

## **The Logic of Conditional Party Government: Revisiting the Electoral Connection**

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One of the most influential and enduring books on Congress in the last three decades was David Mayhew's Congress: The Electoral Connection.<sup>1</sup> Mayhew presented a purposive theory in which members were assumed to be motivated solely by a desire for reelection. Employing this assumption, he seemed able to account not only for most behavior by individual representatives, but also for much of the institutional structure of the House. The House, it was said, was organized to facilitate the reelection of the members. One pair of institutional features that were deemed by Mayhew to be of little import were the political parties. Their only purpose was to foster the electoral wellbeing of individual representatives, and otherwise leave them free to pursue their own interests.

Yet in the years since The Electoral Connection was published, we have witnessed a resurgence of partisanship in Congress--in voting, in institutional processes, and in personal conflicts.<sup>2</sup> Party leaders, especially on the majority side, have been granted powers that are greater than at any time since early in the century. How are we to understand these events in light of Mayhew's analysis? Did he misunderstand the motives of members and their consequences, or are the changes over the last 30 years due to more complex processes that are still consistent with the theory of The Electoral Connection? In our previous work we have developed a theoretical argument—termed “Conditional Party Government” (or CPG for short)—that we believe accounts for the observed developments. In this chapter we will focus on the electoral connection from the point of view of CPG: how is it that, beginning with electorally independent members, we end up with high levels of party loyalty and party conflict,

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<sup>1</sup> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> See David W. Rohde, Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), and John H. Aldrich, Why Parties? (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

and with institutionally strong party leaderships. We will see that our account is, with just a few changes, largely consistent with the earlier analysis offered by Mayhew.

### **The Electoral Connection Revisited**

Mayhew began his analysis with an assumption about the motivation of members: "Specifically, I shall conjure up a vision of United States congressmen as single-minded seekers of reelection, see what kinds of activity that goal implies, and then speculate about how congressmen so motivated are likely to go about building and sustaining legislative institutions and making policy."<sup>3</sup> He made it clear that he did not think this assumption would provide a complete accounting of congressional behavior, but it was also clear that he believed the electoral motivation to be sufficient to explain most that was of interest.

Mayhew explicitly contrasted his perspective with the electoral theory of Anthony Downs.<sup>4</sup> Downs assumed that parties were the main actors, and for his analysis he conceived of those parties as teams whose members all were motivated by party victory. He believed that Downs's conception could apply to the election of executives, but that it broke down when applied to Congress, and he cited three reasons for this. "First, the way in which congressional candidates win nominations is not, to say the least one that fosters party cohesion in Congress. ... There is no reason to expect large primary electorates to honor party loyalty... [and] parties are locally rather than nationally oriented." Second, "...the typical American congressman has to mobilize his own resources to win a nomination and then to win election and reelection." And "Third, Congress does not have to sustain a cabinet and hence does not engage the ambitions of its members in cabinet formation in such a fashion as to induce party cohesion."<sup>5</sup> From these considerations and others, Mayhew comes to one of his central conclusions, which is most important for our analysis: "The fact is that no theoretical treatment of the United States Congress that posits parties as analytic units will go very far. So we are left with individual congressmen, with 535 men and women rather than two parties, as units to be examined in the discussion to come."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Op. Cit., pp. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> An Economic Theory of Democracy (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

<sup>5</sup> The quotations appear in op. cit., pp. 25-26, 26, and 27 respectively.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit., p. 27.

The analysis in The Electoral Connection argued that parties were shaped by members to serve their electoral needs, not to accomplish policy objectives. "The fact is that enactment of party programs is electorally not very important to members.... What is important to each congressman, and vitally so, is that he be free to take positions that serve his advantage. ... Party leaders are chosen not to be program salesmen or vote mobilizers, but to be brokers, favor-doers, agenda-setters, and protectors of established institutional routines."<sup>7</sup> Mayhew noted that it was often vital, because of constituency preferences, for members of the same party to vote in opposite directions. "In regard to these member needs the best service a party can supply to its congressmen is a negative one; it can leave them alone."<sup>8</sup> In support of his perspective, Mayhew noted that "[p]arty voting' in the House, however defined, has been declining since the turn of the century, and has reached a record low in the last decade."<sup>9</sup>

In addition to arguing that representatives had little or no personal incentive to support their party programs, he also contended that they were insulated from potential party pressure. The principal arrangement that accomplished this was the seniority system, by which the senior member of the majority party on each committee became its chairman. Once this was achieved, the chairman was protected from losing this desired post, as long as his or her party remained in the majority. "What the congressional seniority system does as a system is to convert turf into property; it assures a congressman that once he initially occupies a piece of turf, no one can push him off it."<sup>10</sup> Thus the committee system existed independent of party leaders, and as a competitor with them for power and influence within the House. Members could pursue their electoral interests within the committees, and freely choose their positions on the floor. This was particularly true of the three "control committees"—Appropriations, Ways and Means, and Rules. The first two were the most important policy committees in the House, dealing respectively with spending and taxes, while the third shaped the chamber's floor agenda and the terms for debate on bills.

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<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., pp.99, 100. Mayhew notes that while enactment of a program may not be important, "some [members] may find it important to take positions on programs."

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit., pp.99-100.

<sup>9</sup> Op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit., pp.95-96.

Thus we have a picture of the House in the early 1970s, and a theoretical account for what was seen. Party voting was low, representatives were electorally independent and concerned almost exclusively with being returned to office rather than with enacting policy, and party leaders held fewer powers and were oriented toward serving their peers, with no significant ability to influence either members directly or the committees on which they served. However, in the few years before, and in the decade after, The Electoral Connection was published, the substance of the picture Mayhew had presented changed radically. We now turn to a brief discussion of those changes and the theory that was offered to explain it.

### **Congressional Change and an Alternative Theory**

During the 1970s, in what has become known as “the reform era,” the House experienced substantial changes in its organization and procedures. Some of these changes involved alteration of the House rules, but most were accomplished by revising the rules of the Democratic Caucus, the majority party from 1955 through 1995.<sup>11</sup> While there were many facets to the reforms, and multiple motivations in creating them, the most important ones for our purpose were explicitly directed at altering the institutional balance between parties and committees that Mayhew had described. The liberal wing of the Democratic party saw itself as shortchanged by the institutional balance in the House. A “conservative coalition” of southern Democrats and Republicans dominated many committees, particularly the important ones. The liberals thought that their party’s majority status should produce policies more to their liking, but that such results were being blocked by the conservatives’ institutional advantages, protected by the seniority system and a predominantly one-party electorate who rarely failed to reelect them. The liberal Democrats sought, therefore, to alter those institutional advantages.

Like working with the two ends of a seesaw, the reformers tried both to increase the powers of the majority party leadership and to decrease the power and autonomy of committee leaders. Included in the first effort were moves that increased the leadership’s influence over committee assignments. Democrats’ assignments had long been made by the Democratic members of the Ways and Means Committee, without any direct role for the leaders. This was changed to have assignments made by a new party committee (called “Steering and Policy”), which was dominated by leaders and their appointees. An exception was made for Democratic

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<sup>11</sup> For more detail, see Rohde, Parties and Leaders, Chapter 2.

members of the Rules Committee. The Speaker was given that power, plus the right to appoint (and remove) the committee's chairman. Thus instead of being an independent power center, with strong influence over the agenda, Rules became an arm of the majority leadership. This put agenda control firmly in the leadership's hands.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the proponents of these changes stated publicly that their intent was to increase the influence of the leadership over the choices of members by giving them more control over the distribution of desirable posts.

