

**THE POLITICS OF INTRAPARTY DISSENT:
BLUE DOG DEMOCRATS IN THE 111TH U.S. CONGRESS**

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in Political Science with
Distinction.

Fall 2010

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this thesis has been one of the most ambitious undertakings of my undergraduate career. I want to first thank the Committee of Senior Thesis Readers for offering fair and consistent advisement and assistance throughout the investigative, research and writing components of this thesis. I want to specifically thank Dr. Jason Mycoff for his mentorship and expertise in Congress and American politics, and for his assistance in narrowing down my research questions and topics. Dr. Mycoff's guidance will undoubtedly benefit me in my future academic pursuits and in my own professional career. I want to thank my second reader, Dr. Ken Haas, for his moral support throughout the thesis process. His unconditional support was a constant reminder that somebody believed in me.

I also want to acknowledge those who provided emotional support and aided in my personal and professional growth. First, I want to thank Dr. Maria Palacas and Ms. Meg Meimen, who inspired and encouraged me to write this thesis. Second, I want to thank my family—Michelle, Chuck, Stephen and Paul Sr.—for being my backbone even at times where I struggled. Finally, I want to thank the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program, which gave me the structure, resources, funding and encouragement to write this thesis. The McNair Scholars Program gave me a sense of community with other students, and a sense of purpose in my work.

Last, I want to thank the Office of Congresswoman Melissa Bean of Illinois and the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Delaware. Congresswoman Bean's office provided me with a

Washington, D.C. internship in the summer of 2009 that allowed me to gain important insights into U.S. House of Representatives' institutional proceedings. My time in the House allowed me to sit in on committee sessions, watch the floor and track legislation. These activities guided my curiosity of House proceedings and sparked an interest in the Blue Dog Coalition. I would also like to thank the Department of Political Science and International Relations' James R. Soles Citizenship Endowment for funding my summer internship that inspired this thesis. I hope that future political science students use the Soles Citizenship Endowment to similarly pursue public service internships that spark an intellectual curiosity in the name of the late Dr. James R. Soles.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the interactions of fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition members with their respective constituencies and the Democratic majority in the 111th U.S. Congress. As a result of the Democratic National Committee's "50 State Strategy", non-traditional Democratic candidates were financed and recruited to win in mostly rural, and outer ring suburban districts. The 17-member expansion of the moderate-to-conservative Blue Dog Coalition complemented growth in the House Democratic majority during this period. This study analyzes two questions arising from the expansion of the moderate and conservative Congressional wing of the Democratic Caucus. First, with regard to member and majority interactions, what electoral, district demographic, and voting behavior differences distinguish the Blue Dog Coalition as a whole from the liberal Progressive Caucus? Second, with regard to member and constituency interactions, do Blue Dog Coalition members explain their votes differently than Progressive Caucus members? Applying Mayhew (1974), I assumed that members are preeminently motivated to win reelection. I found that when compared with Progressive Caucus members, Blue Dog incumbents are reelected by smaller margins. Moreover, Blue Dogs are elected from more marginal, less "safe" districts that have a greater likelihood to split ticket vote for a Republican presidential candidate and a Democratic Congressional candidate. Accordingly, these electoral realities coincide with the Blue Dog Coalition's diminished party unity indices; Blue Dogs oppose the majority on both fiscal measures where the Coalition has expressed a specific policy position and highly publicized, highly salient votes.

Although a direct relationship is inconclusive, I infer a correlation between a Blue Dog member's election marginality and the low party unity index. With respect to district demographic differences, I found that the use of Census statistics to delineate between Blue Dog and Progressive districts did not provide significant contrasts. My second research question derives from my first: if Blue Dog members are more marginal collectively, do members explain Washington voting behavior differently than Progressive Caucus members? I examined 188 separate press releases explaining two highly salient votes in the 111th Congress, and found that coalition membership influences only specific messages. Blue Dogs cited the need to reduce the deficit to their constituencies more consistently than Progressive members. Overall, most messages were generally salient across each coalition, with few significant differences in member explaining behaviors. Although messages were more similar, Blue Dog and Progressive appeals differed: Blue Dogs were more likely to appeal to the local impact of legislation and to added amendments within legislation than Progressive counterparts.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2006, Democrats took control of the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time since the 1994 “Republican Revolution.” Over the next two Congresses, Democrats won in unexpected places, winning victories in rural Ohio, Idaho, South Dakota and Nevada, among other places. Democratic neophytes and incumbents outperformed Republicans in rural and outer-ring suburban districts and elected Democratic insurgent candidates by narrow margins. The victories of Democrats in particularly Southern, Western and Midwestern states appeared to hand Democrats a decisive mandate for control. Buried beneath the popular narrative of this era however, was a more realistic problem for the new Democratic Congressional majority. Many of the Democratic candidates elected by narrow margins represented constituencies that were ideologically moderate-to-conservative. The “50 State Strategy” devised by Democratic Party Chairman Howard Dean identified the control of Congress as its primary objective and funded campaigns in districts that were unlikely to elect a traditional Democrat who will vote the party line. The result the strategy was the election of more moderate-to-conservative Democratic candidates in anti-Republican years.

This thesis examines the impact of moderate-to-conservative Democrats on the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives. Specifically, I will

compare a cohort of moderate-to-conservative Blue Dog Democrats with liberal Progressive Democrats to illustrate divergent policy interests within the party. I will approach these differences by examining the constituency as my primary descriptor of factional voting behaviors. Using Mayhew (1974), I will assume that Congressmen are preeminently motivated by the reelection interest and the general aura of uncertainty about future reelection prospects. I will assume that Congressmen are more aware of voting behavior to win reelection. I will also reference a number of electoral mitigation strategies Congressmen implement to explain Washington voting behaviors to constituencies. My overall hypothesis is that the constituencies moderate-to-conservative Blue Dog Democrats represent are ideologically distinguishable from liberal Progressive Democratic districts. Two methodologies will first, measure the extent of Blue Dog and Progressive differences and second, measure the extent of differences in the explaining behaviors of Blue Dog and Progressive Democrats.

My first research question asks whether or not there are electoral, district demographic and voting behavior differences between Blue Dog Democrats and Progressives. Electoral variables will determine whether or not Blue Dog Democrats are elected from a unique political context when compared with Progressives. My hypothesis is that Blue Dogs are less safe, and more prone to modify voting behavior. As a result of election marginality, heightened levels of uncertainty are expected to weigh heavily on Blue Dog decision making. Conversely, Progressives are expected to show less self-regulation and less attentiveness to constituency pressures because of their “safe” status. An alternative explanation is that Progressives represent the values and views of their district’s constituents, and therefore do not regulate voting behavior. Electoral variables will thus be compared with voting behavior to determine whether

or not there is a connection between election marginality and the level of dissent. If Blue Dogs are more marginal, and dissent from the majority more frequently, a relationship between roll call voting records and reelection statistics could be inferred. If significant differences are not found, the null hypothesis that marginality has no effect on levels of dissent will be true.

Another hypothesis derived from my first research question is with respect to the type of constituency represented by each coalition. In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I will examine the unique history of conservative Democrats in Congress. My analysis will show that the conservative faction of the Democratic Party has historically represented predominately Southern and rural constituencies. Given that the Blue Dog Coalition presently represents primarily Southern constituencies, I will examine whether or not there is an archetypal “Blue Dog constituency.” The hypothesis for this portion of the first research question is that certain age, race, income, and socioeconomic status variables should show dramatic differences between Progressive and Blue Dog district demographics.

This thesis’ second research question examines whether or not Blue Dog Democrats explain their votes differently from Progressive Democrats. I will apply political science literature to the press releases following two salient votes in the 111th U.S. Congress to examine Congressmen’s (i) appeals, (ii) affirmative messaging, (iii) negative messaging and (iv) neutral messaging. My hypothesis is that Blue Dogs will show higher levels of appeals to constituency and dramatically different affirmative and negative messages than their Progressive counterparts. The concept behind this hypothesis is that, as Chapter 3 will describe, Congressmen show an impressive tendency to individualize voting behavior and attribute legislative success to personal

interventions. More specific to the Blue Dog Coalition, it is expected that moderate-to-conservative members, as result of their election marginality, will refer and appeal to constituency more often than Progressive members. If this hypothesis is true, it will confirm a relationship between victory margins and the level of constituency appeals. If there is no relationship, and the messages espoused by each faction are the same, the finding will be that Congressmen express general policy preferences regardless of electoral circumstances.

I decided to use coalition membership (instead of ideology) for several important methodological and contextual reasons. First, I wanted to specifically examine the impact of the Blue Dog Coalition on Congressional policy making. The Coalition of 54 moderate-to-conservative members espouses very specific values that are generally fiscally conservative in orientation. The members of this coalition made a very specific choice to join a coalition of mostly marginal members. Second, I wanted to examine the relationship between the marginality of this coalition, and its low party unity score. What factors most influence Blue Dog decision making? What is the constituency dynamic of members who join this coalition? Third, I wanted to find out why members would join a coalition that votes against the Democratic majority on upwards of 15% of votes. What is the relationship between the faction and the member, the member and the constituency, and the member and the faction?

Chapter 2 will analyze nearly 80 years of history to illustrate the growth and organizational formation of the conservative faction of today's Democratic Party. I will examine four specific periods of organizational identity formation and movement in American political thought. I will show how the Blue Dog Democrats did not form overnight. Rather, the small government and fiscally responsible ideas that dominate

the coalition today are the result of years of historical development that are deeply rooted in rural and Southern history.

Chapter 3 will move the discussion to the political science literature. There I will examine the interplay between the member and the faction, and the member and the constituency. Combining appropriate scholarly sources on each, I hope to demonstrate that to some extent the constituency influences the member, who joins the coalition to broker power with the majority party. Nearly 240 years after Madison warned that factions are influenced by the ‘passions of the people’, I will examine factions in the context of constituency influences on the member, and vice versa. Moreover, Chapter 3 examines why members join factions in the first place, and illustrates many different modes of Congressional explaining behavior.

Chapter 2

A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF MODERATE AND CONSERVATIVE FACTIONS IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The Blue Dog Coalition was founded in 1994 following the midterm elections of that year. In the face of significant Democratic losses in the Congress, moderate to-conservative Democratic members organized around the principles of House pay-as-you-go (paygo) measures, caps on discretionary spending and a Constitutional balanced-budget amendment. Leaders of the 22-person caucus called on Republicans to join a coalition that fought to balance the federal budget and reign in spending. Coalition members would advocate for change in their new minority status, and in doing so, would transform the face of the Democratic Party.

My examination of newspaper articles and magazine periodicals in the mid-1990's revealed only a few reports about the Blue Dog Coalition's formation as an organization in Congress. The movement of moderate and conservative members into one minority caucus appears to have eluded many political observers and journalists at the time. Congressional realignment focused attention on the incoming Republican majority and the impending speakership of Newt Gingrich. Moreover, "Contract with America" devised a context that heralded Republican success and challenged Democratic malaise. Buried beneath the popular narrative of Republican resurgence however, is a more detailed political and philosophical history that occurred over one hundred years. Republicans in 1994 controlled a majority of

Southern House seats for the first time since the end of Congressional Reconstruction; two-party politics returned to the South. Prior to 1994, moderate and conservative candidates saw value in being Democrats in House majority. After the “Republican Revolution” there was simply no motivation to stay in the party or to run as a Democrat; instead of fighting within the party for moderation and diversity, many members abandoned the Democratic banner.

An understanding of the demographic and electoral contexts of Blue Dog members in the 111th Congress requires an analysis and review of the history and values that underlie the present coalition. It is not enough to examine the coalition’s formation in 1994 alone. Such an analysis would not address why moderate and conservative members exist within the Democratic Party today, or the historical tension points across the Democratic Party’s conservative-and-moderate factions. This section seeks to answer how moderate and conservative members evolved within a changing American society; how they collectively formed an organizational identity leading up to 1994. These questions dominate my discussion on the evolution of values in this chapter. Here I will analyze the history behind the coalition of mostly rural and Southern members. I will discuss the White Southern animus toward Republicans following Reconstruction, the expansion of federal powers under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the subsequent erosion of Southern support from the Democratic Party in the latter half of the 20th Century. I will briefly introduce each of the four historical periods I have identified and discuss why they are significant in the development of the moderate-and-conservative Congressional faction of the Democratic Party.

The first section will analyze the rise of the New Deal coalition under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the intraparty tensions that emerged between 1932 and 1960. Prior to 1932, the Democratic Party dominated the South. In a reaction to the Republican Congressional enactments during post-Civil War Reconstruction, Southerners refused to vote Republican at local, state and federal levels. The economic catastrophe of 1932 marked a movement from homeostasis within the Democratic Party. FDR built a cross-sectional coalition that was regionally diverse and committed to ending the Great Depression. However, FDR's New Deal Coalition ignored particularly salient civil rights issues in the South. The period of 1932-1960 is important because of the growth in federal power. Southerners, who were most concerned with maintaining states' rights, wanted federal intervention to lift the U.S. economy out of a depression, but were suspicious of many federal powers as a result Reconstruction's legacy. This suspicion divided the Democratic Party into Northern and Southern factions. I will analyze the effect of these dynamics on the intraparty Democratic tensions from both a Congressional perspective, and through a perspective on the events outside of the Congress. These include the authorship of the "Conservative Manifesto", the regional divide in the Fair Labor Standards Act vote, the emergence of Dixiecrats in the South and Republican erosion in Northeastern Congressional representation.

The second section will evince the dramatic Democratic Party fracturing along regional lines between 1960 and 1980. During this twenty-year period, the "Conservative Coalition" of Southern Democrats and Republicans would become a visible cohort in Congress. President Johnson's inauguration brought a bifurcated domestic policy agenda that, on one end, advanced a comprehensive anti-poverty and

social welfare agenda, and on the other, was forced to move on civil rights. My discussion will examine intraparty opposition to each, and illuminate specific reactions within the party and in the broader political system. Nixon's "Southern strategy", the presidential candidacy of George Wallace, and the erosion of Southern Democratic Congressional representation during this period were consequences of the social and political tumult of the 1960's. This section will conclude with the presidential administration of President Jimmy Carter, whose administration personified what the Democratic Party had become, and the dynamic conflict with its New Deal elements.

The third section will discuss the period of 1980-1994. Conservative and moderate Democrats during the Reagan era gained an organizational identity with the establishment of the Conservative Democratic Forum in 1980. The broader "Boll Weevil movement" sought to diversify the Democratic Party and incorporate more voices into the Democratic caucus. Although President Ronald Reagan never controlled a majority Congress, many of his administration's domestic policy initiatives were passed with the votes of many conservative and moderate Democrats. These include the Economic Reform Tax Act of 1981 and Reagan's sweeping 1982 budget. I will conclude by analyzing the impact of polarization on the Democratic Party. As President Reagan won a second term, Southern Democrats were becoming more liberal, and thus, the party was becoming less diverse. Mean Americans for Democratic Action committee scores, the movement of Reagan voters, Congressional recruitment activities, and the new cohorts of younger voters will describe this trend both from within the Congress and in the broader political context.

I will conclude this chapter by discussing the formation and evolution of the modern Blue Dog Coalition since 1994. Although the coalition faced numerical

problems initially, it was successful in promulgating many Republican proposals during President William Jefferson Clinton's administration and later, under President George W. Bush. The organization of the conservative and moderate Democrats into a formal faction gave it a broader appeal beyond its traditional Southern base. As a result of the Democratic Party's "50 State Strategy", Democratic Congressional candidates were recruited from conservative constituencies during popular anti-incumbency campaigns between 2006 and 2008. The result of the party strategy was an interesting amalgam of conservative and moderate Democrats in 111th U.S. Congress. My final analysis will focus on the contemporary Congress: what are the divergent policy preferences between Blue Dogs and their liberal Progressive counterparts? What preferences make Blue Dogs different from Progressives? These questions establish a basis to answer my first research question: what are the electoral and district demographic differences between Blue Dog and Progressive Democrats?

The New Deal Coalition and the Solid South, 1932-1960

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's response to the Great Depression marked a significant realignment in how the Democratic Party viewed the role of the federal government. FDR won in a landslide victory over incumbent Republican President Herbert Hoover, whose underwhelming reaction to the Great Depression condemned his reelection prospects in the minds of many voters. In the first one hundred days of Roosevelt's presidency, Congress acted at a frantic pace to boost the national economy, lift workers out of unemployment and repair the inflation that left the U.S. economy in pieces. Americans were not only shocked at the extent of FDR's broad reaching initiatives; they were shocked at the pace of enactment.

When President Roosevelt was inaugurated on March 4, 1933, he immediately pressed Congress to pass legislation designed to stimulate the economy. The first priority on his desk was a comprehensive banking bill intended to halt bank foreclosures. The Emergency Banking Act passed on March 9th, five days after the President took office. In the coming days, FDR's Democratic Congress moved to permit wine and beer imports, passed price supports for farmers, added an unrequested direct block grant of \$500,000,000 for the states and attached \$3.3 billion in public works appropriations to the National Industrial Recovery Act. Several other one hundred day initiatives were also designed to protect homes and workers. The Home Owner's Loan Act extended short-term loans to long-term mortgages, saving many homeowners from foreclosure and bankruptcy. The National Industrial Recovery Act (Wagner Act) established the famous "Section 7(A)" guaranteeing labor unions the right to collective bargaining (Allswang, 1978). Post enactment, union membership

more than doubled from 12.3% of the workforce in 1930 to 27.6% a decade later (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001).

The most crushing reality of the Great Depression was unemployment. In 1933, 24.9% of the U.S. workforce was unemployed, compared to 3.3% between the 1923 and 1929 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001). In 1934, Congress acted to expand employment programs by establishing the Civil Works Administration (CWA) to provide jobs to skilled construction laborers. The CWA complemented an earlier federal employment program, the Civil Conservation Corps (CCC) that employed unskilled male laborers between 18 and 24. Together the CWA and CCC would construct schoolhouses, bridges, highways and roads, among other public works projects that aimed at employment opportunity and investment in the American infrastructure. The success of both programs led to Roosevelt's Executive Order 7036 creating the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1939. The WPA however, was broader in scope than the earlier unemployment programs: not only did the federal government seek to hire construction workers, but it also helped builders, teachers and artists. Employment opportunities were extended to almost everyone, even two million high school and college students who took advantage of the new National Youth Administration.

Once immediate relief for families was achieved, the Roosevelt administration acted to establish a social insurance system that would help workers retire once they reach old age. In 1935, Congress passed the Railroad Retirement Act, which provided pensions for workers in the federally regulated railroad industry (Allswang, 1978). Correspondingly, Congress enacted the Old Age, Survivors, and

Disability Insurance Act (OASDI), also known as Social Security to establish a system of supplemental security income to old age retirees.

The most obvious piece of domestic legislation missing from the New Deal package was a comprehensive civil rights law. Southerners were anxious about the rapid expansion of federal power, but were more anxious about preserving the status quo on civil rights matters. At the start of the 72nd Congress, the Democratic Congress increased its majority from 217 in 1930 to 322 in 1932. Although the Roosevelt Administration favored a bill making lynching a federal crime, Roosevelt said bluntly: “If I come out for the anti-lynching bill now, [the Southerners] will block every bill I ask Congress to pass [that] keeps America from collapsing” (Allswang, 1978). Of the 103 Congressmen representing the states of the former Confederacy, only two were Republicans in 1934, and both represented the same area of Tennessee that voted against secession from the Union.

Roosevelt inherited what historians and political scientists term the “Solid South.” After presidential reconstruction ended in 1867, the Republican Congressional majority imposed strict requirements that enfranchised hundreds of thousands of Blacks. Senate estimates in 1890 suggest that 672,000 Blacks would be enfranchised in Southern states with the adoption of the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Although the White electorate of those states totaled 925,000, post-Reconstruction federal laws barred over 300,000 former Confederates from voting. In a series of Reconstruction Acts starting in February of 1867, the Republican Congressional majority divided the South (except Tennessee) into five military districts, and stationed federal troops at polling places to ensure enfranchisement of newly freed Blacks. The federal government required the ratification of the 14th and 15th

Amendments by Southern state constitutional conventions for readmittance into the Union.

New Deal-era Southern Democrats still carried the sentiment of the Reconstruction South. Enfranchisement of Blacks meant that mostly Blacks would ratify the constitutional amendments in state conventions that gave them the “privileges and immunities of citizenship” and the right to vote regardless of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” “Carpetbaggers” from the north moved south just to organize Blacks to vote, and (among White Southerners) “scalawags” helped Blacks to make profit. The combination of immediate enfranchisement of Blacks, the federal dissolution of state governments, and the movement to organize Blacks politically in the South buttressed the Republican Congressional majority with Black Southern Republicans. Patch (1932) observes that Southern debt increased by \$31.7 million dollars in the Congressional Reconstruction South (Patch, 1932). After federal troops were withdrawn in 1872, Jim Crow laws reduced the Black vote by one half in South Carolina, one third in Louisiana, and one quarter in Mississippi. By 1900, Southern states enacted laws that effectually re-disenfranchised Blacks, threw their representatives out of Congress, and systematically eliminated the Black vote. White Southern animus toward the Republican Party soon took precedence over the agrarian/corporate class conflicts that formerly divided the South, and unified the South against Republican Party for generations (Patch, 1932).

Southern representatives were united behind the Democratic Party, but a few had reservations with the New Deal’s expansion of federal power. In 1936, minor protests by states’ rights activists were focused around the Republican presidential nominee, Alf Landon of Kansas. Landon blasted what he termed the “New

Dealocrats” economic agenda, once noting in a campaign speech: “True Democrats have been sold down the river” (Oliver 1937). Republicans expressed reservations with the New Deal’s collective bargaining arrangement, but generally supported the overall program. In Texas, a group of “Constitutional Democrats” organized to support Landon, while a larger group of national “Jeffersonian Democrats” worked to defeat Roosevelt nationally (Patch, 1951).

The first express document relating to states’ rights within the Democratic majority came in what the newspapers of the late 1930’s would term “the Conservative Manifesto.” Authored by Senator Josiah W. Bailey (D-NC), the manifesto was a rallying call and a warning for Democrats to reclaim their party from Roosevelt. Bailey believed that Roosevelt was using his popularity to break with the Southern Democrats and form a third party with the unions. In early May 1937, Bailey remarked: “[Roosevelt] wants a party of his own, molded to his own conceptions and of course he intends to run for a third term” (Moore 1965). Historian John Robert Moore (1965) argued that the manifesto was a mechanism to articulate conservative values and return two-party politics to the South (Moore, 1965). It called for: opposition to “unnecessary” government competition with private enterprise; recognition that private investment and enterprise require reasonable profit; maintenance of states rights, home rule, and local self-government, except where proved definitely inadequate; and economic and non-political relief to unemployed with maximum local responsibility, among other things (Moore, 1965). In order to prevent prominence of the “anti-New Deal”, Roosevelt quickly worked with New York Senator Robert Wagner and George Norris of Nebraska to resist conservative opposition (Kickler 2010).

Subtle legislative signs of party factionalism emerged in the debate and roll call vote over the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938. FLSA guaranteed workers a national minimum wage, time-and-a-half, overtime compensation for particular occupations and prohibited minors from “oppressive child labor” (29 U.S.C. § 212). In the FLSA vote, 38 of the 41 Democratic Congressmen who voted against the measure represented districts in the former Confederacy. In Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi and North Carolina, the Democratic state delegations were nearly unanimous in opposition. Some opposition also arose from large segments of the Texas and Tennessee delegations. Employing an economic model that controlled for population size, Fleck (2002) found that opposition to the FLSA came from districts where few low wage workers voted (Fleck, 2002). Fleck asserts that opposition to FLSA could be interpreted as a sign of further disenfranchisement of Blacks, and as a clearer reflection of values. Historians Brady and Bullock (1981) asserted that the 1938 FLSA vote was the first vote of the fracture: “The emergence of a conservative coalition in 1938 effectively ended the President’s ability to push further domestic policy changes through the Congress. The coalition became active on a bill that, like civil rights legislation, split the Northern and Southern wings of the party” (Brady, 1981).

The FLSA vote also revealed a growing urban base among Northern Democrats. By 1938, migratory and immigration patterns formed a new coalition of urban and ethnic voters. New urban ethnics and working class whites realigned with the Democratic Party because the party became the impetus for social change amidst economic tumult. Among the New Deal policies important to the working class: the Wagner Act allowing collective bargaining, the National Industrial Recovery Act and

the many social insurance programs that protected individuals in poverty (Allswang, 1978). Movement in the Democratic ethnic vote in Chicago between 1930 and 1942 for instance, reveals the strength of the urban realignment. Jewish Democratic support increased from 15% in 1930 to 77% in 1942. Similarly, Polish Democratic support increased from 39% to 80%; German support from 18% to 69%; and, Italian support from 31% to 64% (Allswang, 1978).

The urban Northeast, once a bastion of Republican support, started seeing movement in the proportion of manufacturing workers voting Democratic. In the 1930 midterm election under President Hoover, 48% of highly industrialized manufacturing communities voted Democratic. In 1936, that number rose to 56% (Allswang, 1978). Ware (2002) suggests that the margin does not necessarily matter as much as the actual turnout. The New Deal Coalition was created by the mobilization of new voters into the Democratic Party (Ware, 2002).

Even if Democratic turnout declined in the 1940's, the Democratic Congressional majority was solid for all but two Congresses between 1940 and 1960. In the intervening years, Republicans captured a majority of the U.S. House of Representatives in the 80th and 83rd United States Congresses, respectively (1947-49; 1953-55). Republicans won their highest share of Congressional seats in the 1946-midterm elections with 245. 1945 was also the year Democrats attained their lowest level of Congressional representation with 184 seats. Table 2.1 shows a longitudinal view of party representation in the highly industrialized Northeast from the 1946 midterm election to 1958. 1946 was chosen because it was the highest point of Republican representation, and lowest point of Democratic representation; 1952 was chosen because Republicans recaptured the House and it was the second peak in

Republican victory in this period; and, 1958 was chosen because it represented the largest Democratic majority with the lowest level of Republican representation. It is also noteworthy that 1946, 1952 and 1958 follow in six-year cycles.

