FORREST MALTZMAN
George Washington University
STEVEN S. SMITH
University of Minnesota

Principals, Goals, Dimensionality, and Congressional Committees

We argue that committee members are best viewed as agents of multiple principals—their parent chamber and parties, as well as external constituencies. We propose improvements in measuring the relationship between the policy positions of committees, parties, and parent chambers. We find predictable variation across committees and across issues within committee jurisdictions in this relationship. We conclude by making some observations about future directions for research in this area.

Three issues distinguish recent positive theories of congressional institutions from each other (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Krehbiel 1991; Weingast and Marshall 1988). The first issue is the identity of the principals for whom standing committee members serve as agents. (The focus on committees and their members is natural because committees occupy a special place in the decision-making process.) The possible principals include district constituents, the parent chamber, and the parent parties (or at least the median voter within each party).

The second issue is motivation or goals. Reasonable motivations for the various principals have been proposed. Constituents seek federal benefits (Weingast and Marshall 1988), the typical member in the parent chamber seeks to reduce uncertainty about policy outcomes (Krehbiel 1991), and party leaders seek to protect or enhance the reputation of the party (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991). Committee members seek reelection (Weingast and Marshall 1988), policy choices (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991), or policy outcomes (Krehbiel 1991).

The third issue is political dimensionality. The complexity of the issues and the presence of cross-cutting majorities are problems for any set of principals—constituents, chamber colleagues, or party colleagues. Problems that beset collective action by these groups are com-

pounded by problems of majority-rule cycling whenever the political space is characterized by two or more dimensions.

We wish to draw attention back to the sources of variation in relations between committees, parties, and the parent chambers. After noting important sources of variation across committees and the theoretical difficulties those sources create, we outline several propositions about these sources of variation and report some new evidence that lends support to the propositions. We conclude by expanding upon Shepsle and Weingast's (1994) discussion of problems in the evolving theory of congressional institutions and suggest subjects to be addressed in the future.

Revisiting Some Propositions about Congressional Committees

Only two decades ago, it seems fair to say, most congressional scholars would have agreed on three propositions: members have multiple goals; committees operate in complex environments, in which their members have multiple principals; and the policy space within which Congress and committees operate is multidimensional. On balance, subsequent research appears to have reinforced the validity of these generalizations. The proposition of multidimensionality has been attacked with meaningful data, but the case for a strictly unidimensional interpretation of congressional politics remains weak.

Nevertheless, nearly all recent positive theories assume that one or more of these basic propositions is wrong or irrelevant. Such assumptions may account for much of the resistance to these new arguments among more traditional political scientists. More than one's taste for theoretical parsimony or hunches about the real Congress are at issue, however. The complications of multiple goals, multiple principals, and multiple dimensions threaten the viability of the principal-agent theories offered so far.

Consider multiple goals. Two goals—good public policy and reelection—appear to be widely held (Bullock 1976; Fenno 1973; Smith and Deering 1990). In fact, in certain kinds of legislative activity, they are pursued jointly and are viewed as compatible (Smith 1990). Yet, the presence of multiple goals greatly affects the viability of the existing theories. In the party theory of Cox and McCubbins (1993) and Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991), the reelection goal motivates members to be concerned about party reputation and to license leaders to take actions to preserve or enhance party reputation. Just how much members would condition this license if they disagreed

with the policy stances of their leaders is left indeterminant. Similarly, Krehbiel's information theory turns critically on the assumption that members care about policy outcomes. As Krehbiel argues, uncertainty about policy outcomes may lead legislators to prefer information about numerous policy options from the diverse membership of a committee. But uncertainty about reelection prospects may lead legislators to prefer a less diverse committee that keeps politically dangerous issues off the floor. The net effect of outcome-oriented and reelection-oriented strategies on committee composition is indeterminant.

