At any one point in time, Claiborne Pell--the unrepresentative silk purse, the oddball, the unaggressive campaigner, the low key senator--is not immediately appealing and his success is puzzling. But Claiborne Pell--the patient, steady lawmaker, the dignified, honest and positive campaigner--can be identified and appreciated by voters after a process of repeated interaction and repeated testing.

No single look, no one campaign explains his representational durability--only the cumulative result of numerous looks, and several campaigns over a considerable period of time. Cross-sectionally, so to speak, Pell’s success is incomprehensible; longitudinally it becomes comprehensible--both in policy and in personal terms. In everyday language, Pell and his constituents gradually grew on one another until they had negotiated a comfortable fit. And the same with Pryor.

The end result of these repeated assessments by voters has been

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Beginning in 1978 and ending in 1994, I followed 17 U.S. senators and wannabe senators, as they campaigned in their home states. I also followed nine of the winners off and on for six years as they worked in Washington. My talk today grows out of that research. It is research which developed, in turn, out of an earlier research report called Home Style. To anyone who read that House-related research, my Senate-related research may seem more like a case of arrested development--that there has been, in fact, very little advance from soaking and poking to ticking and clicking. And that is largely true. All I can say is that is the risk you take when you invite an old guy to come talk. (Theo Green)

Thinking fairly generally about what these sorts of participant observation studies might contribute to other political scientists, three things come to mind. First, they might tell us what politicians are like as individuals. That is, they might encourage us to unpack our analytic categories every once in a while to see what the flesh and blood human beings inside those categories are.
like. This is what I mean by "ticking." Second, observation-based studies of working politicians might tell us in the kind of detail that census statistics cannot tell us, what constituency relationships are like at the actual point of contact between politicians and citizens--where the rubber meets the road as they say--in the constituency. This is what I mean by "clicking." And third, observation over time might remind us of the importance of longitudinal analysis--of developmental sequences, of learning, of repeated negotiation, for example. Analysis, over time, might well include "ticking" and "clicking."

The general idea is, then, that participant observation research might produce useful information and perspectives concerning people, place and time.

The general subject to which all this research addresses itself is representation--that is, the subject of politician/constituency relationships. And I want to focus on what I think of as the
Before I tell my Pell and Pryor stories, let me say a little more about the idea of representation—as I see it from over the politician’s shoulder—since that angle of vision produces a somewhat different emphasis from that of more mainstream research.

First, I think of representation as a longitudinal idea. Whatever it means, the idea of the politician as an "institution" is a cumulative idea—an idea about a constituency relationship that has developed over time, as a result of repeated interactions and a string of judgments on both sides of the relationship. Nobody becomes an institution or establishes an optimal representational relationship overnight. None of the one-term senators I followed, for example, was ever described as an institution.
Representation can usefully be seen and studied, therefore, as a process, as a process of continuous negotiation between a politician and a constituency. It is a relationship or a set of connections that changes over time and may be short-lived or long-lasting. Where a constituency relationship is long-lasting, representation should be thought of as a cumulative phenomenon.

This is a different emphasis, I think, from that found in the cross-sectional research which has generally prevailed in our empirical studies of representation. Much of that work follows the seminal study of Miller and Stokes in studying policy congruence by relating constituency policy preferences to House member roll call votes.

Second, because the special vantage point of my research is the campaign trail—and since my first meeting with every one of my senators took place on the campaign trail—my research on representation is heavily concentrated on the campaign and on what
politics of representation, by which I mean a set of interconnected political routines, which need to be studied in order to understand representation. Those routines are pursuing a career, campaigning for office and connecting with constituents.

As a politician might put these representational questions to himself or herself: Why do I want to be a representative?, How do I get to be a representative? and, How do I go about remaining a representative? Studying the careers of politicians, the campaigns of politicians, and the constituency connections of politicians, will help us answer those three questions. And I want to examine all three. But the one I want to emphasize today is the third one: How do I remain a representative? I want to see if I can help explain representational durability. And I want to puzzle over this matter of representational durability by looking at a pair of U.S. senators, and by telling a story about each of them.

