Chapter 3: The Nature of Subconstituencies

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"If you run a play for 40 years and it doesn’t work, you’d better run a different one."
--Representative (and former football coach) Tom Osborne discussing the Cuban trade embargo (R) NE-3.

A central question motivating this research examines the conditions under which politicians advocate the preferences of minority groups over those of majorities. The Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation (SCP) holds that politicians appeal to groups in order to gain electoral advantage. In Chapter 2, we tested the foundations of the theory and saw both that individuals with an active group identity know more about related issues, and that the prevailing description of how representation works is incorrect. While we have evidence that *individuals* behave in a manner consistent with the SCP, we know little about how and when *candidates* appeal to specific groups.

This chapter investigates the conditions under which politicians adopt positions and target specific subconstituencies. In particular, we develop and evaluate a series of expectations about the conditions under which politicians appeal to subconstituencies in each of the varying configurations of groups in a state or district. I evaluate these predictions by performing a case study of candidate positioning on the Cuban trade embargo. By articulating how candidates appeal to subconstituencies we set the stage for investigating whether candidates appeal to constituents in their campaigns and in Congress. Of course, these results also inform our understanding of the conditions under which minorities are likely to tyrannize majorities.

This chapter proceeds by reviewing research that examines how and when politicians appeal to voters. Building on this literature, I develop a typology of the
positions candidates should take given various constellations of groups in district.¹ I then evaluate the efficacy of these predictions by looking at the positions politicians in the different types of districts took on the Cuban trade embargo.

**Group Influence and Issue Positioning**

Relatively few studies consider the possibility that constituents hold anything other than monolithic opinions. This is not to say that the concepts of groups and opinion diversity have been totally ignored. An entire sub-field focuses on the study of a handful of particular groups, such as African Americans, about whom we now know quite a bit. However, such studies generally focus on the circumstances unique to the case of the particular group rather than on developing broader generalizations about groups.

A few studies examine diversity more broadly by attempting to identify commonalities across groups. One question examines the relationship between diversity and electoral competition. For instance, Fenno (1978, 178) shares the views of a legislator representing a heterogeneous district who points out that political diversity makes it exceptionally difficult for a challenger to piece together a coalition large enough to defeat him. While the evidence on the relationship between diversity and representation is mixed (see Fiorina 1974 for a review) the results of diversity studies appear quite sensitive to way that diversity is measured (e.g., Koetzle 1998). However, these studies of descriptive and ideological diversity may suffer from being too abstract in that specific issues may not map well to these general district characteristics. Even the most diverse district likely faces some issues on which most people agree.

¹ Throughout this chapter I refer to both districts and states as districts, for convenience. I use the term in the sense of its most general meaning as a legislative district.
Perhaps the strongest theoretical contribution to our understanding of the influence of constituent groups on legislative representation is presented in Fiorina’s (1974) formal model of how legislators with different combinations of groups in the district will respond through their roll call voting behavior. Fiorina finds that in homogenous districts, vote maximizing legislators are essentially slaves to the dominant group, while even those legislators who are happy to simply maintain their popularity—he calls them maintainers—will vote with the dominant group a majority of the time. In contrast, in a heterogeneous district, one characterized by the existence of conflicting groups, legislators cannot increase their re-election probabilities through their roll call voting because the cost of angering a group that cares about the issue is greater than the benefit received for giving the opposing group what they want. Legislators may vote with a minority group provided it cares deeply about the issue. Such cases present “lose-lose” proposition for the legislator as they are relegated to simply trying to minimize their loss of support by the smallest possible amount.

While Fiorina does not empirically test his predictions of legislator behavior, two studies bear on his work. Examining local legislators’ behavior on the zoning issues, Clingermayer (1994) finds that those who represent homogeneous districts are attentive to constituents while those who represent diverse districts vary in the degree to which they are in tune with constituents’ preferences. Bailey and Brady (1998), examining Senate trade policy, find that legislators from homogeneous states are strongly influenced by constituent preferences, while those from heterogeneous states are both less strongly influenced by constituents and more heavily influenced by other factors such as party.
Moreover, this general result has been extended to representation in campaigns as well (Bishin, Dow and Adams 2005).

