individual’s identification. Lacking the relevant context, many identities never become salient. In order to motivate political behavior, skilled candidates act strategically to draw attention to those issues that activate or heighten group associations that favor them. Consequently, it is not surprising that social psychologists find that the link between attitudes and behavior are strengthened when the relevant group membership and norms are salient (Terry, Hogg and Duck 1999, 287).

The self categorization theory has two key implications for candidates. First, these definitions allow individuals to share attitudes or predispositions on the basis of some common characteristic or shared experience despite the absence of formal group organization, personal interaction, interpersonal dependence or attraction (Turner et al. 1987). Neither a membership card nor an organizational hierarchy is needed for individuals with common identities to become politically active in response to significant issues. Reagan Democrats and soccer moms are two examples—groups that lack formal
organization, membership and interaction, but share similar background socializing experiences that lead to shared attitudes—that might be seen as reflective of the SCT.  

Second, not only might group membership be informal, but it may go unrecognized by the individual until activated by the candidate or external events. For instance, summarizing decades of cognitive psychology research, Turner et al. conclude that “…groups can be formed because people are categorized from the outside.” (1987, 29). This point is crucial because in the political context it implies that candidates can try to impose categorizations or identities and make them salient based on their perceived electoral value. Specifically, they try to take positions that will appeal to existing group identities or activate latent ones—in which case the individual may not even recognize that they are a member.

Expecting candidates to recognize the power of social identity that underlies group membership may be unrealistic. However, politicians clearly recognize the benefits of appealing to groups of voters, even if they don’t understand why the appeal to groups is potentially so powerful. More directly, while the average candidate may not understand that appealing to more recent Cuban immigrants is effective because of their shared experience at Mariel, they are likely to recognize that taking positions to appeal to these groups of later migrating Cuban voters may be advantageous because they feel intensely about the issue.

The idea that individuals have multiple social identities, some of which are latent, raises an important question about the limits of group membership. The boundaries of a group are delineated by the absence of shared self-identification or self-perception. For

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23 The term Reagan Democrats refers to male, white, middle or working class union workers in manufacturing jobs who through their experience came to see Democrats as abandoning the values of the
instance, while two Cuban immigrants may share a Cuban group identity differing socializing experiences pertaining to when they immigrated leads to association with different groups when issues exposing this distinction become salient.

The manner through which even latent group association maps from identity to political preferences can be illustrated through a hypothetical example. Since group associations are a function of personal identity, even the politically disinterested have latent group associations. However, an individual may not think of an association for long periods of time (if ever) if the social context does not make the identity salient (Turner et al., 1987). One possible mapping of group associations appears in Figure 1.

--Insert Figure 1--

Here we see the associations of a Republican, Cuban-American who immigrated in the Mariel boat lift. The degree to which these various group associations are politically relevant depends on the degree to which he both identifies with each group and the degree to which his various identities are made salient to him. For instance, the events of September 11, 2001 may have shifted one’s active identity from a typically disinterested individual to an ‘American’ concerned about national security. A particular identity is ‘active’ when something occurs that leads a person to rely on it when interpreting or evaluating events. This could be a current event, a well-designed advertisement (political or not), a news story, or a public speech. The intensity of these group associations then, depends in large part on the degree to which the individual sees the issue as important or relevant (e.g. Sherif and Cantril 1947). Moreover, as intensity

middle class for those of African Americans and the poor.
increases, individuals are likely to become active on the issue. Association with a particular identity related to a group may be highly variable. That is, both the identity activated and the strength of the activated identity may vary.

The importance of active and intense group associations can be seen in the case of the race for Florida’s 25th House seat. Here, differences in group identity led to widely divergent opinions among a population that is assumed to be monolithic. In this race, Annie Betancourt attempted to capitalize on a shift of opinion within the Cuban-American community. However, she overlooked an important distinction between subconstituencies within the Cuban American community. This can be seen in Figure 2, which depicts how opinions on the Cuban trade embargo vary with differences in socialization and identity.

--Figure 2 Here--

The diagram in Figure 2 shows that opinion within the Cuban community is split based on when people immigrated to the United States. Approximately 32% of Cuban Americans immigrated before 1970. Of these, 35% support the repeal of the embargo while of the 31% who immigrated after 1990, 61% support the same position. These cleavages are manifest across a variety of issues including the ability to remit money to Cuba, opening dialog with Castro, and the travel ban.