The other reform trend—the weakening of committee leadership and committee independence—involved a number of facets. One was to terminate the protections of the seniority system. The Democrats adopted Caucus rules that provided for automatic secret-ballot votes on all committee chairs (and for chairs of the subcommittees on Appropriations). If a chair failed to receive majority support from the Caucus, a competitive election for chair could follow. Then in 1974, after the election of that year brought into the House a large number of newly elected liberal Democrats as a result of the backlash over the Watergate scandal, the Caucus voted down three southern committee chairs and replaced them with more mainstream Democrats. The automatic protection of seniority was ended, and with it the guarantee of independence that Mayhew had properly noted as its central consequence. From that point on, even though the Caucus would rarely reverse seniority, committee leaders had to consider the preferences of the Democratic Caucus when they made decisions, and worry whether straying from those preferences could cost them their desired posts.

Another aspect of this reform thrust was to decentralize committee power away from chairs to rank-and-file members. The reform leaders recognized that they would have an easier time selling the changes if they offered their colleagues opportunities for increased influence over resources and policy. The main vehicle for this effort was a set of Caucus rules changes that came to be known as the "Subcommittee Bill of Rights." They restricted the committee chairs' control over staff and ended their ability to appoint subcommittee chairs, who were instead selected in order of committee seniority. The Bill of Rights also granted subcommittees guaranteed jurisdictions, and all bills had to be referred to subcommittees unless a majority decided otherwise. Thus subcommittee chairs were given significant independence from the full committee chair in running their panels, reducing the latter's influence.

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<sup>12</sup> See Bruce I. Oppenheimer, "The Rules Committee: New Arm of Leadership in a Decentralized House." In Congress Reconsidered eds. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (New York: Praeger, 1977), pp. 96-116.

Following on the reforms, the members of the House also exhibited significant changes in behavior related to party. Mayhew had cited the decrease in party voting over time, reaching a low point for the century at the end of the 1960s. Shortly thereafter, however, party voting began to rise. The proportion of roll calls on which party majorities voted in opposition increased from 28 percent in 1969-70 to 42 percent in 1976-76 and to 52 percent in 1987-88. Average party loyalty on these party votes increased among Democrats from 71 percent in 1969-70 to 75 percent in 1976-76 and to 86 percent in 1987-88; the corresponding figures for Republicans were 72 to 76 to 81 percent.<sup>13</sup>

Thus at about the time that The Electoral Connection was being published, partisan conflict and party loyalty in voting were beginning to increase, and the majority party had adopted new rules that undermined the independence of members from the party and expanded the powers of the Democratic leadership. These developments certainly seem contrary to what we would expect from the perspective presented by Mayhew. Why would partisanship increase? Why would members grant to leader more influence over them and over valuable institutional resources? Was Mayhew's description of representatives as independent entrepreneurs focused on reelection incorrect? We don't think so. We argue that part of the reason that Mayhew's theory did not anticipate the developments we have described is that it accepted as stable, implicitly or explicitly, some key features of the electoral context that, in fact, proved variable. The other part of the reason we think, is that the theory in The Electoral Connection simplified a bit too much.

It is a necessary and desirable feature of theory that it abstract from the full richness of reality by leaving out certain aspects, but sometimes even a very good theory will leave out some features that are necessary to predict and explain events. We think that is the case here. Our theory---Conditional Party Government---seeks to modify the perspective offered by Mayhew with some additional assumptions and a focus on some other aspects of the electoral context, and thereby provide an account that is consistent both with the institutional patterns described by Mayhew and with the increased partisanship exhibited shortly thereafter. As we will see, the theory also explains the developments in the House after the Republicans took control in the

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<sup>13</sup> These data are from David W. Rohde, "Electoral Forces, Political Agendas, and Partisanship in the House and Senate." In The Postreform Congress, ed. Roger H. Davidson. New York: St. Martin's Press: 27-47. As that analysis shows, similar increases in party voting and party loyalty were exhibited in the Senate over this period.

wake of the 1994 elections—developments that occurred after the theoretical argument was initially published. First we will discuss the two theories in general terms, drawing out the logic of CPG in relation to Mayhew’s views. Then we will consider some evidence that bears on the accuracy of our perspective.

### **The Electoral Roots of Conditional Party Government**

CPG theory begins with an acceptance of the central assumption offered by Mayhew—that representatives are entrepreneurs that have a strong focus on electoral success, and who are largely electorally independent of the party leadership in the House (although this part needs a bit of modification). On the other hand, our theory departs from Mayhew’s by focusing on insights offered by the work of Richard Fenno and Morris Fiorina. We will see that most of these additional points are mentioned in The Electoral Connection, but because of the nature of the electoral landscape at the time Mayhew wrote they did not receive the prominence that we believe time soon demonstrated they deserved.

The first embellishment is that CPG adopts a broader perspective on member goals. We follow Fenno and assume that representatives (and candidates to be representatives) are potentially motivated by the desire to make good public policy and the desire to achieve and wield power within government, as well as by the desire to win elections.<sup>14</sup> Mayhew noted and discussed Fenno’s multiple-goals perspective, but he argued that “the electoral goal has an attractive universality to it. It has to be the proximate goal of everyone, the goal that must be achieved over an over if other ends are to be entertained.”<sup>15</sup> We agree with this statement, but believing that everyone is centrally concerned with winning elections is not the same thing as assuming that everyone is concerned only with winning elections.<sup>16</sup> Some members, because they have policy goals, may be willing to take some electoral risks to achieve them. Moreover, some issues offer electoral uncertainty on both sides, making an emphasis on policy ends in that situation more palatable. In addition, as we will discuss below, the multiple-goals perspective

<sup>14</sup> Richard F. Fenno, Jr., Congressmen in Committees (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), Chapter One.

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> Again, we emphasize that for Mayhew this was a theoretical assumption, not an assertion about reality. Our argument is that a more elaborate theoretical assumption about member goals permits our theory to explain certain institutional arrangements and member behavior that cannot plausibly be explained by the reelection motive alone.

implies that members will some times seek to structure situations within the House to simultaneously achieve both policy and electoral goals, something that would not be easily explainable if they were only concerned with reelection. We will consider more of the implications of this assumption shortly.

Another elaboration of Mayhew's perspective revolves around the view of the relationship between representatives and their constituencies, both at the individual district level and in the aggregate. Here we build on other work by Fenno, who argued that representatives deal not with a single undifferentiated constituency, but rather with a set of concentric constituencies, each smaller and nested within the other.<sup>17</sup> The largest is the geographic constituency—the legal definition of the district. Next comes the reelection constituency, those people who support the member in a general election. Then there is the primary constituency, the representative's strongest supporters who would back her in a primary contest, even if she faced competition within her party. And finally there is the personal constituency, the representative's closest advisors and confidants. Mayhew made a similar distinction in his analysis, noting that “the congressman must keep in mind that he is serving two electorates rather than one—a November electorate and a primary electorate nested inside it but not a representative sample of it.”<sup>18</sup> He also noted that a member might find that the views of the two electorates are sufficiently divergent that she might find it difficult to hold the support of both, although he did not seem to consider the contrast in opinions in the two constituencies to be a generic problem.