Multiple sets of principals create similar theoretical problems. First, let us note how tempting it is to identify an ultimate principal for congressional committees. All rules governing the House are established by floor majorities, so it is natural to conclude that committees are created, their jurisdictions and powers set, and their products crafted to meet the needs of the parent chamber. And yet committees are composed of members who are subject to influences that, at least in the short or medium term, are not manipulated by the parent chamber—home constituencies, congressional parties, and so on. If committee members may be required to balance competing demands, their behavior cannot be predicted on the basis of the expectations of any one set of principals. Variation across committees and across time in the mix of goal-relevant demands further undermines simple models.

Finally, multidimensionality greatly complicates principal-agent relations. Shepsle and Weingast's (1994) most telling argument is that multidimensional policy spaces make it highly unlikely that a single member or group will hold a median position in the parent chamber or within either party. Without such a median member or group, there is no clear majority preference about institutional arrangements, policies, or policy outcomes for a chamber or party. And without a predictable majority preference, the expectations of the principal cannot be defined, at least not narrowly.

Multidimensionality complicates matters in other ways as well. Most obviously, multidimensionality infects committee deliberations just as it does the deliberations of the parent chambers and parties. If more than one dimension is subject to legislation from a committee, even the committee's behavior is unstable. Why would any principal license agents whose behavior is so unpredictable? Why would committee members be motivated to specialize or to seek any gains from trade when their own committee's policy choices are so unpredictable?

Sources of Variation

It may by now seem unlikely that a coherent principal-agent theory of congressional committees could capture their variation and their complexity in goals, principals, and dimensionality. But Congress may not exhibit all the variation and complexity that is possible. We must begin by developing and testing theories about that variation and complexity.

What causes potential principals to vary in importance for committee members? We have summarized some of the relevant considerations elsewhere (Smith and Deering 1990, 169–73; Maltzman 1993): the character of the issue agenda, the alignment of policy preferences among members, and the inherited institutional arrangements. Some discussion of these sources is in order.

Over its history as Congress enlarged its policy agenda it continuously elaborated its committee systems, the basic means for dividing labor and increasing its capacity to process legislation. New issues have sometimes been sufficiently distinctive that their jurisdiction could be assigned to a single committee in each house. But, particularly with the increasing integration of national and international society in the twentieth century, new issues have not always fallen neatly within established jurisdictions, creating conflict among committees, sometimes producing slow and incoherent policy making, and generating interest in reform.

Furthermore, the dimensionality and partisanship of policy alignments have varied. Highly partisan alignments have followed dramatic shifts in the coalitions supporting the two major parties, shifts that have been labeled realignments. The realignments have been associated with a change in the dimensionality of political divisions as well (Sundquist 1973). The timing of these realignments—in the Civil War years, the 1890s, and the 1930s—has given congressional partisanship a cyclical cast that contrasts sharply with the more monotonic increases in the size and complexity of the congressional agenda. Thus, a pattern of periodically centralized party leadership appears to overlay a more linear trend toward more elaborate committee systems.

While the House and Senate have been subject to similar changes in the agenda and policy alignments, they have evolved different decision rules that affect the ability of each chamber to change its institutional arrangements. In the Senate, where there is more tolerance of individual initiative and obstructionism and more resistance to committee-imposed or party-imposed policy choices, the decision

rules make change in institutional arrangements more difficult than do the decision rules of the House.

This brief discussion suggests that the relative importance of the various principals—home constituencies, party, the parent chamber—is likely to differ across committees and vary over time. Theorists seeking to account for such things as floor procedures, the power of party leaders, and committee assignment processes and outcomes must confront this variation. We suspect, as Fenno does, that the principal-agent relations shaping each committee's behavior varies in predictable ways.

In this preliminary effort, we restrict our attention to the House and to the effects of just three factors—issue salience, partisanship, and dimensionality—from among the many properties of issue agendas and preference alignments that are likely to influence each committee's relations with its parent chamber and parties. Issue salience affects the identity of the members who care to influence policy choices or outcomes. Partisanship affects the willingness of members to draw upon party organs to control committees. Dimensionality affects the ability of the parent parties and chamber to exercise control over committees.