24 Psychologists also describe the active identity as salient to the individual meaning that that identity becomes the primary one.
25 In 2002, the Cuban Study Group commissioned Sergio Bendixen to study the political views of the Cuban American community. These data are taken from his report, “Public Opinion Survey of the Cuban American Community” which examines a random sample of Cuban Americans in Miami-Dade County in the spring of 2002.
26 Unfortunately, the report does not allow for inference to be drawn concerning the views of those who immigrated between 1970 and 1990. Moreover, because of the contentiousness of the issue, the data are unavailable.
Differences across these similar groups also illustrate the differences in intensity between active and inactive group associations. Perhaps the best indicator of the intensity of these groups is seen in their relative rates of political participation. Among those who are eligible, about 86% of the older group is registered to vote, while only 22% of the newer group is registered. Hence, differences in group identity have broad political implications even among people who hold so much in common. Differences in intensity go a long way toward explaining Mario Diaz Balart’s landslide victory in the 2002 election.

How Voters Behave

The assumptions about individual level voting behavior on which the SCP is based rely on extensive research in psychology and voter behavior. While Social Identity Theory has been described above, voter behavior research provides several insights integral to the SCP. First, and perhaps most importantly, citizens are more knowledgeable on issues about which they are intense and active than on issues in general (Hutchings 2003). Second, individuals’ attitudes and voting behavior are seldom motivated by self-interest. Third, research finds that candidates’ positions galvanize group identities, even for informal groups, and lead them to vote as a group (Schaffner 2005). Finally, various group identities may vote based on shared symbolic (i.e., non-policy) preferences such as traits (e.g., Hayes 2005) as well as issue stereotypes (Petrocik 1996).

Vince Hutchings (2003) work demonstrating that citizens are knowledgeable on issues that are important to them provides an important mechanism underlying the SCP. Recall that the basic framework of the Demand Input Model requires knowledgeable
citizens acting as principal conditioning their legislator’s behavior. While such a view is doubtlessly an oversimplification, if only because legislators and constituents are likely to often agree even without oversight, a citizenry that demonstrates an interest in an issue or at least a willingness to become interested, is a citizenry with which election minded candidates must reckon. However, studies show that few citizens have levels of political knowledge high enough to constrain the elected (Converse 1964, Delli Carpini and Keeter 1994). These studies suggest that the traditional conceptualization of the Demand Input Model is untenable.

Hutchings’ work shows that citizens have knowledge levels sufficient to control legislators on those issues that are most important to them; issues that research shows are related to their group identity (e.g., Schaffner 2005). Candidates must pay attention to these groups because unlike the district as a whole, even if the groups aren’t watching, they are easily mobilized against them by and instigator if they misstep (Arnold 1990, 1993).27

The theory of symbolic politics is consistent with an appeal to group identities. A wide range of research shows that people seldom vote on the basis of narrow self-interest (See Sears and Lau 1983 for an overview). Consequently, the process of issue positioning is made tremendously more difficult for candidates, since it is harder for candidates to determine the basis for the voting decision. An important alternative to self interest, called symbolic politics, suggests that people acquire “…predispositions in early life which influence their adult perceptions and attitudes.” (Sears et al. 1979, 371). Candidates who make symbolic attitudes salient can invoke underlying political
predispositions. While the SCP holds that identities continue to be formed well into adulthood, the process underlying the symbolic politics thesis is entirely consistent with the SCP. The rejection of self-interest as a motive for behavior provides additional, albeit indirect, evidence for the SCP.

The SCP holds that successful candidates are those who are best able to activate the groups that provide them with a competitive advantage. The greatest opportunity to activate latent groups occurs in the campaign and the most obvious instigator is the challenger. The efficacy of the SCP then, also depends on a candidate’s ability to identify and activate key groups, especially informal ones. Informal groups are the most difficult test of the SCP because while we can easily see how issue appeals to highly organized groups, such as unions, could be translated into votes, it is less clear whether and how politicians activate and mobilize informal groups. Brian Schaffner’s (2005) recent work both explains and validates this process. Studying the women’s vote, Schaffner (2005) shows that politicians who recognize an important strategic benefit of appealing to women, can and do effectively target them by publicizing issue stands that women disproportionately view as important. Additionally, he shows that women respond to such appeals and vote in higher numbers for the candidates making them. This work demonstrates that the individual voting behavior on which the efficacy of the SCP rests does in fact occur. Groups of voters respond to politicians’ appeals on positions central to the group.