Claiborne Pell has represented Rhode Island for 36 years and ranks

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second in seniority among Democratic senators. Fellow Democrat David Pryor has represented Arkansas for 21 years—four as governor and 17 as senator, and is in the top one-third of all senators in seniority. They happen to be the most long lived of all the Democratic senators I have followed. I am going to assume that longevity is the best indicator we have of a successful representational relationship; and I want to ask: How have they done it?

One indicator of their success is that both men—and they alone among the senators I have followed—are described as institutions in their home states. A recent article on Pell, in Roll Call magazine, for example, began: "At 76, Sen. Claiborne Pell is a political institution in Rhode Island." And in 1990, when David Pryor ran unopposed for a third term, his most likely Republican opponent declined to run saying, "David Pryor is an institution in Arkansas. I'm not about to participate in a suicide mission." We might paraphrase my research question as: How does a senator get
to be an institution?

It is hard to say what people mean when they speak of a politician as an institution. My own thinking to date is very general: the idea of an "institution" has something to do with the *solidity* or the persistence of constituent support, that constituents have a *settled* and, of course, favorable opinion of the politician; it has something to do with *trust*, that constituents are predisposed to give the politician every benefit of the doubt in the face of criticism; and it has something to do with the *distinctiveness* of the politician’s reputation and persona, that constituents have a sufficiently nuanced appreciation of the politician to feel they *know* what he or she is really like. As you can see, I shall need all the help I can get.

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Second, because the special vantage point of my research is the campaign trail—and since my first meeting with every one of my senators took place on the campaign trail—my research on representation is heavily concentrated on the campaign and on what I learn in the campaign context. And I see the campaign as making a substantial contribution to the connections between politician and constituency. It is through a campaign that a politician learns about and answers to his or her constituency. Campaigns can create connections; campaigns can strengthen constituency connections; campaigns can weaken, or even destroy connections. Campaigns provide for every politician an updated reading and a MICHIGAN STATE TALK ON MARCH 28, 1995 (3/27/95)-9
test of his or her constituency connections. Indeed, as I see it, without campaigns, it is hard to talk about constituency connections; and without constituency connections, there can be no representative government. So, campaigns, as I see them, are central to the process of negotiation and of representation.

That emphasis is different from political scientists who think of campaigns only as they help us explain electoral outcomes—and who normally treat campaigns as background noise, since they are widely believed to have only "minimal effects" on election outcomes. But even when political scientists focus on campaigns—as in the excellent book by Steven and Barbara Salmore, there is no sense that campaigns are a part of the representational process. I, too, have some interest in how campaigns affect electoral outcomes. But it is not my main interest. If it was, I’d be studying voters too—and I’m not. I want to know how the politician and the campaign affect one another, and what that interaction tells us about the success of the representational relationship of the politician.
Third, in order to think of a politician negotiating with a constituency over time, we need some time-related way of thinking of the individual politician. And that idea is the career. It is an idea that hits you between the eyes from the moment you meet a politician on the campaign trail. That's because the politician is introduced to constituents everywhere in terms of his or her career—with the resume listing the career milestones to date—offices, accomplishments, experiences, honors, etc. And every candidate uses those career milestones to appeal to his or her constituents.

My ideas about the career begin with the work of Joe Schlesinger (and the follow-up work of Dave Rohde) and others on ambition as the engine that drives careers. But when I look at politicians and their careers—one-by-one—I am pushed to ask what is the fuel that runs each particular engine. I want to know what motivations or attractions or satisfactions lie behind their common ambition, and whether such motivations might help us to explain their different
career interests and paths, their campaigns and, in the end, their representational relationships.

My idea of careers carries me outside the main body of career-oriented research—and its focus on the individual’s decision to run or not to run for a given office. I use the idea of career first, to help me think about the underpinnings of a politician’s ambition, and second to help me think about the cumulative nature of a politician’s constituency connections over time.

Let me, then, introduce the two senators with the career question:

"Why do I want to be a representative?"

Claiborne Pell and David Pryor both came by their elective office ambition naturally. Both of them came from political families. Pryor’s father and his grandfather both won election as Sheriff of Ouachita County, Arkansas. And Pryor wanted to run for office as far back as he can remember. (Third grade story?) Pryor’s

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progressive ambition took a classic Joe Schlesinger path—state
House of Representatives, U.S. Congress, governor, senator.
Between Congress and governor, he mounted an unsuccessful primary
challenge to an incumbent senator—his only defeat. Pell’s father
served a term as a member of Congress from New York City and, for
several years, was Chairman of the New York State Democratic party.
Pell says he thought about elective office when he was 20; but he
first pursued a prepolitical career in the foreign service. He
began his political career as a senator; and his progressive
ambition was revealed when, after his first reelection to the
Senate, he launched a campaign for his party’s vice-presidential
nomination. It was his only set-back.