While these empirical studies speak to effects of diversity broadly defined, they do little to help explain how candidates react to differing constellations of groups in a district. However, Fiorina’s work develops explicit predictions about legislator behavior under differing group conditions. In a consensual district, legislators appeal to the one active group. However, in a conflictual or diverse district, the position a legislator takes depends on the strength of the groups. Under these conditions, they cannot gain support; legislators are forced to choose from among the positions that cost them the least. Consequently, he recognizes that some conditions exist in which legislators can profitably vote with a smaller group the group cares more intensely about the issue. While Fiorina’s predictions are intuitively appealing, they rely on several simplifying assumptions that reduce their appeal for the study of representation more generally.

First, roll call voting behavior reflects arguably the least consequential aspect of the representation process. Most votes deal with issues that have little relevance to the district or to the legislator’s personal interests. In contrast, the positions taken in the campaign seem designed to speak directly to the people’s preferences. If one is interested in examining how the people’s will is translated in to legislative behavior, then campaign positions which precede roll call votes would seem to be a more appropriate focus. There is good reason to think that on issues important to constituents, roll call votes are restricted, if not driven by candidates’ campaign positions. Alternatively, if one is interested in evaluating how legislators spend their time, and which issues are most
important to them, then co-sponsorship, floor speeches, and committee work most likely provide better indicators of responsiveness.

Second, and relatedly, roll call votes are based on a highly skewed set of data on which to judge responsiveness. In the House, for instance, legislators only cast votes on issues approved for consideration by the majority party, and the decision about what makes the agenda is selected for strategic reasons. Additionally, legislators are essentially forced to take positions on virtually all roll call votes, even if they have no meaningful position on the issue and if their constituents care not one whit about it. A Representative from Idaho may not care about a bill that bans oil drilling off the California coast. However, failure to vote on the issue might provide an opponent the opportunity to label the legislator as absentee. In Fiorina’s model, roll call votes follow directly from constituents’ preferences.

Third, the model treats legislators as free agents, failing to account for the constraining effects of party primaries, partisanship and of past positions the member has taken (Burden 2004). To a large degree, the may act to constrain a candidate’s behavior. Alternatively, taking positions to appeal to primary voters may leave a candidate too extreme to win at the district level. In addition, candidates that change positions based on fluctuations in the strength of groups in the district, a plausible implication of Fiorina’s model, may confront voters who either question the legislator’s commitment to their cause, or who feel that the candidate lacks the character required of an elected official (e.g., Hayes 2005).

Finally, Fiorina’s model does not account for the phenomenon of issue ownership (Petrocik 1996). This theory holds that candidates and parties develop reputations for
credibility and competence on issues (Petrocik 1996) and traits (Hayes 2005). When a candidate “owns” an issue, voters who care about that issue are unlikely to vote for the opponent even if the two share the same position. Essentially, one candidate has more credibility on the issue. In 2000, despite Vice President Gore’s volunteering for service in Viet Nam and proposing to spend more money on the military than George Bush, voters saw Bush as more pro-military (cite here).

**Toward a Typology of Position Taking**

Expectations about candidate positioning should account for criticism of past work, and reject the implicit assumption that legislators and constituents take positions on all issues. Clearly, interest in issues varies both within and across districts. More specifically, the distribution of constituent groups varies across districts. A typology of issue positioning must address the circumstances under which candidates adopt groups’ positions.

On most issues, politicians’ first recorded stands are taken during or immediately preceding the campaign. Campaigns seem more likely than roll call votes to focus on issues relevant to the district. Research suggests that even incumbents’ adopt new positions through the course of the campaign (Sulkin 2005). Since campaign positions precede positions taken in office, it is important for representation theories to explain behavior in campaigns.