Research suggests that politicians can use issues or symbolic positions, such as traits, to activate social identities that benefit them. Viewed from the perspective of the

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27 This mechanism helps explain yet another puzzle: How can unknowledgeable citizens control their legislators? Hutchings (2003) work, in conjunction with the SCP, suggests that when knowledge levels are
SCP, theories of issue ownership (Petrocik 1996) and trait ownership (Hayes 2005) imply that elections are essentially battles between candidates to activate identities that advantage one candidate over the other. In particular, these theories suggest that parties and candidates own (or lease) particular issues and traits and that by having the election become a referendum on their issues, voters are asked to make a decision while the advantageous identity is active.

In combination, these findings confirm that the behavior of voters comports well with the depiction of the electoral process described by the SCP. Groups of voters have the knowledge necessary to hold candidates responsible for their behavior. Voters respond to candidates’ cues on issues of importance to them, and candidates attempt to frame the voting decision in terms that invoke identities that provide them a disproportionate advantage.

The Cost of Citizen Ignorance and Apathy

The civic shortcomings of the American voter are central to the logic of why candidates appeal to groups. Most citizens know little about politics (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). They are unable to explain which issues go with ideological concepts, nor can they identify even the most visible political figures and their stances (e.g., Converse 1964). Citizens’ lack of political knowledge is costly for candidates because informing citizens in order to garner their support can be expensive and ineffective.

Apathy further increases the cost of ignorance—even if people become knowledgeable, they may not act. The proportion of those eligible to vote but unregistered suggests that most citizens do not participate in the electoral process (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003). Social psychologists explain such apathy as rational
because few see the direct relevance of politics in their daily lives (e.g., Katz 1960). Often the issues citizens care about are sparked not by candidates making an issue salient, but rather by some external event that directly affects them such as an act of terrorism or a plunge in the stock market.

Ignorance and apathy also make it costly for candidates to become known. Studies show that challengers require more resources than incumbents in order to overcome a lack of name recognition (Jacobson 1983). Moreover, appeals to uninterested citizens who ignore them waste campaign resources. Thus, if reaching potential voters is costly, influencing their behavior may be impossible. As a consequence, it is difficult to figure out how to motivate or activate such voters. It is up to candidates to identify those individuals who care strongly enough about one or more issues and may therefore, even unknowingly, have a stake in the system.

The Economy of Appealing to Groups

Politicians appeal to groups because it is efficient to do so. Once an identity becomes salient, members of the resulting group are more likely to be interested, active, or knowledgeable about issues that pertain to their shared beliefs or attitudes. These commonalities offer increased potential for mobilization. Members of organized groups distinguish themselves as receptive to political entreaties through their behavior, opinions, or associations, and thereby overcome the greatest barrier to participation—disinterest. In so doing, group members make it clear that they intend to be active and thus signal politicians that their support is likely to pay off at the ballot box or through the provision of other resources. Appealing to groups has additional benefits because, since individuals are not unique, one appeal reaches many voters.
Within any constituency, groups of voters coalesce around particular policy or symbolic issues. Social psychologists and sociologists tell us that groups form in response to their environment on the basis of shared attitudes, experiences or outlook (Sherif and Cantril 1947, Whyte 1956, Turner et al. 1987). Members of these groups share beliefs and attitudes about which issues matter, which positions to advocate, and how intense they feel (e.g., Rice 1928, Terry, Hogg and Duck 1999).

Groups provide resources to politicians. They are easier to activate than individuals and provide disproportionate benefits. In addition to voting, they may provide money, time, contacts, prestige, and advice that aid candidates in their drive to get elected. Additionally, they are often geographically concentrated and this amplifies their voice. For instance, racial and ethnic minority groups tend to be concentrated in urban areas while farmers and religious conservatives tend to reside in rural ones. People also segregate by class. Concentration may further reduce the cost of appealing to potential voters and facilitate communication among group members about issues that affect their interests. Tapping into these networks facilitates the ability to spread political messages.