Specifically, we test two hypotheses. First, when issues are unidimensional and are salient to most members but partisanship is low, the chamber-committee relationship dominates and chamber-committee congruence in expressed preferences is especially high. Second, when issues are multidimensional and are not salient to most members, committees are relatively autonomous and congruences in expressed preferences between chamber and committee and between party and committee are low.

We look for confirming and disconfirming data for these hypotheses in the roll-call record on legislation from three House committees: Agriculture, Appropriations, and Energy and Commerce. Agriculture has jurisdiction over issues that lack broad salience, so its members should exhibit less congruity with the parent chamber and parties. Appropriations has a diverse jurisdiction that is not likely to produce unidimensional alignments; we expect low congruity on some of those dimensions. Energy and Commerce is the major authorizing committee of the House, with jurisdiction over issues that are usually salient to most members; its members should be largely congruent with the expressed preferences of their parent parties and chamber. We view the analysis of these three committees as a weak basis for generalization to all House committees. Nevertheless, the analysis will illustrate a new direction of building theory and empirical research.

Data

We turn to the roll-call record to explore the degree of congruity in expressed policy preferences suggested by our hypotheses. In our use of the roll-call record, we seek to avoid two limitations inherent in the measures employed by Krehbiel and by McCubbins and his colleagues (see Fowler 1982; Snyder 1992a, 1992b; Hall and Grofman 1990).

The first limitation concerns the selection of roll-call votes. Krehbiel relies upon interest-group ratings to demonstrate that committees are not outliers in issue-specific areas. One problem with such ratings is that they are not jurisdiction-specific and are often inappropriate as gauges of committee members' behavior on matters within their committees' jurisdictions (Hall and Grofman 1990). McCubbins and his colleagues use Poole and Rosenthal's (1985) NOMINATE ratings, but these ratings are based upon every vote and are inappropriate for testing jurisdiction-specific propositions. Better committee-specific measures are required.

The second limitation concerns behavioral measures of preferences. As Shepsle and Weingast (1994) correctly observe, roll-call votes reflect a variety of political forces, only one of which is policy preferences. If a committee and the chamber vote alike, we cannot determine whether committee members are acting as faithful agents, whether the parent chamber is deferring to committee members, or whether there is genuine agreement. It is important, however, that reliance on the roll-call record leads us to understate the genuine level of disagreement between committees, parties, and the parent chamber. Thus, when statistically significant differences are found between committees, parties, and the parent chamber, we can be reasonably confident that the differences were not caused by strategic voting.

We limit ourselves to contested amendments from the 94th, 96th, 98th, and 100th Congresses, with a subset of amendments for the legislation associated with each House committee.[1] We use two measures of congruence in expressed preferences. The disagreement measure is the frequency with which the chamber majority and committee majority disagree. The divergence measure is the average difference in the percentage of committee members and chamber members voting yea on each vote.[2] The disagreement measure taps differences in median positions; the divergence measure taps differences in mean positions. More detail on these measures and our tests of statistical significance is provided in the Appendix.[3]

To supplement the congruence measures and explore dimensionality, we identify issue-specific scales for each committee.

For each scale, we devise a qualitative characterization of the alignment of committee, party, and chamber positions and offer an additional test of committee-chamber congruence for single dimensions. Scales are created with a hierarchical clustering algorithm on a Yule's Q matrix among each committee's roll-call votes. Median scale scores are determined for the committee, for each party's committee contingent, for the chamber as a whole (excluding committee members), and for each party caucus (excluding committee members). The method is similar to techniques used by Clausen (1973), Sinclair (1977), and Brady (1988) and is described in the Appendix. In contrast to the divergence and disagreement scores, which capture central tendency and relative variance, the scales permit us to show the direction of any bias in committee or committee contingent positions.