The SCP holds that candidates appeal to groups of intense citizens in order to gain electoral advantage. Behavior in Congress is an attempt to service those groups, or to expand the legislative coalition. Our expectations about candidate positioning must account for the fact that individual districts vary in their preferences across issues, and
that the relevance of issues varies across districts. In some districts, no meaningful opinion exists on many issues, but opinion is intense on others. In many districts, there is great diversity of preferences on some issues and perfect homogeneity on others. The table below describes the various constellations of constituency preferences and the political behavior that results.

Table 1. A typology of constituent constellations and predicted candidate positions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Both candidates take the active group’s position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Candidates take opposing positions closest to traditional (often partisan) supporters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Opinion in district does not exist, or is not meaningful. Other cues used if position is taken at all (e.g., party, ideology).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The expectations of candidate behavior under varying conditions of group existence are depicted in Table 1. Candidate positions can be forecast using the answers to the questions: Does an active group exist on the issue? Does an opposing group exist on the issue? In the first scenario, when groups in the district share the same opinion on the issue, only one active group exists. Under such circumstances both candidates should adopt the position of the single active (unopposed) group. In the second scenario, groups in the district disagree. Candidates respond by advocating opposing group positions on the issue, closest to those preferred by their respective ideologies and parties, assuming they differ on the issue. In the third scenario, groups do not exist on the issue so candidates must rely on cues other than constituency. In particular, they will take
positions that more closely align with their personal preferences, ideology or party if these cues are tied to the issue. Such issues are especially likely to go unmentioned in campaigns. However, once elected, they may be forced to vote on such issues.

While the typology above appears reasonably comprehensive, it provides no cues for how politicians behave when more than 2 groups exist in the district. One happy accident of the American system is that since there are only two candidates, no more than two positions can be taken on any issue. This does not mean that intense groups necessarily go unrepresented, however. It seems that on most issues there are usually no more than two major positions and so additional groups seem likely to fall in line with preferences that match, or are closely aligned with, one of the existing group’s positions. Indeed, at first blush examples of districts where more than two groups with unique positions exist are difficult to identify. However, should they exist, almost certainly the third group will have a position that is closer to that held by one of the other groups. As a result, the multi-group setting seems likely to reduce to the conflicting group scenario.

An example of how groups can unintentionally coalesce around some issues, and despite fierce opposition on others, can be seen in the 2000 controversy over whether the Confederate Battle Flag should fly over the South Carolina state capitol and the issue of whether the state should recognize gay marriage.

In South Carolina, two clear groups were activated on the flag issue. African-Americans who constitute about 30% of the state’s population were strongly opposed to the flag (Firestone, 2000). However, older white male South Carolinians, akin to Greenberg’s F-You Men, strongly advocated that it remain flying. These conflicting groups’ preferences are reflected in the last two Senate races. The most recent of these
saw the Republican primary dominated by the flag issue as Jim DeMint excoriated his opponent, former Governor Michael Beasley for changing his position on the flag and agreeing to have it removed from the capitol (Sheinn, 2004). While the Republican candidates for Senate the last two cycles (Lindsay Graham and Jim DeMint) have supported the continued flying of the flag, the Democrats (Alex Sanders and Inez Tenenbaum) opposed it.

In contrast, while both groups are active on the gay marriage issue, in this case, both African-Americans and white males support restrictions on gay marriage (Ly and Harris, 2004, Langer, 2004). And so, not too surprisingly, both DeMint and Tenenbaum shared the same position opposing gay marriage in 2004.