Though similar in their elective office ambition, their ambition
had very different motivational underpinnings. For Pell, the
motivation was public service. "I’ve always been interested in
public service," he says. That is what his upper class family—
wealthy and socially prominent—had always done. Five of his
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ancestors served in Congress--and one was also Vice-President. He has hung pictures of these five forbears prominently in his private office in the Capitol and in his study at home in Newport. He recalls his father's "bourgeois oblige" advice that "when you have been given things on a silver platter you should give something back." His first choice, the foreign service, followed his father's own later career, as a diplomat. For seven years, Pell served as a foreign service officer in southern Europe, before he returned to the states to dabble in investment banking and national politics until a Rhode Island senator retired, whereupon he jumped into a Democratic primary.

David Pryor, on the other hand, was drawn to politics by the sheer love of it and by the desire to participate in the political life. When he was 16, he worked as a Capitol Hill page for a summer; and ever since, his ultimate office goal was the U.S. Senate. "I don't know why I wanted to be a senator--to serve people, to pass legislation or to fulfill an ambition," he says. "But my attitude
toward politics was portrayed in the movie 'Patton.' There is this battle field scene... Patton rides in and stands there is in his Jeep, taking it all in. And then he says, 'I love it. I love it.' That's just the way I feel about politics."

Given their different motivational patterns, it is not surprising that they have different views of politics and have pursued their political careers in different ways. Pell, the service-oriented senator, tends to see politics first and foremost in terms of public policy. His seven word political mantra, which he often repeats, is: "translate ideas into events and help people." For him, ideas come first. Indeed, his earliest formulation of this credo, in his first campaign, had nothing about "and help people" in it. "If you believe in your philosophy of life," he explains, "there's no better fulcrum than the Senate." Claiborne Pell is a cerebral politician, a policy intellectual who writes books about transportation and ocean policies. He has been interested in futuristic and esoteric policy matters--Club of Rome theorizing
about the limits of growth, treaties on the use of the seabed floor, and more recently, ESP and other paranormal phenomena.

David Pryor, the politics-oriented senator, tends to see his business quite differently than Pell does. "Politics is people," he says. "If you like people, you'll like politics." People, not policy, comes first. He recalls his father's advice: "Stay close to ordinary people." Which he does. He is the most accessible and the most genuinely people-oriented politician I have travelled with.

Each senator captures—in his career ambitions—one of the two basic types of constituency connections: public policy connections for Pell, and personal style connections for Pryor. And I think it is useful to talk about constituency connections in their two ways. All successful representatives must eventually negotiate connections of both sorts. But my two cases indicate that the mix will be different. And so may the timing, in the sense that in MICHIGAN STATE TALK ON MARCH 28, 1995 (3/27/95)-16
these two cases anyway, the stronger of the two connections was negotiated first and the weaker one later. That is, the logic of campaigning, as it relates to representation, leads the representative to negotiate a primary constituency of strong supporters before reaching to a wider reelection constituency of weaker supporters.

In any case, on the campaign trail with Pell and Pryor, there is no mistaking the constituency reputation of the one, for the constituency reputation of the other. Listen to the way each is introduced to supportive audiences.

**Pell:** to three Democratic audiences during my 1984 visit:

"No one person in the United States has done more for education than Claiborne Pell. Hundreds of thousands of young people have been able to go to college because of Claiborne Pell."

"Thank God for Claiborne Pell. He’s done more for education than any other senator in the history of the United States."

"He is a man of vision, a man of peace, a world leader, someone who has given us great dignity and made the little state of Rhode Island known around the world."

**Pryor:** to three different groups during my 1982 visit:

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To the Arkansas Education Association: "David Pryor, he is just about the most perfect person I know." To the Russellville Rotary: "David Pryor has something most politicians do not have--humility." To the Arkansas NAACP: "David Pryor is a decent, caring individual. He will still talk to you no matter what your problem is today, just as quick as he would have years ago before he got into state-wide politics."