Combining the multiple-goals assumption with the multiple-constituencies perspective leads CPG theory to focus on an additional aspect of constituencies. It is that those constituencies (and, by extension, the mass parties within them) are composed of voters who vary not only in their issue preferences, but also in the intensity with which they hold those preferences relative to other interests. Specifically, the people who care most about issues tend to be more active in politics than those who care less, and also they tend to hold preferences more toward ends of a given issue spectrum than towards the middle. For example, Gary Jacobson has shown that Democratic and Republican “activists” (people who engage in a

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<sup>17</sup> *Home Style* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978).

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 45.



number of political acts in addition to simply voting) exhibit substantially greater differences on a liberal-conservative scale than do the voters of the two parties.<sup>19</sup> (We will consider more evidence on this point below.) Because of their disproportionate tendency to participate, the comparatively extreme opinions of these activists tend to exert a disproportionate influence on the nomination process that chooses candidates. Indeed, activists are often a source from which candidates for office emerge, carrying with them the intense policy preferences that got them involved in politics in the first place.<sup>20</sup>

A final point about constituencies and Congress relates to the aggregation of district-level outcomes into the groups of representatives belonging to each party in the House. As we noted above, Mayhew emphasized that it was often necessary for members of the same party to vote differently because of contrasting constituency preferences. At the time he wrote, a consistent source of such conflicting preferences was among northern and southern Democrats. It must have appeared at that time that the north-south divide among Democrats would persist indefinitely--both in the respective constituencies and in the party contingents each region sent to the House--thus barring any incentive for stronger parties. CPG, however, explicitly recognizes the possibility of variation in the degree of preference agreement within parties, and the degree of preference conflict between them. The theory sees these characteristics as the most important considerations in whether parties within the legislature will be strong or weak.

### **The Institutional Consequences of Electoral Forces**

We can now bring the electoral features of our theory together, and outline their implications for congressional behavior and organization. As just noted, CPG sees a primary determinant of the strength of parties within the legislature to be the amount of preference homogeneity within each party (and especially among the majority). If members are independent entrepreneurs concerned about being reelected, they will be reluctant to delegate significant power to party leaders, for fear that that power could be used to force them into supporting policies (or being identified with policies) that would make them vulnerable. When there is a lot of diversity within a party, the risk of some significant number of members being put in such a position is considerable. Thus they would, a priori, not favor a strong leadership.

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<sup>19</sup> “Gary C. Jacobson, “Party Polarization in National Politics: The Electoral Connection.” In Polarized Politics, eds., Jon R. Bond and Richard Fleisher (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2000), pp. 9-30.

<sup>20</sup> See Aldrich, Why Parties?, pp. 180-193.

This is the insight and conclusion Mayhew offered, and CPG offers the same conclusion. However, substantial preference diversity within the majority is not a fact of nature, it can ebb and flow over time. CPG argues that as that diversity shrinks, members will be less worried about leaders choosing positions contrary to theirs, and will be more willing to delegate power to the leaders.

The considerations related to the amount of preference homogeneity within legislative parties are reinforced by considering the amount of preference conflict between them. As conflict increases, so do the negative consequences to members of either party from a legislative victory by their opponents. That is, if the distribution of opinion is relatively similar within both parties, the policy chosen by the minority party will not be very far from that preferred by the majority, and so a minority victory on a bill will not hurt the majority greatly. If, on the other hand, the respective distributions of opinion are very different, the minority's policy is likely to make the majority very unhappy. In the latter circumstances, the members of the majority would have a lot more incentive to empower their leaders to prevent a minority victory on legislation than in the former case.

These two considerations—preference homogeneity and preference conflict—together form the “condition” in Conditional Party Government. As they increase, the theory predicts that party members will be progressively more willing to create strong powers for leaders and to support the exercise of those powers in specific instances. When diversity grows within parties, on the other hand, or the differences between them are reduced, members will be reluctant to enhance leader powers. This is the central prediction of CPG.

We can see now how the various theoretical elements regarding the electoral process that we outlined above interact to affect the character of parties within the House. If activists who have relatively extreme policy preferences, and for whom such preferences are highly salient, have a disproportionate impact in congressional party primaries, the candidates selected in those primaries are likely to be more different on policy between the parties than if that were not the case. This effect will be reinforced if the candidates themselves are drawn from the ranks of the activists—they are more likely to have relatively extreme preferences on policy, and are more likely to care about seeing those preferences enacted into legislation.

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If the primary constituencies in districts in which a given party has a chance to win general elections vary substantially from one district to another in the distribution of preferences among participating voters, the expectation would be for substantial preference diversity among the elected representatives in that party. This was the case at the time Mayhew wrote, especially among Democrats, but also to a significant degree among GOP members. For the Democrats, southern districts tended to nominate conservative (often very conservative) candidates, while northern districts tended to nominate much more liberal candidates. This yielded much disagreement among northern and southern Democratic winners, creating the conflicts described in The Electoral Connection. If, however, the primary constituencies and party activists across the country became more similar within each party and more different between them, then the candidates chosen by each party would become more similar across the country, and the preferences of the legislative parties would become more internally homogenous and more polarized between them, regardless of which party was most successful in national elections. The “condition” in CPG would be increasingly well met because of the dynamics of candidate selection. The effect could occur, moreover, even if there were relatively little realignment among the mass of voters, and even if there were no increase in the strength of party identification in the electorate.

Let us summarize, then, the electoral aspects of CPG, and how the electoral forces translate into institutional effects. If a party’s primary electorates are similar across the country, the policy preferences of the candidates selected in that party will be relatively similar, as will be the preferences of the representatives in the House from that party. Dissimilar primary electorates, on the other hand, will lead to dissimilar party candidates and preference diversity in the House. Furthermore, as the primary electorates of the two parties become more different, the preference difference between the two party’s groups of representatives in the House will become more divergent. The variations in these forces will increase or decrease the incentives members have to support strong parties in the House, depending on the degree to which the “condition” in CPG is satisfied. With these theoretical expectations, we can now turn to applying them to the developments in the electorate and in the House in the years since Mayhew wrote, to see whether our theory can account for the developments that The Electoral Connection did not anticipate.

### **Applications of the Theory and Evidence**

In this section we will discuss the evidence on electoral and institutional changes, both in the years of the Democratic majority and (especially) since the GOP won their majority in the 1994 elections. The events under Republican rule are especially valuable in evaluating our theory, because they occurred after CPG was articulated and so provide a test beyond the data that shaped the theory's development. The events under Democratic rule are also important for two reasons. One is that the Democrats held House majorities during the period in which Mayhew was writing. The other is that we can isolate at least the major source for understanding how Congress changed from that observed by Mayhew to that we have observed in the 1990s.

#### **Voters, Candidates, and Party Images**

There is a variety of evidence that relates to the electoral patterns prominent in our discussion. The variations in policy preferences among activists and voters in the two parties can be illustrated from surveys conducted by the New York Times in 1996.<sup>21</sup> The paper surveyed a national sample of the electorate, and asked the same questions of delegates to the Democratic and Republican national nominating conventions, who represent the opinions among activists (see Table 1).