TABLE 2.1: Northeastern Democratic Representation, 1946-58

State	1946		1952		1958	
	DEM	REP	DEM	REP	DEM	REP
Maine	0	3	0	3	2	1
Vermont	0	1	0	1	1	0
Pennsylvania	5	28	11	19	16	17
New York	17	28	16	27	19	24
New Hampshire	0	2	0	2	0	2
Massachusetts	5	9	6	8	8	6
Connecticut	0	6	1	5	6	0
Rhode Island	2	0	2	0	2	0
New Jersey	2	12	6	8	5	9
Northeast Subtotal	31	89	42	73	59	59
Overall	184	245	213	221	283	153

The South was solidly behind the Democratic Party through the 1950's, but the Northeast started on a trend toward the Democratic Party with Al Smith's nomination against Herbert Hoover in 1928. Figure 2.1 shows Democratic gains in 1952 and 1958. In the 1946 midterms, Democrats controlled only one Northeastern state delegation (Rhode Island). By 1952, Democrats advanced in every Northeastern state except Maine and Vermont, even though Republicans recaptured their majority. In 1958, the Democratic Party's inroads in the industrialized Northeast delivered. Combined with the Party's Solid South, Northeastern Democrats equaled the total number of Republicans in that region.

Most illustrative of the Northeastern Democratic gain was Pennsylvania. In 1946, Democrats held only 5 seats amidst the largest Republican incursion into the House of Representatives since the beginning of the New Deal. While Pennsylvania previously had upwards of 11 Democratic representatives, this period marks when the party gained support among working class voters and urban immigrants alike. Republicans barely held onto the majority of the state delegation in 1958 where they previously maintained an overwhelming majority. The size of Pennsylvania, and the prominence of Philadelphia, gave it 15 more Congressional districts than it has in 2010. Ware (2002) asserts that the Democratic coalition was much more fluid than the Republicans in this era. Where Republican turnout held consistent, Democrats were less likely to turn out. General elections tended toward Democratic candidates, and the presence of a Democratic presidential nominee aided Congressional candidates. From 1940 to 1952, Democratic support was on average 6.7 percent higher in presidential election years. Depressed turnout in midterm elections helped Republicans recapture some Congressional seats in the urban Northeast because Democrats were less likely to turn out (Ware, 2002). New strength in the Northeast gave Democrats stronger majorities because of their lock on the Solid South. A stronger Northern party and advances in the West helped the Democrats build a coalition that reduced the campaign field for Republicans significantly.

The more profound implication involves the bifurcation of the party into Northern working class and immigrant voters and Southerners. Appealing to Northern Democrats and Republicans, President Truman called for Congress to enact an anti-poll tax, anti-lynching and fair employment practice measures recommended in a report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights. Southern Democrats were

furious. Seeing attempts to block the nomination of Truman at the Democratic Convention in 1948 as fruitless, Southern Democrats established a States' Rights Democratic Party, famously called the "Dixicrats." The Dixicrats nominated Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and Governor Fielding Wright of Mississippi as their presidential and vice presidential candidates. Their goal was not necessarily to appeal nationally with a states' rights platform, but at least to force a close vote where none of the three parties would win a plurality in the Electoral College. Failing to secure a sufficient number of electors would have thrown the 1948 presidential election into the House of Representatives. In doing so, the Dixicrats hoped to attain concessions from the Democratic majority on civil rights issues (Patch, 1951).

Truman was reelected without controversy, and the Southern vote only deprived him of 39 electoral votes. The Dixicrats' attempt to block a Northern anti-Jim Crow agenda nevertheless represented an explicit split with the majority. On economic issues as well, some Southern Democrats expressed antipathy for Truman's Fair Deal agenda. Senator Harry F. Byrd (D-VA) would frequently criticize the Truman Administration for "trying to socialize your health, socialize your food, and socialize the roof over your head." Byrd claimed the administration was planning a "massive invasion of states' rights" and gradually "centralizing power in a gigantic, sprawling bureaucracy which [was] way to big to audit."

The New Dealers reliance on government as an instrument for social justice opened the party to new Northeastern urbanites and immigrants who were suffering during the Great Depression. Old factions within the Democratic Party collided with new factions, and created a North and South divide that would begin the process of realignment along ideological lines. In 1950, Senator Karl E. Mundt (R-SD)

suggested the expedition of the divide. Mundt's plan called for a Republican alliance with Southern Democrats where one party asserted the powers of the federal government, and the other asserted the role of federalism. Mundt's plan was dismissed, but his concept would later become a political reality, as events would erode the Democrats' solid south.

The Conservative Coalition and the Rise of Progressive Democrats, 1960-1980

Between 1960 and 1980, the alliance between Northern and Southern Democrats started to unravel. Formed as a response to the economic depression of the 1930's, the New Deal coalition broke apart as two-party politics slowly reemerged in the South. The presidential candidacies of Barry Goldwater in 1964, and George Wallace in 1968, were viewed as responses to Democrats' inability to address Southern protests over civil rights matters. Richard Nixon's appeal to Southern voters further expedited divergence within the Democratic Party into Northern and Southern factions. In the following twenty years, issues of race, war and economic crisis rocked the once monolithic New Deal coalition.

The Southern Democratic caucus continued to be most resistant to the Democratic majority's initiatives. On domestic policy, Southern House Democrats opposed the president on 26% of roll call votes during the 90th Congress. Southern Democrats supported President Johnson's agenda on 61% of roll call votes, compared with significantly higher levels for Eastern (85%), Western (82%) and Midwestern (81%) Congressmen (Congressional Quarterly, 1964). Across the board, Southern representatives expressed higher levels of opposition and lower levels of support for Democratic legislation and President Johnson's Great Society initiatives. The

“Conservative Coalition” of Republicans and Southern Democrats, came together on as many as 30% of votes between 1960 and 1970 (Congressional Quarterly, 1998).

Table 2.2 compares selected Northern and Southern median Congressional members’ support and opposition to President Johnson’s domestic policy agenda. Although Northern states were slightly more likely to support the President’s agenda, Southern states were more varied, perhaps as a result of their rural composition. For example, Congressmen from the entire state of New York supported the agenda 59% of the time. When Congressmen from the New York metropolitan region were isolated however, median support jumps to 83%. Congressmen were more likely to oppose than support the president’s agenda if they represented a community outside New York City (18 metropolitan Congressmen; 22 outside the New York metro region).

TABLE 2.2: Congressional Support and Opposition to President Johnson's Domestic Policy Agenda, 1963-64

Southern States	Support (Median)	Oppose (Median)	Northern States	Support (Median)	Oppose (Median)
Alabama	50.5	29.5	Massachusetts	73	5
Florida	64	29	New Jersey	62	29
Georgia	70.5	15	Pennsylvania	54.5	36
Louisiana	56	9.5	New York (All)	59	7
Mississippi	25	55	<i>New York (City)</i>	83	4
North Carolina	63	32	<i>New York (State)</i>	42	47.2
South Carolina	39	46			
Tennessee	62	14			
Texas	66.5	25			

Urbanity alone cannot describe the relationship between the state and city contrast. Southern support and opposition to President Johnson’s domestic policy agenda varied depending on the state delegation. Mississippi Congressmen opposed Johnson’s policies 55% of the time, while North Carolina Congressmen opposed the

agenda on 37% of roll call votes. In contrast, Eastern Republicans opposed the majority on 40% of roll call votes and Western Republicans opposed on 52% of votes.

Johnson's pursuit of a war against the North Vietnamese to some extent overshadowed his domestic agenda. Under Johnson, Congress fought aggressively to end poverty and enforce civil rights. Four pieces of legislation were especially significant: the Civil Rights Act, the Food Stamp Act, the Equal Opportunity Act and the Equal Pay Act. Where each passed with Northern support, the Southern Democrats protested.

Congress' anti-poverty agenda under Johnson was met with less resistance than plans to reintegrate the public schools in the South, or to enforce voting rights. In the 88th Congress, the House passed the Equal Opportunity Act (EOA) in 1964, creating an Office of Equal Opportunity to administer programs to the poor that promote health, education and welfare. Among Democrats, EOA passed 204-40, but all 40 "nay" votes from Democrats arose from the Southern faction. The Food Stamp Act of 1964, creating a supplemental food program for the impoverished likewise passed the House with 216 Democrats supporting the measure, and 26 Democrats opposed; Southern Democrats accounted for 24 of the 26. Mayhew (1966) argues that the proportion of Blacks in Southern Congressional districts can more accurately describe differences between Northerners and Southerners. Mayhew found that districts with higher proportions of Blacks tended to have more fiscally conservative Congressmen, though he notes that the trend varies by state (Mayhew, 1966).

Of course, the most salient issue for Southern Democratic leadership was civil rights measures. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed the House with 152 Democratic "ayes" and 91 "nays", but Southerners accounted for 87 nays. Only 8

Southern Democrats voted for the bill. In the 89th Congress (1965-67), the Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed with 221 Democratic “ayes” and 67 “nays”, and all 67 dissenters were Southern Democrats. Finally, in the 90th Congress (1967-69), the Civil Rights Act of 1969 passed 150-88 among Democrats, with 70 Southern dissenters. Civil rights legislation tended to aggravate the racial divide, and in 1968, Southern Democrats found themselves without a formal standard bearer.

The inadequacy of the political parties, specifically the Democratic Party, to confront Southern dissatisfaction with civil rights measures allowed Alabama Governor George Wallace to launch an independent bid for the presidency. Similar to Dixiecrat Strom Thurmond (1948) and Republican Barry Goldwater (1962) before him, Wallace won the states in the Deep South. Wallace’s attempt to deprive the Democrats of enough Southern electoral votes and play kingmaker in the House of Representatives failed. He won several states in the Deep South, but failed to capitalize on the Goldwater coalition. An alternative view involving the combined Wallace and Nixon vote suggests that the states might have voted for Nixon in 1968 if Wallace did not run. Judis and Teixeira (2002) found that former Wallace supporters simply switched party allegiance and voted for Nixon in 1972. Nixon and Wallace received 71% of Florida’s vote in 1968, while Nixon received 72% in 1972; Mississippi supported Nixon and Wallace with 78% in 1968, and Nixon with 78% in 1972; South Carolina supported Nixon and Wallace with 70% support in 1968, and 71% for Nixon in 1972 (Judis and Teixeira, 2002). Black (2004) notes that starting in 1968, scores of White Southern males started rejecting the Democratic Party label, and identifying as independent or even as Republican (Black, 2004). The plan to capture White Southern males was the core of Nixon’s “Southern strategy.” The movement of

Southerners away from the Democratic Party however, involved more than just the segregation issue alone. Neither Republicans nor their party leader Nixon endorsed Jim Crow. Instead, Nixon would capitalize on themes of ‘law and order’ and ‘states rights’ to woo Southern Whites, illuminating the dysfunction within the Democratic Party and breaking down the one-party politics of the old South.

In the first instance, Nixon’s ‘law and order’ appeal filled a void amidst the social disorder. The 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago provided little solace for those seeking refuge under the Democratic banner: the floor fight inside the convention, and the protests and riots outside made the Democrats look unorganized and chaotic. Broad trends also illuminated the social chaos of the late 1960’s: protest to the Vietnam War erupted on college campuses across the nation; a string of U.S. Supreme Court cases guaranteeing rights to the accused made it seem as though government was sympathetic to criminals; new factions of Black militants, sexual revolutionaries, and feminists demanded new or expanded rights; the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy drew the ire of those seeking social redress (Judis and Teixeira, 2002).

Nixon was also able to seize upon the Democrats’ lack of party unity. Using 7-point feeling thermometer ratings to measure the attitudes of survey respondents, Mayer (1996) observed significant disagreement within party on crucial issues (Mayer, 1996). As the Democrats struggled to build party cohesiveness, Nixon seized on the social and political chaos to promote law and order as a campaign theme (Flamm, 2005).

These factors accounted for the continued erosion of one-party politics in the South. In his book describing Southern culture, Cash (1941) described the

Democratic Party as a singular institution that was engrained in Southern life and inherited Southern values. Cash's description of Southern politics in the 1940's provides a unique comparison to the movement within the Democratic Party starting in the late 1960's worth quoting at length:

The world knows the story of the Democratic Party in the South; how, once violence had opened the way to political action, this party became the institutionalized incarnation of the will to White Supremacy. How, indeed, it ceased to be a party in the South, and became a party of the South, a kind of confraternity having in its keeping the whole corpus of Southern loyalties, and so irresistibly commanding the allegiance of faithful whites that to doubt it, to question it in any detail, was ipso facto to stand branded as a renegade to race, to county, to God, and to Southern Womanhood (Cash, 1941).

V. O. Key (1955) asserted that the party was once the only vehicle for Southern policy-makers to pursue political careers (Key, 1955). In essence, the South was a one-party state with its own factions and political institutions within the Democratic Party but outside any specific ideological framework. The Democratic Party of the South was an amalgam of ideas, interests, and power dynamics, all intimately concerned with racial issues but divided on the role of government and over economic issues in general.

Discussing the changes in the economy since FDR's programs, Key wrote that:

"Democratic solidarity could probably not survive another New Deal." Black (2004) further explains Key's prediction in retrospect, contending that the Great Society initiatives were devastating for the national Democratic Party because they added racial liberalism to economic liberalism (Black, 2004).

The Congressional impact of Nixon's Southern strategy was gradual. Between 1960 and 1980, Republicans only acquired 23 new Congressional members from the South. Examining roll call votes on economic issues, Mayhew (1966) found: "[an impressive tendency] for conservative constituencies to sustain conservative Democrats in Congress, but to bolt the party in presidential elections" (Mayhew, 1966). The nationalization of Nixon's campaign, pinpointing social disorder and distress, made it more likely for Southern constituencies to vote for a Republican presidential candidate and a Democratic Congressman.

Mayhew identified a trend in 1966 that remained true through the next two decades: although Republicans gradually captured more House seats as a result of their Southern strategy, otherwise conservative Southern constituencies sustained their Democratic Congressman for generations. The habit of voting Democratic maintained the Democratic dominance of the South through the 1960's and 1970's, even as one-party politics was on decline. Said Key (1955) on the dissolution of one-party politics: "When law school seniors who contemplate the possibility of soon running for the legislature begin to give deliberation to their choice of party affiliation, then a competitive party politics will have arrived in the South" (Key, 1955).

The late 1970's marked a period where sociopolitical resistance to Northern Democratic policies started to create a conflict outside the South as well. The focus started to shift, from Southern Democrats providing the most resistance to New Deal-era policies, to a new tide of suburban voters who would later be termed 'Reagan Democrats.' In 1976, President Jimmy Carter's pollster Patrick Caddell predicted the emergence of a younger, white-collar, college-educated, middle-income suburban class. In a memo to President Carter advising on political strategy, Caddell wrote: "We

must devise a context that is neither traditionally liberal, nor traditionally conservative, one that cuts across traditional ideology.” The baby-boom electorate was suburban, young and professional; it would call itself socially liberal and economically conservative; it would reject McGovern liberal philosophy, New Left policies, and embrace the politics of the center (Judis and Teixeira, 2002). The emergence of the suburban, white professional would slowly change the Democratic electorate.

The presidency of Southern moderate Jimmy Carter in the late 1970’s also represented a clash between the liberal and conservative wings of the Democratic Party. In response to economic stagflation, Carter’s desire for earmark reduction hampered his relationship with the Congress. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) railed against the administration for its cuts in social welfare spending while African American leaders chided the President for being “immoral, unjust and inequitable” (Bosch, 2002). Commenting on the work of the 95th Congress, the AFL-CIO wrote: “[Congress] left behind not a monument to forward-looking legislation, but a tombstone” (Selfa, 2008).

One liberal Congressional victory was the passage of the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1977 (otherwise known as the Humphrey-Hawkins Act). The act set specific goals for employment in the U.S., and asserted more broadly that every American has a right to employment. The Humphrey-Hawkins Act reflected Congressional priorities to encourage private development in target areas over public sector jobs. The legislation enumerated four specific goals: expansion of conventional private jobs through improved use of general economic and structural policies; expansion of private jobs to priority areas (education, state and local government,

healthcare, etc.); public employment as a last resort; and, public service jobs as a last resort (Congressional Research Service, 1977).

Achieving the reluctant support of many Northern Democrats, Carter worked to pass emergency energy and budget measures that attempted to reinfuse private enterprise. At the start of his presidency, his ambitious agenda included welfare and tax reform, government reorganization, a comprehensive national energy policy and a balanced budget (Bosch, 2002). Although pragmatic, Carter's agenda was subject to compromise with liberal House Speaker Tip O'Neil. Describing their relationship, biographer John Farrell said: "Across the table is Tip O'Neill, the quintessential New Deal Democrat -- unrepentant, un-reconstructed, and determined to follow the Roosevelt philosophy of tax and tax, spend and spend, elect and elect [...] and basically standing for much of what Jimmy Carter had come to Washington to change."

In a sense, the relationship between O'Neill and Carter was emblematic of the divergence of political thought within the party during this period. Between 1960 and 1980, the identity of the party shifted from a New Deal coalition to a new progressive union of McGovern and Kennedy progressive Democrats who fought to maintain the party's commitment to civil rights and anti-poverty programs. At the same time, an alternative tradition withstood the trials of the Vietnam Era in the form of Southern Democrats loyal to the party. With Carter's abysmal performance in the 1980 election, Republican President Ronald Reagan would build a new majority that demanded government non-intervention, and for eight years during his presidency, found a strain of disaffected Democrats who were willing to give him the Congressional approval he needed.

Boll Weevils and the Conservative Democratic Forum, 1980-1994

Between 1980 and 1994 conservative Democrats found and established an organizational identity. Nearly 50 years after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt created the first New Deal program, President-elect Ronald Reagan was poised to dismantle a federal budget deemed 'out of control.' The philosophy of 'tax and spend', argued Reagan, increased the size of government and interfered with the inherent economic liberties of man. By 1980, the communist threat was deeply engrained in a generation of American families. Reagan fundamentally believed that government was not the solution to domestic problems, and argued that tax relief, deficit reduction and privatization would reign in the size and scope of government. Domestically, President Reagan divested in federal programs, proposed hiring freezes on federal employment, reengineered the tax system, and devolved federal powers. Internationally, he buttressed the Defense Department's budget to unprecedented levels to combat the Soviet threat. President Reagan presided over realignment in American political philosophy where his domestic and foreign policy introduced a new politics reverberant in the 21st Century: neo-conservatism.

Conservative Democrats in the Congress were not neo-conservative ideologically, but for many, the election of President Ronald Reagan signaled a shift in both the political and philosophical environment of the U.S. House of Representatives. Politically, Reagan entered the 97th Congress with a perceived mandate: he won in all but 7 statewide contests, beating an incumbent president by 9 percentage points in the popular vote margin. He put together a winning coalition of moderate and conservative Americans from across the economic spectrum, building majorities among working class, Christian, and White voters. Reagan performed well in Southern and rural

regions as well, carrying suburban and rural voters by wide margins and narrowing Carter's lead in urban areas (Brandt 2009). Democrats lost 33 seats in 1980, but still retained control of the House of Representatives. Split ticket voting among constituents paved a new political environment for many of the Democratic Party's conservative Congressional members, leading to the organization of pro-Reagan Democrats.

Shortly after the 1980 election, Representative Charles W. Stenholm (D-TX) organized the Conservative Democratic Forum (CDF) to empower Reagan Democrats in the Congress to stand against the liberal Democratic leadership of Tip O'Neill. In a letter to Jack Hightower (D-TX), Stenholm explained the goal of the CDF using an analogy to the Boll Weevil Monument in Enterprise, Alabama. Stenholm believed that similar to the boll weevil, which wreaked havoc on cotton crops and forced farmers to diversify, the CDF would damage the Democratic Party, but force it to diversify and inspire others to work for change (Brandt 2009). The CDF, explained Stenholm, would become an independent force in Congress that would primarily focus on budget issues and avoid contentious debates regarding social policy and civil rights.

The CDF was to become a forum for conservative Democrats in Congress to express ideas along a set of ideologically similar perspectives. In an informational packet delivered at the start of the 98th Congress, the CDF explained: "People should be free to live their lives without undue/unneeded involvement from the federal government. State and local governments respond better to people's individual needs ... A conservative Democrat rejects the notion of blindly following the party line and instead tries to represent his or her constituents within the party." In differentiation

with themselves and the Republican Party, Stenholm explained, conservative Democrats “prefer fiscal responsibility over tax cuts [where] Republicans have never seen a tax cut they don’t like” (Brandt, 2009). Fiscal responsibility, government efficiency, and devolution of power to state and local governments became a platform for CDF members to communicate division within their party to their constituents. The formation of an organization furthermore provided bargaining power against the Democratic leadership on matters of fiscal policy. It also provided the new Reagan Administration with a fertile cohort of Democrats to persuade in the Congress. The CDF played a crucial role in advancing the cause of conservative Democrats in two particular areas: through the voting patterns as a cohort on the House floor, and through the placement and formation of policy within committee.

The 1982 budget debate is one example that illuminates the power of the CDF as a cohort on the House floor. On April 9, 1981, the Democratic-controlled Budget Committee of the House of Representatives approved the 1982 budget, calling for less spending in defense and more spending in social programs. The Democratic plan contrasted greatly with the Republican proposal to spend more on defense and reduce the federal deficit by spending less on social programs. CDF member Phil Gramm (D-TX) quickly endorsed the Republican proposal, prompting the Reagan Administration to title their 1982 proposal: “The Bipartisan Coalition for Fiscal Responsibility.” Support for the Republican bill increased within the Democratic caucus, and despite the pleas of Speaker O’Neill, the Gramm-Latta substitute for 1982 budget was approved over the Democratic proposal. The substitute passed 253-176, with 38 out of 47 CDF members voting with the Republicans. Following a number of amendments through reconciliation with the Senate version, the CDF helped the

Reagan Administration introduce cuts to Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamp, and student loan programs claiming that these federal programs had grown too rapidly and amounted to excessive federal entitlement spending. The reconciliation measure passed 217-211, with 27 CDF members voting for passage. To hold moderate Republicans, the Reagan Administration conceded some increases in federal spending, including Medicaid and energy assistance to the impoverished. Nevertheless, the final 1982-budget measure called for a savings of \$36.7 billion in FY 1982 federal outlays. CDF members allowed Reagan to describe the budget as a 'bipartisan success.'

In 1981, the Reagan Administration passed the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 (ERTA), enacting steep federal income tax cuts for wealthy Americans by reducing the highest income-earning bracket's burden by 23% and lowering the lowest bracket by 3%. ERTA similarly passed the House with significant CDF support, with 31 CDF members voting in favor, and 16 opposed.

The 1982 budget fight and the 1981 ERTA were examples of negotiation and compromise with conservative Democrats. In the former budget proposal, the administration agreed to hold back on cutting specific entitlement programs to maintain moderate Republicans and win several conservative Democrats. With respect to the later tax bill, the Reagan administration settled for a piece of legislation that was narrower in scope and included less sweeping federal income tax cuts. In both instances compromise retained Reagan's relationship with his own party and appealed to the conservative faction of the Democratic Party. In a sense, Reagan's domestic agenda was philosophically and politically favorable among conservative Democrats.

The CDF's success on the floor was accompanied by lobbying efforts aimed at placing members in strategic committees. A CDF vote study, released December 1, 1982, found that conservative members were ideologically underrepresented in the Budget, Rules and Ways and Means committees. Using an aggregate of seven interest group scores for each of the committee members, where percentage points increase with conservatism, the CDF found that the mean Budget, Rules and Ways and Means member score was smaller (or more liberal) than other Congressional committees. The CDF analysis grouped individual Congressmen by score range according to a 5-tier scale ("conservative, moderate conservative, moderate, moderate liberal and liberal") and found that as a caucus, Democrats are comprised of members in each of the five categories. Under the CDF methodology, there were no liberal or moderate liberal Congressional Republicans. This broader point underscores the reality that the Democratic caucus was ideologically diverse and thus, more prone to dissent along factional lines (Brandt, 2009). A more strategically relevant point for Democrats at the time involved the leadership's attempt at keeping conservative members out of key committees (Aistrup, 1996).

Despite their pleas for more visibility, the Democratic leadership deprived CDF members of key committee assignments. Several prominent members, including Andy Ireland, Phil Gramm and later, current U.S. Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL), abandoned the Democratic Party for the GOP. Some CDF members threatened to challenge O'Neill for the speakership. After the 1984 presidential election, Speaker O'Neill announced the formation of a new strategy that addressed the disaffected conservatives: "The truth of the matter is that for many years we paid no attention to one group in the Caucus, the conservatives. We felt that there was no need for them;

there were always 25 or 35 Republicans who would vote along with us” (Brandt, 2009). O’Neill provided Marvin Leath (D-TX) and Dan Daniel (D-VA) with positions on the Budget Committee and Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, respectively.

Accommodation became increasingly unnecessary. Through the late 1980’s, the Boll Weevil Movement and conservative Democrats encountered less resistance in the Democratic caucus. Scholars offer a few explanations for this phenomenon. Aistrup (1996) observes that starting in 1983, there was a “permanent and leftward” shift among Southern Democrats. Examining the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) scores for the cohorts of Democrats entering the Congresses between 1977 and 1987, Aistrup found that mean ADA score increased 15-20 points from the mid-to-late 1970’s. The ADA scores and regression tests of Reagan’s victory percentage in Southern Democratic districts demonstrate increasing moderation among Southern Democrats. First, Aistrup notes that biracial supporting coalitions were formed in the “peripheral South” (defined as having a Black population of less than 15% of the district). In these peripheral districts, Whites worked with Blacks to elect agreeable candidates, in part because the threat of a successful Black candidate at the state or local level was nominal given the low percentage of Blacks in the district. Aistrup also discusses the role of “White reactionaries”, where districts with fewer Blacks tended to have less conservative Whites. A second argument involves replacement. Older conservative cohorts, Aistrup finds, left the party, and contributed to a rise in mean ADA scores. Combining research from Abromowitz (1990), Aistrup found that Southern Republicans tended to

be more homogenous in their ideological orientation, while voters may not have initially noticed the gradual leftward movement of Southern Democrats.

Brandt (1996) offers a few more arguments concerning the leftward movement of Southern Democrats in the 1980's. First, in many primary campaigns, as more moderates voted with Reagan, liberals became the main primary constituency. Second, with the introduction of two-party politics in the South, the acceptability of voting Republican gradually gained greater social acceptability. Finally, younger Southern Democrats were ideologically similar to the national Democratic platform than both their older contemporaries and previous cohorts of young Democrats. The cumulative effect of all these factors led to increased competition in a once one-party state. In 1984, the defeat of Boll Weevil Jack Hightower (D-TX) by a conservative Republican reflected the increasing partisanship and the coming era of Republican dominance of the South (Brandt, 1996).

Change was slow to impact the South, but many of the converts within primary constituencies were not loyalist Democrats. Prysby (1992) found that between 1980 and 1983, 20.1% of Republican activists were converted Democrats, which grew slightly between 1984 and 1991 when that proportion increased to 21.8%. The vast majority of those who switched party affiliations described themselves as "very conservative" or "conservative" (36.7% and 44.8%, respectively) (Prysby 1992). Aistrup (1992) underscores Prysby's findings, concluding: "Democratic converts to the GOP [were] considerably more conservative than loyalist Democrats" (Aistrup, 1992).