The difference in connective emphasis is unmistakeable.

Pell’s policy connections began with his strongly liberal voting record in a strongly liberal state. His AFL-CIO and ADA ratings and National Journal rankings consistently place him in the most liberal decile in the Senate. Only his early opposition to the Vietnam war caused a policy problem at home--and that eventually turned into an asset by adding moralistic liberal support to his bread-and-butter, labor-and-elderly, liberal support, and by gaining for him a reputation for wisdom and independence in foreign policy.

For his policy connections at home, the unusually quick start of his first eight years in the Senate were crucial. He was able to...
claim credit—I do not know all the facts—as the main author of national legislation to create the Foundation for the Arts and Humanities and to create Educational Opportunity Grants, as the author of local legislation to create a High Speed Ground Transportation network in the N.E. Corridor and create Sea Grant Colleges for the Ocean State.

The linch pin accomplishment was the Pell Grants for needy students—160,000 in Rhode Island and tens of millions in the country. To be introduced, as he now is, as the "Education Senator" to an audience of constituents waving signs "I got a Pell Grant" is the kind of policy publicity politicians would kill for, but rarely get. It is of great importance to Pell's representational success that he achieved a solid policy reputation very early in his Senate career. The policy career, we might say, got off to a very strong start; and he has fed off it—in foreign affairs and education—ever since.

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Pell's weaker constituency connections have generally involved matters of personal presentation. Every year, his pollster's main worry is that he may have gotten out of touch with ordinary citizens of Rhode Island. Indeed, the great Pell puzzle is how anyone with so many unrepresentative personal attributes could get elected, much less stay elected, in Rhode Island.

He ran originally, in 1960, as an amateur and an outsider, without any substantial roots in his constituency. "I was," he says, "a most unusual candidate. I had no experience in politics. I was not in the mold of my predecessors in Rhode Island. I came out of the woodwork." He was a protestant in a catholic state, a Yankee in an ethnic state, a patrician, blue blood in a working class, blue collar state. In a purely descriptive sense, he was about as far from being a representative match as could be imagined. In 1960, he was a self-starting, anti-organizational candidate in an anti-organizational climate and he won. But neither that nor several other victories have stopped the head scratching in the

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media and among his opponents over the weakness of his stylistic connections. Which Pell willingly concedes, "You know the old saying that you can't make a silk purse out of a sows ear. My problem is that I'm a silk purse instead of a sow's ear. I wish I could be a sow's ear, but I can't." "I'm an oddball," he says. In 1990, he was among the Republican targets and on everyone's most endangered Democrat list. But he won easily.

Not only does he not seem representative--but he is not recognizably skillful at making personal connections. He is a quiet, almost shy gentleman, whose courtly, formal, dignified, old fashioned demeanor, dress and speech seems off-putting in any one-on-one relationship and eccentric overall. Even his veteran staffers call him "The Senator" or "Senator Pell"--never anything else. He does not like to campaign; and he is demonstrably poor at the handshaking, speech making, publicity seeking aspects of it. He is often discomfitted by my presence--asking me to leave when he meets with editorial boards or tape records a constituency message.

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One afternoon, after we had spent the morning together, he was campaigning in a hospital; and he came up to me, looked me in the eye, shook hands and introduced himself. Another time, in the headquarters, he looked in as we were playing his opponent’s ads on the video, watched for a bit, and said, "Those are pretty good ads, whose are they?" Another time, on the trail, as we headed for his media-oriented appearance at the end of a holiday road race, he insisted we stop and take all the Pell signs off of his van. "They might offend people," he said. Not exactly a stylistic match for the hype, hustle and hard ball of contemporary constituency politics.

He displays a similar absence of political aggressiveness inside the Senate, too. Pell’s major institutional ambition has been closely tied to his policy interests. He has wanted to become Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It is an ambition that--once he got on the committee in 1965--became essentially passive, waiting for time and seniority to bring it to
him. Which it did in 1986. Washington scorekeepers who know nothing of his successful early policy career, criticize him for his legislative passivity—naming him among the "worst" and "least effective" senators. They have been especially critical of his record as Chairman of Foreign Relations. Again, as in his "silk purse" comment at home, he willingly acknowledges his senatorial deficiencies. "I talk too little in committee." "I have the uncanny ability for making the most exciting matters gray." "I'm not one of the great leaders, one of the five or ten leaders." "I say let other people have your way." "I'm not a gavel whacker," he says. And he adds simply, "it is not my style. It is not me."