#### TABLE 1 HERE

The data show that across a variety of issues the views of the delegates were considerably more polarized than the views of each party's voters. For example, in the most general contrast, 76 percent of Democratic activists think the government should do more to solve the nation's problems, compared to only 53 percent of Democratic voters. In contrast, 20 percent of Republican voters agree with this opinion, but only 4 percent of activists do. The full electorate is in between at 36 percent. Similarly, 81 percent of Democratic delegates believe that affirmative action programs should be continued, compared to 59 percent of Democratic voters. Among Republicans the corresponding percentages are 28 for voters and 9 percent for delegates. Again the electorate balances these two views, with 45 percent agreeing. Over all, the average difference between each group of activists and the full electorate is greater than the average difference between Democratic voters and Republican voters.

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<sup>21</sup> August 26, 1996, p. A12.

Of particular relevance to our discussion is change over time in the difference between the policy views of the two party's activists. While we do not have data over time that corresponds precisely to that in Table 1, a number of studies contain evidence that shows the pattern. The Jacobson study cited above indicates that in terms of average liberal-conservative self-identification, the difference between Democrat and Republican activists increased substantially between the 1970s and the 1990s.<sup>22</sup> The increase, moreover, was much greater than the increase in the corresponding difference between Democrat and Republican voters. Using the same measure, Jacobson also shows that the difference in average placement between southern and northern electoral constituencies declined over the same period, illustrating the decrease in the diversity of Democratic constituencies. Another relevant result presented by Jacobson is that from the 1970s to the 1990s, the correlation between the party identification and ideology of all voters in House elections increased substantially. That is, over time liberals were increasingly likely to identify as Democrats, and conservatives as Republicans.<sup>23</sup>

Another analysis that offers related findings on electoral developments was authored by Morris Fiorina.<sup>24</sup> Analyzing the National Election Studies from 1964 to 1998, one thing that Fiorina found was that, among "strong ideologues" (respondents who were most extreme at one end or the other of the liberal-conservative spectrum), reported turnout had increased. Meanwhile, turnout declined slightly among weak ideologues, and even more among moderates. This is consistent with a growing electoral influence of those with more extreme policy views. He also examined the ideology of activists compared to all voters. He compared the average ideology of Democratic respondents (activists and voters) in districts represented by Democrats in the House, and also Republican respondents in districts represented by Republicans. Paralleling Jacobson's findings, he shows that the difference between party activists increased much more from 1970 to 1998 than did the corresponding difference for voters.

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<sup>22</sup> Jacobson, *op. cit.*, p. 23. The study used the biannual National Election Studies, and the measure uses respondents' average self-placement on a seven-point scale from extremely liberal to extremely conservative.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17. In addition, recent work by Larry Bartels shows that over the last 25 years there has been a substantial increase in the impact of partisan loyalties on voting behavior, both in presidential and congressional elections. See "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996," *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (January 2000): pp. 35-50.

<sup>24</sup> "Whatever Happened to the Median Voter?" A paper presented at the 1999 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association.

These data tell us about activists and voters, but what about candidates? Our theory expects that the divergence between the two groups of party activists, and between the activists and the whole electorate, will produce divergence in the platforms or positions of the congressional candidates of the two parties. While congressional scholars could use roll-call data to measure positions of winners, we have not had good systematic data on unsuccessful candidates. However, in a clever and convincing analysis, Stephen Ansolabehere, James Snyder, and Charles Stewart exploited responses to a survey administered to all House candidates in the 1996 general election.<sup>25</sup> The survey was conducted by an organization called Project Vote Smart, and included over 200 policy questions on a wide range of topics. The authors used the responses, coupled with roll-call data, to measure the (public) positions of both representatives and their opponents in 1996. They also employed the presidential election results in each district as a measure of district political preferences.

One of their principal findings directly relates to our discussion. They say: “One of the starkest facts revealed in our data is that candidates clearly do not converge, either nationally or district-by-district. Nationally, there appear to be two “pools” of candidates, one Democratic and one Republican, and little overlap between the two.”<sup>26</sup> The data showed that, with the exception of only one district, the Republican candidate was always more conservative than the Democrat, and usually substantially so. The average gap between the two parties’ candidates is .47 on a zero-to-one scale. The within-party standard deviations are both less than one third of this average difference. Thus, in 1996, the voters of America were generally presented by their congressional candidates with sharply different policy platforms. This is just the kind of situation that would produce the internally homogenous legislative parties in the House, divergent from one another, that CPG would expect to lead to the support for strong party leadership powers.

The Ansolabehere-Snyder-Stewart analysis produced two more findings that relate to our analysis. By matching the voting records in consecutive congresses of representatives who succeeded one another, they were able to extend their comparison of candidate divergence back in time to the 1870s, at least for a subset of the districts. In this portion of their work they found,

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<sup>25</sup> “Candidate positioning in U.S. House Elections.” (manuscript, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, July, 1998)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

first, that in general divergence had been the pattern during the whole period. Indeed in 1814 races since 1874, only twice is there evidence that the two party candidates had converged to the same position. They also found, however, that there was variation over time in the tendency of candidates to depart from the national party position and tailor their positions to district sentiments. There was almost no tendency in this direction until 1934. From that point, some Republicans began to exhibit a tendency to respond to district sentiments, although the Democrats did not begin to show any substantial amount of this behavior until the 1960s. The tendency toward individual candidate responsiveness peaked for both parties between 1970 and 1974, and then declined, with the decline being especially precipitous among Republicans. Thus during the 1960s and 1970s, congressional candidates of both parties exhibited relatively great propensities to depart from their party's national positions to be responsive to their districts. This would be exactly the kind of electoral behavior that could produce less internally homogeneous and less distinctive legislative parties in the House.

The district-responsiveness of congressional candidates in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by an increasing degree of (national) party-responsiveness thereafter is consistent with Mayhew's Electoral Connection for the former period with enhanced partisan influence thereafter. There are many reasons why this shift occurred, but there is one important source of the shift that illustrates the interplay between elections and congressional policy making.<sup>27</sup> Before the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the South was an essentially one-party, solidly Democratic region. It was also a white electorate with a large, effectively disenfranchised African-American population. The Movement and Acts led to the enfranchisement of African-Americans in the South. By itself, that added a substantially more liberal block of voters to the typical southern congressional constituency. In response, the Republican party slowly began to emerge as a significant competitor, and by 1996, it won, for the first time, a majority of southern seats. As a result, conservative voters, heretofore solidly Democratic, began to support Republican candidates. For Democratic candidates in the South, therefore, they now faced an electoral constituency that typically had a substantial increase in liberal Democrats and a significant decrease of conservative Democratic voters. It should therefore be no surprise that formerly

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<sup>27</sup> See Rohde, Parties and Leaders, chapter 3, esp. pp. 45-58.

conservative Democratic candidates and officeholders would either become more liberal in their electoral positioning, retire and be replaced by new, more liberal Democrats, or lose their seat to a conservative Republican.<sup>28</sup> As a result, nationally, the southern Democrats were no longer as different from their northern peers, and the addition of conservative southern Republicans moved that party's congressional delegations to be farther from this more homogenous Democratic delegation.