Essentially, appealing to groups is economical because groups are more easily activated politically than are a collection of individuals. Because their attitudes on issues are related to group association, campaigns that activate such associations can utilize them to encourage the desired behavior—whether a vote for their candidate or simply the provision of resources. Politicians can expend fewer resources to activate these potential voters. Even when attitudes are not pre-existing, these group members are not likely to need as much convincing, only an impetus to act. While activating a shared identity may
not dictate an individual’s behavior, it should serve to reduce the cost to candidates who are trying to tap it, especially when compared with the costs of attempting to motivate the behavior of the typical, apathetic individual.

Less obvious benefits may be obtained by appealing to groups as well. The social context of the group has three important political implications. First, formal groups pressure members to conform in order to reduce dissonance (Sherif and Hovland 1961, Turner et al. 1987, Terry, Hogg and Duck 1999). This pressure may lead to a shift in opinion or to increased apathy among group members holding minority views. Individuals who develop such feelings may withdraw from the group or reduce the intensity and frequency of their participation (e.g. Berger 1960, Finifter 1974). Indeed, Truman (1951) finds that members of groups who have heterogeneous preferences tend to withdraw from group activity. Even when they do participate, their preferences are less intense. It seems possible that this general process may even occur, though likely to a lesser degree, among members of informal groups. The benefit to candidates is an increased homogeneity of group members.

Second, communications can be transmitted more easily and more credibly, both formally and informally, via social issue networks. Statements made by fellow group members are more likely to be perceived as valid while those made by members of opposing groups or outgroups are not and are immediately discounted (van Knippenberg 1999). Because group members share experiences and values, information transmitted through social issue networks may be viewed by the receiver as more reliable. A wide literature suggests that people are more open to information that comes from a reliable source (e.g., Iyengar and Valentino 2000). Thus, accessing a group not only allows

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28 For instance, Von Drehle (2004) describes America as “….engaging in voluntary political segregation.”
politicians to reach members who care about the issue, but also to disseminate their message via a highly trusted source. This gives added weight to the message—an impact that is not available through mass approaches to individuals. In combination, then, group dynamics serve to provide credible and “pure” cues to members.

The appeal to groups also has practical benefits to the campaign. Groups help reduce problems of issue timing. In order to secure resources and become credible, candidates must adopt issue positions before the formal campaign begins. This increases the uncertainty candidates have about the appropriate issue position to take early in the campaign process. Candidates also need to consider the extent to which opinion or group preferences in the district evolve over time.

Focusing on groups helps overcome this problem in two ways. First, issue positions required to appeal to groups are often obvious well in advance of the campaign. Second, the inventory of groups—a census of virtually all latent and active groups that might be activated in a state or district—is often known in advance of the campaign. Consequently, group appeals can be incorporated into the campaign platform and thereby help to lock up early support. By adopting a group’s preferred position on the issue they feel most strongly about, candidates can activate group identities, gain their support and achieve the benefits identified above. The characteristics of groups and the manner in which they help candidates overcome the limitations inherent in appealing to individuals influences how candidates build coalitions.

The Strategy of Coalition Building

With election as the proximate goal, candidates strive to obtain more votes than their opponents. By taking positions on multiple issues candidates create a coalition of
groups of intense supporters. The combination of positions taken to appeal to these groups is a *platform*.

The probability that a candidate wins is largely a function of the degree to which supportive groups exist in a district in sufficient strength and numbers. The political geography of the district—the nature of the group associations—affects the positions a candidate takes, the chance a candidate succeeds, and ultimately the policies they pursue in office.

The groups to which candidates can appeal are limited substantively by a candidate’s personal political beliefs, public statements, and affiliations including other groups to which they appeal. Groups can be seen as consistent, neutral or opposed to the legislator’s predispositions, agenda, background, or other supporters. Candidates build coalitions from among the groups that are either neutral or positively predisposed to the candidate’s stated position or intention on the group’s key issue. Further, since American elections are characterized by single member districts, a candidate who builds a coalition may reduce the size and number of groups available to an opponent because key groups are, consequently, unavailable. That is, gaining support helps neutralize the opposition.