The point I would like to make here is that the stylistic puzzles and the stylistic weaknesses I have observed and have described have been presented in cross-sectional terms. But viewed longitudinally, conclusions may be quite different. His willingness to concede his deficiencies may turn into an asset, as he is seen—over time—to be a person who knows who he is and...
presents himself that way. Or his gradual and successful accession to foreign policy leadership—however symbolic—may have a cumulative effect on his constituents. Especially since his natural and unwavering policy liberalism provides a solid underpinning. In order to understand his representational success, I would argue some kind of career-long story is not only helpful, but necessary.

The mix of David Pryor's constituency connections is the reverse of Pell's. The foundation of his strength is his personal presentational style. His rural, small town background as the son of a chevrolet dealer, and the product of an Arkansas public education could not be more different from Pell's and, unlike Pell, he is in a descriptive sense, extremely representative of his constituency. He campaigns and he legislatates—and he is thought of—as a representative "one of us."

His base of support is described variously as a personal network,
as friends and neighbors and as general store to general store. He thinks of Arkansas as "a family." "I can tell a story about every town in Arkansas." And "I’ll bet I can tell a story about almost anyone I’ve ever met in Arkansas." He relishes the person-to-person, flesh-pressing and story-swapping that produces such support—in and out of campaign season. He is widely known as David. In speech, he refers to himself as ol’ David Pryor. When he fills out his name tag at receptions, he simply prints "David."

He is never uncomfortable in my presence. As he was handshaking his way through a crowd of teachers one day, he looked over at me, smiled, winked and said, "Isn’t this a funny way to make a living."

During one meal in Little Rock, I counted nine people who came by to reminisce, give advice, tell a story, recall a previous connection, talk about a mutual friend. And when during the meal, someone quoted a local manicurist as saying, "The only politician I like is David Pryor. He is one of us," Pryor poked me in the arm and said, "You see, one of us, one of us"—to make sure I get it.

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He needn't worry. Alone among Arkansas politicians, his poll negatives have always been near or in single digits. But the extent of his personal rapport does have to be seen to be believed. As we ate smoked raccoon at the annual Coon Dinner in Gilette, three politicians who had battled against him in the past described him to me. "Everybody loves David." "He knows half the people in Arkansas by their first names." "He doesn't put on airs," and "His secret is that he likes people."

Pryor's behavior in the Senate has the same characteristics as his behavior at home. His institutional ambition is to be accepted in the Senate and to become involved in its political life in as many ways as possible. But he has pursued this goal slowly and carefully---personal connection by personal connection, just as he campaigns.

First, he got on his most important political committee,
Agriculture; then he won a seat on the Senate’s most powerful committee, Finance. Then he became the Democratic leader of a bipartisan effort to improve the quality of life inside the Senate—advocating rules changes and family friendly scheduling—working for collective benefits for his colleagues—as a senator’s senator would do. Then he won election to the party’s third ranking position on the leadership ladder—Secretary of the Democratic Conference. Mary McGrory, in her description of the recent balanced budget tug of war on the Senate floor, described Pryor as "everyone’s favorite senator." But for a couple of fateful twists, he might now be the minority leader of the Senate.

Pryor’s policy connections have been less important to his representational success, I would argue, then his presentational connections. Like Pell, it is useful to think of Pryor as having a long run policy career. As Pell has gone from fast start to slow finish, Pryor has gone from early liberal to later moderate. He lost his early Senate challenge to a conservative incumbent because
he was deemed too liberal. But as a fiscally conservative, budget balancing governor, he began to win conservative support. Midway in that tenure, in fact, he lost the support of the liberal Arkansas Gazette--the state's major paper. As senator, his work on the Agriculture Committee has increased his support among the state's farming community. And, as a member, then Chairman, of the Committee on Aging, he cemented his strong connections with the state's elderly--connections established by his investigations of nursing homes when, as a young congressman, he worked incognito in nursing homes on weekends to find out what they were like.