So we have evidence that the activists in both parties are more extreme in their policy preferences than rank-and-file voters, and that this propensity has increased since the 1960s and 1970s. We also have seen that in 1996, the pairs of congressional candidates of the two parties offered sharply different policy positions to voters in districts across the country, and that the tendency toward divergence was lower in the 1960s and 1970s than before or later. To complete the picture we need only to see evidence on the legislative behavior that resulted from this electoral activity over time. The most widely used measure of positions in legislative voting is the NOMINATE score derived from scaling techniques developed by Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal.<sup>29</sup> This produces a liberal-conservative scale, with a score for all members of the House in each Congress. We selected two congresses to illustrate the changes in the distribution of voting patterns. The first is the 91<sup>st</sup> (1969-70), the first Nixon Congress and a time of deep divisions nationally in the Democratic party, especially along North-South lines. Then there is the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, the most recently completed and the second consecutive one with a Republican majority. For each congress, we grouped the members into deciles—ten groups, each with ten percent of the representatives—from most liberal (group 1) to most conservative (group 10). These data are presented in Figure 1. The contrast could not be more stark. In the 91<sup>st</sup> Congress, there are

FIGURE 1 HERE

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<sup>28</sup> For more on the building of Republican competition in the South at various levels of office, see John H. Aldrich and John D. Griffin, "Ambition in the South: The Emergence of Republican Electoral Support, 1948-1998," paper delivered at the Twelfth Citadel Symposium on Southern Politics, March 2-3, 2000, The Citadel, Charleston, South Carolina.

<sup>29</sup> See Poole and Rosenthal, *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). They actually developed a number of related measures; we use the DW-NOMINATE first dimension score.



Democrats in every one of the deciles, and there are Republicans in all but group 1, the most liberal group. There is substantial overlap between the parties; both internal homogeneity and party distinctiveness are low. This is the period when the influence of the conservative coalition was high and the liberal Democrats began the planning that culminated in the reforms of the 1970s. In the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, by contrast, there are only Republicans in the five most conservative deciles, and there are only Democrats in the four most liberal. Homogeneity is close to the maximum possible, as is the distinctiveness of each party from the other.<sup>30</sup>

Given these patterns, CPG theory would expect the members of the two parties in the House at the time Mayhew wrote to be resistant to the creation or exercise of strong party leadership, and to tend to their own individual electoral interests. This is precisely the picture presented in The Electoral Connection. However, given the electoral changes in the intervening years and the resulting changes in the distribution of preferences among members of the House, CGP would also predict that the representatives in both parties would be increasingly willing to delegate substantial power to their party leaders and to support the exercise of that power to advance the party's legislative agenda and collective electoral interests. Given our earlier discussion, it will be no surprise to the reader that this is what happened. We now turn to a further discussion of the developments regarding the strengthening of parties in the House.

### **Stronger Parties and Electoral Interests**

We do not have space here to provide a full and systematic discussion of the institutional changes in parties in the House over the last three decades. Rather we will only touch on a few points that will further illustrate the character of what occurred, and help to amplify some points about the role of electoral interests in CPG theory. In particular these will illustrate the relevance of the assumption regarding the multiple goals of members, and the impact of members' own policy goals in addition to their electoral self-interest.

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<sup>30</sup> Indeed, it appears that the 1950s through 1970s are the unusual period. The degree of satisfaction of the "condition" in CPG appears to have been uniformly at or near its typical high point from the late 1800s through about World War II in the U.S. House. There began a period of decreasing satisfaction of the "condition" through about 1970, with an equally consistent return to the usual historical high in the 1990s. It could therefore be that Mayhew happened to write at just the historically most atypical moment. For development of these data and discussion, see John H. Aldrich, Mark Berger, and David W. Rohde, "The Historical Variability in Conditional Party Government, 1877- 1986," Essays on the History of Congress, edited by David Brady and Mathew D. McCubbins, Stanford Press, forthcoming.

We discussed the dual thrust of the Democratic reforms of the 1970s—strengthening leaders and undermining committee power and independence. It is difficult to account for these changes solely from the reelection goal. How was the reelection interest of House Democrats fostered by removing the protection of the seniority system, a protection that Mayhew saw as an essential feature of their electoral independence? What individual electoral gains resulted from giving Democratic leaders more direct influence over the distribution of valuable committee assignments? If the independence of the Rules Committee, which permitted it to block the floor consideration of bills its members did not like, was valuable to the electoral interests of the membership, how are we to understand the decision by the Democratic members to terminate that independence and to vest complete control of the committee in the Democratic Speaker?<sup>31</sup> (And note that this decision was matched by the Republicans when they became the majority.) We believe that these decisions clearly indicate the influence of the policy goals of members.

Moreover, it was on the basis of policy interests that these and other reforms were “marketed” to the Democratic membership (as opposed to position taking for outside consumption). The reform leaders—echoing Mayhew’s theoretical arguments--publicly complained about the way the seniority system gave independence on policy matters to committee leaders, and stated that the rules changes would take away that independence. The reformers contended that they wanted to give the leadership more influence over committee assignments because they wanted “members to owe their committee assignments to the leadership....”<sup>32</sup> Again we think this illustrates the policy motives of members, and supports one of the few direct contrasts between Mayhew’s perspective and our theory. CPG expects that some significant part of the membership, at least some notable portion of the time, will seek to achieve policy outcomes, and not just be concerned about position taking and credit claiming.

We want to be clear that we are not arguing that only issues matter to members, or even that issues systematically take primacy over electoral interests. Rather our theory contends that policy interests reflect one member goal that will be relevant to their decisions in some instances, and which they will pursue particularly if their election prospects are not seriously threatened.

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<sup>31</sup> See Mayhew, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Burton Sheppard, *Rethinking Congressional Reform* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Books, 1985), p. 198.

Indeed, we can use some evidence from the last few years in Congress to illustrate the interplay of the multiple member goals in our theory.

It is clear, for example, that representatives will not generally accept substantial electoral risks, or loss of election-related resources, to support their party's programs or interests. When the Democrats increased their leadership's powers in the reform era, they also sought to build in controls on the exercise of those powers to reduce the personal risk.<sup>33</sup> After the Republicans took majority control in 1994, the GOP Conference sought ways to carry out their pledge to cut the costs of running the Congress. They adopted a reduction of staff funds for committees, but they did not support a reduction of members' personal staff funds, which have (as Mayhew noted) significant electoral benefits. Similarly, the GOP had pledged to cut government "pork-barrel" spending. During the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, policy-oriented Republicans on the House Budget Committee sought to force such budget cuts, but they largely failed because of resistance from GOP members of the Appropriations Committee whose personal electoral interests benefited from maintaining the spending.<sup>34</sup> In each of these instances, we see support for the perspective, assumed by Mayhew and also contained in CPG, that most representatives are independent entrepreneurs who will act to protect their personal electoral interests.

Party Records and Individual Reelection. This is an appropriate place to note that there are always two distinct electoral interests that may be at issue: that of each individual member, and that of each party. Each member wants to be reelected, and each member would like to have her party be in the majority.<sup>35</sup> However, the importance and impact of these motives vary across members. For example, some members are quite safe electorally and therefore they can pursue policy goals or seek to foster majority status with little conflict with their personal electoral fortunes. Party leaders are often in this situation. Furthermore, the relative implications of

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<sup>33</sup> See Rohde, Parties and Leaders, pp. 26-28.

<sup>34</sup> See Gregory L. Bovitz, "Why Did Republican Porkbusters Fail in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress?: Assessing Competing Theories of How the U.S. House Works." (manuscript, Michigan State University, 2000), and John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, "The Republican Revolution and the House Appropriations Committee," Journal of Politics 62 (February 2000): 1-33.