Ronald Reagan's popularity complemented changes in supporting coalitions. In 1984, Reagan was reelected with 58.8% of the popular vote and 525

electoral votes. Reagan carried every state except Minnesota and the District of Columbia, and won among working-class whites and Southern Democrats, who frequently attributed the economic recovery with the Reagan presidency. Despite Republican success at the presidential level, the House Democratic caucus picked up more seats in the late 1980's than lost: between the 99th and 101st Congress (1985-91) Democrats gained only 8 seats. It wouldn't be until 1994 that the Republicans would carry a majority of Southern districts, and that a new coalition of fiscally conservative Congressmen would be founded.

Blue Dog Democrats, 1994-Present

This final section will move the discussion of the Conservative Coalition into its current context as Blue Dog Democrats in the 111th U.S. Congress. Following decades of intraparty ideological opposition, the 1994-midterm elections signaled a tectonic shift in the balance of power. A prodigious amount of scholarly literature has documented, analyzed, and debated elements of the 1994 "Republican Revolution" in great detail. The vastness in books, periodicals and vote studies has enriched the scholarly debate on the presidency, party affiliations, electoral realignments, and ideology. There remains a dearth of literature however, chronicling the organizational formation of the Blue Dog Democrats in the same time period.

The focus here is neither on the reasons for Republican resurgence in 1994, nor the realignment of parties in the House of Representatives. The Blue Dog Coalition was formed in a shadow of a major Republican upset. Institutionally, conservative Democrats lacked the power to win key minority leadership positions. Politically, the movement of conservative identifiers away from the Democratic Party,

the realignment of the South, the decrease in civil rights as a salient issue, and the nationalization of party platforms pushed conservative House Democrats to organize into one united coalition. A discussion of the institutional and electoral events that allowed the Blue Dog Coalition to organize will follow a brief review of the 1994-midterm elections.

The Republican resurgence in 1994 set the tone for the formation of a new conservative Democratic coalition. In 1994, Republicans captured the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years. Once the minority party with 176 representatives in the 103rd Congress, Republicans became the majority party with 230 members in the 104th Congress. Democrats lost a net 33 seats in the 1994 midterms. The election cycle shocked the public and political observers alike; up until 1994, some Congressional observers speculated on a “permanent” Democratic majority in the House of Representatives (Irwin, 2004). Popular accounts of the “Republican Revolution” attribute Democratic losses to the ascendancy of the Christian Right, the “angry” White male, well-funded Republicans, the decline of the White South and Congressional redistricting outcomes (Klinkner, 1996). Further, Republicans were able to articulate a message of deficit reduction, reduced government spending and devolved federal powers. Newt Gingrich’s “Contract with America” armed neophyte Republican candidates and Congressional incumbents with a conservative manifesto.

Following the 1994 midterms, conservative Democrats failed win significant leadership posts in the new House minority. When members convened in December of 1994 to select leadership, conservative Democrats supported Boll Weevil Charlie Rose (D-NC) for minority leader. Rose challenged Richard Gephardt (D-MO),

whose candidacy was almost unassailable. Gephardt's promise of inclusive leadership resonated with the caucus, and his connections with the Clinton White House solidified the support of more liberal Democrats. Gephardt won the top spot with a 150-58 vote. Thereafter, conservative Democrats pinned their hopes on Charles Stenholm's race against David Boiner (D-MI) for House minority whip. Stenholm, the Boll Weevil leader who backed Reagan's economic program, argued that Democrats should reconsider significant policy debates with Republicans. Stenholm was once quoted as saying: "When we differ with Republicans, we better be on the side of angels." Boiner prevailed 145-60. (Congressional Quarterly, 1994).

A more direct problem for conservatives was their sheer number within the Democratic caucus entering into the 104th Congress. As a result of the "Republican Revolution" of 1994, the conservative alliance between Southern Democrats and the Republican Party was effectively dead. Many of the Democratic incumbents who lost to Republican insurgents hailed from more Republican and independent districts. Abramowitz (1995) presents 1994 National Election Study results that identifies the mean party affiliations of the 33 formerly Democratic-held districts lost to Republicans. Table 2.3 shows that districts gained by Republicans contained a higher proportion of Republican and independent identifiers than Democrats. The National Election Study's sample showed that districts held by Democrats were more Democratic (Abramowitz, 1995). In 1994, Republicans won a majority by expanding in districts with a high proportion of Republican identifiers. Compounded with research discussed in the last section regarding movement of conservative party identifiers from the Democratic to Republican Party, 1994 can be seen as the cumulative result of a slow political realignment.

TABLE 2.3: Party Identification by Outcome of 1994 U.S. House Elections in Previously Democratic Districts, National Election Study Results 1994

Party Identification	Electoral Outcomes	
	Republican Gained	Held by Democrats
Republican	41	21
Independent	30	37
Democratic	29	42

The theory Southern “de-alignment” suggests a sort of homeostasis of the South. Years of gradual movement toward the Republican Party and the final breakdown of the one-party state lead to equilibrium in Congressional representation. In 1994, Republicans for the first time since Reconstruction held a majority of seats in South. The cultural and political dynamics of the Democratic institution that V.O. Key observed no longer applied. Southern realignment occurred because by 1994, politics was not local. Republicans nationalized the elections, and Newt Gingrich’s overtures captivated Southern audiences (Frymer, 1996).

The reasons given by conservative Democratic defectors into Republican ranks exemplify the nationalization of the Democratic identity. Representative Nathan Deal said about his defection: “I have come to the conclusion that my conservative north Georgia principles are not shared by today’s national Democratic Party.” Said Representative W.J. Tauzin: “I decided to go with a party that respects my views.” Even Mississippi’s Mike Parker seemed to criticize Democrats for not reprimanding his disloyalty: “I cannot find Democrats who are strong enough or who have the courage of their convictions to kick me out.” Newt Gingrich and the Republicans in 104th Congress expanded their majority by appealing to conservative Democrats who were dissatisfied with their party. Greg Laughlin obtained a coveted seat on the powerful House Ways and Means Committee in exchange for his switch

(Congressional Quarterly, 1995). Between 1980 and 1995, 18 House and Senate Democrats switched into Republican ranks. 5 House members, and 1 senator, switched after the 1994 midterms (Congressional Quarterly, 1996; Bianco, 2000).

The conservative coalition of CDF members and House Republicans was no longer necessary in the wake of Republican gains. In their evaluation of the 104th Congress, Congressional Quarterly proclaimed: “Southern Democrats lose clout.” The coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats came together on 11.4% of votes in 1995. Compared with the 30% unity rate of the mid-1970’s, the coalition’s unity was only a shell of its old self. In 1995, the Conservative Coalition was successful in “[advancing] a constitutional amendment banning flag desecration, [weakening] environmental protections, boosting defense spending and continuing agricultural subsidies” (Congressional Quarterly, 1995). Southern Democrats, clearly a base for conservative support within the party, represented 59 districts by the end of 1995, approximately half the strength of the coalition decades earlier. Cited in Congressional Quarterly (1995), University of Kansas political scientist Burdett Loomis called the coalition an “artifact of a strong Democratic south” (Congressional Quarterly, 1995).

Starting in the early 1980’s, issues that were once salient started fading from public consciousness. Applying Aage Clausen’s earlier work on issue dimensions to the conservative coalition, Shelley (1983) observed that civil rights measures were less salient than decades past. Although the civil rights dimension was still more salient in the South compared to other regions, it was still less salient than decades earlier. The national discussion moved away from civil rights and accordingly, there were less opportunities for coalition cohesion than in Congresses past. Congressional Quarterly’s analysis of the 104th Congress notes: “Many of the old-time conservatives

had fallen victim to Republican challengers or switched parties.” Simply, the environment of the old South had changed, and the representation in the Congress illustrated that movement. Rapid industrialization and urbanization within the Sun Belt made the representatives from the region more diverse and civil rights issues less salient (Congressional Quarterly, 1995).

Underscoring the new era of national politics, all 23 of the original Blue Dog Democrats supported at least 8 out of the 10 principles in Gingrich’s Contract with America (Roman, 1995). These 10 principles included: (i) a balanced budget amendment and line-item veto, (ii) new laws against violent criminals, (iii) welfare reform, (iv) families and children, (v) tax cuts, (vi) national defense, (vii) Social Security reform, (viii) government regulations, (ix) tort reform, and (x) Congressional term limits (Gingrich & Armev, 1994). Initially called “the Coalition”, the Blue Dog caucus was intended to represent both Republicans and Democrats. Quoted in the Washington Times, a staffer of a Blue Dog Democrat remarked: "It's not a Democratic group, it's a philosophic group” (Kellman, 1995).

The new Blue Dog Coalition was no longer exclusively Southern. The original class of Blue Dogs included two non-Southern Democrats, Gary Condit (D-CA) and Colin Peterson (D-MN). Discussing the formation of the new coalition, the Washington Post reported: “[Blue Dog Democrat derives from the term] Yellow Dog Democrat that was used to describe southern voters so loyal to the Democratic Party that they would cast their ballots for a yellow dog if it were a Democratic candidate rather than vote for a Republican.” The concept of using a dog originated with Louisiana artist George Rodrigue’s portrayal of a blue dog sitting in front of the Capitol. The painting depicted his black-and-white dog named Tiffany, who was part

spaniel, and part terrier. Asked to expand on the difference between a Blue Dog and a Yellow Dog, Stenholm said: "A blue dog's got a better sense of smell [...] if you're not careful, it'll bite you" (Yang, 1995).

In retrospect, the Blue Dog Coalition organized because of necessity. After 50 years of cohesion, the Conservative Coalition came together on only 7% of House votes in 1998. That same year, Congressional Quarterly deemed the alliance between Southern Democrats and Republicans "statistically insignificant" (Congressional Quarterly, 1998). With Republicans in the House majority, Blue Dog Democrats became the ideological force within the minority party. Without an incentive for conservative or moderate candidates to run as Democrats, and without a Southern base, the power dynamics and the composition of the party that built a conservative coalition had run out of steam. The new role of conservative or moderate Democrats was to supplement for Republican defectors, or bargain with the majority for amendments to bills.

Republicans held the House of Representatives for 11 years between 1995 and 2006. In the intervening period, the clout of the Blue Dog Coalition varied. According to Congressional Quarterly (2000), in the 106th Congress the Coalition was decisive in successfully aiding Republicans on fifteen House votes. During that Congress, Blue Dogs were instrumental in weakening Environmental Protection Authority in a 2001 bill enforcing clean water standards. They also helped the Republican majority narrowly pass legislation weakening gun control regulations (Congressional Quarterly, 2000). Following Republican gains under President George W. Bush in the 107th Congress Blue Dogs were left with very little clout. Ways and Means Chairman Bill Thomas (R-CA) was criticized for not including the moderate

group on legislation relating to trade agreements, an economic stimulus package and Bush's first tax cut proposal. On the House floor, moderates joined with Republicans in opposing a Democratic campaign finance reform bill (Congressional Quarterly, 2001). Nearly every year since its formation, the Blue Dog Coalition has proposed alternative "balanced" budgets, pay-as-you-go measures, and deficit reduction plans to offset progressive proposals.

When Democrats captured the House majority in 2006, the Blue Dog Coalition moved into the majority. Under Chairman Howard Dean, the Democratic Party's "Fifty State Strategy" directed financial allocations to traditionally "unwinnable" districts. The strategy encouraged local party organizations to recruit and finance moderate and conservative candidates to run in traditionally noncompetitive districts. The result was a swell in conservative and moderate House Democratic membership. Democratic membership in the Blue Dog Coalition reflected the party's expanding majority in Congress. Blue Dog membership grew from 32 to 54 members after 2006, and the Democratic majority now included members from rural Idaho, Ohio, Indiana and North Carolina.

Discussion

Although the Blue Dog Coalition in its present form is not exclusively Southern, it is clear that values exist within a historical context: the present coalition is mostly Southern and rural; it was founded out of the leadership and organization of Southern conservative Democrats in the 1980's; its suspicion of federal power is derived from the battles over states' rights. In the present form, race and civil rights issues are less salient than in the 1960's and 1970's, but it would be a mistake to

assume that the suspicion of federal power exists solely in a vacuum. The emergence of the Solid South, the expansion of federal power, the heightened salience of civil rights, and the erosion of Democratic South are only examples of events within that context.

The inclusion of more moderate and conservative members after 2006 did not polarize the Blue Dog Coalition. Rather, members joined because they agreed with its principles and priorities. In 2010, they included: (i) the restoration of Pay-As-You-Go rules, (ii) decreases in federal spending, (iii) cutting programs that “don’t work”, (iv) deficit reduction, (v) a balanced budget, (vi) honesty about long term fiscal obligations, (vii) the establishment of a bipartisan fiscal commission, (viii) improved transparency and accountability, (ix) performance based budgeting, (x) the elimination of waste, fraud and abuse, (xi) justification for every dollar, (xii) the closing of tax loopholes, (xiii) the de-politicization of the process, (xiv) the elimination of duplication and inefficiency, and (xv) a review and termination of “unnecessary” federal programs (Blue Dog Coalition, 2010). These narrowly defined fiscal principles contrast with the liberal Progressive Caucus’ more broad cornerstones of (i) economic justice and security, (ii) civil rights and civil liberties, (iii) global peace and security and (iv) environmental protection and energy independence (Progressive Caucus, 2010).

Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the literature’s discussion on factions in the U.S. Congress. It will accept two perspectives on the faction: from inside the Congress as an institutional instrument of necessity, and from outside Congress as an instrument that helps the Congressman win reelection. This theme is important in describing the dynamic relationship between the member and their

faction. Do members join because of constituent pressures, or do they join because of institutional necessity? If members join out of constituent pressures, it supports this thesis' hypothesis that constituent pressures are more prominent in Blue Dog decision-making. If members join out of institutional necessity, it gives credence to the null hypothesis that constituent pressures are not as significant as winning legislative battles and obtaining power. Unfortunately, the answer provided in Chapter 3 is ambiguous and unclear: constituent and institutional pressures affect Congressmen in different ways.

Chapter 3

POLITICS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL FACTION: INSTITUTIONAL AND DISTRICT INFLUENCES ON VOTING BEHAVIOR

It is widely understood that members of Congress join caucuses to identify with and advocate for minority interests. This chapter seeks to address how members use caucuses (political factions) as a tool to win reelection. I will first analyze the reelection incentive through the institutional lens of the Congress, specifically focusing on why members join factions in the first place. I will then move to a discussion on the individual member's reelection incentive within his or her constituency. Three perspectives of success are thematic in both analyses: majority, factional, and individual.

Majority, factional and an individual member's success depend on the confluence of ideas into legislation and the cohesion of supporting coalitions. A piece of legislation that is successful in passage wins the support of a majority of coalitions. In the most simplistic sense, individual members with similar interests join together to promulgate ideas into a bill. The cohesiveness of the majority results in the sometimes-narrow passage of House bills. Across all three perspectives, the interests of the majority, factions and individual members align to implement optimal outcomes. The successful passage of a law allows the majority party to claim victory

over opposing interests, winning factions to enact specific policy proposals and members to claim personal credit for pieces of the legislation.

Buried beneath the glory of victory however, is the implicit reason why members join factions in the first place. In the face of a majority, individual members need an intermediary to represent their interests before the Congress at large. This entity is not a singular ombudsman of minority interests, but a block of like-minded individuals. In the most fundamental sense, the faction serves the individual member's electoral interest because it gives like-minded members greater collective bargaining power. Factions allow members to speak in unison and corroborate with other representatives from similar policy or ideological persuasions. More than just platforms to advance policy ideas, factions give Congressmen a seat at the table in allocating key committee placements or even chairmanships.

The dynamic that is tested in this thesis involves the extent to which coalition members come from ideologically similar electoral and district demographic backgrounds and contexts. If members of the Blue Dog Coalition for example, are electorally marginal, not only does the coalition serve to advance insular policy goals, but it also serves as a mechanism for cue shopping. "Marginal" members who win election to Congress with less than 5% may look to other similarly situated representatives to regulate their voting behavior. In this sense, the Blue Dog Coalition becomes a tool to guide voting decisions.

The first section of this chapter will focus on the faction as an institutional power source. If Blue Dog Congressmen are marginal, they can use the faction to advance policy goals. I will use DiSalvo (2009) to define "factions" in a general sense, and to describe the reasons why members join them. I will expand upon and interpret

DiSavlo's research where necessary, and use his work as a guide to conceptualize the Congressional faction. Contemporary research into factional interests is varied. Therefore, building off of one set of criterion ensures consistency in my analytical framework. This theoretical treatment of factions contextualizes the hypothesis that members from similar electoral and district demographic backgrounds join them to advance policy agendas.

The second section will focus on the individual Congressman and his or her interaction with constituents. In determining how to vote on controversial pieces of legislation, members analyze their political environment to understand the implications of a vote on future electoral outcomes. Although Congressmen generally believe that a single vote will not cost them reelection, a "string of votes" in opposition to their constituency's interest could. Therefore, a Congressman's success is also determined by the individual, not just his or her majority's or factional success in Congress. This section takes the first research question regarding electoral and district demographic cohort differences one step further: at the individual level, do Congressmen explain votes differently? My discussion will invoke political science literature relating to individual members' explaining behaviors.

Each section describes the basis for the two research questions in this thesis. Each research question will be examined using appropriate literature to describe the dynamic interactions and interrelationships between the majority, the faction, the member and the constituency. These agents provide a basic framework for understanding voting decisions. First, I have to describe what factions are to illustrate why there would be differences between them. Second, if there are explanatory

differences between members of each faction, why do members explain votes in the first place?

The Member and the Faction

The political faction has long been a subject of inquiry and suspicion among political theorists and philosophers. Although contemporary views in American Congressional literature offer more benign interpretations, factions have historically been characterized as agents of chaos and disharmony. In Federalist No. 10, James Madison famously wrote that a faction is “a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community” (Madison, 1789). The peoples’ immediate impulse drove Madison’s view: government required checks to ensure deliberative public policy decisions. Without some form of protection, “factions [would] subvert government, render laws impotent, and beget the fiercest animosities among men of the same nation” (Hume, 1742; 1985).

Parties are organizations that compete with one another for electoral supremacy. Factions exist within party structures to compliment existing institutions and rally support around specific interests. Parties are products of their environments, and are thus responsive to changes in their political economy (Aldrich, 1995; DiSalvo, 2009). Accordingly, a faction is a “party sub-unit that has enough ideological consistency, organizational capacity, and temporal durability to influence policy making, the party’s image, and the congressional balance of power” (DiSalvo, 2009).

DiSalvo (2009) argues that members of Congress join factions for three reasons. First, factions advance particular agendas within parties and in the Congress as a whole. Factions accomplish agenda advancement through roll call voting and ideological cohesion. Deutchman & Lucas (2010) assert that in recent years, factions have stressed economic interests over social policy to enhance the durability and consistency of their ideological message (Deutchman & Lucas, 2007; Deutchman & Lucas, 2010). The necessity to communicate a moderate message has increased as the Democratic Party moved to the left, and the Republican Party moved to the right (Hacker & Pierson, 2005; Poole & Rosenthal, 2000; Deutchman & Lucas, 2010). Deutchman and Lucas found these trends especially true among moderate Republican Main Street Partnership members and Democratic Blue Dogs. Agenda advancement is only successful insofar as the caucus is cohesive in their roll call voting behavior. Levy and Stoudinger (1978) found that among Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) members in the 92nd Congress, members rarely deviated from each other's voting patterns. This resulted in tremendous legislative success, especially in civil rights (Levy & Stoudinger, 1978). Unlike the CBC success however, Deutchman and Lucas (2010) argue that more difficult challenges persist in advancing a united agenda amidst a geographically diverse national coalition. Cohesion is central to the success of the faction: highly cohesive caucuses earn greater collective bargaining power, and prominent positions in committees and subcommittees (Barnette, 1975; Ferber, 1971).

DiSalvo's second assertion requires some inference and expansion. He argues that factions advance electoral interests in shifting party agendas. In a sense, the advancement of electoral interests requires a factional identity to move the party's legislative priorities. Just as the Blue Dogs are suspicious of Progressive programs,

members of the moderate Main Street Partnership are suspicious of the many socially conservative and fundamentalist elements within the identifiable right wing of the Republican Party (Deutchman and Lucas, 2010). Under Deutchman and Lucas' scheme, a Republican Congressman who represents a diverse urban constituency might not feel compelled to join the right-wing Republican Study Group. In order for more moderate Republicans to move the party agenda and advance their own electoral interest, they must first distinguish and characterize themselves with identifiable traits. If a faction is not identifiable, it loses its suasion in moving pieces of legislation through the House. On a more macro-level, these identifiable traits are distinguishable by the type of district that the Congressman represents, a hypothesis tested in this thesis (Froman, 1963). Congressmen can use the faction to further individualize themselves to advance reelection interests.

Finally, DiSalvo argues that members join caucuses to secure key power bases on committees and subcommittees. This phenomenon has often been discussed in the related context of political party competition (Fiorina, 1974). Like parties, factions compete for prominent committee and subcommittee chairmanships. They often stake out powerful committee memberships that allow the representative to influence what is placed on the docket. Applying Richard Fenno's analysis of Congressional committee behavior and home-style orientation, Weber (1989) found that the Agricultural Committee was only attractive to members with many farmers and rural populations. Although primarily serving farming interests, the Committee wrote bills broad enough to attract support on the floor (Fiorina & Rhode, 1989). For members of more rural or regional caucuses—such as the Blue Dogs—placement on a “special interest committee” (termed by Weber) would be appealing. The Agriculture

Committee, currently chaired by Blue Dog Colin Peterson (MN-07), would be one example of a coveted power base.

The electoral incentives involved in advancing minority agenda's and utilizing power bases alludes to a broader application of DiSalvo's criterion. Applying these standards to the Agricultural Committee example, it could be argued that members join prominent committees to advance insular goals, secure reelection and capitalize on positions of power. This capitalization includes the Congressman's presentation of self where membership on a committee promotes the member's good works to his or her constituents. The DiSavlo criterion may more broadly apply to organized groups of representatives who pursue common goals as cohesive units.

The relative success of House caucuses can be judged by a different set of standards. First, the successful promulgation of ideas into legislation requires a caucus's party to have a majority in Congress. One reason the present moderate Republicans appear to be voiceless is because, as a faction, they exist within a centralized minority party infrastructure. Without a majority in Congress, moderate Republicans lack formal sources of influence (ability to manipulate House procedural rules, committee and subcommittee chairmanships, etc.) Second, caucus groups need to be sufficiently large to exercise influence. Progressive Democrats represent over 70 members in the 111th Congress. As one of the House's largest, most ideologically cohesive groups, they are the most reliable backbone in the Democratic Party's voting bloc. Last, the caucus needs to have the organizational capacity and network to achieve its ends. Without members in key committees, or the ability to persuade party or minority party leaders to join a faction, it lacks the organizational network to achieve its desired policy outcomes.

Factional success also depends on Congressional power dynamics. Operating under the assumption that caucuses seek power and control, DiSalvo (2009) asserts that success depends on the interplay between ‘who’ has power, and how power is distributed in the Congress. In this view, the House has moved through periods of formality and informality, centralization and decentralization. Formality refers to changes in House rules that accommodate factional interests, while informality involves the exploitation of existing rules that shift the power dynamic. The centralization /decentralization paradigm considers what group holds the locus of power: if power is invested in one particular majority party faction there is “centralized” authority, while power distributed amongst subcommittee chairmen is decentralized and diffuse (DiSalvo, 2009). DiSalvo argues that Progressive House Democrats exemplified formal centralization in the 1950’s and 1960’s. In that era, Democrats changed procedures in the powerful Rules Committee to benefit the power of the liberal Democratic Study Group. The “Old Guard” House and Senate Republicans of the early twentieth century exemplified informal centralization when Speaker “Uncle” Joe Cannon, and four Republican senators exerted control and influence over bills coming to the floor. Finally, the Southern Democratic faction of the late 1960’s and 1970’s exemplified informal decentralization. Although a caucus of the majority party, Southern Democrats did not change rules to their advantage. Instead, they used decentralized subcommittee chairmanships to exert influence.

Power and influence define the success of the caucuses in the Congress. The size of the party and coalition, the centralization or decentralization of the locus of power, the ease of House rules that allow members to carry bills to the floor, and the power given to members in committee and subcommittee chairmanships are just a few

examples of how caucuses succeed in exerting influence. Factions use these means of power and influence to achieve two objectives. First, members join caucuses to collectively bargain and advance factional agendas. Second, members individualize and separate themselves from the majority to generate electoral success.

These two objectives guide the next section's overview of constituency effects on the individual member. If members join coalitions as a way of gaining leverage and advancing agendas, what is the coalition's effect on the individual member? I have demonstrated that membership in a coalition could help tailor specific messages to constituencies and facilitate greater reelection margins. Now I will focus on the reciprocal effect: how does constituency affect the individual member, and in turn, how does that effect the coalition? If constituency pressures guide members' voting decisions, are coalitions nothing more than organized marginal districts? I will explore these relationships through the perspective of the individual member; if electoral and district demographic differences exist between factions, I might expect differences in the explaining behaviors of Congressmen in each faction. The common element between the first research question and second research question involves marginality. When the threat of not being reelected has reached its acme, is there an effect on explanatory behaviors?

The Member and the Constituency

Modern conceptions of the Congressman offer two conflicting, if not dichotomous, lenses of constituency accountability. Where some have argued that the Congressman must consider the position of district constituency on most votes, others rely on the representative to exercise his or her best judgment in making voting

decisions (Fenno 1978). In the former delegate model of constituency accountability, it has been argued that Congressmen must be completely responsive to the interests of the people they represent. The delegate model entrusts representatives with the responsibility to vote according to prevailing constituency attitudes alone. The later trustee model conceives of the Congressman as an individual actor who makes voting decisions without reference to constituency position. Those who want representatives to act as trustees recognize the complicated (often nuanced) nature of public policy and argue that representatives are elected to exercise judgment on behalf of the public interest.

Attempts to delineate the responsibilities of the representative into two opposing models provide a theoretical framework for understanding the complex relationship between the Congressman and his or her constituency. Representatives perceive themselves as both delegates and trustees of constituent concerns (Fenno, 1978). On highly salient issues where the public is intimately concerned with policy outcomes, Congressmen generally adhere to constituency attitudes. On less salient minor votes where little or no public opinion is expressed, Congressmen can exercise a wide degree of autonomy in making voting decisions (Kingdon, 1974). The degree to which an individual Congressmen adheres to constituency opinion when there is a conflict with his or her personal ideology or policy preference requires an assessment of the political environment that allows representatives to cast votes in opposition to the prevailing view of their constituency (Fenno, 1978; Kingdon 1973). Mayhew (1974) argued that although many Congressmen are assured reelection victory, tremendous variability from year-to-year inspires uncertainty. For many representatives, the fear of the unknown primary or general election challenger or

amorphous special interest mobilizing against them inspires caution in roll call voting. Given that Congressmen are primarily motivated by reelection prospects, they must individually weigh the degree to which the issues, events or circumstances change from year to year (Mayhew, 1974). The focus here is on the degree to which Congressmen in “marginal” districts assess the uncertainty of their political environment and vote with party and against the majority view of their district constituency.