Validating Diversity: Fidel, Farmers and Oswald

To evaluate the SCP we can examine the degree to which candidate behavior comports with the predictions in Table 1. The optimal test case is an issue on which the distribution of groups varies across districts allowing us to examine how candidates position themselves under each of the different configurations of constituent preferences. The issue needs to be visible in at least some states or districts so that there is sufficient media coverage on the issue such that we can ascertain candidates’ positions. Once an issue and districts fitting each scenario have been identified, we can evaluate whether the positions the candidates took are consistent with the predictions generated in Table 1. This section proceeds by examining the positions candidates took, under each of the three constituency configurations described above, on the Cuban trade embargo.²

² Candidate positions were found using two newspaper databases and the Google search engine. See Appendix A for more information.
The Cuban trade embargo was implemented in 1963 as an attempt to pressure Castro by isolating the Cuban government in the international economy. The hope was that sanctions would hasten the transition to democracy. The Trade Sanctions and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 slightly reduced sanctions by authorizing the export of medical supplies as well as agricultural commodities for humanitarian purposes. However, sales must be paid for in cash and cannot be financed using credit extended by either the sellers or by American banks (U.S. Department of the Treasury 2004). This last provision substantially restricts trade as Cuba is a cash poor country (Pianan and DeYoung, 2000).

The politics underlying the embargo bear directly on the interests and preferences of at least three groups. Most supportive of the embargo are Cubans who fled during the period around the revolution until about 1980 (Bendixen and Associates, 2002.). Residing primarily in south Florida, and to a lesser extent New Jersey and New York, these immigrants were the elite of Cuban society many of whom, with Castro’s rise, saw their assets seized by the state. Given their experience, it is not surprising that these old line immigrants are the active, group supporting the embargo. Indeed, for years, this was the only vocal group on the issue of Cuba.

Over the last decade, however, other groups with identities tied to Cuba have emerged. In Chapter 1, I discussed the schism in the Cuban-American community that is based largely on time of immigration. Newer immigrants, especially those who migrated after 1990, oppose the embargo and travel ban (Viega, 2000). Many of these Cubans have relatives still living on the island. Because shortages are so common, the embargo adversely affects their relatives’ quality of life by denying them full access to American
agriculture. It also limits the amount of money they can send to their relatives and the frequency with which they can visit.

One consequence of the adjustment to the embargo is that American agricultural interests have begun to see Cuba as a valuable and largely unexploited market. While the country is exceptionally poor, it does not produce enough to feed its people and so must rely on imports to augment domestic agricultural production. Owing to its geographic proximity, the United States is a natural trading partner. Not surprisingly then, farmers have increasingly come to oppose the embargo, or to at least support reducing it sufficiently to facilitate the sale of agricultural products.

In order to evaluate the predictions articulated in Table 1, we need to identify districts that fit each of the three constellations of constituent groups. The multiple group case, described in the first scenario requires a district in which two or more conflicting groups exist. “New Cubans” tend to live alongside “old Cubans” in cities, while farmers are concentrated in rural areas. The single group case, described in the second scenario, occurs where either there is a large concentration of only old Cubans, or in agricultural districts. Finally, the “no group” case, described in the third scenario occurs in most areas of the country as they lack both Cubans and farmers. The case studies that follow begin by identifying appropriate cases fitting each scenario and candidates’ positions in each of these districts.

The Multiple Group Case

Nationally, Cuban-Americans are concentrated in four Congressional districts: Florida’s 18th (186,314), 21st (207,180) and 25th (122,101) and New Jersey’s 13th

However, because new Cubans tend to assimilate into existing communities, there is no evidence that a homogenous community consisting solely of new Cubans exists.
In fact, Cuban-Americans are so highly concentrated that the population of each of these districts except New Jersey’s 13th is higher than the population of Cubans in any other entire state except New York (52,366). Indeed, only in these Florida districts do we see evidence of the existence of both old and new Cubans.