**The Context in Which Positions are Taken**

Candidates need name recognition, popular support, and resources in order to win.²⁹ Their behavior reflects the desire to acquire these resources. Candidates acquire these political assets in three ways. Perhaps most obviously, they advocate popular issue positions. A second way candidates can acquire support is through non-policy, or symbolic, positioning. Candidates might build a reputation or image in non-policy terms...

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²⁹ This is not to say that election and re-election are the only goals, merely the proximate one upon which others are predicated (e.g., Fenno 1978, Arnold 1990).
by engaging in behavior that resonates with groups of voters. For example, a candidate may try to develop a reputation as a religious person by publicizing church attendance in order to appeal to those with strong religious identities on a more personal level. Abrajano (2005) finds that receptivity to non-policy cues increases as education levels decrease.

A third way that candidates acquire these resources is “pre-political” (Fenno 1996). Candidates can obtain name recognition, support, and resources due to their descriptive characteristics such as their race, gender, age, their personal experiences or relationships, or their fame from previous careers. For instance, Arnold Schwarzenegger’s fame gave him instant credibility as a gubernatorial candidate. Such cues can provide a shortcut to voters. Finally, support might also result from a candidate’s personal life experience such as being a veteran or a fraternity member. In the 2004 election, Florida Senator Mel Martinez’s escape from Cuban tyranny in operation Pedro Pan spoke not just to Cuban-Americans, but to Florida’s large immigrant population more broadly. In each of these cases, candidates appeal to voters who identify with a group. However, as each candidate’s descriptive and experiential characteristics are limited and inflexible, so too are the groups to whom candidates can appeal.

Examples of the importance of personal experience and descriptive characteristics on people’s voting proclivities abound. Senator Edward Kennedy’s well publicized experience on a Chappaquiddick bridge limits his support. New Hampshire Senator Robert Smith’s defection from and his later return to the GOP, clearly angered staunch partisans who removed him in the 2002 primary election. The benefit of descriptive characteristics such as race (e.g., Lublin 1997) and gender (e.g., McDermott 1996) can
also be seen in selected races. Each of these factors provides cues to groups and voters that may be related only indirectly to issue positioning. In some cases these characteristics may inoculate a candidate or give them greater freedom in the range of issues they can propound. For some voters issue positions are effective indirectly by creating stereotypes or reputations about candidates’ personal characteristics on which the vote decision is based (Hayes 2005). More specifically, groups may be mobilized by symbolic or valence characteristics.

The inflexibility of these attributes implies that in most cases, issues are likely to be key either directly because the group cares strongly about the position, or indirectly because the issue position plays to a broader stereotype to which the group is sympathetic. Issue positioning often dictates which groups can be included in a support coalition. Gun control advocates should not expect NRA members support any more than should candidates who have changed positions expect the support of those looking for a “strong leader”. The context in which issues are taken and groups mobilized is a product of constituency preferences, the candidate’s past group associations, their individual preferences, and a function of timing.

Constituency constraints are limits on candidates that result from the nature of the state or district. These constraints stem from voter geography and the political preferences of district groups. For years, no south Florida candidate of either party would, or could, take a stand against the Cuba trade embargo or for easing travel restrictions to Cuba. To do so would ensure certain defeat. In North Carolina, for

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30 Of course, a candidate with advantageous personal attributes can vary the degree to which they try to emphasize them.
instance, party and ideology matters not at all—only a fool opposes the federal tobacco buyout.

The ideological predisposition of the major organized groups in a constituency also conditions candidates. Candidates running in districts with large, well organized, groups must account for these preferences if they have any hope of gaining or maintaining office. The number, intensity, and political predisposition of the groups must be favorable or at least neutral toward a candidate in order for that candidate to generate the resources necessary to win.

A candidate’s personal reputation and affiliations also constrain their position-taking and groups to which they can appeal. A primary association from which the candidate needs support is the political party, which provides a well organized, intense group of individuals with shared identity who work to get their candidates elected (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002). Party affiliation constrains candidates to varying degrees. Once elected, the party may pressure the candidate to support state and national level platforms, which may not be consistent with constituent group preferences. This may be perhaps most clearly seen in the case of Representative Marjorie Margolies Mezvinsky (R-PA) who cast the decisive vote on President Clinton’s first budget and paid for it with defeat. Other affiliations may have similar effects. Advocating specific group positions influences the attractiveness of the candidate to the voters outside the group—those that make up the remainder of the constituency. Further, membership in or association with particular groups may preclude an appeal for support from other opposing groups.