The condition that binds Blue Dogs to become delegates of their constituencies has been termed the “marginality hypothesis.” According to this hypothesis, members of Congress elected from marginal districts display more moderation in their voting behavior than Congressmen from “safe” districts (Fiorina, 1974; Sullivan and Uslander, 1978). Starting in the early 1970’s, scholars observed two phenomena. First, incumbents were winning with greater electoral margins (Erikson, 1972; Ansolabehere, Brady, & Fiorina, 1992). Second, the proportion of Congressmen elected marginally—usually with less than 50% support—was declining (Mayhew, 1974). The study of marginal voting behavior demonstrated that roll call votes were indeed related to election percentages (Erikson, 1971; Mayhew, 1974). Over the next 35 years of discursive research, scholars have both rejected and reaffirmed the validity of the marginality hypothesis (Griffin, 2006). For the purpose of this research, the marginality hypothesis is assumed to be true. Despite the lack of consensus in the political science literature, objective and empirical measures of voting behavior indicate that Congressmen pay at least some attention to their reelection margins in assessing how to vote (Fenno, 1978).

The marginality hypothesis assumes that Congressmen act as individual rational actors. Derived from economic theory, the application of the rational actor to Congressional voting behavior was used by Anthony Downs' *An Economic Theory of Democracy* in 1957. In Downs' analysis, constituents determine which party is most likely to deliver tangible benefits by weighing one party against the other in a primarily retrospective manner. Within this framework, parties are cohesive "teams" that are entirely selfish and aim to maximize their collective power (Downs, 1957; Mayhew 1974). Downs however, did not address intraparty opposition. In Downs' universe, Congressmen make 'rational' decisions to maximize the party's electoral benefits, but it left unanswered the question of intraparty dissenters.

In 1974, David Mayhew proposed that Congressmen are preeminently motivated by the reelection incentive. "Safe" Congressmen are not defined by well-cushioned electoral victory margins, but by uninterrupted electoral success. Within the Congress, it was not the party that guided Congressmen's voting decisions, but the individual Congressman. Representatives engage in a process of advertising, credit claiming and position taking to brand, articulate and express individual values. Advertising emphasizes themes, including independence, sincerity, and responsiveness among others. Claiming credit for legislation brands the Congressman with an identity. Finally, Congressmen take positions to further distinguish themselves on various issues. Each strategy aims to define and individualize the representative to achieve reelection success (Mayhew, 1974).

Individual reelection is the ultimate goal, but sometimes Congressmen are confronted with voting choices where personal ideology or policy preference conflict with constituency attitudes. In his quantitative content analysis of Congressional

interviews, John Kingdon (1973) found that more than any other variable, constituency attitudes are most highly correlated with Congressional vote outcomes. In instances where Congressmen are confronted with divergent policy choices, they may vote against the perceived interests of constituency if they redefine or reframe the issue to their benefit. The decision to vote with or against the perceived constituency position involves weighing both the intensity of feeling within the district and the general salience of the issue. Congressmen do not feel that one particular vote will cost them reelection, but they do believe that the cumulative effect of a “string of votes” could have electoral consequences (Kingdon, 1973). Given the uncertainty surrounding future elections, Congressmen adopt strategies to distinguish themselves as individuals (Mayhew) and present themselves to their constituency (Fenno & Kingdon).

In instances where a Congressman’s policy preference diverges from constituency, the representative has to determine exactly ‘who’ is paying attention to the vote. Representatives must determine which votes will be controversial among his or her supporting coalition. Kingdon identifies this process as a “problemistic search.” (Kingdon, 1973). The calculus of Congressional decision-making is complex, but in its most basic form identifies the votes and group impacted by the votes that may harm the Congressman in the next election. Formerly active supporters of an incumbent’s coalition may not turn out or withhold campaign funds if they are unenthused with a Congressman’s voting record. If a group of individuals or a particular organization is particularly antagonized, they may electioneer against the incumbent (Kingdon, 1973; Fenno, 1978). Congressmen are thus not only motivated to win reelection, but also to hold their coalition of supporters together. Thus, Congressmen are constantly checking

their “field of forces” to weigh the intensity of conflicting interests against one another (Kingdon, 1973).

Although Congressmen are always cognizant of the uncertainty overshadowing the next election, they are also aware of the possibility to improve or expand their supporting coalition’s margins. A weak opponent can buttress victory margins, just as a strong opponent can drain an incumbent of their marginal supporters (Fenno, 1978). Literature chronicling Congressional interactions both in Washington and at home reveals that in general, representatives are aware of the coalitions that support their reelection efforts. The implication of course is that awareness affects legislative outcomes (Kingdon, 1973).

Variability from election to election nevertheless forces Congressmen to adopt strategies that mitigate the repercussions of controversial votes. Fenno’s thesis that Congressmen adopt a “home style” to present themselves and explain their voting behavior is one such mitigation strategy (Fenno, 1978). Yet another is to recruit candidates who will not be enticed into divergent policy predicaments in the first place. The most obvious is to avoid conflict all together by casting a vote with the perceived constituency position (Kingdon, 1973). Where none of these resolutions are possible, Congressmen must justify the legislation on substantive policy grounds to segmented audiences of supporters and non-supporters alike (Fenno, 1973).

The predicament of the Congressman who votes against his or her constituency’s interest is not completely bleak. First, Kingdon enumerates many institutional and tactical strategies that help Congressmen reframe or refocus the issue to their advantage. The vast majority of legislation passed by the House of Representatives must first be reviewed, amended and passed by the Senate.

Congressmen can note that the process of legislating is long, and emphasize their agreement with only certain provisions of bills. Sometimes Congressmen can describe their advocacy for amendments to legislation, or plead the parliamentary situation that forces them to vote for or against the overall substance of bills. Where parliamentary pleas fail, Congressmen avoid commitment until last minute and then cite respected authorities or other constituents (Kingdon, 1973).

Most roll call votes will not be controversial. Congressmen frequently vote to name a federal post office, honor a national pastime or recognize an individual for a significant accomplishment. The nuances of policy and procedure further dilute the public's interest. In a body of 435 elected representatives, keeping track of introduced amendments and procedural floor motions require salaried staffs to monitor floor action. Congressmen are aware that most votes will not draw the ire of their constituency, and vote knowing that only a few informed constituents are watching in real time.

Nevertheless, Congressmen are also aware of their political environment. Potential opponents can run ads 'educating' the public about a Congressmen's Washington voting behaviors in the next election, special interests can feed an opponent's primary or general election coffers, and elites can defect from a Congressman's reelection constituency. To combat these realities, representatives engage in direct communication with constituents to preempt challenges. Education initiatives can include utilizing Congressional franking privileges, speaking at public events within the district, and appearing on television or radio programs (Kingdon, 1973; Fenno, 1978). The advent of the Internet and direct e-mail communication allows Congressmen to instantly inform supporting coalitions of their voting rationale.

The cumulative effects of these education efforts ensure that Congressmen are recognized as individuals within the House of Representatives. Mayhew describes the situation of individualizing within district as a “zero-sum conflict” among members. Congressmen advertise, claim credit and take positions to distinguish themselves from the collective whole (Mayhew, 1974). Richard Fenno’s qualitative case study analysis describing the interactions of 18 members within district illustrates how easy it is for representatives to run against the House of Representatives as an institution. Distinguishing themselves as individuals and claiming that the House as a whole is inefficient delivers immediate benefits without electoral consequence (Fenno, 1978).

Although studies into the extent of the marginality hypothesis have produced variable outcomes, a few truths about constituency are prominent in the literature. First, Congressmen are uncertain about future electoral outcomes and are motivated by a quest for reelection (Mayhew 1974). Second, concern for constituency informs Congressmen from “safe” districts and “competitive” districts alike (Kingdon, 1973). Finally, the strategies Congressmen employ to explain policy positions that diverge from constituency both individualize the Congressmen and refocus the issue (Mayhew, 1974; Kingdon, 1973). These strategies help define the Congressmen in a unique presentation of self that the Congressman adopts as his “home style” outside Washington (Fenno, 1978). The story of Congressional interaction with constituencies can thus be read as a balancing act between the delegate and trustee models of representation. Congressmen vote according to their policy preferences but check their “field of forces” for opposition.

The following two chapters will address specific questions relating to factional differences. The common element is marginality. Chapter 4 examines the electoral and district demographic similarities and differences between Blue Dog (marginal) and Progressive (non-marginal) Congressmen. Chapter 5 analyzes how these two cohorts compare and contrast in Washington explaining behaviors. Throughout the next two chapters, members' interaction with their factions and members' interaction with their constituencies is thematic. If marginality influences Congressmen's voting behavior, it will be expected that the voting behavior of Blue Dogs and Progressives will be different and that the explaining behaviors of Blue Dogs and Progressives will be dissimilar. The following analysis will focus on the majority, factional and individual themes addressed in this chapter. What is the impact of marginality on voting behavior? Are Blue Dog Democrats more marginal than their Progressive counterparts? Chapter 4 seeks to address these questions.

Chapter 4

DESCRIBING THE CONSTITUENCY: BLUE DOG AND PROGRESSIVE ELECTORAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXTS AND VOTING BEHAVIOR

The previous chapter introduced the concept of marginality and its affect on individual voting behavior. This chapter will address the first research question in this thesis: are there unique electoral and district demographic differences between Blue Dog and Progressive Democrats? It is hypothesized that election marginality makes Congressmen more attentive and responsive to perceived constituent interests. Given that Congressmen are motivated by their reelection incentive, and that they are always uncertain about future electoral outcomes, the natural first question in this discussion should seek to quantitatively define marginality. The first section of this chapter elaborates on the political and electoral context of moderate –to-conservative Blue Dog Democrats and Progressive Democrats. Progressives were chosen because they represent the most liberal cohort of the Democratic caucus. For comparative purposes, Progressives rarely dissent from the Democratic majority and espouse what is considered to be a traditional Democratic policy and ideological orientation. Moreover, although members are free to choose caucuses to join, no member is both a Progressive and Blue Dog. Members of each caucus are unique and different, and identify with one or the other.

The political context section will define marginality using an aggregate of individual member reelection statistics. Other variables, including presidential election victory percentages for both the Democratic and Republican candidates in 2004 and 2008, and the Cook Partisan Voting Index will further delineate between “marginals” and “non-marginals.” In this section, I will control for incumbency by dividing each caucus into two cohorts of newly elected members (elected in 2006 and 2008), and tenured members (elected before 2006). It is hypothesized that although incumbency advantages members of each coalition, Blue Dog incumbents will not be reelected with the similarly large margins of Progressive Democrats. These variables will help underlie the discussion of uncertainty in election marginality as a particular concern in the Blue Dog Coalition.

The next section addresses the district demographic differences between Blue Dog and Progressive members. It is hypothesized that Blue Dogs do not vote with the Democratic majority because of dramatically different defining characteristics of their constituencies. I will test this hypothesis using a number of age, race, income and socioeconomic status variables to quantitatively identify the demographic divergences particular to each coalition. Age will be examined to determine whether constituents of each coalition member are younger or older than the average for the Democratic majority or other coalitions. Race will examine the proportion of White, Black, Hispanic and Asian constituents per coalition. It is hypothesized that Blue Dog districts will be more racially homogenous given their more rural and suburban orientation. Finally, I will aggregate mean and median district income and workforce variables to determine whether one type of occupation is particularly archetypal of Blue Dog or Progressive districts. All of these variables combine to illustrate a broad

narrative or context to the Congressman's voting behavior. If significant differences in demographic variables are found, credence will be given to the argument that Blue Dog Democrats join factions to represent particular constituencies in the Congress. If there are not differences, the null hypothesis is true, which could indicate that members join because of reelection interest and policy preference alone.

The final section of this chapter will focus on the Congressional context of dissent. This narrow area of analysis is focused around the result of the political and district contexts of Blue Dog and Progressive members. What is the extent of opposition to the Democratic majority? How many Blue Dogs dissent from the majority? I expect Blue Dog members to exhibit higher levels of opposition based on lower electoral victory margins. Three methodologies will examine dissent: an analysis of party unity statistics, a brief examination of Blue Dog opposition on salient votes, and an analysis of interest group scores. I expect to find significantly lower party unity indices among Blue Dog Democrats, and higher levels of support for the Democratic majority among Progressives. I also expect Blue Dogs to dissent most frequently on salient votes in the 111th Congress. My final measure of opposition will present a more varied, and often ideological, view of Congressional voting behavior in the context of issue voting. Interest group scores are those provided by specific interests to rate the favorability of Congressmen to specific interests. In the aggregate, these scores reveal general attitudes about Congressmen in specific policy areas. I will use these scores to illustrate a broad narrative of divergence with the majority and with Progressive Democrats in particular policy areas.

It is important to realize that this chapter requires inference. Specific relationships cannot be concluded given the available data collection methodology. To

understand what the extent of constituency influences on Congressional voting behavior, I would have to conduct interviews with each Blue Dog member of Congress. My analysis here is only an examination of the electoral and district demographic context. I am inferring a relationship between the unique electoral circumstances of Blue Dog members, and the coalition's heightened level of dissent. Indeed, I will find a correlation between party unity and the victory percentage. However, the validity of the marginality hypothesis is assumed to be true. The unique constituencies represented by Blue Dogs and Progressives may provide insights into why Congressmen exhibit caution in their voting behavior to win reelection. The purpose here is to describe the constituencies that barely send a Democratic representative to Washington.

Methodology

I collected demographic, electoral and voting records data for each of the 248 Congressional Democrats serving in the 111th U.S. Congress (January 3, 2009 to January 11, 2011.) One specific Congress was chosen to provide a single unique case study of coalition voting behavior. Moreover, although the inclusion of multiple Congresses would ensure reliability and validity results reporting, the data required for such an analysis would take a significant amount of more time. Such an investment would simply be beyond the scope of this project or the allotted time frame.

I gathered information from a variety of government and non-government data-reporting sources including the 2000 U.S. Census, Congressional Quarterly, and Project Vote Smart. The sources for each individual variable are listed in the Appendix. The aggregate data was analyzed for descriptive statistics, correlations and

significance across two or more variables. The results of my analysis fall within a 95% confidence interval according to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences: Predictive Analytics SoftWare. Roll call votes in the House of Representatives were reported by secondary source, data-reporting firms (Congressional Quarterly, GovTrack.us and OpenCongress.org.)

The “political context” section will use public data from Congressional Quarterly and the Cook Political Statistics firm. Congressional Quarterly (CQ) was used because it is a reputable source in political science literature. CQ gathers and reports data directly from primary source government reporting agencies. The availability of this information in a centralized location facilitated the process of data collection. I gathered CQ’s reports on 2004 and 2008 presidential victory margins and Congressional member reelection statistics from 2006 and 2008. To ensure validity and broaden the scope of election statistics data gathering, I also collected Cook Political Statistics firm information, which aggregates presidential and Congressional reelection statistics to rank districts based on competitiveness.

The “district demographic context” section was gathered from CQ’s reporting of 2000 U.S. Census data. As I will discuss in the limitations section, 2000 U.S. Census data was used because it is the most recent and available report of the Census. There is no other report that synthesizes demographic data for individual Congressional districts. This portion of my analysis required me to collect age, race, income and socioeconomic status variables from each of the Congressional profiles located in CQ’s profiles of Congressional members.

Finally, the “Congressional context” section uses interest group score data from Project Vote Smart and Congressional roll call vote reporting from GovTrack.us

and OpenCongress.org to analyze public records of Congressional voting behavior. I used Project Vote Smart's available reports to analyze seven organization's interest group scores of Blue Dog and Progressive Congressmen. Project Vote Smart is a nonpartisan and refutable source that collects and publishes data directly from primary sources. Correspondingly, GovTrack.us and OpenCongress.org were used to analyze roll call votes as a similar secondary source-reporting firm that reports primary source public data on member's voting records. I selected 14 salient votes in the 111th Congress, but only reported a few of the most indicative votes of Blue Dog dissent in this analysis.

Electoral Context

In 2006 and 2008, the Democratic Party won and expanded a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives. Democratic candidates defeated Republican incumbents in 32 House races in 2006, and 20 races in 2008. In Congress, the party built a majority from 203 seats at the end of the 109th Congress, to 255 at the start of the 111th. Democratic gains coincided with increases in coalition membership. Between the 109th and 111th Congress, the Blue Dog Coalition gained 21 members, compared with 16 new Progressive members.

Incumbency & Victory Percentage

The average length of service in both coalitions indicates change in the political climate. Most Progressive members were elected in 1992 (20 members), however 1996 and 2006 were also years of tremendous growth (net 6 and 9 members, respectively). The Progressive Caucus started growing in 2004 and continued to grow

in 2008 while most Blue Dogs were elected in 2006 and 2008. Unlike Progressives, most Blue Dogs are new to Congress, with their year of election following in a leftward skew. Only 8 of its members were elected before the year 2000. The election of Blue Dog Democrats in this period reflects the Democratic “Fifty State Strategy” where the party funded campaigns across all 50 states in the nation. The Democratic strategy worked in conjunction with Republican frustration. The cumulative result was Democratic Congressional gains in 2006 and 2008 in both coalitions.

Blue Dog Democrats are distinguishable by marginality. Blue Dogs elected in 2008 won their seat with an average of 55.8%, compared with Progressives who won with 73.9%. The differential between the mean Blue Dog and Progressive score is 18.1%, suggesting wide variation between political contexts within the caucuses. Examining the standard deviation, new Progressive members were more heterogeneous in their election margins ($\sigma = 14.8\%$), compared with more homogenous Blue Dog members ($\sigma = 4.5\%$).

Incumbency advantages members of both coalitions, however the bulk of Blue Dog victory margins are smaller than Progressives. The Blue Dog coalition overall is more marginal, and marginally homogenous among its new members. Excluding 2006 and 2008 newly elected Blue Dogs, the median victory margin in 2008 was 68.6%. However, among the 2006 and 2008 cohort (members who have served less than 3 terms) the median victory percentage was 55.1%. As a caucus, 21 Blue Dogs were elected or reelected in 2008 with less than 60% support, and 14 members formed the bulk of a cohort elected with between 60-64%. Only 6 members were elected with victory percentages above 65%, which explains the elevated average margin.

Progressive districts are more similar in their non-marginality and are safer overall. Excluding the 2006 and 2008 newly elected Progressive members, in 2008 Progressive representatives who served more than 3 terms were elected with a median margin of 77.3% support. Among the 2006 and 2008 Progressives, the median margin was 74.9%. As a caucus, most Progressive members were elected in 2008 with between 70-74% (14) and 85-89% (11), respectively. Only 6 members were elected with less than 60% support.

These data suggest that while there is a group of ‘non-marginal’ Blue Dog incumbents who are relatively ‘safe’, these incumbents are still less safe than the bulk of Progressives. The leftward skew in length of service among Blue Dogs elected in 2006 and 2008 suggests that although incumbency advantages Congressmen of both caucuses, the Blue Dog Coalition is both more new and more marginal. Figure 4.1 demonstrates that only the top 25% of the most marginal Blue Dog’s elected in 2008 are within range of the bottom 50% of least marginal Progressives.

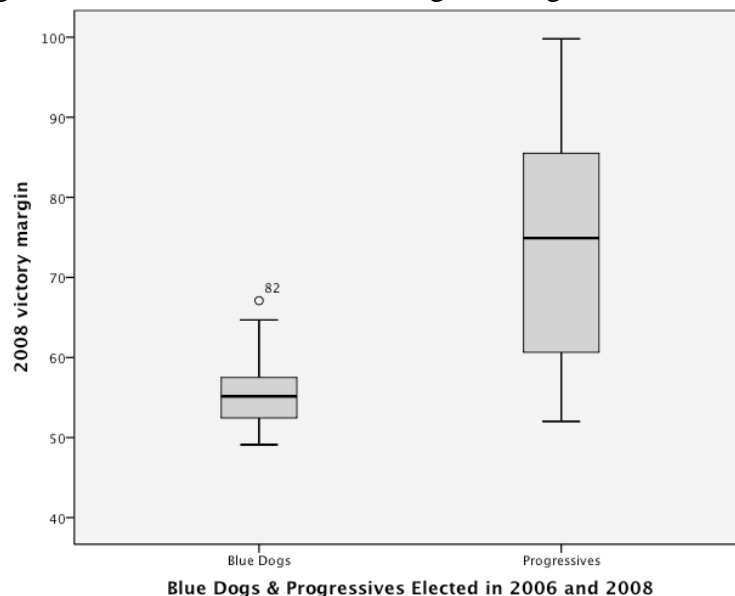


FIGURE 4.1: Blue Dog & Progressive 2008 Victory Margins: Box-and-

Presidential Victory Percentages & Partisan Voting Index

Three other variables will be used to further illustrate electoral contexts: 2004 and 2008 presidential victory margins, and the Cook Partisan Voting Index (PVI). Table 4.1 shows that across all three electoral indicators, new members of both caucuses come from districts that are more electorally polarized than those of older cohort of Congressmen. Bush (2004) and McCain (2008) performed better in new Blue Dog districts than Kerry (2004) or Obama (2008). In progressive districts, the opposite phenomenon is apparent: Kerry and Obama performed better than Bush and McCain among the older cohort of Congressmen's districts. The Cook PVI confirms this trend, and in fact is an aggregate of district-wide presidential vote margins and the Congressional race's victory margin.

Table 4.1 also captures an effect of incumbency on presidential victory margins in Blue Dog districts. An incumbent's name recognition may present an reverse-coat tails effect for Democratic presidential candidates within Blue Dog districts. In 2004, Bush won the popular vote, and retained control of Congress, while Kerry won an average of 46.5% of the vote in Blue Dog-represented districts. In the 2008 Blue Dog districts not represented by Blue Dogs in 2004 Kerry lost with 43.1% of the vote. The trend of reverse-coattails, where the popular Blue Dog incumbent helped the party's presidential candidate, resurfaced in 2008 with Obama losing newly elected Blue Dog districts with 47.4%, and narrowing winning in established districts with 50.0%. It is possible that constituents are more comfortable voting for a presidential candidate of their opposite party preference once they have had, and are

accustomed to voting for, their Blue Dog congressman. Such a view however, must consider the many contexts, political environments and differences between presidential candidates and Congressional incumbents and non-incumbents alike. In essence, everything is circumstantial.

TABLE 4.1: Blue Dog & Progressive PVI & Presidential Victory Margin by Year of Election

Cohort	Coalition	Measure	Partisan Voting Index	McCain (2008)	Obama (2008)	Bush (2004)	Kerry (2004)
Blue Dogs & Progressives Elected Before 2006	Blue Dog	Mean	R+1.9	48.44%	50.03%	52.56%	46.59%
		N.	32	32	32	32	32
		Std. Deviation	9.961	10.957	10.965	7.721	7.762
	Progressive	Mean	D+22.2	23.81%	74.81%	28.81%	70.50%
		N.	54	54	54	54	54
		Std. Deviation	10.2	10.1	10.723	10.36	10.397
Blue Dogs & Progressives Elected in 2006 and 2008	Blue Dog	Mean	R+5.46	51.08%	47.42%	56.42%	43.13%
		N.	24	24	24	24	24
		Std. Deviation	5.942	6.241	61.114	5.978	5.922
	Progressive	Mean	D+16.12	28.53%	70.06%	36.18%	63.18%
		N.	17	17	17	17	17
		Std. Deviation	11.973	11.663	11.755	12.446	12.32

To compensate for the differences in presidential and Congressional elections, Charlie Cook’s political statistics firm created an index that aggregates three variables into a formula to rate district competitiveness. Under the Cook Partisan Voting Index (PVI), Table 4.1 also demonstrates that the new Blue Dog districts are slightly more conservative than their pre-2006 counterparts, although the variability is higher. Under the Cook PVI, the most conservative districts are rated R+30, while the most liberal districts are rated D+40. “0” marks the most competitive “center” of the index. Blue Dogs elected before 2006 average an R+1.94 rating, while Blue Dogs

elected after 2006 average R+5.46. This phenomenon of diminished conservatism among the pre-2006 cohort corresponds with decreases in the PVI for district competitiveness. Republican presidential candidates still carry these Congressional districts, but Blue Dogs perform better after their initial election, and build a margin as they expand and protect their base. The result is a slight Republican advantage in these districts because of the Republican presidential vote preference. With time and the advantage of incumbency, Blue Dog districts can moderate from an average R+5.46 rating in just one or two Congresses. Yet another explanation could be related to Democratic expansion in this time into moderate Republican districts. As moderate Republicans lost seats in the House in 2006 and 2008, their districts went to Democrats and caused an elevated PVI.

It should be noted that Progressive districts demonstrated the same incumbent tendency. Progressives elected in 2006 and 2008 hailed from less Democratic districts than their older cohort. On average, these Progressives earned a safe D+16.12 rating, while older progressive member's districts earned D+22.24. The broad trend for both caucuses was to become more liberal or moderate with incumbency, in part because of the result of incumbency on the Cook PVI, and in part because of the expansion into moderate Republican districts in this period. Finally, the charts in Figure 4.2 show the ranges in PVI scores for the entire Blue Dog and Progressive caucuses. As a visual illustration of district competitiveness, Blue Dog districts range from D+12 to R+20, with the middle 50% falling between D+1 and R+9. The median caucus-wide index is R+5. Blue Dog districts lean Republican compared with Progressive districts. Progressive Democrats are elected from safe Democratic districts where the middle 50% falls between D+30 and D+11.