While data are not available for evaluating the degree to which more recent Cuban Immigrants live in a district, anecdotal data suggest that the Cuban population in the New Jersey 13th is predominantly “old” Cuban. First, while the district boundaries of the 13th have remained roughly the same between 1990 and 2000, the proportion of the district that is Cuban has dropped substantially (from 48,734 in 1990 to 35,541 in 2000), suggesting there has not been a large influx of recent migrants. Second, Florida’s geographic proximity and massive Cuban community provides an attractive and affordable destination for largely poor immigrants searching for economic opportunity. The size of the immigrant community also makes it more likely that friends and relatives reside in south Florida. Finally, extensive polling documents the existence of these groups of Cubans and their diverging political preferences in south Florida (Veiga, 2000, Rufty, 1998). In contrast, there is no evidence suggesting such a schism in New Jersey. Consequently, the three Florida districts seem to be the logical place to examine the impact of conflicting groups on candidates’ positions.

We can evaluate the first prediction by examining the positions taken by the 2004 candidates in Florida’s 18th, 21st, and 25th districts and the two senate races to see whether or not candidates took opposing positions. The SCP predicts that when active groups

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4 District data are taken from the U.S. Census 109th Congressional District Summary File. Data from New York is taken from the 2003 American Community Survey.

5 Unfortunately Florida’s Congressional districts are not comparable over the same period because the state was awarded an additional seat following the 2000 Census.
with conflicting preferences exist in a district, candidates should take positions such that the candidate with the established position continues to support that position, while the opponent adopts the alternative position.

These five cases also allow us to examine positioning in a variety of electoral contexts. Each of the three districts are represented by Cuban-American Republicans, so old Cubans’ policy preferences are consistent with their party’s established pro-embargo position. Thus we expect the incumbents in each of these races to support the embargo while the opponents should favor loosening or ending the embargo. In contrast, the most recent (2004) Senate race was for an open seat. We expect Republican Mel Martinez to advocate the embargo while Democrat Betty Castor should oppose it. Finally, in 2000 we saw Democrat Bill Nelson face Republican Bill McCollum. Here we expect Nelson to oppose and McCollum to support it. Table 2 summarizes these results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>House (18th)</td>
<td>Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R)</td>
<td>Opposes Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sam M. Sheldon (D)</td>
<td>Favors Reducing Sanctions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>House (21st)</td>
<td>Lincoln R. Diaz-Balart (R)</td>
<td>Opposes Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frank Gonzalez (Lib.)</td>
<td>Favors Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Mel Martinez (R)</td>
<td>Opposes Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Betty Castor (D)</td>
<td>Favors Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>House (25th)</td>
<td>Mario Diaz-Balart (R)</td>
<td>Opposes Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Annie Betancourt (D)</td>
<td>Favors Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Bill Nelson (D)</td>
<td>Opposes Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bill McCollum (R)</td>
<td>Opposes Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above Table shows that in 2004 Illeana Ros Lehtinen and Lincoln Diaz Balart maintained their long support of the embargo, while their respective opponents, Sam Sheldon and the Libertarian Frank Gonzales, favored loosening the embargo. In his last
contested race (2002), Mario Diaz Balart strongly supported the embargo while his opponent, Annie Betancourt opposed it. Additionally, Democrat Betty Castor opposed the embargo while Mel Martinez strongly supported it. Consistent with the SCP, in each of these four cases, the Republican candidate maintained their traditional position supporting the embargo, while their main opponent opposed the embargo.

However, one case does not fit with the prediction of the SCP. In 2000, Democratic Senator Bill Nelson, strongly supported the embargo as did his opponent, Bill McCollum. This result is inconsistent with the SCP suggests that when active, conflicting groups exist candidates should take opposing positions. However, a close inspection of the nature of the constituent groups provides an explanation for Nelson’s position.

Bill Nelson has been a strong supporter of the embargo since he was first elected to Congress in 1978. At the time he took his position, Florida was a one constituency state on the embargo issue. Recall, that the second constituency that developed in the Cuban community consists of Cubans who immigrated to America between 1990 and 2000. Moreover, the existence of this group has only been recognized since the spring of 2002, almost two years after Nelson’s last campaign began (Oppenheimer, 2002). Given these facts, and the potential costs of changing positions, it would make little sense to support a group that did not exist.