As for his overall senatorial policy orientation, he describes himself as a populist in a populist state--a stance that allows him to move freely (and less predictably than Pell) across liberal and conservative lines in pragmatic fashion, but which leaves him, still, a moderate, racially progressive southerner close to the centrist side of Bill Clinton.

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His legislative interests are investigative, rather than policy-making, and general rather than specialized. Where Pell is cerebral and patient in policy matters, Pryor is instinctive and restless. He has a very limited faith in "expertise," and a lot of faith in the judgment of ordinary people. His investigative interests flow largely from his relations with citizens' problems. He moves, he says, when "something makes my blood boil," and when "in my gut," I know its wrong. And what is usually "wrong" is that some big guys are taking advantage of some little guys.

His Senate policy career has been marked by a series of investigative crusades--against such targets as nursing home operators, government consultants, the IRS, pharmaceutical companies and the Pentagon--each of whom is "ripping off" the taxpayer, the ordinary citizen, the consumers in one way or another. He calls these issues "living room issues," the sort that can become subjects of every day conversation among ordinary people. In his new book on Bill Clinton, Arkansas reporter John
Brummett repeatedly refers to Pryor as "the President's common sense advisor."

Much as observers criticize Pell's personal style, media people in Arkansas sometimes criticize Pryor's policy activities--on the grounds that he fails to engage large, controversial issues, and that his votes on the big issues are too pragmatic--that is, too much dictated by finger-to-the-wind search for popularity. His senatorial leadership in the fight to eliminate nerve gas--even as it hurt the producers in Arkansas--has tempered that criticism somewhat. And in any case, their criticism points to the less prominent of his two constituency connections. No one criticizes him for his personal connections; and his populist policy stance, while fuzzy, does place him close enough to the electorate to allow his personal constituency connection as "one of us" to govern his overall representational relationship.

The most recent campaign test of these constituency connections

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came for Pryor, in 1984--against his toughest possible Republican challenger--a popular, conservative, three-term congressman, Ed Bethune. Bethune was one of Newt Gingrich’s original and closest sidekicks in organizing the Conservative Opportunity Society; and he ran a classic policy-oriented, pro-freedom, pro-small government, anti-liberalism campaign against Pryor. He attacked Pryor as too liberal and too often opposed to President Reagan--who came to Arkansas calling for Bethune's election and for a Republican Senate. Bethune and Reagan portrayed Pryor as just one more stereotypical tax-and-spend liberal.

Pryor campaigned with the slogan "Arkansas Comes First"--emphasizing his personal concern for the problems of ordinary citizens, highlighting his support for the concerns of the farmers and the elderly and framing the contest as one of personal representational relationships rather than ideology. As he put it, the question was: "Which person best represents the people of Arkansas?"
When it was over, he continued to view the contest as a highly personal matter—not policy, but personal.

I didn’t have any vision or sense of history (about it). I wasn’t thinking about the future or the past. I saw it as a matter of personalities. Our families had been friends; our wives had played bridge together; we raised our kids together. We had been friends, and he was running against me. When I would meet him during the campaign, I would say to him, ‘Ed, why are you running against me?’ He would say, ‘You went to Washington and became too liberal.’

In their one debate, Pryor escalated his highly personal view by framing the contest in non-ideological, highly personal terms.

Ed has had an awful good time poking fun at the idea that ‘Arkansas Comes First.’ Ed has a different philosophy of what a senator should be. Ed is so concerned with graphs and charts and national policy that he’s truly forgotten the real every day problems we face here at home. The election is not about which political party controls the Senate, but about who is the best senator. It’s not about those percentages and charts and graphs and tables you carry around. It’s about you and it’s about me, Ed. It’s about you and me and the people of Arkansas and their seat in the Senate.

And he closed by restating "the real issue:" "Which individual can best represent Arkansas? Who has been the most effective member of
Congress? Ask him what he's done to put his state first."

Pryor campaigned on the basis of his representational strength--his personal connections. He won by 57%. The media people called it a "whipping" and a "licking." And since that campaign, he has been universally described in the Arkansas press as "the state's most popular politician." In 1990, he ran unopposed. And for 1996, there remains only one question in Arkansas--not "Will he win?", but "Will he run?"