To evaluate the observed differences between committee, party, and chamber medians, we used a nonparametric difference of medians test (Norusis 1990, 230).[4] While the test enables us to determine whether the distribution that occurs could have occurred randomly, it does not indicate whether the differences are meaningful. Meaningfulness is determined in part by the distances between the various medians within a distribution. To assess these distances, we calculated the percentage of members whose scores on a particular issue dimension were situated at the chamber median or between the chamber and committee's median. The assumption is that, the more members fall within this gap, the greater the distance between the committee and the chamber.

Findings

Disagreement and divergence scores are reported in Table 1. Consider Agriculture Committee votes. The disagreement score shows that the Agriculture Committee and chamber majorities voted differently 11.9% of the time. That is, on 5 of the 42 contested amendment votes, the majority of the committee did not support the decision eventually made by the full chamber. The divergence between Agriculture Committee members and all other members on these votes is 9.6%. That is, the difference between the percentage of committee members voting yea and the percentage of all other members voting yea averaged 9.6.

Two features of Table 1 should be noted. First, the committee-floor divergence scores are statistically significant for the Agriculture and Appropriations committees but not for Energy and Commerce. That is, the average difference between the committee and chamber in

TABLE 1
Committee-Chamber Divergence and Disagreement Scores

Committee	Votes	Divergence Score	Disagreement Score
Agriculture	42	.0963*	.1190
Appropriations	346	.1122*	.0232
Energy and Commerce	146	.0788	.0959

*$p \leq .05$. See Appendix.

the percentage voting yea is larger than that expected by chance for Agriculture and Appropriations. Second, the committee-floor disagreement score is not statistically significant for any of three committees, although the score for Agriculture comes closer to statistical significance than do the scores for the other two committees. For these committees, then, committee majorities do not vote differently from chamber majorities more often than for randomly selected committees, even where the political balance on two of the three committees is measurably different. In fact, for Appropriations and for Energy and Commerce the disagreement scores were so low that we can conclude that these committees concur with the majority of the floor more than a randomly drawn committee.[5]

The scores indicate that Appropriations and Energy and Commerce express preferences more congruent with chamber preferences than does Agriculture. Such a finding is consistent with our predictions. The jurisdiction of Agriculture is less salient to most members than is the jurisdiction of either Appropriations or Energy and Commerce. The differences that exist between Energy and Commerce and Appropriations are not so clear, as their high salience might suggest. The disagreement and divergence scores indicate that the Appropriations Committee majority more often takes positions congruent with the floor majority, while the overall political balance on the Energy and Commerce Committee is more similar to the floor's.

The results of the dimensional analysis are illustrated in Figure 1, where the alignment of committee, party, and chamber medians is indicated for each recovered dimension. We have placed the floor's position in the middle of the scale and plotted the distance and direction between the floor (F) and the party caucuses (D for the Democratic caucus and R for the Republican caucus), committee contingents (Dc or Rc), and committee median (C), standardizing the overall length of the scales.[6] We use a set of tentative standards to characterize

the relationship between the committee and the chamber and between the party contingents and their respective caucuses.

To characterize the relationship of the committee to the chamber, we use the terms *outlier* and *aligned*. To be classified as an outlier, the committee must satisfy two criteria. First, the committee distribution must significantly differ (at the .05 level) from the floor distribution. Second, at least 10% of all members must be situated at the floor median or between the floor and committee median. If these criteria are not both satisfied, the relation between the committee and chamber is characterized as aligned.

To summarize the relationship between each party's committee contingent and its caucus, we describe the contingent as either more extreme than, more moderate than, or aligned with its caucus. For a contingent to be labeled extreme, three conditions must be satisfied. First, the party contingent must be farther than its caucus from the chamber median. Second, the contingent median must be on the same side of the floor median as the caucus. Third, either the difference in caucus-contingent medians must be statistically significant (at the .05 level) or at least 10% of the caucus members must be at the caucus median or between the contingent and caucus medians. If either of the criteria in the third condition is met and if one of the first two conditions is met, we categorize the contingent as moderate. If a contingent is neither extreme nor moderate, we characterize the relationship as aligned.