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31 For an overview of her travails see Mary Claire Dale. 9/30/2002. “Democratic power couple’s lives unravel over guilty plea to $10 million fraud.” Associated Press.
Personal constraints also affect position-taking. Candidates are limited in the positions they take by their own political preferences. A widely recognized goal is the production of good policy (e.g. Fenno 1978). Those with firm moral, ideological, or religious beliefs may reduce the set of acceptable issue positions around which coalitions can be built.

Candidates’ past positions constrain their current ones because there is always a potential cost associated with position change (e.g., Karol 2002, Burden 2004). Legislators may switch these positions when the resources gained outweighs the potential costs—both of alienating the group that supported the position, and the transaction costs that stem from appearing to pander and lacking leadership qualities. Generally, this occurs when the relative importance of the groups within the candidate’s constituency changes.

In combination, these factors describe the influences on candidates’ issue positions. Candidates try to mobilize groups rather than individuals in order to build the coalitions necessary to gain election because of the context, and the difficulty winning the support of individuals. They do so because it is much less efficient and more difficult to appeal to individuals rather than groups.

**Dynamic Positioning**

Just as candidates try to activate group identities to their benefit, so too can they try to activate identities that disadvantage their opponent and either undercut or neutralize an opponent’s base of support. As when building coalitions, candidates can use symbolic stances or policy positions to do so. Many of the advantages of a candidate’s pre-political characteristics might be reduced by their opponent’s shrewd issue positioning.
For instance, an advantage may be muted when both candidates take the same position on an issue a group sees as paramount. Alternatively, an opponent may take positions designed to de-activate groups that would otherwise support a candidate. For example, in the 2004 Colorado senatorial race, the conservative Democrat Salazar highlighted Republican Pete Coors’ support of a gay film festival in his work as president of the Coors Brewing Company (Florio 2002). This emphasis was designed to undermine social conservative’s support for Coors.

**Latency**

Research shows that identity is dynamic (e.g., Turner et al. 1987, Huddy 2001). At any given time some identities are active while others are not. If a politically relevant group identity is not active or salient it is not politically useful. Members of latent groups may exhibit the behavioral characteristics of the unaffiliated in terms of the resources necessary for a politician to activate them. More specifically, if their issue is not active, or has been resolved, they may revert to a more ‘natural state’ taking an interest in politics only when they see it as relevant to an active identity (e.g., Katz 1960, Abrams 1999). Instead, at any given time they act based on their active, often apolitical, identity. Indeed, group identities are usually primed by non-political actors and events.

Contemporary events may lead members of groups to subordinate the importance of their primary issue in the face of a salient super-ordinate threat or condition. That is, some exogenous shock may temporarily supplant primary issues and lead to a change in active identities. The importance of particular identities to an individual may vary depending on social context (e.g., Turner et al. 1987). For instance, after the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001 the major political parties put aside their issue differences, as a
nationalist American identity was activated (Huddy et al. 2002). \(^{32}\) Individual associations with different groups are activated based on the social context. Absent other attacks, the salience of the terrorism of September 11 will diminish with time, or it may be superceded if confronted with other events that activate alternative identities, such as economic hardship, for instance.

**The Sources of Group Power**

Groups are important because they wield intense power disproportionate to their size (Truman 1951). One of the contributions of this work is to show that unorganized groups provide many of the benefits commonly ascribed only to the organized. The power of both types of groups stems from several sources.

First, groups provide candidates with multiple resources. Because of their shared experiences, outlook, and attitudes, even informal groups are likely to be better informed and less apathetic than the average citizen which results in a higher probability of engaging in behavior supportive of a candidate. Groups are more likely to provide votes, manpower, advice, endorsement, prestige and money.