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of the relative advantage of majority status to a party, and the asymmetry in power between the majority and minority parties, see John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, "The Consequences of Party Organization in the House: The Role of the Majority and Minority Parties in Conditional Party Government," in Polarized Politics, eds., Jon R. Bond and Richard Fleisher (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2000) 31-72.

majority status are clearly more salient to party and committee leaders, whose powers and prestige are enormously affected, than they are to rank-and-file members.<sup>36</sup> Thus those leaders will have strong personal incentives to pursue strategies that emphasize the collective party interests.

One aspect of this will be the effort to establish a positive “public record” for the party. Indeed, this effort plays a central role in the partisan theory of Congress articulated by Cox and McCubbins.<sup>37</sup> The idea is that each party’s reputation potentially has electoral effects, so a bad reputation would present an electoral risk both to the party in general (and its chances of achieving or maintaining majority status) and to at least some individual members. Certainly this seems a plausible argument in the wake of the Democratic disaster of 1994, and it seems clear that the concept of a party record motivates some aspects of leader behavior, and is used by leaders in their dealings with members. Speaker Newt Gingrich frequently made reference to potential media coverage of the party in trying to persuade the GOP members to stick together. For example, in negotiating with GOP factions on an appropriations bill just before a House recess, Gingrich argued: “we can go home as having the most successful seven months anyone can remember, and have people have a positive view of how we work as team, or we could lose the bill, with people spending a month saying that we are falling apart. Gingrich added, it’s incredibly important in the fall battle with Clinton.”<sup>38</sup> Also, worries about the congressional party’s negative reputation after the government shutdown in 1995-96 led GOP leaders to make legislative concessions to President Clinton at the end of 1996 so that the party could have some legislative accomplishments to take credit for in the election.

There is also evidence that the party’s image or reputation is not only relevant to short term voter reactions—i.e., in the next election. The kinds of positions the party offers and the actions it takes in government can have more enduring effects on voters’ opinions and

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<sup>36</sup> The implication of this contrast are more fully explored in Bryan W. Marshall, Brandon C. Prins , and David W. Rohde, "Majority Party Leadership, Strategic Choice, and Committee Power: Appropriations in the House, 1995-98." In Congress on Display, Congress at Work, ed. William Bianco \_ (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, forthcoming 2000)

<sup>37</sup> Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, Legislative Leviathan (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 110-122.

<sup>38</sup> Drew, Elizabeth, Showdown: The Struggle Between the Gingrich Congress and the Clinton White House (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p. 270.

attachments. This is illustrated by the work of Carmines and Stimson on “issue evolution.”<sup>39</sup> They argue that changes in the patterns of elite behavior help to redefine the public’s images of parties, and this in turn can lead to a realignment of voters’ party loyalties. The issue they focus on is race—how the national Democratic party’s increasing identification with a liberal position on racial issues, and the GOP’s growing identification with a more conservative position, reshaped voter opinion and changed the South from solidly Democratic to tilting Republican. More recent work has shown that there has been a corresponding change in opinion and attachments based on the abortion issue.<sup>40</sup>

It is clear, however, that the leadership’s appeals about the party record or the party program are not always persuasive to the membership and do not give the leaders a free hand. This is true both when the competing interest is the electoral welfare of individual members, and when it is the policy interests of a party faction. For example, during the government shutdown in 1995, Gingrich was concerned about the negative public reaction to the congressional Republicans. He sought to persuade his colleagues to pass a short-term appropriation to reopen the closed agencies while negotiations continued with the Clinton administration. He was turned down by his leadership team by a 12-0 vote, which also reflected the sentiments of the members of the conference who wanted to win over Clinton and balance the budget.<sup>41</sup> Here the top leader, concerned about his party’s electoral interests, lost out to the policy interest of members. On the other hand, when the GOP leadership tried to resist passage of an increase in the minimum wage in 1996, they suffered wholesale defections from more moderate members, who were fearful of voter reactions after a television ad blitz sponsored by the AFL-CIO.<sup>42</sup> Here individual electoral interests dominated.

National Parties in Local Elections. Another illustration of the interplay of policy and electoral interests involves the national parties’ increased involvement in congressional contests.

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<sup>39</sup> Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics (Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> See Greg D. Adams, “Abortion: Evidence of Issue Evolution,” American Journal of Political Science 41 (July, 1997), pp. 718-737.

<sup>41</sup> See, David Maraniss and Michael Weisskopf, "Tell Newt to Shut Up!" (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), pp. 179-182.

<sup>42</sup> See Linda Killian, The Freshmen (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 343-345.

When Mayhew wrote, he largely dismissed the role of parties in elections, and this expressed the consensus view of politicians and political scientists. Over the intervening years, however, national party organizations have come to play a much more consequential role, providing direct money contributions to candidates and "coordinated expenditures," offering advice on campaign management, and acting as brokers between candidates and PACs.<sup>43</sup> National parties have also become more involved in recruiting candidates to run. As noted, parties desire majority status, and the quality of candidates plays a big role in who wins in a district. However, contrary to the old saying, winning is not the only thing. Who is selected to be the party's candidate will not only influence the chances of victory; it will also influence (if the candidate wins) the positions the party takes and the outcomes in the House.

As one would expect from the discussion in the previous section, many party leaders--given their strong interest in majority status--will tend to search for and support the candidates with the best chance of winning. Other leaders, some rank-and-file members, and district activists, however, also care about policy. They may seek a candidate who will advocate their desired positions. These competing motives can lead to conflict within the party. For example, in 1998 there was a special election in California to fill a vacancy caused by the death of a Democrat, in a district that had had a long history of being represented by a Republican. Speaker Newt Gingrich and other House GOP leaders believed that a moderate Republican would have a better chance of winning the district, and so they endorsed a moderate state legislator. This effort ran into opposition from local conservative activists as well as conservative members of the California GOP House delegation. The conservatives succeeded in defeating Gingrich's candidate, but their standard bearer lost to the Democrat in the election.<sup>44</sup>

The competition between electoral and policy interests has continued into the 2000 elections--not surprising given the narrow majority held by the Republicans. For example, House leaders became involved on both sides of a primary contest between two former GOP representatives seeking the right to try to take back a New Jersey district from the Democrat who had defeated one of them. Speaker Dennis Hastert and the head of the Republican Congressional

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<sup>43</sup> See Paul Herrnson, Congressional Elections, 2d. ed. (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 1998), especially Chapter 4, and Gary C. Jacobson, The Politics of Congressional Elections (New York: Longman, 1997).

<sup>44</sup> For more details, see Paul R. Abramson, John H. Aldrich, and David W. Rohde, Change and Continuity in the 1996 and 1998 Elections (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 1999): p. 263.

Campaign Committee, Tom Davis, backed the more moderate candidate, while Majority Leader Dick Armey and Majority Whip Tom DeLay backed the conservative who had been beaten in 1998. Like the California case in 1998, this dispute revolved around ideology versus greater chances of victory. Like the California race in 1998, the speaker and his allies were most interested in who could win the district and help hold the Republicans house majority, while the more conservative leaders emphasized ideological considerations. Together they illustrate that the candidate selection process is influenced by policy goals as well as by the desire for electoral victory for the party.