To characterize the relationship between each dimension that we recovered and the liberal-conservative dimension, we use the terms *aligned* and *cross-cutting*. If the correlation between each member's score on a dimension and his or her average ADA rating for the 94th, 96th, 98th, and 100th Congress is greater than 0.75, we label the dimension as aligned. If the correlation is 0.75 or less, we classify the dimension as cross-cutting.

Only one dimension was recovered for Energy and Commerce. This dimension is aligned with the left-right ideological spectrum that is captured by ADA ratings. In contrast, both the Agriculture and the Appropriations committees have more than one dimension, some of which cross the dominant left-right spectrum. The Agriculture Committee has two distinct dimensions, one aligned with ADA ratings and pertaining to social welfare issues such as food stamps and another, orthogonal to the first dimension, pertaining to agribusiness issues such as commodity price supports.

By our tentative standard, the committees are aligned with the full chamber on five of the eight recovered dimensions. Indeed, in the most common alignment the chamber median divides the caucuses

FIGURE 1
Alignment of Committee, Party, and Chamber Medians for Three House Committees, by Policy Dimension

Agriculture Committee, Social Welfare Dimension (e.g., food stamps)

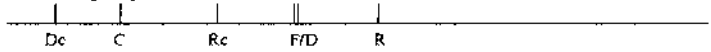
Committee-chamber relation:	aligned
Caucus-contingent relation:	extreme majority, aligned minority
Relation to left-right dimension:	aligned

Committee-party-chamber scale:

Agriculture Committee, Agribusiness Dimension (e.g., commodity price targets)

Committee-chamber relation:	outlier
Caucus-contingent relation:	extreme majority, moderate minority
Relation to left-right dimension:	cross-cutting

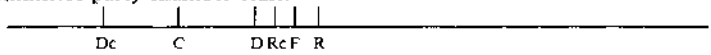
Committee-party-chamber scale:



Appropriations Committee, Distributive Projects Dimension (e.g., water projects)

Committee-chamber relation:	outlier (Democratic bias)
Caucus-contingent relation:	extreme majority, moderate minority
Relation to left-right dimension:	cross-cutting

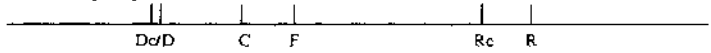
Committee-party-chamber scale:



Appropriations Committee, Government Management Dimension (e.g., appropriation for Department of Education)

Committee-chamber relation:	aligned (no bias)
Caucus-contingent relation:	aligned majority, moderate minority
Relation to left-right dimension:	aligned

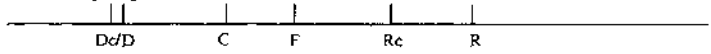
Committee-party-chamber scale:



Appropriations Committee, Size of Government Dimension (e.g., across-the-board cuts)

Committee-chamber relation:	aligned (no bias)
Caucus-contingent relation:	aligned majority, moderate minority
Relation to left-right dimension:	aligned

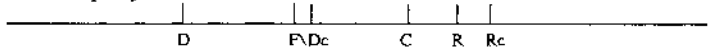
Committee-party-chamber scale:



Appropriations Committee, Defense Policy Dimension (e.g., funding for MX missile)

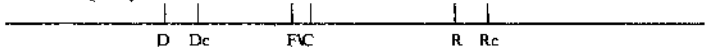
Committee-chamber relation:	outlier (Republican bias)
Caucus-contingent relation:	moderate majority, extreme minority
Relation to left-right dimension:	aligned

Committee-party-chamber scale:



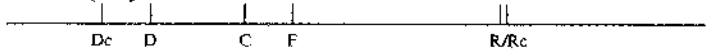
Appropriations Committee, Social Policy Dimension (e.g., funding for abortions)

Committee-chamber relation:	aligned (no bias)
Caucus-contingent relation:	aligned majority, aligned minority
Relation to left-right dimension:	aligned
Committee-party-chamber scale:	



Energy and Commerce Committee (single dimension identified)