The Single Group Case

The SCP predicts that candidates in districts with only one group will advocate that group’s position. In the case of the embargo, single group districts are likely to be
farming districts. To study such districts we may need to identify a larger number of cases for two reasons. First, news coverage may not be as comprehensive in rural regions. Second, it seems likely that neither media nor challengers may be inclined to spend resources publicizing a position on which both candidates agree.

In order to identify single group cases, I constructed a ranking of each state’s population that is employed in agriculture, forestry and hunting using data from the 2003 American Community Study. From the list of the top 5 states in this ranking I randomly selected two: Montana and Nebraska. From these states, I further selected the three districts with the highest proportion of farmers. Few Cubans live in these districts. The results are summarized in Table 3, which shows the positions taken on the embargo in seven homogeneous cases including: four senate races from the two states, as well as the House races for Montana’s At Large district and Nebraska’s 3rd district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>House (1st)</td>
<td>Dennis Rehberg (R)</td>
<td>Favors Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>House (1st)</td>
<td>Tracy Velazquez (D)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Max Baucus (D)</td>
<td>Favors Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Mike Taylor (R)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Conrad Burns (R)</td>
<td>*a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Brian Schweitzer (D)</td>
<td>Favors Reducing Sanctions b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Chuck Hagel (R)</td>
<td>Favors Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Charlie Matulka (D)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Ben Nelson (D)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Don Stenberg (R)</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>House (3rd)</td>
<td>Tom Osborne (R)</td>
<td>Favors Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>House (3rd)</td>
<td>Donna J. Anderson (D)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No position announced. Roll call votes are not considered.
*a Baucus and Burns both voted to strengthen the embargo in 1996. Burns, recently equivocated, however.
*b Position not formally announced, but traveled to Cuba in 2004 to negotiate the sale of dry beans.

The states that were rated among the top 10 were: ND, ID, NE, MT, and IA. Only 3 of these are Midwestern states. There are 299 Cuban Americans in Iowa and 283 in Nebraska according to the 2003 ACS.
A striking difference between Table 3 and Table 2 is immediately evident. Where every candidate took a position in the multiple group districts, in the single group districts, a majority did not make a clear statement on the issue. While this may be partly attributable to the fact that these more rural districts may receive less coverage (but see Arnold 2004), it is also possible that issue coverage may be reduced when candidates agree. More specifically, the invisibility of embargo positions may be a function of the fact that candidates are unable to distinguish themselves from their opponents by playing up such issues, and newspaper reporters may be less interested in covering issues on which the candidates agree.\(^7\)

Examination of the positions adopted by the 12 candidates described above shows that in every case in which a position could be ascertained, every candidate supported the reduction or repeal of the embargo. Perhaps most impressively, 4 of the 6 incumbents are Republicans and thus cross pressured on the issue since their announced position runs contrary to the national party position. Despite this, each of the 4 Republicans who took a position advocated the repeal of the embargo. Indeed, there is only one case where there is even a suspicion that a senator may hold a position inconsistent with the predictions.

Perhaps the most interesting case is that of Republican Conrad Burns. While we are unable to find any public statement of support or opposition to the Cuban trade embargo, Burns does have a legislative history as a supporter of the sanctions. He voted to maintain sanctions in 1996 (H.R. 927; vote number: 1996-22). However, Burns has recently become conflicted about the issue. The *Washington Post* reports that he seems

\(^7\) Indeed, a basic criterion of newsworthiness taught to freshman journalism majors is controversy (CITE HERE).
to have had a change of heart. In recent negotiations with the House leadership he advocated reducing trade restrictions, however once it was made clear that such a provision would not pass, he voted to support the embargo (Pianan and Morgan, 2000).