### **Effects Within the House: When The Electoral Connection is Insufficient**

As is always the case with alternative theories of political phenomena, the ultimate question is which one better accounts for what we observe in the real world. Both Mayhew's theory and CPG try to explain the legislative organization of the House by beginning with the perspective of members as independent electoral entrepreneurs seeking to protect their chances of reelection. The main difference between the two perspectives is that CPG sees members as also motivated by their desire to influence policy outcomes, partly for electoral reasons (such as in response to pressures from activists) and partly because of their own policy preferences. Mayhew's theory does not share this view. He is explicit that members do not care about policy outcomes, and that their activities related to policy are limited to position taking. So then, are there salient aspects to the legislative organization of the House that CPG can account for while Mayhew's theory does not? This returns us to some aspects of the reform effort of the 1970s that we discussed earlier, and to subsequent developments along the same line during the Republican takeover of the House in 1994.

We can consider only a few salient examples, confining our attention to two features of House organization that Mayhew cited as particularly important: committee assignments and the seniority system. These were noted earlier but are considered here in the context of examining the (relatively few) areas in which Mayhew's theory yields different expectations than ours. Thus, here we want to pursue explicitly the question we asked earlier: can we understand the developments in the House regarding these features solely from the motivations outlined in The Electoral Connection? For example, Mayhew argued that committees are central to the electoral interests of members. They are "structural units" that provide important opportunities for credit-claiming and position-taking, two of the central activities for fostering reelection. Thus--as we

would expect from Mayhew's theory--both parties until the 1970s had long vested committee assignment responsibilities in committees that offered party leaders little opportunity for influencing the allocation of this most valuable commodity.

As we noted above, this changed under the Democratic reforms. In 1975, the year a large class of Democrats were elected in the wake of the Watergate scandal, the power to make committee had been transferred to the party's Steering and Policy Committee. Where previously the influence of party leaders on assignments was small and indirect, now half of the members of this committee were elected party leaders or members appointed by the speaker. In 1986, the Republicans also moved in this direction. Previously, GOP assignments were made by a committee on committees which had one member from each state with Republicans in the House, plus the elected party leader. Each committee member had as many votes as there were Republican members from her state, while the leader had only one vote. Thus the leadership had little influence and the process was dominated by big states. In 1986, the party adopted a new system, with a committee of 21 members. As before, the regular members cast multiple votes based on their state delegations, but now the party leader and whip had twelve and six votes respectively, substantially increasing their influence.<sup>45</sup>

In 1994, immediately after achieving majority status, the Republicans went much further. Prospective speaker Gingrich personally designed a new assignment committee of 25 members with a total of 30 votes. Only two committee members had more than one vote: Gingrich with five and Majority Leader Armev with two.<sup>46</sup> Thus in eight years the Republicans had made the influence of their leadership over assignments progressively stronger, increasing their voting strength of the top two leaders from less than 1 percent to 23 percent of the votes, and seeking the second of these increases in their new status as incoming majority party. We cannot explain either party's change toward more centralized party leadership over committee assignments based solely on the reelectoral incentive of individual entrepreneurs. This increasing control, in the context of increasing intra-party homogeneity and inter-party divergence, is just what CPG theory leads us to hypothesize.

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<sup>45</sup> See Rohde, *Parties and Leaders*, pp. 24, 77, and 137.

<sup>46</sup> See John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, "The Transition to Republican Rule in the House: Implications for Theories of Congressional Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 112 (Winter 1997-98): 554-55.



Moreover, we must emphasize again the special case of the Rules Committee. Mayhew emphasized the importance of this Committee to members, because it controlled the flow of legislation to the floor, and it determined the time and procedures of debate on that legislation. As Mayhew noted, an independent Rules Committee could keep from the floor bills on which the members did not want to be forced to take positions.<sup>47</sup> However, as we discussed, the Democrats altered this arrangement by granting their party leader power to choose all Democratic members of rules, including the chair, and to remove them with the agreement of the party caucus. Later the Republicans gave the power to appoint the GOP Rules members to their party leader as well. In 1994, the Republicans confirmed this power under majority status.

Finally, consider again the seniority system. As we noted, Mayhew saw the protection of this system as central to the independence of members from party pressure, because of the "property right" to committee membership and the guarantee of ever increasing value of membership that the system guaranteed. Yet the Democratic members during the 1970s systematically and voluntarily altered the seniority system, terminating its automatic nature. No longer did they have the certain property right; chairmen served at the sufferance of the party caucus. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that this reform had its desired effect. Research shows that the voting behavior of chairmen and those close in seniority to the job demonstrated increased party loyalty after the change.<sup>48</sup> For example, the party loyalty score of Jamie Whitten of Mississippi (chair of Appropriations) went from 39 points below the average for all Democrats in 1975-76 to two points higher than the average in 1987-88.<sup>49</sup>

As with committee assignments, the Republicans further altered the seniority arrangements when they took over in 1994. Within a week after the election, Gingrich simply asserted the right to choose chairmen of major committees without any formal alteration of the party or House rules, and even before most of the newly elected members could get to Washington. The GOP members accepted this assertion of authority. On three major committees--Appropriations, Commerce, and Judiciary--Gingrich bypassed more senior

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<sup>47</sup> Op. cit., pp. 150-52.

<sup>48</sup> See Sara Brandes Crook and John R. Hibbing, "Congressional Reform and Party Discipline: The Effects of Changes in the Seniority System on Party Loyalty in the House of Representatives." British Journal of Political Science 15 (1985): 207-26.

<sup>49</sup> Rohde, Parties and Leaders, p. 76.

members to choose a chairman he preferred and who would be responsive to the leadership. In fact, on Appropriations he skipped the four most senior members to choose Robert Livingston of Louisiana. Appropriations was to be a major vehicle for the party to accomplish its policy objectives, so it was particularly important to have the right chair.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, when the new congress convened, Gingrich compelled Republican members of Appropriations "to sign a 'letter of fidelity.' [It] pledged the members to cut the budget as much as Gingrich wanted."<sup>51</sup> This is a long way from the parties of the 1970s in Mayhew's account, which simply left members alone to make their own decisions.

The point of these examples, and many others that could be taken from the Democratic reform period or the Republican majority, is that members voluntarily adopted rules that removed some of their electoral independence from their parties. They also gave powers to the party leadership that could be used to pressure those same members to follow what the party wanted. These changes in the House are, we think, not explainable within a framework that only recognizes reelection as a motive of members. Such developments are understandable, however, from the perspective of conditional party government, with its emphasis on the interplay of electoral and policy goals for members and on the electoral and institutional effects of the polarization of American politics.

### **Conclusion**

We want to emphasize that we do not offer this discussion, or our theory more generally, as a rejection of Mayhew's analysis in The Electoral Connection. Rather we see it as an extension and elaboration. Both theories share the view that representatives are strongly motivated by the desire for reelection, and that that interest shapes the organizational structure of the House and of its parties. The main points of difference are CPG's emphasis on the consequences of the multiple constituencies members have (particularly the impact of activists), on the variability of preference agreement within and between parties, and on the assumption that representatives maintain and pursue both electoral and policy goals. These amplifications permit us to understand and explain important developments that are not comprehensible from the reelection motive alone. Conditional party government's combination of electoral and policy

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<sup>50</sup> Aldrich and Rohde, "The Transition to Republican Rule...", pp. 548-50.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Rosentiel, "Why Newt is No Joke," Newsweek, April 10, 1995, p. 26.

goals, linked through the electoral connection, provides (we believe) a more complete account of the legislative organization of Congress and the behavior of its members.