Claiborne Pell's most recent campaign test--in 1990--brought him, too, the toughest possible Republican challenger--Claudine Schneider, a young three-term congresswoman, popular and energetic personally, moderate to liberal philosophically. Since they did not differ on policy, and since policy was his strongest connection in any case, Schneider did not frame the contest in policy terms. She framed it, as she almost had to, in terms of his weaknesses in personal connectedness--that Pell was too old, too out of touch and...
too ineffective.

Pell responded, as Pryor had, by campaigning just the way he always had. And that way had one distinctive, Pell characteristic—the refusal of the gentleman patrician to conduct any kind of negative campaign. It was a career-long refusal. In his closest and most stressful campaign—against John Chafee in 1972—he had defined himself by refusing to do it. As he recalled,

The Republicans thought they had me beaten. I don’t know why. Maybe because my opponent—was a very glamorous fellow. I was dull and gray. I was supposed to be gobbled up by John Chafee, but I wasn’t. I would have been gobbled up if he hadn’t made one mistake. He went negative. He was ahead by 2-1 about six weeks before election day, when suddenly he went negative. He didn’t have to; and I never understood why he did. Little old ladies in tennis shoes started coming up to me and saying, ‘I’m a Republican, but you are being such a gentleman by not hitting back, that I’m going to vote for you.’ The big laborers came up to me and said, ‘Pell, where’s your guts?’ I didn’t respond, because I knew they would vote Democratic anyway, whereas the little old ladies would not have. I have always believed that negative campaigning will not work. And I’m proof that it doesn’t.

At the outset of his 1990 campaign, Pell maneuvered Schneider into...
a mutual "no negative campaign" pact. Then his campaign publicized the agreement in the media, and monitored her every move publicly to guard against any negative drift. And when she seemed to be weakening, they put on a classic innoculating commercial in which several people-in-the-street decried negative campaigning as a tactic, noted Pell's refusal to do it and predicted that, of course, no one would think of conducting a negative campaign against such a gentleman. Schneider remained a hamstrung Hamlet throughout the campaign; Pell had successfully framed the contest in his own stylistic terms and Schneider's expected attack never materialized.

It probably wouldn't have mattered--because Pell, all by himself, gave her plenty of ammunition during the campaign--and yet there was no adverse response from the voters. In their only debate, for example, Pell was asked to name one thing he had done recently for the state. He said, "he could not remember any." Nothing happened. Then, it was reported that a loopy foreign policy aide
of Pell’s wrote to the Defense Department saying he had cracked an enemy code by reading speeches backward--thus calling attention to Pell’s eccentric interest in the impact of out-of-body experiences on foreign policy. Nothing happened. It was as if voters had accumulated, over time, all the information they needed about Pell and had decided they liked him and that they would keep him--that no new information would matter. In a word, he had become an institution. And an institution is impregnable both to the attacks of others and to his own gaffes.

In our earlier campaign travels, Pell had wondered out loud whether he might someday become an institution. His predecessor--Theodore Frances Green--had become one, he said, and he had added that he hoped to follow in Green’s footsteps. And so, on the trail in 1990, I asked him if he thought he had become an institution. "I think it has happened," he answered,

I know I have wished it would happen sometime. It didn’t
happen 12 years ago; and it didn't happen six years ago. But it has happened this year. I have been victorious after having run--warts and all, with all my imperfections on display--my interest in the paranormal, for example. It's a good feeling to run just the way you are without pretending to be something you aren't.

That comment captures the essence of his stylistic strength, that he is what he is, that Rhode Islanders know what he is and that they are happy with it. After the campaign, the Providence Journal Bulletin political reporter called him "the best loved Rhode Island politician of his era" and concluded "in the privacy of the voting booths, the quirky, courtly Pell drew from a seemingly bottomless well of good will." That is probably a pretty good rough approximation of the solidity, the trust worthiness and the distinctiveness of an institution.

In Rhode Island, as in Arkansas, the only operative question for 1996 is: "Will he run?"

I can't generalize from my stories of these two small state Democrats whose careers I happened to catch up with in midstream and followed off and on for a few years. But I want to comment on...
some commonalities they share as politicians and as representatives--as these commonalities appear from the vantage point of the campaign trail. And I say that because, from the vantage point of the campaign trail, personal attributes tend to dominate policy attributes--as any campaign consultant would tell you.