How can we explain Burns’s position on the embargo? Several reasons for his equivocation seem compelling. First, Burns’s position on the embargo was adopted, at the latest, in the mid 1990’s, well before anyone seems to have had any idea that the issue would become relevant to farmers. Recall the agricultural exception did not become law until October of 2000. At that time it may not have been clear that Cuba would be interested in buying such products from the U.S. even if they were able. Second, Burns has not faced election since the latent group seems to have activated on the issue. Finally, it appears that facing election in 2006, he is attempting to change his position on the issue. There seems to be a good reason why he has not publicly spoken about the issue.

Overall, these results seem to strongly support the predictions articulated in Table 1. Despite examining cases with legislators who were cross-pressured because of their Republican affiliation, and thus more likely to support the embargo, in not a single case did any of the candidates take a position supporting the trade embargo.

The “No Group” Case

The groups that are interested in the trade embargo appear primarily limited to the states with large concentrations of Cuban-Americans or farmers. In states and districts that lack these groups the SCP model suggests that legislators have wide latitude on the positions they take to the extent that they take positions at all.
To examine positioning in these cases, I identify 5 constituencies that lack groups and then examine the positions candidates took on the Cuban trade embargo. This sample is randomly selected from among those states and districts that are not in the top 4 states with Cuban Americans and are not in the top 10 farming states. The cases are: Rhode Island’s 1st District, Georgia’s 4th District, Washington’s 7th District and the senate races for Michigan and Utah. The SCP predicts that if candidates take a position on an issue at all, alternative factors such as party, personal preferences, or interest group influence are likely to influence choices when constituency groups do not exist in a state or district. The positions taken by these candidates are summarized below, in Table 4, and show that only two candidates have taken positions on this issue.

Table 4. Embargo Positions of Candidates from Districts without Groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>House (1st)</td>
<td>Patrick Kennedy (D)</td>
<td>Opposes Reducing Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>David W. Rogers (R)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>House (4th)</td>
<td>Cynthia McKinney (D)</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Catherine Davis (R)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>House (7th)</td>
<td>Jim A. McDermott (D)</td>
<td>Favors Reducing Sanctions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carol T. Cassady (R)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Carl Levin (D)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Andrew Raczkowski (R)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Robert Bennett (R)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Paul Van Dam (D)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No position announced. Roll call votes are not considered.

The results of this analysis are also characterized by an even more pronounced absence of available positions than the single group case. However, the source of these omissions seems likely to be different. It seems likely that candidates themselves may lack positions on these issues, and indeed, when they do have such positions they may not be deemed of sufficient interest or importance to these more urban constituencies by

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8 Patrick Kennedy’s district was intentionally selected after the other districts were randomly selected.
news reporters and editors. Indeed, the two candidates who took positions on the issue seem to have very diverse motives.

Patrick Kennedy’s position is especially interesting. While many Democrats nationwide oppose the embargo, Kennedy is among its staunchest supporters, a position apparently motivated by his belief that Castro is responsible for the murder of his uncle, President John F. Kennedy (Davies, 2000).

The only other candidate for whom a position can be obtained is Seattle Representative Jim McDermott. While the factors motivating McDermott’s position are not obvious, he has a long history of supporting free trade, as well as for providing medical services to the poor. Taken together, these two factors are consistent with his desire to repeal the embargo.

Under conditions in which constituents lack policy preferences, it is not surprising that so many of these candidates fail to mention the issue during the campaign. Absent constituency demand for a particular position, this tactic provides the victor maximum flexibility for taking sides when the issue comes to a vote in the Congress. As mentioned earlier, it is difficult for a Member of Congress to abstain from a vote because missing too many votes invites criticism for absenteeism. By avoiding taking a position in the campaign, party leaders maintain maximum flexibility in developing coalitions needed to support the party’s preferred policy while allowing their members, such as those from farm states, to vote against the party’s position (but with their constituents) on particular issues.