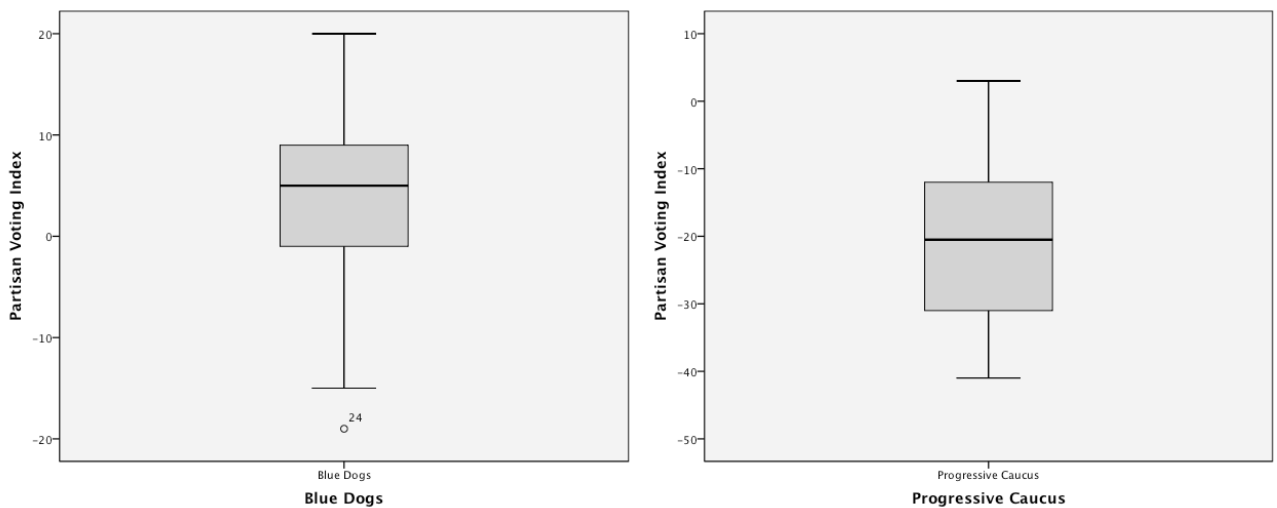


FIGURE 4.2: Blue Dog & Progressive PVI Scores: Box-and-Whisker

In summary, Figures 4.1 and 4.2 visually answer part of the first research question in this thesis. In the political context, there is evidence to support the finding that Blue Dogs, especially non-incumbents, face a particularly unique set of electoral circumstances than “safe” Progressives. Under a rational choice construction, it would seem that Blue Dogs must consider constituency if they are preeminently motivated by the reelection incentive. Blue Dogs represent districts that split ticket vote, and reelect them marginally. A successful reelection for a Blue Dog incumbent is defined by winning between 60% and 64% of the vote, while such a result would be disastrous for Progressive with similar tenure in Congress. The bottom 25% of most marginal Progressives can expect to receive at least 55% support in their districts, and most are elected with between 70% and 74%, or more.

District Context

This section examines Blue Dog and Progressive district age, race and income demographics. Distinguishing Blue Dog and Progressive district demographics serves to illuminate the varying environments and constituencies each caucus represents. It has been hypothesized that constituency demographics create unique political circumstances that govern constituent and Congressional relationships. The purpose of this analysis is to determine whether or not Blue Dogs are elected from a unique set of district demographic circumstances. Here I will compare Blue Dog districts with Progressive districts, and find that some demographic differences.

Age

With regard to two measures of age variables, there is no basis to support this hypothesis. The average percent of constituents below age 18 among every district in the Democratic caucus is 25.5%. Constituents below age 18 compose 26.0% of Blue Dog districts and 25.7% of Progressive districts. Similarly, very little deviation occurs among older constituents: the average age above 65 in the Democratic caucus was 12.2%, compared with 12.5% in Blue Dog districts and 11.3% in Progressive districts. The standard deviation among the districts within the two caucuses was 3.3% and 3.1%, compared with 4.1% for the party as a whole, revealing very little variation. Given that age is relatively evenly distributed, and that the number of districts measured is smaller among the caucus, these results are unsurprising and not unique.

Race

Racial demographics provide a better illustration of Blue Dog constituencies, and contrast well with the urbanity of the Progressive caucus. In general, Blue Dog districts are more racially homogenous compared with the heterogeneity of Progressive members' districts. Many Progressives represent urban city centers and inner-ring suburbs where elevated percentages of racial and ethnic minorities reside. These urban districts compare with Blue Dog rural and outer-ring suburban districts. Although the median percent of whites represented by the Democratic caucus was 59.5%, Progressive caucus districts represented a mean 44%, and median 49.8% of whites. The average Blue Dog caucus member's district represented 80% of whites, and a median 73.9%. Figure 4.3 shows that Progressive district vary widely, with 33 districts representing constituencies that are at most 39% White, and another modality of 19 districts that are at least 80% White. These figures suggest that membership in the Progressive caucus is not necessarily related to race variables. Individuals who join the Progressive caucus come from districts that are varied in composition and urban contexts. Progressive districts offer a clear contrast with Blue Dog districts. Only 14 of the Blue Dogs' 54 members represent constituencies that are less than 70% White. Unlike Progressive districts, whose district racial composition takes a bimodal form, Blue Dog districts show a leftward skew, where White constituencies are overwhelmingly represented.

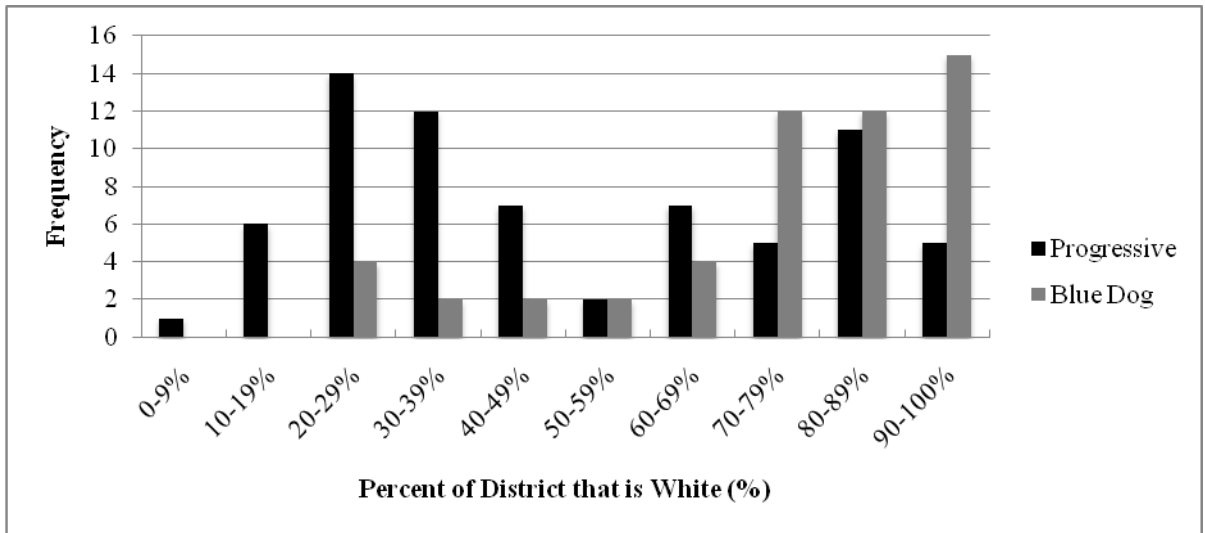


FIGURE 4.3: Whites in Progressive & Blue Dog Districts: Frequency Distribution

Between Blue Dogs and Progressives, the factor that most distinguishes both caucuses in terms of racial demography is the heightened number of minority communities represented by Progressives. Although the Blue Dog Coalition does represent some minority populations, they do not represent minorities at the frequency or proportion of the Progressive caucus. Regarding specific minority populations, Figure 4.4 shows that 18 Progressive districts represent constituencies that are at least 40% Black, compared to 14 Blue Dog members representing districts that are between 11% and 29% Black. In a sense, the frequency distribution in Figure 4.4 shows that both caucuses represent some constituencies of high minority populations, but Progressive districts represent them in greater frequency. The same phenomenon is observable for Hispanic and Asian populations, where similarly both Progressive and Blue Dog districts offer a few constituencies of high Hispanic and Asian proportions. The distinguishing factor is again, the elevated frequency and higher proportion of minorities among Progressive members' districts. This trend makes sense because

minority constituencies tend to reside in highly dense populations occupying the same space. A singular Congressman thus often represents them. 18 Progressive members represent highly Black constituencies in the South. Among Western districts, there are 8 Progressive Congressmen who represent Hispanic communities totaling at least 20% of their district population. It could be speculated that members who join the Blue Dog caucus and represent high minority communities do so for ideological purposes (align with Blue Dogs), however that claim cannot be confirmed without a personal interview or a similar methodology.

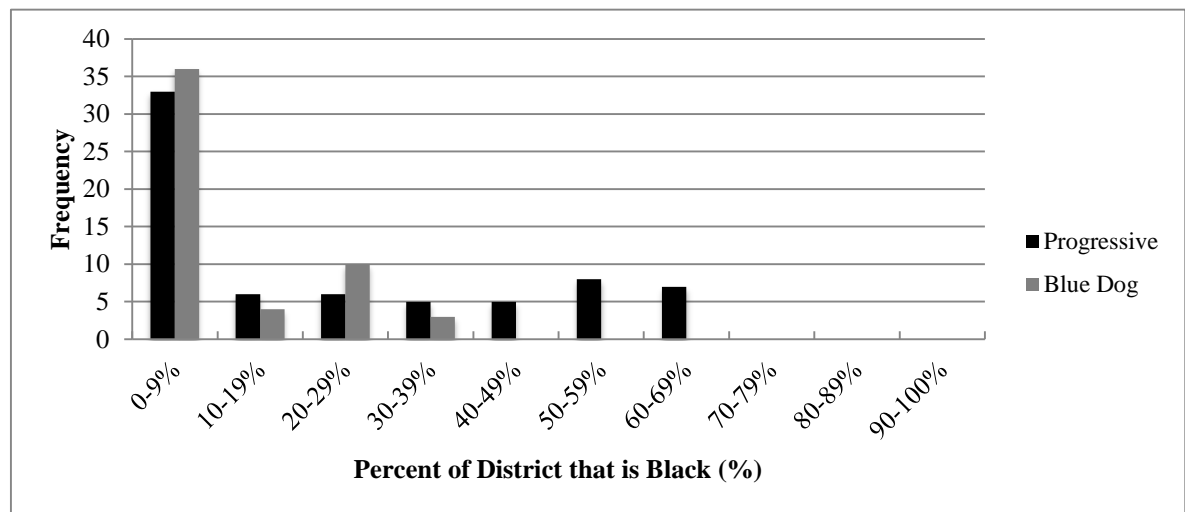


FIGURE 4.4: Blacks in Progressive & Blue Dog Districts: Frequency Distribution

The trend of Progressive representation at a higher frequency and higher proportion of minority constituencies can be confirmed by a brief examination of new member district demographics (elected in 2006 and 2008). The graphs in Figure 4.5 show the race characteristics of new members' districts. A few outliers notwithstanding, the middle 50% of Blue Dog districts were 78%-90% White, compared with wide variation among the 30% to 80% Progressive caucus. Following the trend, although there are a few Blue Dog districts with high minority populations,

the middle 50% of Blue Dog districts were 5%-15% Black, compared to a wide ranged third quartile among Progressive members. Progressive districts offer wide variation, more frequent and higher proportion minority populations, and ultimately, more racial heterogeneity.

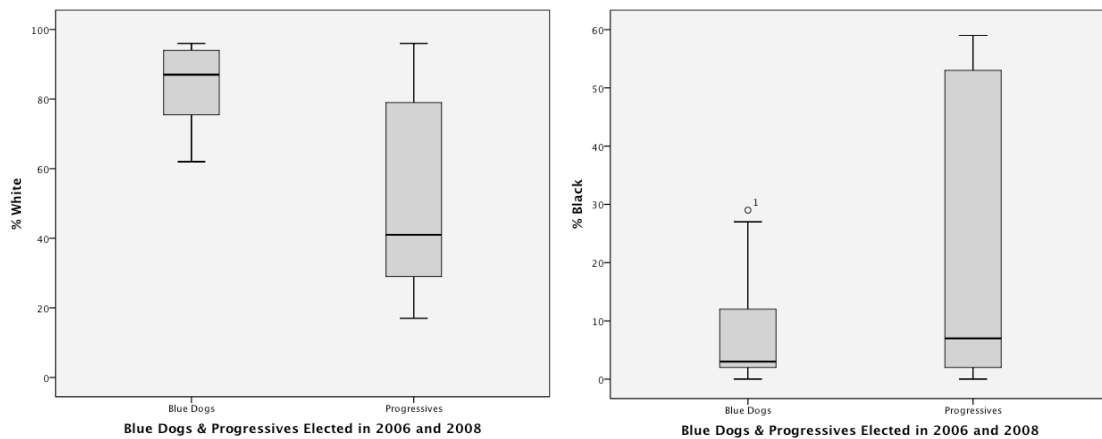


FIGURE 4.5: Percentage of White and Black Constituents in Blue Dog & Progressive Districts Among Members Elected in 2006 & 2008: Box-and-Whisker

Socioeconomic Status: Income, Workforce Occupation

The final set of variables analyzed here describes district socioeconomic demographics. It will be revealed that very little variation distinguishes Blue Dog districts from Progressive districts in terms of median household income.

Nevertheless, some differences exist in district education and profession variables. These characteristics will be compared with the demographics of Democratic districts overall, and further serve to highlight the types of constituents Blue Dog Democrats represent.

The median household income of all districts represented by Democrats is \$40,381. Progressive districts earn a median \$39,243, while Blue Dog districts earn \$36,452. The mean household income for the Progressive caucus was \$41,189

(σ =\$10,784), while Blue Dog districts earned on average \$38,274 (σ =\$7,115). A little bit more variation is probably to be expected among Progressive districts given that there are more members, and that those members represent a wide range of urban and suburban constituencies. On the whole, although Blue Dog districts are slightly poorer, it appears that the income distribution is relatively even. Congressional districts are created and shaped to represent at least 650,000 constituents, and frequently converge suburban neighborhoods with rural areas, and urban city centers with suburban edge cities, so long as the district population proportion is about even. While there are rich districts and poor districts, the shape of the distribution suggests that the Democratic caucus represents a wide range of constituencies, and that the coalitions within the caucus similarly represent all income brackets.

Specific employment variables reveal slight variance between the caucuses. Blue Dog districts are on average 55.7% white collar (σ =7.7%), 29.1% blue-collar (σ =7.1%), and have 15.1% (σ =1.9%) of its workforce in the service industry. Progressive districts generally have fewer blue-collar workers, and more white-collar. They are 60.9% white-collar (σ =8.7%), 22.4% blue-collar (σ =7.4%), and 16.1% (σ =3.7%) service industry. The distribution illustrates variation better than the averages. At least 30% of constituents were employed in blue-collar occupations in 50.1% (28) of Blue Dog members' districts, compared to 16.3% (10) of Progressive districts. For white-collar occupations, the middle 50% of Blue Dog members' districts fell between 50-59%, while the middle 50% of Progressive districts fell between 60-69%. On average, Progressive districts tend to be more white-collar than Blue Dog districts, and Blue Dog districts tend to have more blue-collar workers.

This analysis of district demographics has provided a few meaningful distinctions between the Blue Dog and Progressive coalitions. In summary, it has been shown that Blue Dog districts have fewer minorities and more blue-collar workers, while Progressives represent fewer Whites, and more minorities and white-collar professionals. Different constituents and constituent groups have implications for Congressmen's voting decisions. The very fact that the populations these coalitions represent are different underlies the foundational research question of this thesis. City environments have long been considered bastions of liberal orientation, with more educated and diverse populations residing within frequently gentrified boundaries. The suburbs are more homogeneous in both industry occupation and race variables. Some districts may have several newspaper or media outlets, while others have only one. Districts with more blue-collar workers might have a stronger union membership presence, while other districts have no unions at all. Understanding the type of constituency helps contextualize Congressional coalitions within the people they represent. It shows that because there are differences between constituencies, to some extent, type of district affects the type of coalition a Congressman might join in the House of Representatives. In essence, if a Congressman can join a coalition where its members come from similar demographic contexts and electoral circumstances, the prevailing attitudes of the coalition should inform voting decisions. Coalitions become a cue shopping market, where leaders can pick and choose from an array of similarly situated members. The next section is an extension of the shopping market paradigm: if coalitions are groups of similarly situated members based in demographic and electoral contexts, to what extent do they dissent? The next chapter's content analysis

will focus on explaining behaviors; this next section will reveal the implications of the electoral and demographic contexts on voting behaviors.

Congressional Context

Merriam-Webster's definition of "dissent" is: "to differ in sentiment or opinion, esp. from the majority; withhold assent; disagree." It is tempting to define dissent as simply voting against legislation. If Congressmen voted against bills they disagreed with or had reservations about, almost nothing would get passed. By the time legislation reaches the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, it has been drafted in subcommittees, debated in committees, changed behind closed doors, amended, compromised on, narrowed, broadened, expanded, and scored. Legislation affects no two districts the same. Its provisions contain intricate policy details where any member's interest may lie, and special interests persuade Congressmen to vote for or against bills based on the substance of its sections and subsections.

Dissent in this context considers opposition among Blue Dogs and Progressives in their votes for or against final passage of legislation. Dissent on final passage exhibits finality. It is the result of a balancing approach that weights the totality of the bill against his or her legislative interest. For a representative to vote against a bill after reviewing its impact in a holistic sense, a specific section has to be so salient that it causes a Congressman to vote against his or her party. Another possibility is that a Congressman, upon considering the legislation as a whole, views the total effects to be averse to the nation, his or her district interest, reelection interest and/or policy interest. This section accepts the more narrow definition of dissent. The opposition expressed on final roll call votes will be used to determine the elasticity of

the Blue Dog Coalition: how salient does a bill have to be to lose a large cohort of Congressmen? Does the individual member face constituency and institutional pressures to vote for or against a bill? This section examines party unity scores, final votes for passage on legislation, and interest group scores to reveal the extent Blue Dog dissent, and Progressive unity.

Party Unity

Party unity scores are one way of measuring how frequently Congressmen break away from a majority of their party's vote. These scores demonstrate a proportion of votes against the majority of a Congressman's party. They often appear as high percentages because the index considers all votes, regardless of issue salience or relative importance. In 2009, Democrats collectively remained unified on 92% of House votes. Progressives were more united at 94%, while Blue Dogs voted with their party on 85% of votes. Figure 4.6 shows a frequency distribution of party unity scores as a proportion of each caucus. Approximately one-third of Progressives and Blue Dogs vote with their party between 90- 94% of all votes. 60% of Progressives vote with the party between 95-100% of the time, compared to just 13.4% of Blue Dogs. Blue Dog members tend to dissent more frequently, as evidenced by higher proportions of members opposing the party majority at varying levels below 90% of the House votes. Not shown in Figure 4.6 (yet significant for comparative purposes) is the distribution of party unity scores for all Democratic members of Congress. 48.7% of Democrats voted with the majority on 95-100% of House votes, compared with 31.0% of Democrats who voted with the majority between 90-94%, and one-fifth of members who voted with the majority less than 90% of the time. 2008 and 2007 scores

were also examined, but the database used for this project only considers members of the 111th Congress. As a result, it does not account for the party unity scores of members no longer serving in the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the pattern found in those scores was consistent with the 2009 scores.

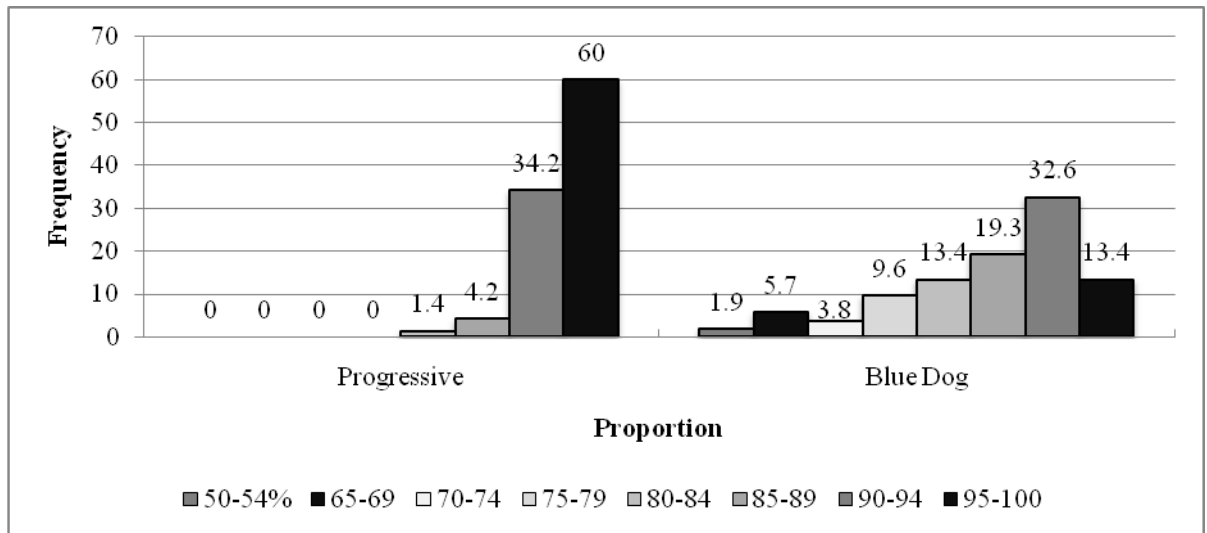


FIGURE 4.6: Proportion of Blue Dog & Progressive Party Unity Scores: Frequency Distribution

Finally, the party unity scores of Blue Dogs and Progressives elected in 2006 and 2008, and Blue Dogs & Progressives elected before 2006 were compared to analyze the effects of incumbency on voting records. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 reveal three interesting phenomena. First, Progressives elected in 2006 and 2008 tended to vote with their party on average 94.9% of the time. It appears that year of election does not have a significant impact on party unity scores of Progressive Caucus members. These averages are derived from 17 Progressives elected in 2006 and 2008, and 54 elected prior to 2006. Second, incumbency appears to impact Blue Dog party unity scores similar to electoral victory percentages. The 32 Blue Dogs elected in 2006 and 2008

voted with the Democratic majority on 81.2% of all votes. The 24 member older cohort voted with the majority on 88.2% of all votes, slightly higher and more reflective of perceived electoral security over time.

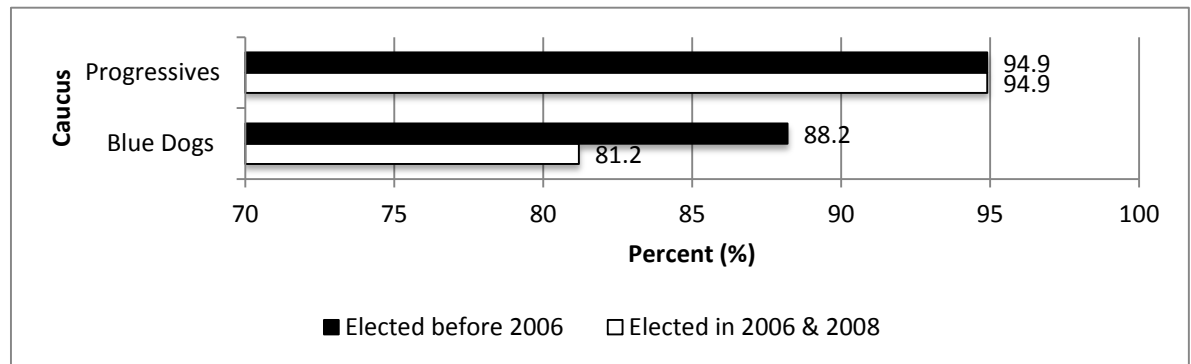


FIGURE 4.7: Blue Dogs & Progressives Elected in 2006 & 2008 Mean Party Unity Scores

The third phenomenon involves variability. The Progressive standard deviation from the mean 94.9% among those elected in 2006 and 2008 was 2.4%, compared with 3.2% among Progressives elected before 2006. This contrasts with the Blue Dog deviation in 2006 and 2008 ($\sigma=10.3\%$) and before 2006 ($\sigma=9.4\%$). Figure 4.8 shows the distribution of newly elected members' party unity scores. Progressives tended to vote with their coalition with very little variability, while Blue Dogs tended to deviate and vary more frequently. New Progressive party unity scores ranged from 92-98%, while new Blue Dogs varied from 54-94%.

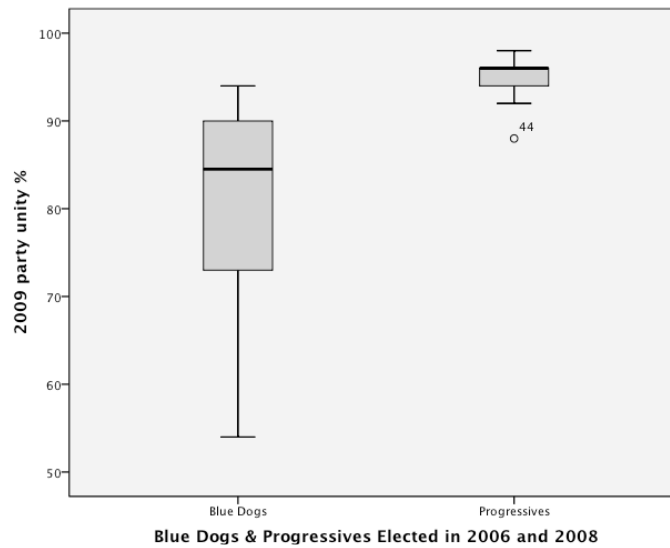


FIGURE 4.8: Blue Dogs & Progressives Elected in 2006 & 2008 Mean Party Unity Scores: Box -and-Whisker

Selected Roll Call Votes

For the purpose of sketching a preliminary context to Blue Dog dissent, four bills are discussed here in brief. These pieces of legislation cover issues ranging from high to low salience, and demonstrate finality in Blue Dog decision-making. In a rational actor model, it is assumed that the Congressman has weighed his or her options, considered the pressures of their constituency and various interest groups, and made a final decision to support or oppose a bill. A summary of the bill, the final vote tabulations, and the Blue Dog vote will be provided for each bill, followed by a discussion of broad trends.

H.R. 1: The American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) passed the U.S. House of Representatives on January 28, 2009. ARRA provided emergency supplemental appropriations to stimulate the economy, spur job creation and invest in a number of infrastructure programs. H.R. 1 passed on a party line vote of 254-178 (R 0-178; D 244-10). Among the 10 Democrats in opposition, 9 were Blue Dogs, 5 of

whom were elected in 2006 and 2008 while 4 were elected before 2006. 6 of the Blue Dogs voting in opposition came from Southern districts, 2 from the Midwest, and 1 from the West.

H.R. 1105: The Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009 passed the U.S. House of Representatives on February 25, 2009. The omnibus bill provided additional appropriations for the 2009 fiscal year. Winning more bipartisanship than the economic recovery bill, it passed 245-178 (R 16-158; D 229-20). Among the 20 Democrats in opposition, 16 were Blue Dogs: 10 elected in 2006 and 2008, 7 elected before 2006. 7 Blue Dogs from the South, 3 from the Midwest and 6 from the West voted against the bill.