Second, the intensity of even small groups can offset the numerical advantage inherent in larger groups. \(^{33}\) Often an intense minority is opposed on the issue by a larger group that is less intense in its preference. If the intense group uses the issue as a litmus test for a candidate to gain its support but the opponent does not, then a candidate can accept the minority position and still court voters of the larger group. Candidates must

\(^{32}\) Indeed, these differences may have been put aside because conditions activated the cue that relates to a different group association, that of citizen of the United States, which lead to shared attitudes toward terrorist attacks on the country.

\(^{33}\) Mancur Olson (1965) points out that smaller (organized) groups have an inherent advantage in that the costs of organizing large groups to obtain collective advantage are disproportionately large and less likely to be offset by individuals who disproportionately benefit from the acquisition of the collective good.
consider the preferences of small groups when they are most intense because their probability for adverse action is highest.\(^\text{34}\) This effectively biases the process of group representation toward extremists, or the very intense.\(^\text{35}\) The value of group intensity explains the appeal by Democrats such as senator Bob Graham to the intense minority of Cuban-Americans on issues pertaining to Cuba, despite the overwhelming opposition to those positions by the more numerous (and apathetic) Florida citizenry at large.

In general, group power seems to be a function of four characteristics: Group size (how numerous), group wealth (resources), the degree of commitment or intensity of group members, and the groups reputation (the potential cost or benefit associated with affiliation). Gaining the support of the KKK, the ACLU or the NRA may each entail benefits as well as costs that vary depending on the nature of the district. The success a group has seems likely to be a function of the above factors and the degree to which a rival group opposes its preferences.

Plan for the Book

The Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation explains politicians’ behavior in the democratic process. One benefit of the strong grounding in the social psychology and voting behavior literatures is that the individual level dynamics of mass behavior have been extensively validated. Consequently the SCP is primarily tested by examining candidate behavior and empirically evaluating its efficacy relative to traditional representation theories. More specifically, I focus on examining the degree to which candidates appeal to groups through their political behavior.

\(^{34}\) For such groups, benefits are often concentrated while costs are diffuse.

\(^{35}\) Who usually happen to be extremists (Brim 1955).
As a psychologically based theory, the implications of the SCP should be widely
generalizable across countries and levels of government. However, this study tests the
theory using the behavior of candidates for, and legislators in, the United States
Congress. Testing the SCP in the context of Congressional behavior provides a
conservative test since races for and behavior in Congress reflect a diverse set of actors in
a wide variety of electoral contexts. Equally important, the data needed to test the theory
at the level of congressional behavior are available. Finally, examination of
representation in this context offers the potential to contribute greatly to our
understanding of representation since the American Congress has been the primary focus
of empirical representation scholars.

The study examines the implications of the SCP for Members of and candidates
for Congress. The chapters that follow fall into two additional sections. The second
section of this book focuses on testing the implications of the theory: that issue visibility,
the primary rival explanation for variation in responsiveness, does not condition
responsiveness, and that the process through which politicians represent constituents is
the same whether as candidates or Congressmen. In so doing, it provides solutions to two
puzzles: it explains the conflicting results in the roll call voting literature; and, it explains
why, and empirically demonstrates that, candidates in campaigns take non-centrist
positions.

The third section of the book applies the theory to address two puzzles that nag at
representation scholars. First, that responsiveness occurs in homogeneous but not
heterogeneous states (Bailey and Brady 1998). Addressing this problem demonstrates
that the value of the theory is not limited to explaining past political behavior, but that the
theory also provides an important new tool for understanding the democratic process and solving puzzles of democracy. Second, it provides an explanation for the paradoxical finding that legislative responsiveness decreases with district competitiveness. This book proceeds as follows.

Chapter two performs a crucial test of the SCP and the traditional conceptualization of the Demand Input Model. One of the enduring questions of political representation asks why elected politicians reflect the preferences of their unknowledgeable constituents in some situations but oppose them in others. In particular, students of congressional behavior have long looked to legislator’s roll call voting behavior to evaluate the degree to which the elected reflect the will of the electorate (e.g., Miller and Stokes 1963). The central explanation for the inconsistency of legislative responsiveness on roll call votes is the Issue Visibility Thesis (IVT)—which holds that as issue visibility increases so too must constituent responsiveness (e.g., Hill and Hurley 2003). Enhanced visibility, through press coverage, is thought to lead to higher levels of citizen knowledge on an issue. The SCP holds that the IVT is incorrect. Legislative responsiveness varies not with issue visibility, but rather because legislators appeal to different groups on different issues. Studies of legislator behavior fail to account for these differences. Chapter 2 provides a crucial test of these competing theories by empirically evaluating the salience thesis.