Evaluation
The results of these case studies appear to strongly support the predictions of the SCP under each of the various constellations of state or district preferences. In only one case did a candidate publicly take a position inconsistent with the predictions of the typology defined above. In that case, Bill Nelson’s position was taken well before the group to which we expected him to appeal even existed. In a second case, an otherwise highly visible senator, Conrad Burns has avoided speaking publicly about the issue—despite supporting legislation maintaining it in the past. In Burns’s case, his position appears to have been taken well before the issue became relevant to the group.

In the districts with two conflicting groups, we saw that candidates running in the three South Florida districts took positions contrary to those offered by the incumbent Republicans. In contrast, in the single group districts in Montana and Nebraska, every candidate with an announced position, regardless of party, adopted the anti-embargo position. Finally, in the third case, we see that most candidates did not address the embargo in states that lack active or latent constituencies on the issue. However, the conclusion that candidates avoid taking positions in cases where constituent opinion does not exist must be seen as tentative. After all, we cannot rule out the possibility that the absence of positions stems from a lack of news coverage rather than the fact that the legislator did not address the issue. Fortunately, we can account for this hypothesis when we test the SCP’s implications for positioning in campaigns more broadly in Chapter 4.

Conclusions

Overall, the predictions generated using the Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation comport quite well with the cases observed in this chapter. In districts with conflicting groups, candidates take opposing predictions. In districts with a single
group, candidates take the same position. Finally, in districts with no group, candidates seldom take positions on issues, and when they do, the issue seems to be driven by personal preferences. Overall, this chapter examines candidate positioning in 36 races covering 72 candidates. In only one case—Bill Nelson’s embargo position in the 2000 Florida Senate race—is any position inconsistent with the prediction made by the model. Even in that case there seems to be a simple explanation for the anomaly—at the time the position was taken the district group to whom the model predicted the candidate should appeal, did not exist!

While the purpose of these case studies is to validate the predictions of the model, they are limited in their ability to validate the SCP as a whole. First, we have examined only one issue, on a topic that might be seen as arcane to many Americans. However, the value of this particular issue is broader than might first appear. The issue of the Cuban trade embargo varies not only in the groups it engages, but also in its symbolic type. Note, for instance, that to farmers, the issues might be seen as one of economics. In contrast, the position of both “old” and “new” Cubans on the issue would seem to have little to do with economics. The varied cues the issue provides to the groups suggests that the theory may indeed have relatively wide applicability across different issue types.

A second limitation of the case studies performed herein is that in many cases candidate positions were unavailable. While there are good reasons to think that candidates may not develop positions on a range of issues in particular circumstances, it also seems likely that the media may not report on positions that candidates did take, especially when both major candidates agreed. The absence of such positions is
disconcerting in that cases in which candidates did not take positions cannot provide evidence against the theory.

The source of this unavailability is an important question as we turn to examining the influences on candidate positioning. One of the central questions we need to examine is whether the absence of candidate positions is intentional and in response to campaign environment, or whether it is a function of the absence of media coverage.

In summary, the results of the case study presented herein strongly support the validity of the model’s predictions. The results also set the stage for a more robust test of the SCP thesis by examining whether candidates appeal to subconstituencies in the positions adopted in the campaign. To do so we will examine issues that both span a range of domestic policies and are sufficiently visible such that most candidates will have taken positions. In particular, I will look at positioning on a civil rights issue—abortion, and a social welfare issue—social security privatization. Taken in combination with the study of the trade embargo performed in this chapter, the results allow for a comprehensive assessment of the general validity of the theory. It is to these questions that we turn in Chapter Four.
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Appendix A: Database Information:

Candidate positions were mostly researched using LexisNexis and America’s Newspapers. Both are searchable newspaper databases containing 406 and 516 newspaper sources, respectively. While LexisNexis’s sources are concentrated in heavily populated areas, particularly east of the Mississippi, America’s Newspapers’ sources are mainly derived from local newspapers more evenly distributed around the country. Furthermore, LexisNexis includes the AP Newswire as a source (often the only source for a particular state), while Americas Newspapers does not archive the AP wire or the New York Times as sources.