The 111th Congress tackled Wall Street reform with H.R. 4173: The Restoring American Financial Stability Act of 2009. The bill reasserts federal regulatory oversight following the mismanagement of housing derivatives market and credit default swaps in the late 2000's. The bill also reengineers the federal government's regulatory scheme, requires comprehensive reassessment and reporting on the standards that protect the U.S. economy, and creates new rules for executive compensation. The Wall Street reform legislation passed on a party line vote of 223-202 (R 0-176; D 223-26). 13 of the 25 Democrats in opposition were Blue Dogs. 9 Blue Dogs were from the South, 2 from the Midwest, and 2 from the West. Among the rest of the Democrats in opposition, 4 were from the South, 6 from the Midwest, and 2 from the West. Southern Blue Dogs were also more likely to vote to recommit the bill before final passage. 12 Blue Dogs voted to recommit, 9 from the South and 3 from the West.

In a narrow party-line vote, the House passed H.R. 3962: Affordable Health Care for America Act. The early House version of the Obama Administration's health care reform effort included a public option, among other provisions. The initial health reform legislation passed 220-215 (R 1-177; D 219-38), with 24 Blue Dogs in opposition. 17 Southern Blue Dogs voted against the bill, compared with 2 Northeastern, 2 Midwestern and 2 Western. Among the rest of House Democrats voting against the health bill with a public option, 5 were from the South, 2 from the Northeast, 3 from the Midwest and 3 from the West.

Two themes are consistent across each bill. First, although there are many independent Democrats who do not self-affiliate with the Blue Dog Coalition, a large plurality of the dissenters on each bill are Blue Dogs. Second, many of the Congressmen who oppose legislation represent Southern constituencies. The Southern opposition trend seems to be exacerbated by issues of high salience. Regardless of status in the Blue Dog coalition, on both the Wall Street reform bill and the initial health care reform legislation, independent Southern Congressmen joined the Blue Dog dissenters in opposing the bill. These pieces of legislation show that although Democratic opposition seemed small, it was frequently Blue Dog Congressmen who opposed the legislation. The organization of the Blue Dog Coalition, coupled with the explicit expression of its ideas, is why dissent is discussed in the context of this singular coalition in this thesis.

Interest Group Scores

A final index of member voting behavior is derived from third party analysis. Interest group scores are evaluations of a Congressman's voting record from

a third party organization. These scores reflect a Congressman's favorability to an interest group's priorities. Figure 4.9 shows mean interest group scores for Blue Dog, Progressives and Democratic members of the House of Representatives. Blue Dogs earn higher scores on pro-business measures from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (64.4%) than Progressives (53.5%), and score lower on pro-labor policies from the AFL-CIO (82.7%) when compared with Progressives (96.7%).

On social issues, Blue Dogs also score lower from more liberal advocacy organizations. Planned Parenthood, which advocates for women's reproductive health, gave the Blue Dog Coalition an average score of 59.4%. This score reflects 10 Congressmen rated at 0%, and 13 Congressmen rated at 100%. The wide range in the middle reflects that social issues are not a caucus priority. Although many Blue Dogs reaffirm the values specific to their constituency, the caucus as a whole does not require pro-choice or pro-life advocacy, or social conservatism generally, to become a member. Many Northeastern Blue Dogs distinguish themselves from their Southern and Midwestern colleagues in this way. Similarly, views of LGBT rights do not define the coalition. Although Blue Dogs earn a lower score (55.5%) than Progressives (95.8%), support for gay, lesbian and bisexual rights varies within the caucus.

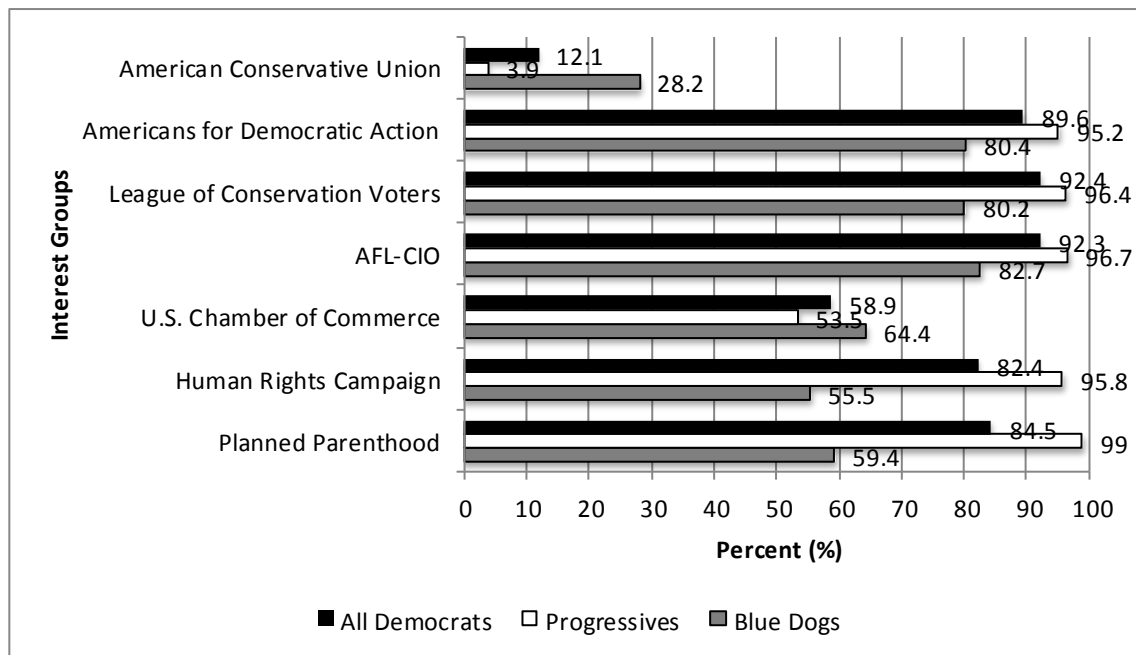


FIGURE 4.9: Mean Interest Group Scores for Blue Dogs, Progressives and the Democratic Caucus

Environmental issues, as measured by the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) score, are often at the crux of economic debates. The LCV gave Blue Dogs an average 80.2% score, compared with Progressives (96.4%). 78% (48) of the Progressive Caucus earned a 100% from the LCV, compared with 15.3% (8) of similarly scored Blue Dogs. Unlike the Progressive Coalition, Blue Dog scores were more evenly distributed above 30%. The distribution underscores the diverse approaches to environmentalism within the coalition and the lack of a direct policy statement on the environment from Blue Dogs.

The most vague score in terms of actual policy substance comes from ideological organizations such as Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) (liberal) and the American Conservative Union (ACU) (conservative). These scores are nevertheless relevant to determine how moderate the coalitions are perceived to be by

ideological organizations. Blue Dogs earn an average 80.4% from the ADA, while Progressives earn a 95.2%. Conversely, the ACU rates the Blue Dogs with an average 28.2%, while Progressives were scored at 3.9%. Although the measurements are to an extent subjective, it is clear that despite their more conservative tendency Blue Dogs remain handicapped by their status as Democrats from earning high scores among conservative organizations. Blue Dogs still perform better among conservative groups than liberal groups, indicative of their commitment to ‘fiscal responsibility.’

Findings & Discussion

Blue Dog Democrats are elected from a unique political context, with a few unique district demographic descriptive variables and a record of dissent in Congress. Blue Dogs can be distinguished from the liberal Progressive cohort by electoral marginality, greater racial homogeneity and more blue-collar members of a district’s workforce. In Congress, Blue Dogs are the least united cohort within the Democratic majority, and most likely to oppose the majority on highly salient votes. I will synthesize the most relevant results for each of this chapter’s section’s in the context of this thesis’ first research question.

This thesis posits that Blue Dogs are more responsive to constituency interests because they are more marginal and motivated by the reelection incentive. The political context portion of this chapter revealed that indeed, Blue Dog Democrats are more marginal across several measures of election statistics. Controlling for incumbency advantage and tenure in Congress, newly elected Blue Dogs are elected with 55.8% of the vote on average, and a standard deviation of 4.5%. Comparatively, newly elected Progressive Caucus members won election to Congress with 73.7% of

the vote (although with a higher standard deviation of 14.8%). Although Blue Dogs are more likely to win by greater reelection margins as their tenure in Congress increases, the mean average is still lower than the same advantage given to Progressive Democrats. Progressives tend to gain only a few election percentage points with incumbency, meaning that Blue Dogs and Progressives do not even start on the same footing with their respective constituencies.

The political context of Blue Dog districts is clearly distinguishable by other metrics of political persuasion. Presidential victory margins for 2006 and 2008 reveal that Blue Dog districts are more likely to split ticket vote, and have a significantly greater tendency to vote for a Republican presidential candidate. In this context, I speculated on the possibility of a “reverse coat-tails” theory, suggesting that the election of an amicable moderate-to-conservative Congressional Democrat may help Democratic presidential candidates within district. This theory however, is based only two presidential elections (one of which was a significant anti-incumbent realignment in Congress). An examination of incumbent Blue Dog vote margins with those of opposite-party presidential candidates over time can confirm or reject this hypothesis.

Marginality in the Blue Dog context has specific and general meaning. Specifically, it means winning at or with 55.8% of the vote. Congressmen who are barely elected to Congress might feel more inclined to vote with the perceived constituency interest. In the general sense, marginality could refer to the diminished margins of Blue Dogs overall (and including among veteran Congressmen.) Given the district’s moderate or conservative persuasion, this generalizable feeling of uncertainty could also inspire caution in voting behavior.

The electoral context of Blue Dogs is undeniably unique from Progressives, and represents a profound set of challenges for sustaining a majority and passing legislation. In a system where “majority rules”, winning support among broad, national coalitions of marginal Congressmen (who are mostly invested in winning reelection) induce any number of legislative challenges. In Chapter 5, I will discuss some of the ways the majority can negotiate and compromises with Blue Dogs to add amendments to legislation and win votes from marginal Congressmen. Blue Dogs can also tailor specific messages to constituencies in their explaining behaviors, also discussed in the next chapter.

The next part of the first research question asked whether or not there are district demographic differences among Blue Dog and Progressive districts. Unlike the political context portion however, the answer this question is more ambiguous. A few variables point to unique and specific evidence of an archetypical Blue Dog district. Nevertheless, the differences between Blue Dog and Progressive variables in these areas are often not statistically significant, or relatively significant. I first tested age, and found no statistically significant differences between the mean younger and older populations of Blue Dog and Progressive districts. The race variable however, indicated some meaningful differences. Blue Dog districts were more racially homogenous, with greater percentages of Whites and fewer minorities. These differences may be attributable to the geography and urbanity of Blue Dog districts; Blue Dogs tend to represent rural and outer-ring suburban areas that are less racially diverse than the more urban-centered Progressive caucus. The income measure revealed very little difference at a statistically significant level to delineate between the average Blue Dog district’s earnings and Progressive districts. Finally, socioeconomic

status variables for workforce occupation and education revealed that Blue Dog districts tended to be only slightly more likely to work in blue-collar occupations.

Racial and urbanity statistics notwithstanding, there does not appear to be a unique demographic context to Blue Dog districts. They may be more racially homogenous, but according to my analysis of age, income and socioeconomic status variables, I cannot support the hypothesis that Blue Dogs represent one particular constituency. Although it is true that Blue Dogs come from predominately rural and Southern districts, the types of people they represent are diverse and varied, and difficult to describe in the aggregate. Although some may find it tempting to conceptualize the Blue Dog district as less educated, whiter, poorer, and rural, the diversity within the coalition ensures that this cohort of Democrats is not defined by these constituency characteristics. One possible limitation of this reasoning was the use of coalition membership to make predictions of expected constituency demography. Membership in a coalition appears to be more related to individual policy preference, and not a member's response to the demand of an archetypical constituency. Blue Dogs are more likely to be motivated by the electoral context described earlier.

The final area of analysis sought to draw a connection between the Blue Dog Coalition and its level of dissent. I used three metrics to determine Blue Dog opposition to the Democratic majority: party unity, cohesion on salient votes, and interest group scores. Once again controlling for incumbency, Blue Dog Democrats oppose the Democratic majority on 15% of votes, compared with only 6% of votes among Progressives. Term in Congress tended to increase Blue Dog members' party unity score, yet still retain the margin significantly below the similarly tenured

Progressive cohort. An examination of several salient votes revealed that Blue Dogs in the 111th Congress tended to form a majority-to-plurality of dissenters on less visible pieces of legislation. This finding suggests that to a certain extent-constituency pressures do not matter as much as ideological policy orientation or other factors. Confirming this concept, an examination of interest group scores revealed that Blue Dog members sustain unique policy preferences. Blue Dogs tend to earn higher ratings from business, and lower ratings from environmental, socially liberal, liberal ideological and pro-union organizations. The inverse was true for Progressives.

This chapter provided this thesis with a working conception of marginality. Perceived safeness at home may be an illusory concept for all Congressmen given the fear of the unknown primary challenger or special interest that mobilizes against them. Nevertheless, it is possible that there is a more internalized relationship between opposition to the majority in Congress, membership in the Blue Dog faction, and election marginality. Such a relationship is quantitatively verifiable; 2008 victory margins and 2008 party unity scores are correlated at .339. In a conceptual, “common sense” approach, Progressives elected with over a 70% victory margin do not have to really worry about the “backlash” when voting for a controversial bill.

Applying the literature, this chapter contains many significant implications for how the Blue Dog’s approach to constituent relations. Under Kingdon’s (1973) analysis, Blue Dogs would have to work to maintain supporting coalitions of supporters and hone in on opponents that block their “field of forces” in decision-making. Election marginality may even have implications for how Congressmen establish a base of support. Applying Fenno’s (1978) framework, I would argue that

the “expansion phase” (where a Congressmen secures reelection constituencies) of the Blue Dog incumbent’s Congressional career would take significantly longer when compared to new Progressives. The next chapter will use this political context of marginality and Congressional context of dissent to examine the explaining behaviors of Blue Dog Congressmen. I will compare Blue Dog and Progressive messages and appeals to reveal the unique communicative strategies Blue Dogs implement to sustain supporting coalitions and mitigate reelection uncertainty.

Limitations

Interest group scores are based on algorithms produced by an evaluation of a representative’s voting record. More weight may be placed on specific votes or factors over others. Organizations may or may not enumerate these factors in their methodology. These specific organizations were chosen based on fulfillment of at least two of three criterion: (i) citation by Congressional Quarterly, (ii) prominence as an advocacy organization and/or (iii) recent and updated scores. Only a few organizations had updated scores as of the 1st Session of the 111th Congress. As a result, many freshmen members and members elected in 2009 and 2010 were excluded. Two ideological organizations were also chosen. Americans for Democratic Action and the American Conservative Union were selected based on Congressional Quarterly’s reliance on them as a reputable source of advocacy on behalf of liberal or conservative ideology, respectively. The ADA and ACU scores represent a broad evaluation on economic, social and international issues.

The Cook Partisan Voting Index (CPVI) is supposed to measure ideological orientation of a House member’s Congressional district; however I believe

the algorithm that derives the rating ignores several outside variables. The CPVI may not be sensitive to split-ticket voting, where an electorate of a Congressional district may be more accustomed to voting for a Democrat in Congressional elections and a Republican in presidential elections. A similar confound relates to the unmeasured influence of incumbency, where members of Congress may represent a ‘more conservative’ constituency, but are nevertheless reelected because of the popularity that results from their tenure in Congress. Finally, other influences create significant situational variability when comparing House races to the national politics. It is important to emphasize that politics at the local level is relative in comparison to politics at the national level. Constituencies may ignore national factors and focus on more salient local factors in determining how to vote in a Congressional election. As a result of these confounds, CPVI is only used as a descriptor to further delineate between Blue Dog districts, and other Democratic constituencies.

Further Information

Democratic members who were added to the dataset as a result of a special election included John Garamendi (CA-10), who replaced Ellen Tauscher on Nov. 5, 2009, Judy Chu (CA-32) who replaced Hilda Solis on July 16, 2009, Mike Quigley (IL-5) who replaced Rahm Emanuel on April 21, 2009, Scott Murphy (NY-20) who replaced Kirsten Gillibrand on April 29, 2009, and Bill Owens (NY-23) who replaced John McHugh on November 6, 2009. Two members elected in 2010 were also added. These include Ted Deutch (FL-19) who replaced Robert Wexler and Mark Critz (PA-12) who replaced John Murtha on May 20, 2010. Parker Griffith (AL-5), formerly a

Congressional Blue Dog Democrat, was excluded from the dataset after he switched parties in Congress on December 22, 2009.

Chapter 5

EXPLAINING SALIENT VOTES: A COMPARISON OF BLUE DOGS & PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS

The purpose of this chapter is to delineate between Blue Dog and Progressive constituent explaining behaviors. The focus here is not necessarily on voting outcomes, but rather on the messaging and themes that are consistent across each coalition in describing and justifying Congressmen's votes to constituents. If Blue Dogs vote according to unique electoral and district demographic contexts, do Blue Dog Congressmen explain Washington voting behavior differently than the more electorally safe Progressive Caucus? Implementing a content analysis methodology of press releases following two salient votes, I will determine that the answer to this question is inevitably inconclusive and ambiguous. Blue Dog Congressmen engage in a unique presentation of self that leads them to advertise, position take and claim credit differently than Progressive Democrats. The hypothesis that Blue Dogs offer significant differences in explaining behaviors as a result of their electoral circumstances will be rejected. Although certain messages are salient to each coalition, some messages are generally salient across both coalitions making it difficult to distinguish between the explaining behaviors of Progressives and Blue Dogs. The full rubrics for each bill are available in the Appendix.

The Progressive Caucus, as opposed to the Congressional Black Caucus or the New Democrats, was chosen for the purpose of providing a clear comparison. Many distinguishing factors between these two coalitions mark the foundation of this analysis. First, Chapter 5 demonstrated that Progressives are politically and electorally safer than their Blue Dog counterparts and thus feel less danger in voting on controversial pieces of legislation. Second, Progressives tend to be more cohesive in their voting behavior, and vote with the majority at a greater frequency than Blue Dog counterparts. Third, no member is cross-listed as belonging to both coalitions; members are either Blue Dogs or Progressives, which is not necessarily the case across the many formal and informal voting blocs in Congress. Finally, each caucus has organizationally enumerated specific values and messages that appear to conflict with one another.

Methodology

A total of 188 press releases were analyzed and included in this study to determine the policy differences between Blue Dog and Progressive explaining behaviors. Press releases, or statements intended to be disseminated to news outlets, often describe how the Congressperson arrived at their decision, what organizations the Congressperson considered, the different facts the Congressperson used to underlie their reasoning, and the varying appeals the member makes to justify their decision. A rubric was created to analyze the content of each bill's set of press releases. The rubrics were developed based on an evaluation of 20 randomly selected press releases for each of the two sets of bills. The evaluated areas of analysis needed to be broad enough to capture the varying responses and communicative strategies implemented by

individual Congressmen, yet narrow enough to capture every instance of the evaluated area. For instance, on the healthcare vote, I included broad and specific messages to account for the variety of messages observed in the random selection of health care press releases. Members of Congress mentioned both the extension of coverage to millions of Americans most broadly, and at times elaborated on the extension of coverage to specific constituencies (such as middle class or low income families.)

Content also needed to be mutually exclusive from other evaluated areas. Although the Congressmen's messages in the health care vote discussed broadly 'help for seniors', they often also specified how the bill will close the Medicare Part D "doughnut hole." The broad message of "help for seniors" and the specific message of "closing the Medicare Part D doughnut hole" do not conflict with one another. Rather, they are just narrower or broader appeals to policy elements. Finally, I also included open-ended criteria where I felt the need to elaborate. Both rubrics asked for the specific organizations that were appealed to, amendments that were added and local effects of the bill. These open-ended questions helped specify why the Congressperson implemented an appeal or message, and helped identify similar policy appeals.

Salient recorded votes are those where the media and public are intimately involved in the legislative decision making process. Constituents write or call their Congressman, special interests mobilize members to call House offices, and the outcome of the vote is seen as having a significant role in constituents lives. Salient vote press releases were analyzed for several reasons. First, members feel the greatest electoral danger from special interests and public at large organizing and voting against them. Accordingly, members will justify their vote and appeal to the wide-ranging values in line with perceived electoral circumstances. Second, salient votes are

most widely available. Members do not release statements on votes they do not want to publically explain or find unworthy of explanation. Salient votes allow the largest possible sample size to be collected for each vote. Finally, salient votes are the most controversial, and represent voting situations where members will use strategies of explanation.

The two salient votes in the 111th U.S. Congress analyzed here include the “cap and trade” and healthcare reform votes. The former H.R. 2454: The American Clean Energy & Security Act aimed at reducing carbon emissions in the United States by establishing a carbon emissions market. It narrowly passed on a recorded vote of 219-212 on June 26, 2009 with 28 out of 53 Blue Dogs voting in opposition, compared with only 3 out of 70 Progressive dissenters. The later healthcare reform press releases followed two recorded votes, first to pass the House version of the Senate bill, and then to agree to Senate reconciliation amendments. Press releases were issued to major media outlets in the days of, and week’s prior and following the final vote. Therefore, the press releases analyzed the votes on both H.R. 4872: The Healthcare and Education Reconciliation Act, and H.R. 3590: The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. H.R. 4872 passed 220-211, with 24 out of 53 Blue Dogs in opposition, compared with a unanimous Progressive caucus in favor. The reconciliation measure, H.R. 3590, passed 220-207, again with 24 Blue Dogs voting in opposition and carrying a united Progressive caucus.

The sample size for each vote varies according to issue salience. Although each vote was technically “salient”, the health care vote was the most salient, attention-provoking vote of the 111th U.S. Congress. Cap-and-trade was less directly in the spotlight yet still galvanized significant support and opposition within district.

There were 71 total cap-and-trade press releases (38 Progressive; 33 Blue Dog), compared with 117 healthcare press releases (68 Progressive; 49 Blue Dog). Almost every member issued a statement about healthcare.

Press releases were chosen over other communicative mediums, such as floor speeches, or issue pamphlets, because of their public accessibility and availability on the Internet. Most relevant in this analysis, they are mechanisms of communicating messages to constituents. Unlike the floor speech, Congressmen are not beholden to address the Democratic leadership or the Congress as a whole. Instead, the press release is written for the constituency, media outlets covering the geographic constituency, and for supporting coalitions within the constituency. If the purpose of this analysis is to describe how Congressmen of each coalition explain their votes differently, it is most appropriate to analyze the mechanism directly intended to appeal to the constituency.

Application of the Literature

This analysis is a modern application of the foundational theories asserted by Fenno (1978), Kingdon (1973) and Mayhew (1974). I will apply Mayhew's theories on advertising, credit claiming and position taking to describe individualizing activities. These theories and descriptors were applied to mentions of the bills' (i) affirmative outcomes, (ii) negative outcomes, and (iii) neutral outcomes. I also applied Kingdon's consensus mode of decision to formulate the "appeals" framework of the content analysis rubric. Fenno's work regarding home style, individualizing and reelection uncertainty serves to underscore both Mayhew and Kingdon's paradigm for Congressmen's explanatory behavior and decision making.

The purpose of applying these criterion to Congressional press releases is to demonstrate how representatives engage in individualizing activities. Mayhew (1974) provides the best operating framework for understanding explaining behaviors. He argued that regardless of electoral circumstance, members engage in activities that they believe are electorally useful and specifically identified three kinds of activities that Congressmen engage in to win reelection. I will apply Mayhew's typology of advertising, credit claiming and position taking to this content analysis methodology, before discussing how specific elements of the rubric were created with reference to the literature.

Advertising refers to "the effort to disseminate one's name among constituents in such a fashion as to create a favorable image but in messages having little or no issue content." The purpose of advertising is to generate a Congressional "brand name." Although "independence" or "sincerity" does not express specific issue content, an application of Mayhew's advertising criteria in this study would be the use of affirmative, negative or neutral facts to create or enhance a Congressman's name brand. Although Mayhew argues that advertising should not include issue content, the modern application of his criteria would. For example, constant repetition that the cap-and-trade bill will create jobs in the district promotes the idea of the Congressman as a fighter for working or middle class families. Similarly, repetition of the healthcare bill's Congressional Budget Office score could be used to define the Congressman as a "deficit-hawk." As I will soon discuss, facts can be manipulated to individualize the Congressperson's brand name.

The next activity Congressmen engage in is credit claiming. Mayhew defines this concept as: "the belief that one agent is personally responsible for causing

the government, or some unit thereof, to do something that the actor considers desirable.” A Congressman is able to claim credit when he or she espouses an individual accomplishment that provides particularized benefits to constituents. In the press release context, individual accomplishment is expressed by the successful addition of an amendment or language in a bill. This language often describes the particularized benefit that is being delivered to the constituency. Many Congressmen discussed their intense fight with leadership over the successful waiver of carbon emissions standards for farmers and ranchers in their districts. These responses were captured with open-ended responses regarding the local impact of the bill.

The final individualizing activity proposed by Mayhew is position taking. Officially defined, Mayhew states that it is: “the public enunciation of a judgmental statement on anything likely to be of interest to political actors.” Position taking is a particularly common activity among Congressmen. Although many try to avoid commitment on controversial votes, many Congressmen are forced to take a position on an issue, and explain their voting rationale. Press releases are clear illustrations of position taking.

Advertising, credit claiming, and position taking are common themes that perpetuate the idea of the Congressperson as an individual, rational actor. The purpose of the five-subject area rubric is to illustrate more specifically how Congressmen of different coalitions engage in individualizing activities. These definitions occur within Mayhew’s parameters with the goal of appealing to the constituency (or elements of the constituency) and winning reelection. I will now discuss how (i) appeals, (ii) affirmative, (ii) negative and (iv) neutral outcomes fit into the literature and answer the hypothesis of this chapter.

Appeals

An “appeal” is defined as a request or reference to some person or authority for a decision, corroboration or judgment. Congressmen make appeals to individuals, groups or coalitions to build up support or blunt opposition in a primary or general election challenge. Among the analyzed press releases, common appeals included references to constituent activism (including mailing the Congressman or writing letters), references to other Congressmen, or references to the local impact of the bill on the district. Statistics from the Congressional Budget Office, as well as third party independent economic analyses were tracked. Formal channels of authority, including references to the Congressman’s role on committee, subcommittee, or to an amendment they included in the bill were also included in the rubric. Finally, I analyzed the press releases for references to organizations and lobbies that were mentioned in the release. Mentions of appeals were tallied to provide the most common explanatory behaviors of Congressmen across each coalition. If the appeal was to the local impact of the bill, I included an open-ended question to insert language on how the bill will specifically impact the district.