In order to test whether the theory explains behavior across democratic venues (i.e., both campaigns and in institutions) chapters 3, 4 and 5 develop and test the predictions of the SCP on the issue positions taken in the campaigns and on the roll call votes cast in Congress, respectively. In chapter 3, I develop general predictions that can
be applied to any issue and then test them using a case study of candidates positions on the Cuban Trade Embargo. The embargo provides a difficult test for representation models because responsiveness is commonly thought to be lower on foreign policy issues since the public is less aware of them. In chapter 4, I test whether candidates’ positions are more responsive to informal groups or to the median voter on abortion using a statistical model that accounts for alternative explanations of candidates’ positions. In so doing, these chapters test the SCP by showing that the positions candidates and legislators take, appeal not to the average voter, but to the relevant subconstituencies and coalitions of subconstituencies they have built. Even more importantly, these tests examine candidate behavior over both hard foreign policy issues like the Cuban trade embargo where most citizens lack meaningful opinions, and easy domestic policy issues like abortion where conventional theories are thought to best explain legislative behavior. In both cases, the SCP outperforms traditional explanations for legislator behavior. Indeed, the SCP provides similar solutions to the puzzles of legislator positioning in campaigns and to the conflicting results in the roll call voting literature.

Candidates take non-centrist positions in campaigns in order to appeal to intense groups of constituents who often have more extreme positions than does the average citizen in a district. Owing to their intensity, the benefits obtained by appealing to these groups frequently outweigh those obtained by appeal to the district’s average voter. Moreover, taking extreme positions does not necessarily cost candidates votes of those who disagree. Precisely because these non-group members do not feel intensely about the issue, a candidate’s advocacy of the minority position seldom prevents him from
obtaining the support of voters who are opposed to the position but do not feel strongly about the issue.

Chapter 5 demonstrates that the same process occurring in campaigns is also at work in legislators’ behavior in the chamber. The conflicting results about the degree to which legislators are responsive in the roll call voting literature stem from scholars failure to account for the preferences of subconstituencies rather than the district as a whole on legislators’ roll call voting decisions. The failure to do so leads to estimates of constituent influence that tend to be biased downward on issues where subconstituencies are active. Previous work shows that accounting for even the most crude subconstituencies leads to findings of marked improvements in legislative responsiveness (e.g., Wright 1989, Uslaner 1999, Bishin 2000).

Having demonstrated that the theory explains behavior in both campaigns and in Congress. The third section of the book applies the theory to several puzzles. Chapter 6 applies the theory to explain the curious result that the impact of constituency has been found to vary depending on the degree to which a constituency is heterogeneous (e.g., Bailey and Brady 1998). The implication of such research is that the process of representation carried out by elected officials differs across these states. Subconstituency politics suggests that in homogeneous states and districts the relevant subconstituencies are larger and thus more similar to estimates of mean state opinion. Once we account for subconstituencies, these differences disappear.

In chapter 7, I demonstrate that the curious result that increased electoral competition is associated with decreased legislative responsiveness results from
subconstituency politics. Legislators are highly responsive to groups but there are more issues in which multiple groups adopt conflicting positions here.

   The SCP is based on social and individual psychology. Consequently, there is no reason to think that the results concerning political behavior are unique to races for and behavior in the U.S. Congress. In chapter 8, I examine the degree to which the SCP explains counter-majoritarian behavior in the comparative context.

   Chapter 9 concludes by summarizing the results and discussing the implications of subconstituency politics for democratic theory and for applied politics. The central conclusion is that candidates and legislators are quite responsive, but not in the manner commonly thought. Instead of responding to centrist opinion they respond to intense subconstituencies of potential supporters. Consequently, the SCP provides a view of representation contrary to pluralist representation principles. In the end it explains why Mario Diaz Balart wins despite advocating minority preferred positions.
Figure 1. A Stylized Mapping of Group Identities.
Figure 2. A Mapping of Cuban American Subconstituency Support for Embargo Repeal Based on Year Arrived in the United States.

These data are adapted from Bendixen 2002.