Committee-chamber relation:	aligned
Caucus-contingent relation:	extreme majority, aligned minority
Relation to left-right dimension:	aligned
Committee-party-chamber scale:	



Note: F = floor median;
D = Democratic caucus median;
R = Republican caucus median;
C = committee median;
Dc = the median position of the Democratic contingent on the committee;
Rc = the median position of the Republican contingent on the committee.

and committee contingents of the two parties. Furthermore, on most dimensions, the parties' committee contingents are either aligned with or more extreme than the caucus and the committee is aligned with the chamber. This finding conforms to Shepsle and Weingast's (1994) observation that the various models "are not mutually exclusive."

The tremendous variation across dimensions in voting alignments and committee-chamber congruence is demonstrated in Table 2, which reports statistical tests for the differences in committee and chamber medians shown in Figure 1. Again, the one dimension for Energy and Commerce shows an insignificant difference between the committee median and the chamber median. Of Appropriations' five dimensions, two—one that includes spending on water projects and one that primarily includes defense programs—show significant differences between committee and chamber medians. Of Agriculture's two dimensions, one—the agricultural subsidy dimension—shows a significant difference. The other Agriculture and Appropriations dimensions are more strongly correlated with the left-right dimension and exhibit more committee-chamber congruence. It is reasonable to surmise that the more constituency-oriented or parochial dimensions are associated with less committee-chamber congruence and that dimensions more aligned with the liberal-conservative dimension are associated with more committee-chamber congruence. This surmise is consistent with our propositions about the effects of broad salience.[7]

TABLE 2
Analysis of Congruence between the Policy Preferences of Three House Committees and the Floor, by Policy Dimensions within Committees

Committee and Dimension	Committee-Chamber Congruence[a]	Chi-square	*p*-value Squared[b]
Agriculture Committee			
Social welfare	1.6	.01	.91
Agribusiness	19.0	27.75	.00
Appropriations Committee			
Distributive projects	11.0	9.46	.00
Government management	5.0	.60	.44
Size of government	7.5	1.03	.31
Defense policy	11.4	5.87	.02
Social policy	1.3	.01	.90
Energy and Commerce			
Committee	6.7	1.04	.31

[a] The figures represent the percentage of the committee members whose scores on a particular issue dimension are at the floor median or between the floor and committee medians.

[b] A significant score indicates that one can reject the null hypothesis (i.e., that the chamber's distribution around the committee median is similar to the committee's distribution around its own median). Note that this score compares the distribution around the median, not the medians themselves. Thus, if every member of the floor is on the same side of the committee median, the test will show a high level of significance regardless of the size of the difference between the committee and floor medians.

Additional Issues in the Positive Theory of Congressional Institutions

Our interpretation of the data presented here is preliminary. Nevertheless, we believe that the evidence demonstrates predictable variation across committees in their relation to the parent parties and chamber. The evidence is also consistent with our propositions about the influence of salience and dimensionality on the observed congruity of expressed preferences. Before concluding, we would like to raise five additional issues that must be addressed in future efforts to build a theory of congressional institutions.

The Evolution of Principal-Agent Relations

We must distinguish accounts of the origins of certain institutional arrangements from accounts of the operative political relation-

ships in later periods. Existing positive theories assume continuity in the relationships between chambers, parties, and committees rather than accounting for change. Reciprocity arrangements, uncertainty-reducing mechanisms, and collective-action solutions are assumed to be enduring. And the evidence supporting arguments about origins often involves little more than scattered historical examples.

We do not propose a dynamic theory here or insist that all efforts be devoted to developing a useful dynamic theory. For well-understood reasons (collective action problems, transaction costs, multidimensional cycling, etc.), the relationship between conditions and institutions is complex and not easily predicted (Calvert 1992). Institutional arrangements tend to be sticky once established, and how they might change is unpredictable under fairly common conditions. But we must be suspicious of analyses that draw freely from different historical periods without taking into account the possibility that the context might have changed in crucial ways. More effort should be devoted to specifying the contextual conditions under which certain models are applicable.