The methodology implemented in this analysis builds off of John Kingdon’s famous 1973 interviews with members of Congress. As stated in Chapter 3, Kingdon developed a consensus mode of decision where Congressmen check their “field of forces” for cues on how to vote. Kingdon’s work was revolutionary because it involved individualized interviews with every member of Congress. Based on his interviews, Kingdon correlated specific variables with voting outcomes and concluded that constituency was most correlated with decision outcomes, when compared to

other factors (fellow Congressmen, the media, party leadership, the administration, etc.).

Unfortunately, the level of access Kingdon was given is beyond the scope or resources available to this thesis. The purpose here is not to create a brand new theory of Congressional decision-making, but to highlight the critical considerations (appeals) involved in making decisions. These considerations include ways Congressmen convey messages to their constituencies. Press releases provide insight into how Congressmen make decisions, and underline the most salient decision points of the Congressman's vote outcome. The purpose of evaluating press releases for appeals is not to uncover "truth." Instead, the second research question in this thesis asks how Congressmen explain their votes to constituents. The press release therefore, is not a mechanism to uncover "the truth." Rather, the purpose of analyzing press releases for appeals is to illustrate 'perceived truth', or the brand name Congressmen create for themselves. In the aggregate, examining the appeals across both coalitions addresses the research question by looking for significant difference in the kinds of appeals Blue Dogs and Progressives make.

Following in the hypothesis for this thesis, I expect Blue Dogs to appeal to the local impact of the legislation in greater proportion than Progressives. I also expect Blue Dogs to claim credit for the amendments in the legislation, and discuss in open-ended themes why they voted for or against a bill. These appeals would help more marginal Congressmen describe how voting for or against a piece of legislation helps them in their reelection pursuit. A 'perceived truth', or spin, implemented by Blue Dogs voting for the cap-and-trade bill may involve describing how the district will earn many particularized benefits, or will be helped because of an amendment the

Congressmen included in the bill. I expect these specific appeals to be unique to the Blue Dog Coalition.

Messaging and Themes: Affirmative, Negative and Neutral

The influence of constituency varies from Congressman to Congressman and from issue to issue. Certainly, in this analysis, the fact that each piece of legislation provoked an intense public debate (to a varied extent) meant that perceived constituency support or opposition applied pressure to the Congressman. If Blue Dogs and Progressives vote within a unique political and electoral context, as Chapter 4 illustrated, then it is hypothesized that the way members of each coalition explain votes differs by electoral context.

This methodology seeks to capture the most salient aspects of each bill and analyze the frequency of mentions by Congressional coalition. If Congressmen vote within electoral circumstances, are different messages among Progressive (safe) and Blue Dog (marginal) members conveyed? This portion of my analysis examines the specific facts expressed in each press release, and examines the frequency of mentions by coalition to determine differences. For example, a Blue Dog Congressman (in line with his or her coalition's philosophy) would be expected to mention long-term deficit reduction, while Progressives may be more likely to emphasize the individual mandate to buy health insurance, or the extension of coverage to low-income Americans.

The communication of certain facts helps justify and explain voting behavior to constituents. For the cap-and-trade bill, these facts included the messages that the bill (i) creates jobs, (ii) creates a clean energy economy, (iii) that it combats

global warming or global climate change or (iv) protects consumers, among other evaluated areas. A Congressman who voted for the bill from a rural area, where residents are more likely to be farmers or ranchers, would have to justify their vote in a way that shows how these interests may actually benefit the district. Conversely, a Congressman who voted for the bill, but represents a significantly urban (and perhaps more impoverished) constituency, may discuss the benefits in terms of lowering energy costs to low income families. The purpose of this section is to analyze the differences in how each coalition messages the affirmative, negative and neutral “benefits” and/or “harms” of the legislation differently to constituencies.

Similar to affirmative messaging, negative messages can also be associated with specific aspects of constituency. Negative messaging on both the cap-and-trade and healthcare legislation occurred mostly among Blue Dog dissenters. On the healthcare vote for example, many Blue Dogs believed that the bill would have a pernicious effect on existing Medicare benefits to seniors in their district. Other Blue Dog members argued that small business would be harmed, or believed that the bill would raise the deficit. Many Blue Dogs voting against the cap-and-trade vote expressed negative sentiment over a new “energy tax” on families and small businesses. Negative messaging justifies a Congressman’s vote against their party leadership to constituents. It helps brand the Congressman as an “independent”, or ‘maverick.’ Although some Progressive members may harbor negative attitudes on legislation, these messages are often not expressed in specific detail. Negative messaging occurs among these members in more broad and sweeping terms, such as: “this legislation does not go far enough” or “this bill is not perfect.”

Affirmative and negative messaging can also be tied to an appeal to local interest, or to an amendment that succeeded or failed. For example, a Blue Dog can say that the cap-and-trade bill will create jobs without impacting the district because the Congressman fought to include an amendment that provided for regional offsets in new emissions standards. In situations where both a message and an appeal are tied together, the frequency of each was recorded separately. Certainly, an appeal to the local impact of the bill on constituents can be married to the larger point within a press release that the bill creates jobs.

Finally, other “neutral” messages were recorded. These themes are labeled as “neutral” because they either (i) do not express a point or perspective, or (ii) express an issue that is outside my analysis, but still is a measure of note. An aspect of the cap-and-trade bill that fulfilled the first standard was the mention of the word “God.” A Congressman may use “God” in accordance with his or her home-style, but the purpose of using such a word is not to express a point. It is more likely a unique rhetorical strategy tailored to constituency values. Another example was the reference to the Medicare Part D gap, or the “doughnut hole.” The second standard of “neutral” messages applied more to the abortion issue in the healthcare debate. References to the Stupak Amendment, prohibiting federal funds to abortions, or to abortion generally, were broad enough to be rhetorical strategies and explaining behaviors, but ultimately does not say anything about the constituency other than it may be more “pro-life.”

Methodologically, it is important to note that affirmative messages were only examined in “aye” votes and negative messages were only examined in “nay” votes. Because Congressmen are explaining the reasons for their support or opposition, it makes sense to look for messages that only support voting decisions. Affirmative

messages are much more plentiful because the number of Congressmen voting for the examined legislation surpasses the number of Congressmen voting against in both coalitions. Nevertheless, a representative metric was created among both “aye” and “nay” categories that accounted for common messages and themes.

Content Quantity

The press releases examined in this chapter varied from content-heavy issue treatises to short briefs devoid of reasoning. In the middle, most press releases addressed three or four issues particularly relevant to the Congressperson’s decision-making process. I controlled for the amount of content by examining how many rubric criterion each release fulfilled. In the aggregate, this analysis created a typology for content-heavy and content-light press releases, representing a bell curve on “aye” votes where most Blue Dogs and Progressives mentioned 4 or 5 issues important to them. Among Blue Dog and Progressive members voting against cap-and-trade and health care reform, the amount of content found in each release tended to more scattered in the aggregate.

In this analysis, Congressmen are ranked according to how many criteria they fulfilled on the rubric’s evaluation of affirmative or negative messaging. Figure 5.1 shows the amount of content distributed for “aye” votes on cap-and-trade and health care: press releases ranked as having “no content” fulfilled 0 criteria; “low content” press releases raise 1-2 evaluated areas on the rubric; “medium content” press releases raise 3-4 evaluated areas on the rubric; “high content” raise 5-6 evaluated areas on the rubric; “significant content” raises above 7 issues. Health care press

releases were more available, and thus, there are more cases among the health care reform group.

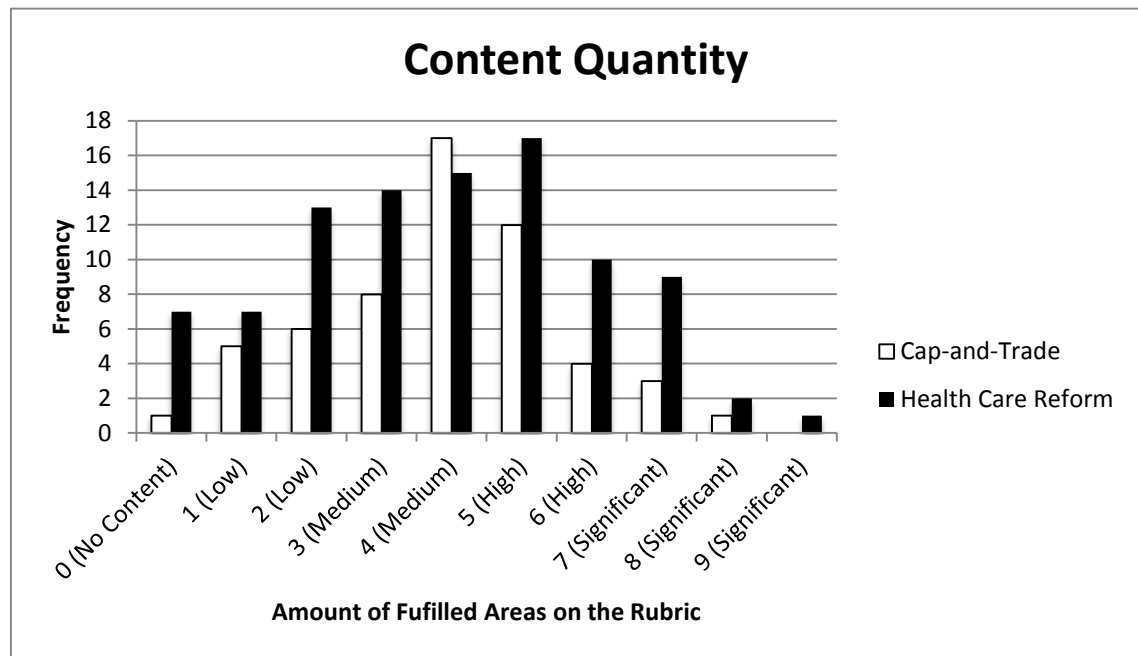


FIGURE 5.1: Blue Dog & Progressive Content Quantity by Number of Fulfilled Areas on the Evaluative Rubric

In the analysis portion of this chapter, this typology is particularly important in evaluating the salience of legislation. “Significant content” press releases are more likely to bring up less salient and more detailed policy issues than low or medium-content releases. Creating this scale provides a metric to understand what issues were particularly relevant in determining health care votes, compared to other areas evaluated on the rubric.

Blue Dog & Progressive Messaging on the Cap-and-Trade Vote

According to the Congressional Research Service bill summary, H.R. 2454: American Clean Energy & Security Act of 2009: “Sets forth provisions concerning clean energy, energy efficiency, reducing global warming pollution, transitioning to a clean energy economy, and providing for agriculture and forestry related offsets. Includes provisions: (1) creating a combined energy efficiency and renewable electricity standard and requiring retail electricity suppliers to meet 20% of their demand through renewable electricity and electricity savings by 2020; (2) setting a goal of, and requiring a strategic plan for, improving overall U.S. energy productivity by at least 2.5% per year by 2012 and maintaining that improvement rate through 2030; and (3) establishing a cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and setting goals for reducing such emissions from covered sources by 83% of 2005 levels by 2050” (Congressional Research Service, 2010). Eight affirmative and five negative messages were conveyed in Blue Dog and Progressive press releases. Overwhelmingly, Blue Dogs and Progressives tended to emphasize the same general statistics, claiming the bill would cost less than a postage stamp per day, or \$40 per year; only impact oil and electric companies; save over \$190 billion in clean energy technologies; eliminate 17% of carbon emissions by 2020; create 1.7 million new clean energy jobs; and implement the same solution that fought acid rain in the 1990’s.

Affirmative Cap-and-Trade Messaging

Although the number of Blue Dogs is exactly half (18) the amount of Progressives (36) voting for the bill, the same three messages were conveyed in “aye” vote press releases. Among Blue Dog Congressmen, the most commonly cited message was the claim that reducing our dependence on foreign oil makes the U.S. more energy independent and improves national security. Progressives tended to emphasize clean energy job creation only slightly more than energy independence, but clean jobs remained a highly salient element of the American Clean Energy & Security Act. Blue Dogs and Progressives also agreed that fighting global warming and/or global climate change was a top priority addressed in this bill.

Table 5.1 shows that affirmative messaging in Blue Dog and Progressive press releases tended to follow in a similar trend regardless of coalition membership. Both Blue Dogs and Progressives emphasized the same messages, with few differences. Progressives, for example, mentioned concern for low-income families more frequently in their press releases compared to Blue Dogs. Typically, members who mentioned low-income families also tended to describe the bill’s goal of long-term energy cost reduction and consumer protection. The “low income” family portion was only considered when the Congressmen specifically described how the bill would help low income families with monthly energy costs. A content quantity analysis confirmed that indeed, the most salient affirmative messaging in the cap-and-trade bill was concern over job creation and energy independence. These two areas were the only categories that carried a majority of low content press releases and a plurality-to-majority of medium-to-significant releases.

TABLE 5.1: Blue Dog & Progressive Affirmative Messaging on Cap-and-Trade

Blue Dog (n=18)			Progressive (n=36)		
1	Improves our national security because it reduces our dependence on foreign oil. Makes the U.S. more energy independent.	11 (61.1%)	1	Creates jobs	34 (94.4%)
2	Creates jobs	10 (55%)	2	Improves our national security because it reduces our dependence on foreign oil. Makes the U.S. more energy independent.	32 (88.8%)
	Combats "global warming" or "global climate change." Helps the environment.		3	Combats "global warming" or "global climate change." Helps the environment.	27 (75%)
3	New clean energy economy, creates new industries	8 (44.4%)	4	New clean energy economy, creates new industries	15 (41.6%)
4	A new, comprehensive and diverse energy strategy	7 (38.8%)	5	Helps low income families	13 (36.1%)
5	Protects consumers	4 (22.2%)	6	Protects consumers	12 (33.3%)
6	Helps low income families	2 (11.1%)	7	A new, comprehensive and diverse energy strategy	10 (27.7%)
7	A new, comprehensive and diverse energy strategy	0 (0%)	8	Concern for children and future generations.	4 (11.1%)

Negative Cap-and-Trade Messaging

The rubric that captured negative messages was only based on the 17 Democrats in the sample who voted against the bill. 15 of those Democrats were Blue Dogs, compared to only 2 Progressives. As Table 5.2 shows, most of the Blue Dogs who voted against the bill were primarily concerned with their constituents' general economic hardships. Others cited regional inequities within the bill that disproportionately impacted local farmers or ranchers. Many Blue Dogs voting in the affirmative cited a compromise with Agriculture Chairman Colin Peterson (D-MN). Peterson's amendment increased carbon offsets to farmers and ranchers, allowing Blue Dogs from rural districts to vote with the majority citing specific provisions within the legislation. Blue Dogs voting against the bill said that the Peterson amendment did not go far enough in offering carbon offsets and would still disproportionately impact constituents. Other salient messages included the regional inequities of the carbon

offsets program, adverse impact on small businesses and a concern for the impact on farmers and ranchers.

TABLE 5.2: Blue Dog & Progressive Negative Messaging on Cap-and-Trade

Blue Dog (n=15)			Progressive (n=2)		
1	Cites the general concern for the hardship of constituents	9 (60%)	1	Cites regional inequities within this bill.	2 (100%)
2	Cites regional inequities within this bill.	7 (46.6%)	2	Cites the general concern for the hardship of constituents	0 (0%)
3	Concern that the bill will adversely affect business	6 (40%)		Concern that the bill will adversely affect business	
	Concern that the bill will affect farmers or ranchers			Concern that the bill will affect farmers or ranchers	
4	Raise energy costs	5 (41.6%)		Raise energy costs	
5	Concern that the bill does not sufficiently address infrastructure	1 (6.7%)		Concern that the bill does not sufficiently address infrastructure	

Blue Dog & Progressive Messaging on Health Care Reform

The passage of health care reform was President Barack Obama’s signature piece of domestic policy. Following months of debate, compromise and negotiation, Congressional leaders agreed on a landmark proposal that included a number of new reforms and safeguards against “the worst” health insurance company practices. The new health care law, H.R. 3590: The Patient Protection and Affordable Choice Act of 2010, blocked insurance companies from denying coverage to children and adults with preexisting conditions, established a system of health insurance exchanges for individuals to buy into starting in 2014, increased the age at which young people can stay on their parents’ health care plans, permitted buyers to enroll in health insurance plans across state lines, and enacted an individual mandate to buy private health insurance. The proposal passed by Congress also included an overhaul

of the student loan system, as well as gradual reforms to cover the Medicare Part D “doughnut hole” by 2020.

Health care reform was the most salient piece of legislation in the 111th Congress. It is therefore unsurprising that most Congressmen issued a press release heralding or cautiously describing their position on the issue. A federal ban on health insurance company denials based on preexisting conditions was the most popular reform among both coalitions. It was discussed in nearly every press release (even those classified as low content.) Most reforms however, were enormously complex; press releases tended to focus on only a few issue areas, instead of enumerating the entire expanse of health care reform. Similar to the cap-and-trade findings, affirmative and negative messages reflected only slight differences between Blue Dog and Progressive explaining behaviors.

Affirmative Health Care Messaging

Table 5.3 shows very little variation between Blue Dog and Progressive salient messages, with two notable exceptions. Blue Dogs were most likely to mention the new health care law’s impact on the deficit and incentives for small business, where Progressives were more likely to mention the extension of coverage to millions of Americans. Given Blue Dog’s concern for deficit spending, and pro-business persuasion, this finding confirms the fact that Blue Dogs tended to espouse the views of their coalition to their constituency. The Progressive caucus’ focus on equity underlies the extension of coverage to millions of Americans as one of the most salient messages in coalition-wide press releases.

Although the content analysis did not reveal significant differences in messaging across both coalitions, it did provide an interesting look at some of the more (and least) salient aspects of health care reform. The closure of the Medicare Part D gap, general appeals to the bill's impact on seniors, and coverage for preexisting conditions were important aspects of Democratic health care messaging. These messages appeared most frequently among low-content press releases.

The least-cited aspects of the health care law included the individual mandate, the health insurance exchanges, and the ability to buy insurance across state lines. Curiously, "coverage for children with preexisting conditions" ranked low among affirmative messages. 19% of Blue Dog press releases, and 23% of Progressive press releases discussed children with preexisting conditions. The low proportion of press releases discussing children is strange, because the reform appeared to be one of the more impactful and emotional messages following the health care debate. Although speculative, it could be that many Congressmen chose to incorporate "children" into the general, popular category of individuals who could not be denied health insurance coverage under the new law.

The "children with preexisting conditions" example reveals one possible problem with this methodological approach to understanding messaging. In some instances, one broad message may encompass a more nuanced policy issue that the Congressperson did not intend to specifically address. Since press releases are descriptors of a Congressperson's messaging to his or her constituency, they have to be read in both broad and narrow terms. Although it is true that a bill may "help seniors", it is entirely up to the Congressperson to discuss how the Medicare Part D gap will gradually phase out with the enactment of this legislation. Unfortunately, because

Congressmen discuss their votes in both general terms, and with regard to specific policy, interpreting some aspects of Table 5.3 can be convoluted. Nevertheless, Table 5.3 can be read as the most frequently cited general and specific messages.

TABLE 5.3: Blue Dog & Progressive Affirmative Messaging on Health Care

Blue Dog (n=26)			Progressive (n=68)		
1	Reduces the deficit	18 (69.2%)	1	Extends coverage to millions of Americans.	43 (63.4%)
	Healthcare companies cannot deny coverage for preexisting conditions			Healthcare companies cannot deny coverage for preexisting conditions	
2	Closes the Medicare Part D gap	14 (53.8%)	2	Reduces the deficit	37 (54.4%)
3	Helps small business	13 (50%)	3	Closes the Medicare Part D gap	34 (50%)
4	Helps seniors	12 (46.1%)	4	Helps seniors	30 (44.1%)
5	Extends coverage to millions of Americans.	11 (42.3%)	5	Helps small business	26 (38.2%)
6	Helps middle class families	8 (30.7%)	6	References to the health insurance exchanges	20 (29.1%)
7	Reduces health care premiums	7 (26.9%)	7	Helps middle class families	17 (25%)
8	References to the health insurance exchanges	6 (23%)	8	Reduces health care premiums	16 (23.5%)
9	Covers children with preexisting conditions	5 (19.2%)		References other successful government subsidized programs	
	Eliminates unnecessary and expensive medical procedures, fiscally irresponsible medical practices		9	Covers children with preexisting conditions	11 (16.1%)
10	Better long term coverage	3 (11.5%)	10	Helps low income families in the district	10 (14.7%)
	Helps low income families in the district		11	Student loan reforms are included under this bill	9 (13.2%)
	References other successful government subsidized programs		12	Eliminates unnecessary and expensive medical procedures, fiscally irresponsible medical practices	3 (4.4%)
11	Allows individuals to buy across state lines	2 (7.6%)	13	A public option, or any kind of government-run health care is not in the bill	2 (2.9%)
12	Individual mandate	0 (0%)		Allows individuals to buy across state lines	
	A public option, or any kind of government-run health care is not in the bill		14	Better long term coverage	0 (0%)
	Student loan reforms are included under this bill			Individual mandate	

It is briefly of note that certain specific constituencies were also addressed in both Blue Dog and Progressive messages. Aside from seniors, Congressmen tended to mention the positive effects of health care reform on middle class families more frequently than low-income families. These mentions could be because the proportion of Congressmen representing middle-class families is higher than the proportion of Congressmen representing low-income districts.

Negative Health Care Messaging

23 Blue Dogs voted against the health care bill, compared to 0 Progressives. Among the 23 Blue Dogs voting against the bill, most (47.8%) expressed concern for the deficit. Overall, the number of messages expressed by Blue Dogs is low compared to Progressives. Most Blue Dog press releases were short, low-content position statements discussing only the member's vote, or perhaps one or two issues. After the deficit, Table 5.4 shows that most Blue Dogs voting against the health care bill cited harms to current Medicare benefits, and the general economic climate of their district as reasons to vote against the bill.

TABLE 5.4: Blue Dog & Progressive Negative Messaging on Health Care

Blue Dogs (n=23)		
1	Adds to the deficit	11 (47.8%)
2	Detriment to current Medicare benefits	8 (34.7%)
3	Hurts the economic climate of the district	6 (26%)
4	Harmful to small businesses	5 (21.7%)
5	Negative impact on seniors	4 (17.3%)
	Hurts middle class families	
7	Will raise health care premiums	3 (13%)
	Critical issue facing our nation is the economy	
8	Not supported in a bipartisan manner	2 (8.6%)
	Imposes an individual mandate to buy health insurance	

Neutral Messages in Cap-and-Trade & Health Care

On the cap-and-trade vote, 1 Blue Dog described the bill as “historic” or “landmark” compared to 12 Progressives. The health care vote follows in a similar trend, with 42 Progressives and 5 Blue Dogs calling the vote “historic” or “landmark.” Although some “nay” voters described the vote in those terms, most Progressives underscored their “aye” vote by describing the significance of the occasion. Although Blue Dogs were more hesitant to vote for cap-and-trade or health care reform, a few recognized the importance of the moment. Congressmen often do not get everything they want in a bill. 17 Blue Dogs and 5 Progressives “would have preferred a different approach” to health care reform or called the bill “not perfect.” On the cap-and-trade vote, 5 Blue Dogs and 4 Progressives expressed their displeasure with the approach taken in the bill. In the health care vote, 13 Congressmen referenced Stupak Amendment or pro-life considerations. The amendment, which prohibited the use of federal funds to finance abortions as a result of the new health care law’s enactment, was mentioned by 4 Progressives and 6 Blue Dogs voting for the bill. 3 Blue Dogs voting against the bill remained concerned that prohibitions on abortion funding did not go far enough.

Appeals in Cap-and-Trade & Health Care

Table 5.5 shows few significant differences in the types of appeals made by Blue Dog Congressmen and Progressives. On the cap-and-trade vote, Blue Dogs tended to discuss the local impact of legislation in a significantly higher proportion (66.6%) than Progressives (28.9%). Examples of the local appeal on the district included statistics and figures discussing how many jobs the bill would bring to the

district, the impact of the legislation on district energy bills, and/or the impact of the bill on local business. References to the local impact of the bill are important because it helps Congressmen hone the message to the constituency or to supporting coalitions in a more direct way. The fact that Blue Dogs describe the local impact of the legislation (in part) supports the hypothesis that they explain voting behaviors in more tenuous detail because of the generalized desire to win reelection. Significant support for that claim would exist if the same trend was found among Blue Dog press releases following the health care vote. On health reform, Progressives actually described the local impact of the legislation in greater proportion than Blue Dogs.

One possible reason that Blue Dog Congressmen cited the local impact of the cap-and-trade legislation involved behind-the-scenes negotiation and compromise. Blue Dog cap-and-trade press releases are riddled with appeals to amendments that would reduce or eliminate the cost of the bill on the individual Congressman's district. Amendments included district-specific water efficiency programs, job search and relocation allowances, funding for green public assisted housing, State Environmental and Energy Accounts, supplemental funding to specific municipalities, funding for meteorological research centers, an incremental phase-out of government subsidized lighting fixtures, incentives for Iowa and Maryland farmers, ad nauseum.

Health care and cap-and-trade demonstrated the clearest differences in appeals to public lobbying activities. References to constituents, or constituent activities ranged from a discussion on the public involvement on health care issues (writing letters, sending emails, making phone calls), to the concern expressed in town hall meetings, to the generalized public concern about health care costs and public initiative to influence Congressional leaders. Constituent appeals were found in 62%

of press releases of both Blue Dog (61%) and Progressive (63%) members. The salience of health care legislation and the relative significance of the health care vote weighed heavily on legislators minds. Acknowledgement of the public role in influencing the health care vote outcome manifested itself about equally in Blue Dog and Progressive press releases, regardless of “aye” or “nay” vote outcomes. The health care vote was particularly unique because of constituent involvement and lobbying activities. Although some constituents lobbied Congress on the cap-and-trade vote, acknowledgement of constituent activities was only found in 7% of press releases.

The circumstances surrounding the health care and cap-and-trade debate best describe the differences in press release appeals between Blue Dogs and Progressives. Provisions within the health care bill were highly publicized, widely discussed and openly debated. The fight over a public option, the impact of the new health reform law on Medicare benefits, the establishment of health insurance exchanges and the individual mandate were all prominent aspects of health care reform. In comparison, the debate over specific elements of cap-and-trade, including the sale of carbon emissions as a derivative on the market, taxes on companies that pollute, and increased fuel-efficiency standards were inconspicuous elements of the public dialogue. The amendments Blue Dog Congressmen introduced to the cap-and-trade bill allowed for individualizing and credit-claiming activity to occur behind-the-scenes.