So, with that caveat, one commonality among my two politicians is their authenticity. With both Pell and Pryor, what you see is what you get. They know who they are, and because they represent themselves in a relatively unvarnished--almost naïve--way, the voters can know who they are, too. They are the same people at home as they are in Washington; they are the same people in their media advertising as they are in the flesh. There is nothing phony or bogus or fake about their representational relationships.

The cardinal sin of a representational relationship from the standpoint of candidate behavior is, I believe, arrogance. And neither of these two very different men display the slightest touch of arrogance.
of arrogance. A veteran Arkansas columnist says of Pryor, "Unlike most politicians, David Pryor doesn't seem to have an ego." And a veteran AP reporter says the same thing of Pell. "Pell... represents a phenomenon not often found in nature: a politician without an ego." My experience tells me they are correct.

A second, related commonality is the consistency of their behavior over time—Pell being especially consistent in policy-orientation, Pryor being especially consistent in stylistic-orientation. But both men have displayed some prominent long-term policy interests—Pell in foreign affairs, Pryor with the elderly. And neither man has tried to change his presentation of self, either to fit changing times or changing contexts—Pryor has campaigned consistently as "one of us," Pell as the idealistic, positively campaigner. Neither man has come close to self-destruction in any form.

It is, of course, quite possible to be both an authentic person and
a consistent person and be, at the same time, a real son of a bitch. In the cases of Pell and Pryor, since they are anything but sons of bitches, another important commonality is what I would call good character. I don't purport to know all of what that means. I think it combines personal and political dimensions, civility, honesty, kindness, loyalty, and tolerance, for example. I do think good character, or good political character, is something voters know when they see it. And students of voting like Sam Popkin, in his later book, argue that they do know it and that it strongly influences their votes. What my observation does tell me is that--whatever its ingredients--good character--like authenticity and consistency--can only be recognized and digested by voters--over time.

At any one point in time, Claiborne Pell--the unrepresentative silk purse, the oddball, the unaggressive campaigner, the low key senator--is not immediately appealing and his success is puzzling. But Claiborne Pell--the patient, steady lawmaker, the dignified,
honest and positive campaigner--can be identified and appreciated by voters after a process of repeated interaction and repeated testing.

No single look, no one campaign explains his representational durability--only the cumulative result of numerous looks, and several campaigns over a considerable period of time. Cross-sectionally, so to speak, Pell's success is incomprehensible; longitudinally it becomes comprehensible--both in policy and in personal terms. In everyday language, Pell and his constituents gradually grew on one another until they had negotiated a comfortable fit. And the same with Pryor.

The end result of these repeated assessments by voters has been that both Pell and Pryor have achieved a kind of non-political status. Their constituents do not think of either one primarily as a politician--not the kind of politician anyway that the public now so heartily dislikes, deplores and despises. Neither senator is
thought to be corrupt, on any ego trip, or, in either sense, "in it for himself." At least, I have never heard nor read such comments about either. Pell is known for his grandfatherly rectitude, Pryor for his neighborly decency. And that kind of non-political constituent judgment may be at the heart of what they mean when they call them an "institution."

Given all the sample biases that are present, and the very limited, astigmatic view we get from these two stories, these commonalities will not carry us very far toward generalization. Nonetheless, it is worth suggesting—in a time when members of Congress command so little respect—that there are some members who meet a fairly high standard, and that disconnectedness between public and politician is not the chronic and fatal system-wide malady the media and the term limits people make it out to be. Whatever we may think of them as senators, they are well connected to their constituents and have been held fully accountable—as their 1984 and 1990 campaigns demonstrate, I think—to their constituents.

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From these stories, I do draw one conclusion, however, that we should continue to study the problem of representational durability, and that—in part at least—we try to study it by staying close to some number of politicians over a considerable period of time. If I were 25 or 30 years old, that is one thing I would want to do with what I have learned from the Pryor-Pell cases. I would explore some relevant theorizing—not about crucial change point decisions in a career—run, retire or seek higher office—but about repeated interactions or repeated play to help me consider the relevance for constituency support of candidate attributes like authenticity, consistency, and good character which develop over time. I’d pick out a few promising legislative politicians, in as systematic a way as I could, and follow them off and on over a considerable number of electoral cycles to see whether and how they gradually developed and sustained their careers as representatives. Political scientists, it seems to me, ought to be at least as durable as the politicians we study. Which, of course, is another old guy’s perspective.

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