Finally, the reader might wonder what the future holds with regard to conditional party government. That is, will the patterns our theory describes--internally homogeneous and polarized parties with empowered leaderships--continue to hold.<sup>52</sup> As we hope our presentation here has made clear, this will depend on the degree to which the antecedent conditions of which these patterns are the consequence continue to hold. Will the electorate continue to be polarized along partisan lines on major issues? Will that polarization continue to be reinforced by the even more extreme polarization among party activists who dominate the nomination process? And finally, will the personal (and often intense) policy preferences of a significant portion of the congressional membership continue to further exacerbate the polarization of the parties? The answer to these questions, while not certain, seems to us likely to be yes.

By far the most likely way that the electoral roots of CPG can be undermined is if one or more issues emerge that are highly salient to voters and activists, and that cut across the parties and divide them the way race did to the Democrats for so many years. This would produce the overlapping preference distributions that characterized the parties from the late 1930s until the late 1970s. There does not, however, seem to be an issue on the horizon that would have this effect. Alternatively, polarization between the parties could be reduced by changes in the rules or context that de-emphasized the influence of activists. Failing those developments, the homogeneity and divergence that the parties have exhibited for the last two decades should continue, and in turn, so should the willingness of members to empower their party leaderships in order to advance the party's policy agenda. These patterns should, moreover, be reinforced as long as the partisan division of the two chambers is close, and control in the next election remains seriously in doubt. The electoral roots of conditional party government have been in place for at least 20 years, and the expected consequences in terms of the legislative organization of the House have held, with some variation, throughout that time, including the "post-revolutionary"

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<sup>52</sup> This question has been raised, for example, by Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, "Congress and the Emerging Order: Conditional Party Government or Constructive Partisanship?" In Congress Reconsidered, 6th ed., Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1997): 390-413.

105th and 106th congresses.<sup>53</sup> We see no reason to expect that these patterns will change in the foreseeable future.

**TABLE 1**  
**POLICY OPINIONS AMONG VOTERS AND ACTIVISTS, 1996**

	<u>Dem.</u> <u>Delegates</u>	<u>Dem.</u> <u>Voters</u>	<u>All</u> <u>Voters</u>	<u>GOP</u> <u>Voters</u>	<u>GOP</u> <u>Delegates</u>
Government should do more to:					
solve the nation's problems	76	53	36	20	4
regulate the environment and safety practices of businesses	60	66	53	37	4
promote traditional values	27	41	42	44	56
Abortion should be permitted in all cases	61	30	27	22	11
Favor a nationwide ban on assault weapons	91	80	72	62	34
Necessary to have laws to protect racial minorities	88	62	51	39	30

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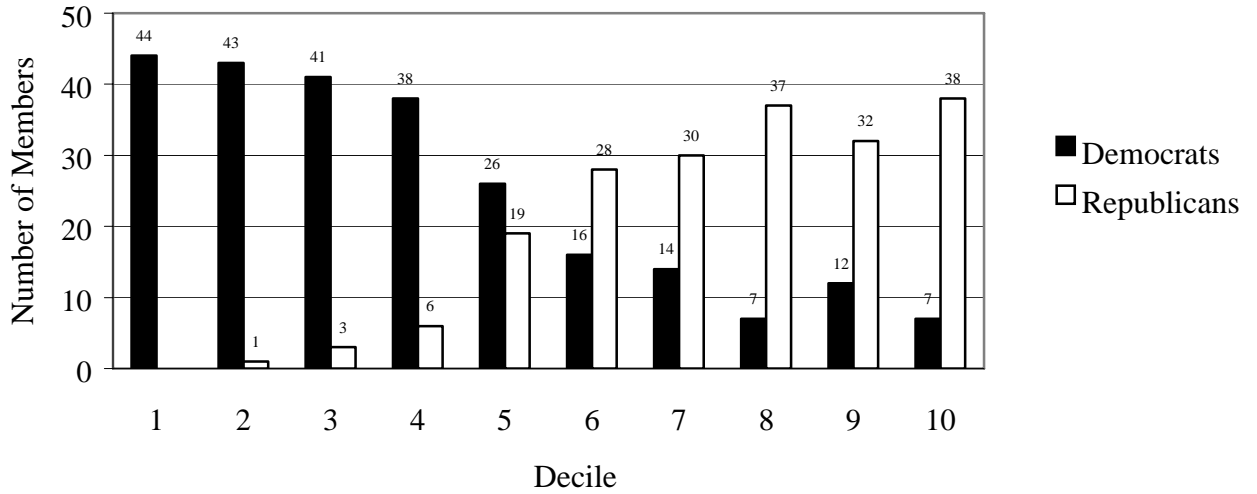
<sup>53</sup> See Marshall, Prins, and Rohde, "Majority Party Leadership, Strategic Choice, and Committee Power...", *op. cit.*; and Aldrich and Rohde, "The Consequences of Party Organization in the House...", *op. cit.*

Affirmative action programs should be continued	81	59	45	28	9
Children of illegal immigrants should be allowed to attend public school	54	65	60	56	31

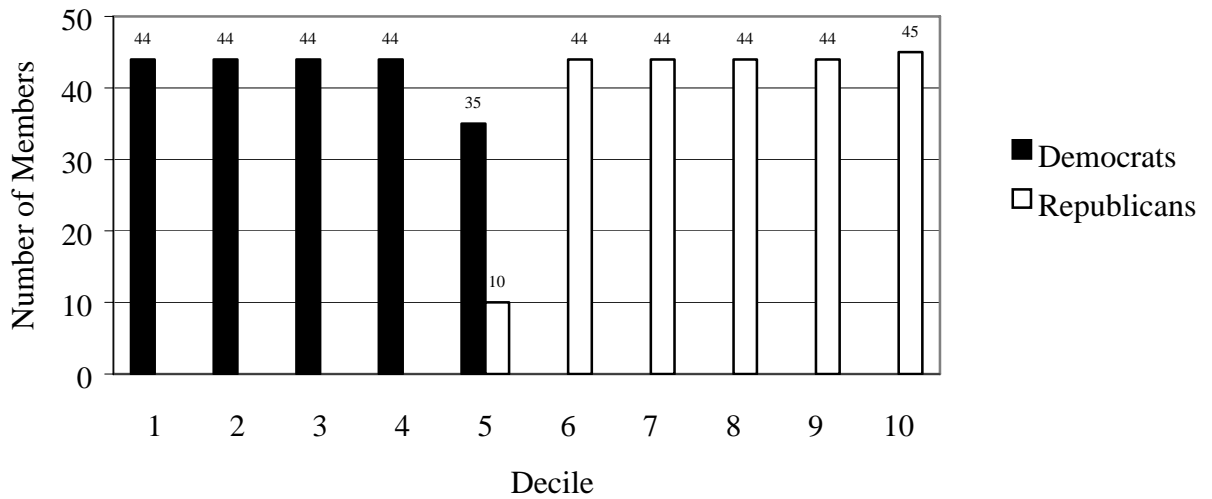
Source: the New York Times, August 26, 1996, p. A12.

**Figure 1**

**1st Dimension DW-Nominate Scores  
(91st Congress)**



**1st Dimension DW-Nominate Scores  
(105th Congress)**





In the United States, a contingent election is the procedure used to elect the President or Vice President in the event that no candidate for one or both of these offices wins an absolute majority of votes in the Electoral College. A contingent election for the President is decided by a vote of the United States House of Representatives, while a contingent election for the Vice President is decided by a vote of the United States Senate. During a contingent election, each House state delegation casts