The credit-claiming activities of Congressmen are also supported by other appeals. 15.4% of cap-and-trade press releases for example, cite the Congressman’s role in committee, subcommittee and Congressional caucus in drafting the legislation, compared with 4% of health care press releases. Since cap-and-trade was less in the

public eye, Congressmen were able to point to specific works on committee that allowed them to claim-credit for specific elements of the bill. Citations of other organizations and lobbies, and other Congressmen are also more numerous in the cap-and-trade press releases.

TABLE 5.5: Blue Dog & Progressive Appeals: Cap-and-Trade & Health Care

Appeal	Cap-and-Trade			Health Care		
	Blue Dog (n=33)	Progressive (n=38)	Total (n=71)	Blue Dog (n=54)	Progressive (n=71)	Total (n=125)
Constituents, or constituent activities	3 (9%)	2 (5.2%)	5 (7%)	33 (61%)	45 (63%)	78 (62.40%)
Organizations or lobbies	10 (30.3%)	7 (18.4%)	17 (23.9%)	6 (11%)	4 (5.6%)	10 (8%)
Other Congressmen	5 (15.1%)	3 (7.8%)	8 (11.2%)	2 (3.7%)	2 (2.8%)	4 (3.2%)
The Congressman's role in committee, subcommittee or a Congressional caucus	3 (9%)	8 (21%)	11 (15.4%)	1 (1.8%)	4 (5.6%)	5 (4%)
An amendment or change in the bill that the Congressman introduced or would have preferred to see in the legislation	18 (54.4%)	11 (28.9%)	29 (40.8%)	3 (5.6%)	7 (9.8%)	12 (8%)
To previous legislation or an independent intervention of the Congressman	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)	4 (5.6%)	5 (4%)
The local impact of the legislation (the bill itself or a specific amendment to the bill)	22 (66.6%)	11 (28.9%)	33 (46.4%)	15 (27.7%)	35 (49.2%)	50 (40%)
Congressional Budget Office	4 (12.1%)	4 (10.5%)	8 (11.2%)	8 (14.8%)	10 (14%)	18 (14.4%)
Economic analysis of a third party organization	1 (3%)	6 (15.7%)	7 (9.8%)	3 (5.5%)	2 (2.8%)	5 (4%)

Findings & Discussion

This chapter examined 188 press releases addressing two salient votes. Analyzing for appeals, and for affirmative, negative, and neutral messaging, I found a few significant differences between Blue Dog and Progressive constituent-explaining behaviors. The health care vote illustrated Congressmen's explaining behaviors under intense public scrutiny where pressure to vote with constituency interests was thought to be highest. The cap-and-trade vote represented a salient, yet less damaging, vote to a Congressional career.

Messages and appeals in the cap-and-trade vote reveal the specific tactics of Blue Dogs and Progressive Democrats. Blue Dogs voting for the cap-and-trade bill expressed the same messages at about the same rate as Progressives with little variation. Under the appeals metric however, Blue Dogs cited amendments to the bill and the local impact of the legislation in greater proportion than Progressives. The fact that Blue Dogs expressed more concern with the local impact of the bill and the inclusion of their amendments could be indicative of individualizing activities. Mayhew (1978) claimed that individualizing activities are implemented as a means of securing reelection. However, the tendency of Blue Dogs to cite amendments and local impact of the bill did not hold true on the health care reform bill. In fact, the opposite is true; Progressives cited the local impact of the bill at nearly double the rate of Blue Dogs, and cited amendments on par with Blue Dogs. Since the ability to inject amendments into the health care legislation was restricted, it seems unsurprising that few Progressives and Blue Dogs claimed credit for specific aspects of the legislation. Excluding the occasional landmark, highly publicized piece of legislation, Blue Dog Democrats may use amendments to individualize their work in Congress.

Claiming credit for amendments or for particularized benefits makes voting for legislation less controversial. Declaring personal responsibility for one aspect of the bill, and relating how that aspect will deliver for the district makes explaining voting behavior easier for Congressmen. Where individualized credit-claiming is more restricted (on the health care vote for instance) members either had to engage in advertising activities or position-taking activities.

Among Blue Dog “aye” and “nay” voters, members advertised themselves as ‘deficit hawks’, preeminently concerned with how the bill will reduce or increase the deficit. Aside from a heightened concern for the deficit however, there were no other discernable advertising activities among Blue Dogs on both cap-and-trade and health care. Concern for reducing the deficit is within the coalition’s mission statement, and it therefore seems unsurprising that members advertise themselves in line with the coalition’s primary advocacy purpose.

In reference to position taking activities, it was hypothesized that Blue Dogs would be less likely to emphasize the extension of coverage to millions of Americans, and more likely to describe the impact of the law on small businesses. This hypothesis was derived from the coalition’s concern for pro-business policies in general. Content analysis revealed that this hypothesis is true. Certain messages were particularly salient for each coalition; Blue Dogs emphasized the impact of the health care law on small businesses at a rate of 50%, while Progressives discussed it at a rate of 38.2%. The extension of coverage to millions of Americans meanwhile, was the most salient Progressive message (63.2%), and ranked 5th among Blue Dogs (42.3%).

Excluding these few examples of advertising, position-taking and credit-claiming activities, Blue Dogs and Progressives explained many elements of policy at

roughly the same rate on both bills. Content quantity analysis of affirmative, negative and neutral messages confirm that there were very few significant differences between the most salient aspects of the health care and cap-and-trade bills. With the exception of the Blue Dog Coalition's generalized concern for the deficit, low-content press releases also tended to emphasize the extension of coverage to millions of Americans, denial for preexisting conditions, and the closure of the Medicare Part D gap. Cap-and-trade content quantity analysis found the same result: Blue Dogs and Progressives discussed clean job creation and energy independence at different rates, but each message was still relatively salient in low-to-middle content press releases.

This chapter reveals two findings with respect to Congressmen explaining Washington voting behavior. First, Blue Dogs and Progressives tend to emphasize their respective coalition's message, but other messages are still generally salient. Concern for deficit spending was the primary consideration among "nay" and "aye" Blue Dog Congressmen on both the cap-and-trade and health care bills, but other issues salient to Progressives tended to be of some significance to Blue Dogs as well. Although there are some differences in the rank order of messages conveyed by each coalition, overall there were not dramatic differences between coalition messaging. The individual mandate, help for low-income families, and the establishment of health insurance exchanges ranged in salience for each coalition, but nevertheless were more-or-less salient than other health care policy messages. It can be generally inferred for example, that the coverage for preexisting conditions is a more popular message than the health insurance exchanges. Blue Dogs may favor discussing the impact of the health reform bill's impact on the deficit, but not at the loss of other important mainstream Democratic messages. Low-content press releases were the only instances

where generally salient issues were not addressed; if a low-content Blue Dog statement only addressed one or two important points, it was more likely to address the health care bill's impact on the deficit rather than a more generally salient point.

The mere instance of a conveyed message does not mean that the same emphasis is placed on the message. Unfortunately, I lacked the resources and time to objectively control for this metric. A subjective reading of the press releases as a whole would analyze the amount of detail each press release provided in explaining particularly salient elements of a Congressman's message. However, I had to narrow my research to the prominence of messages alone given the amount of appeals and messages examined over the amount of press releases analyzed. The failure to control for emphasis is a limitation of this study.

The second finding in this chapter involves individualizing activity. As previously discussed, Blue Dog Congressmen were more likely to appeal to their amendment in the cap-and-trade legislation and/or the positive local impact of the bill on a geographic constituency. This finding was only true amongst the cap-and-trade press releases, and was not found in the health care results. It may be that health care represented a particularly unique circumstance. Unlike most bills Congress considers, the public was engaged in the legislative process. Unlike policy debates in previous Congresses, the dissemination of information on the Internet, the resultant mobilization around activism, and the eased communication of ideas were all contributing factors to heightened constituency pressures. As a result of popular political engagement, Congressmen referenced constituent involvement activities at about the same heightened levels across both coalitions.

Aside from the health care debate, which is an aberration in the larger scheme of public political involvement, the appeals to amendments and the local impact of legislation may be more reflective of traditional Washington explaining behaviors. Another limitation of this study involves the sample size of votes studied. For the purpose of validity and reliability, this analysis would need to be replicated to show the same levels of appeals across other salient pieces of legislation.

If Blue Dog Congressmen do emphasize their coalition's message by advertising themselves as independent deficit hawks and active constituent listeners, and if they take positions that reinforce those messages, Blue Dog Congressmen do have a unique collective presentation of self. This analysis has revealed that the message to constituents provided in that unique presentation of self is only significant insofar as only a slightly higher preference for emphasizing the deficit and pro-business issues. The messages conveyed by Blue Dogs are not wholly different from Progressives, but they mentioned at different levels. The difference is between what is generally salient, and specifically salient to each coalition.

Certain messages espoused by the Blue Dog Coalition, most prominently involving deficit reduction, are prevalent among Blue Dog press releases. Accepting the marginality hypothesis under Mayhew's assertion of the reelection interest, the unique brand name of a Blue Dog is indeed one way Congressmen individualize themselves from the majority. Results of this study give credence to hypothesis that Blue Dogs explain their voting behavior differently than Progressives, but the extent of that difference is inconclusive without similar results in a replicated study.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis examined the relationships between the majority, the faction, the member and the constituency. I implemented a historical analysis of conservative factions in the Democratic Party to determine the current political context of the Blue Dog Coalition, and formed my research questions around the theoretical frameworks established in political science literature. I implemented two methodologies to compare electorally marginal Blue Dogs with non-marginal Progressive Democrats to derive conclusions based on Congressmen's interactions with constituencies. Two research questions served as the foundation for this analysis: what are the electoral, district demographic and Congressional voting differences that distinguish Blue Dog and Progressive members? How are the constituent explaining behaviors of Blue Dogs and Progressives different? My overall hypothesis in each research question was that marginality influences Blue Dog voting and constituent-explaining behaviors. The first research question sought to create a context for why marginality would influence behavior, the second question sought to determine differences between the coalitions in their interactions with constituents.

My first methodology analyzed 64 variables to determine the electoral, district demographic and roll call voting contexts of Blue Dog and Progressive Democrats. Controlling for incumbency, I found that new Blue Dogs are elected to

Congress with greatly diminished victory margins compared to Progressive Democrats. Among new and old cohorts of Progressives, electoral marginality was not a factor. Although incumbency advantages members of each faction, I found that the most senior Blue Dogs are not likely to win reelection with the victory margin of even the average new Progressive Democrat. This finding suggests that the ideological orientation of the caucuses in Congress is based, to a certain extent, on electoral safety. More safe Congressmen within the 111th Congress' Democratic majority tended to be more liberal in ideological orientation (as measured by mean ADA scores) and united in party support. Blue Dogs however, demonstrated less party unity, and received diminished scores from traditionally Democratic policy organizations and interest groups. Given that marginality and diminished support for the Democratic majority's initiatives is unique to this cohort of Blue Dog Democrats, I am inferring a relationship between marginality and dissent. The findings section in Chapter 4 even found a slight correlation between 2008 victory margins and 2008 party unity indices.

With reference to the district demographic contexts of Blue Dog and Progressive members, only a few variables were characteristic of each coalition. It was hypothesized that because Blue Dogs and Progressives are elected from different electoral contexts, the demographics of the constituencies they represent would be meaningfully different across several variables. I found that income, age and socioeconomic variables could not be used to differentiate Blue Dog and Progressive districts. I did find significant differences in race variables, where Blue Dog districts tended to be more White and homogeneous than Progressive districts. Differences across racial demography however, may be more indicative of the rural/outer-suburban

context of Blue Dog districts; I will not draw a conclusion about voting behavior from differing racial demographic characteristics alone.

Having defined marginality, and confirmed that Blue Dogs are elected from unique electoral contexts, I sought to examine Blue Dog constituency-explaining behaviors in greater detail. The literature reviewed in this thesis described the many strategies Congressmen implement to explain their votes to constituents. It also explained how factions help advance insular policy agendas, and individualize the Congressman. The literature seems to speculate that factional membership may help Congressmen win reelection. I hypothesized that Progressive and Blue Dog Democrats will offer specific and unique constituent-explanatory behaviors. Specifically, I believed that Blue Dogs would appeal to constituency at greater proportions and offer uniquely tailored messages that are different from Progressive Democrats.

My second research methodology examined 188 press releases across two salient votes in the 111th U.S. Congress. I confirmed my hypothesis that Blue Dogs are more likely to appeal to constituency effects, finding that the cohort cited amendments and the local impact of the legislation more frequently than the Progressive control group. I found very few differences however, among affirmative messages. I found that although certain messages are generally salient across each caucus, some messages, such as deficit reduction for Blue Dogs, was specifically salient among Blue Dog members' press releases.

The results from the data analysis and content analysis methodologies reveal that although there is no Blue Dog archetypal district, the marginality of Blue Dog districts appears to influence voting behavior. Membership in the Blue Dog Coalition is in part related to agreement with its policy preferences, and in part a

mechanism for reelection interest. This finding is consistent with the literature's discussion on the use of factions as individualizing elements of Congressmen's presentations of self. Despite the lack of consistency across district demographics, it appears that Blue Dogs implement individualizing strategies to win reelection. These include gaining particularized benefits for their district, advertising themselves as "fiscally responsible" following a Congressional Budget Office score, claiming credit for specific portions of legislation, and taking positions on salient issues posed by the Democratic majority.

It would be nearly impossible to gauge the exact determinants of Congressional voting behaviors among Blue Dogs without interviews comparable to John Kingdon's work in 1973. However, the analyses provided here attempted to capture the context—historical, political, demographic, and from within the Congress—to voting behavior. It does not take a grand acceptance of the marginality hypothesis to derive a common sense question about human nature: caution and self-regulation in roll call voting is a human response when elected or reelected marginally. The extent to which the cohort then tries to contextualize and individualize a vote is the difference between the Blue Dog Coalition and the Progressive Caucus. As a result of marginality, the Blue Dogs of the 111th Congress tended to be more rugged individualists, espousing Blue Dog and constituency values/appeals in press releases and incorporating independence into their unique presentation of self and home style.

The challenge to the Blue Dog incumbent is sustaining continued electoral success. Fenno (1978) argued that Congressmen engage in a process of expanding and protecting their base. In Fenno's model, the Congressman works to identify supporting coalitions, makes himself or herself known within the district and finds his or her

unique home style. Among these Blue Dog incumbents however, the challenge of finding amicable supporting coalitions is more difficult than for Progressive Democrats. Finding the funding to fend off a well-financed general election challenger is even more difficult. Future research into Blue Dog Democrats could apply Fenno's construction to incumbent marginal Blue Dog Democrats' ability to fund raise.

Indeed, "living on the edge" has its consequences. In the 2010 midterm elections 30 Blue Dogs, over half of the 111th Blue Dog Coalition, lost their seats. In some sense, given the electoral statistics presented in this paper, the loss of so many Blue Dog incumbents seems unsurprising. Many of the members who served just one term may have been still working to find those supporting coalitions, expand a base, and gain notoriety within district. Instead of even having the opportunity to individualize—to present a unique home style to the district—the new cohort of Blue Dog incumbents were swept out of Congress in a year Democrats were nationally unpopular.

Inevitably, this thesis touches on the very purpose of having a majority in Congress. While some political operatives contend that the purpose of majority power is to ensure that the opposite party is not in power, other idealist observers note that the purpose of a majority is to actually govern. Maintaining party cohesion is the most serious challenge to diverse national coalitions. Unlike foreign parliamentary systems of representation, such as that of the United Kingdom, the American system links the Congressperson's reelection interest directly with the interests of the constituency. The member-district paradigm fuels a motivation to promulgate insular goals. Factions exist out of political necessity, and any attempt at a future Democratic majority will

have to address the balance between sustaining a majority through another Congress and enacting landmark reform at the threat of losing the most marginal.

APPENDIX A: DATA VARIABLES

District Demographics

Variable(s)	Reporting Source	Details
Percent of district (i) under age 18, and (ii) above age 65	Congressional Quarterly: 2000 U.S. Census	The age of the Congressional district can help describe the voting electorate. The mean percent below age 18 was 25.5% while the percent above age 65 was 12.3%.
Racial Demography – percent of district that is: (i) White, (ii) Black, (iii) Hispanic, and (iv) Asian	Congressional Quarterly: 2000 U.S. Census	The racial characteristics of the district were recorded to describe cross-coalition variation in racial demography. On average, Democratic districts were 63.2% White, 14.9% Black, 15.0% Hispanic and 4.3% Asian.
Median Household Income	Congressional Quarterly: 2000 U.S. Census	The median household income was examined to determine the relationship between legislative priorities and voting records. The median income across the Democratic caucus was \$40,456. The lowest 25% of district earned below \$34,718, while the highest 25% earned above \$48,743.
Workforce occupations: percent of district that works in (i) white collar, (ii) blue collar and (iii) service industry	Congressional Quarterly: 2000 U.S. Census	General trends in workforce compositions may have implications for legislative support or opposition among House members. An average of 59.2% of Democratic districts were employed in white-collar occupations, compared with 25.7% blue-collar, and 15.6% in the service industry.
Percent of district with a bachelors degree	Congressional Quarterly: 2000 U.S. Census	Education has implications for agenda setting, constituency, and legislative support and opposition. District education and median income are strongly correlated and significant, where Pearson's $r = .704$. This statistic is limited in that it only measures the percent of the district that has completed at least a bachelor's degree. Data related to "some college education" is not reported.

Political Statistics

Variable(s)	Reporting Source	Details
Cook Partisan Voting Indices: (i) individual district index, and (ii) state index	Cook Political Statistics: 111 th Congress CPVI Indices	The partisan voting index is an average derived from Congressional election results of the previous two elections, compared with national presidential election results. The figure that results from this algorithm reports a (+) Democrat/Republican advantage. Cook PVI theoretically measures district ideological orientation. The most Democratic districts were rated at D+41, while the most Republican district was R+20. District ratings were coded as positive for Republicans, and negative for Democrats to illustrate a simple left (negative)/right (positive) ideological conceptualization. Democratic districts averaged D+8.5.
2008 Presidential Election Results: (i) McCain (R) vote percent, and (ii) Obama (D) vote percent	Congressional Quarterly	Results from the 2008 presidential election between John McCain (R) and Barack Obama (D) indicate a district's proclivity to split ticket voting and can be used as a figure to describe district competitiveness. On average, McCain lost Democratic districts 37.0%, and Obama won with 61.5%.
2004 Presidential Election Results: (i) Bush (R) vote percent, and (ii) Kerry vote percent.	Congressional Quarterly	See above. On average, Bush lost Democratic districts with 42.2%, and Kerry won Democratic districts with 57.0%.
House member's victory percent: (i) 2006 victory percent, and (ii) 2008 victory percent	Congressional Quarterly	The House member's percent of the district vote in the 2006 and 2008 elections, among the members who were in the House in 2006 and all the members elected in 2008 or a special election in 2009. Members who ran unopposed were excluded.
Year of election	Congressional Quarterly	Each member's year of election. Members elected in special elections in off-election Fyears were recorded according the year that they were elected to Congress.

Interest Group Scores

Variable(s)	Reporting Source	Details
Planned Parenthood (PP) score, (women's issues)	Project Vote Smart	The PP score was available for all members serving in 2 nd Session of the 110 th Congress (2008). The average PP score for the Democratic Party is 84.5%. According to Project Vote Smart: "The mission of Planned Parenthood is: to provide comprehensive reproductive and complementary health care services in settings which preserve and protect the essential privacy and rights of each individual; to advocate public policies which guarantee these rights and ensure access to such services [...]"
League of Conservation Voters (LCV) score, (environment)	Project Vote Smart	The LCV score was available for all members serving in the 1 st Session of the 111 th Congress (2009). The average score was 92.5%. According to Project Vote Smart: "[LCV's mission is] to advocate for sound environmental policies and to elect pro-environmental candidates who will adopt and implement such policies."
AFL-CIO score, (labor)	Project Vote Smart	The AFL-CIO score was available for all members serving in the 1 st Session of the 111 th Congress (2009), and reflects the organization's lifetime score on labor issues. The average score was 92.4%. According to Project Vote Smart: "The mission of the AFL-CIO is to improve the lives of working families to bring economic justice to the workplace and social justice to our nation. To accomplish this mission we will build and change the American labor movement."
U.S. Chamber of Commerce (USCOC) score, (business)	Project Vote Smart	The USCOC score was available for all members serving in the 2 nd Session of the 110 th Congress (2008). The average score was 58.8%. According to Project Vote Smart: "[The USCOC mission is] to fight for business and free enterprise."
Human Rights	Project Vote	The HRC score was available for all members

Campaign (HRC) score, (LGBT)	Smart	serving in the 2 nd Session of the 110 th Congress (2008). The average score was 82.4%. According to Project Vote Smart: “[The HRC mission is] to end discrimination for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans.”
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) score, (liberal ideology)	Congressional Quarterly; Project Vote Smart	The ADA score was available for all members serving in the 2 nd Session of the 110 th Congress (2008). The average score was 89.6%. According to Project Vote Smart: “[ADA] strives to push for democratic and progressive values and ideals in American policy.”
American Conservative Union (ACU) score, (conservative ideology)	Congressional Quarterly; Project Vote Smart	The ACU score was available for all members serving in the 1 st Session of the 111 th Congress (2009) and reflects the organization’s lifetime score evaluating a member’s commitment to conservative ideology. The average score was 12.0%. According to Project Vote Smart: “[ACU is committed to a] free-market economy, the doctrine of original intent of the framers of the Constitution, traditional moral values, and a strong national defense”

APPENDIX B: CONTENT ANALYSIS RUBRIC

Cap-and-Trade Rubric

Required (*)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Representative*: _____

District*: _____

Coalition Membership*:

A. Blue Dog

B. Progressive

Vote Outcome*:

A. Aye

B. Nay

POSITIVE MESSAGES

- A. Positive Messages & Themes
- B. Creates jobs
- C. New clean energy economy, or creates new industries
- D. Improves our national security because it reduces our dependence on foreign oil. Makes the U.S. energy independent.
- E. Combats “global warming”, global “climate change”, or it “helps the environment”
- F. Express concern for our children.
- G. Protects consumers by investing in cost-saving energy technology to save

consumers money. Also refunds low income families, prevents increases in electricity, natural gas, and heating prices, provides work assistance or jobs training.

- H. A comprehensive energy solution that invests in a number of new energy sources, (wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass).
- I. Helps low income families

NEGATIVE MESSAGES

- A. Cites regional inequalities within the bill
- B. Concern for the offset emissions program.
- C. Concern for the future of the derivatives' market.
- D. Concern that the bill does not sufficiently address infrastructure.
- E. Cites general concern for the economic hardship of constituents
- F. Concern that this bill will adversely affect business.
- G. Concern that this bill will adversely affect farmers or ranchers.
- H. Concern over the Renewable Electricity Standard (RES).
- I. Actually will raise energy costs.

NEUTRAL MESSAGES

- A. "God."
- B. "Historic" or "landmark."
- C. Not perfect or preferred a different approach.
- D. Fiscally responsible

APPEALS

- A. To other constituents, or constituent involvement activities (including phone calls, mailings, local meetings, etc.)

- B. To organizations or lobbies (see below)
- C. To other Congressmen (see below)
- D. To their role in other committees, subcommittees, or Congressional caucuses.
- E. To an amendment or change in the bill that they introduced or would have liked to see (see below)
- F. To previous legislation or a previous independent intervention of the Congressman (see below).
- G. To the local impact (of this legislation, the amendment introduced, or more broadly, a goal of the legislation).
- H. To the economic analysis of the Congressional Budget Office
- I. To the economic analysis of another third part

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS:

- A. What previous legislation or amendment did the Congressman introduce or support? If nay, what would they have wanted to see in the bill?
- B. How did this legislation aversely affect their district?
- C. What other Congressmen are referenced?
- D. What other organizations are referenced?

Health Care Rubric

GENERAL INFORMATION

Required (*)

Representative*: _____

District*: _____

Coalition Membership*:

C. Blue Dog

D. Progressive

Vote Outcome*:

C. Aye

D. Nay

POSITIVE MESSAGES

- A. Extends coverage to millions of Americans.
- B. Reduces the deficit.
- C. Helps small businesses.
- D. Will have a positive impact on middle class families.
- E. Cuts out the middle man in healthcare.
- F. Helps seniors.
- G. Points to other successful government subsidized programs.
- H. Healthcare companies cannot cut coverage for preexisting conditions.
- I. Eliminates unnecessary medical waste (expensive procedures, specialists, etc.)
- J. Better long term coverage.
- K. An individual mandate ensures everyone has coverage.

- L. Does not create a public option, or government-run healthcare.
- M. Allows individuals to buy across state lines.
- N. Covers children with preexisting conditions.
- O. Helps low income families in my district.
- P. Reduces healthcare premiums.
- Q. Illegal immigrants are not covered by this bill.

NEGATIVE MESSAGES

- A. Hurts the economic climate of my district.
- B. Harmful for small businesses.
- C. Detriment to current Medicare benefits.
- D. Hurts seniors.
- E. Implements end of life consultations with doctors or medical administrators (so called "death panel" reference).
- F. This bill is not supported in a bipartisan manner and I hope in the future for bipartisan health reform legislation.
- G. Imposes an individual mandate for health care on constituents.
- H. Hurts middle class families.
- I. Limits coverage instead of expands it.
- J. Adds to the deficit.
- K. Unfair tax burden on constituents as a result of the tax on "cadillac plans"
- L. Will be detrimental to current private insurance.
- M. Need for long term health care cost reduction.
- N. The critical issue facing our nation is jobs/the economy.
- O. Will raise health care premiums.

NEUTRAL MESSAGING

- A. "Cornhusker Kickback"
- B. Abortion/pro-life/Stupak Amendment
- C. "Historic" or "landmark"
- D. "God"
- E. "Death panels"
- F. "Bipartisan"
- G. Medicare "doughnut hole"
- H. Cadillac Plans"
- I. This bill is "not perfect"

APPEALS

- A. To other constituents, or constituent involvement activities (including phone calls, mailings, local meetings, etc.)
- B. To organizations or lobbies (see below).
- C. To other Congressmen (see below).
- D. To their role in other committees, subcommittees, or Congressional caucuses.
- E. To an amendment or change in the bill that they introduced or would have liked to see (see below)
- F. To previous or future legislation or an independent intervention of the Congressman (see below).
- G. To the local impact (of this legislation, the amendment introduced, or more broadly, a goal of the legislation).
- H. To the economic analysis of the Congressional Budget Office.

- I. To the economic analysis of another third party.
- J. To an emotional appeal of a specific person.
- K. To an emotional appeal to a group of people (seniors).

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS:

- A. What previous legislation or amendment did the Congressman introduce or support? If nay, what would they have wanted to see in the bill?
- B. How did this legislation aversely affect their district?
- C. What other Congressmen are referenced?
- D. What other organizations are referenced?

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