Alternative Institutional Arrangements

To date, models have been developed that yield predictions consistent with certain general characteristics of congressional institutions. The models do not predict institutional arrangements in much detail, and existing studies do not identify the possible alternatives over which choices are made. We are left with only vague explanations about the particular arrangements chosen—say, standing committees, a strict germaneness rule, and limited debate.

For example, Krehbiel explains the delegation of power to committees as a strategy for motivating some members to gather and digest information for the rest of the chamber. He fails to mention other means of gathering and digesting information, many of which Congress has tried and continues to use—support agencies, holding tanks for specialized staffs (e.g., the Joint Economic Committee), party staffs, faction and issue caucus staffs, personal staffs, consultants, and so on. Why does Congress use committees in some cases and staff units of various kinds in other cases? Krehbiel offers no discussion of this question.

In McCubbins's party-based models, the majority party is the chief principal of important committees, and its goal is to enhance the party's reputation. Why should the majority party rely on standing committees composed of members of both parties? McCubbins and

his colleagues set aside the possibility that the majority party wants to limit criticism that it is unfair to the minority party. Instead, they note that bipartisan committees may better predict what will happen on the floor. And yet in recent years the House majority party has relied more heavily on intraparty task forces to generate policy proposals.

Agents and Incentives

We find it puzzling that researchers have not studied the conditions under which committee members are motivated to perform functions important to their principals. Theory alone cannot tell us how much it costs to motivate committee members to perform the duties expected of them by their constituents, parent parties, or parent chambers. It is reasonable to assume that some incentives are necessary, but there is no basis for arguing that the allocation of certain special parliamentary rights is necessary or sufficient for this purpose. Indeed, if committee members are merely agents on behalf of the chamber, special rights that empower committees are themselves public goods that will not encourage individuals to incur the costs associated with committee specialization. Instead, we might want to account for the observation that members have multiple motivations. Such an observation leads to the possibility that many members are motivated to pursue issues within a jurisdiction for reasons other than the ounce of leverage gained from special rights allocated in rules. And, of course, we must anticipate the possibility that the mix of incentives important to committee members varies over time. In short, too little attention has been given to committee members' side of the equation.

The Conceptualization of Party

We have not developed here some obvious propositions about the role of party. For example, a highly partisan alignment of preferences would enable the majority party and its leaders to exercise control over committees. This is the argument made by Brady (1988) and many others, and it probably stands as the conventional wisdom among legislative scholars.

Two other views of party have emerged in recent principal-agent theories. The first view, developed by McCubbins and his colleagues, gives little emphasis to variation in partisanship. Instead, they argue that the shared party label creates a bond among fellow partisans: fellow partisans realize that their individual electoral prospects are influenced by the party's record. They therefore empower party

leaders to look out for their common interests, including maintaining control over committees with jurisdictions relevant to the party record. In this view, then, party organization, leadership, and control over committee contingents represent a solution to a collective-action problem for party members.

The second view is implicit in Krehbiel's critique (1993) of the position that parties operate as distinct principals of committees. Krehbiel grounds his analysis in policy preferences rather than the reelection motive. He argues that parties are coalitions based upon the similarity of their members' policy preferences—partisanship is nothing but preferenceship. Once the effects of preferences are controlled, partisanship has no remaining influence on the institution or policy choices. It is parties' status as policy coalitions, rather than their identity as organizations, that is important. Consequently, parties do not have an effect on the role or character of committees independent of the effect of the desires of the chamber majority. They merely happen to be the most frequently appearing coalitions.

In our view, neither the McCubbins nor the Krehbiel perspective has supplanted the more conventional view that party strength shapes party-committee relations. The theory of McCubbins and his colleagues does not directly address change and so does not offer an alternative to the conventional view. Perhaps it could do so by accounting for the effects of change in the relevance of the party record to members' electoral fortunes.

Krehbiel's theory is ahistorical. Having overcome collective-action problems that beset any new coalition, parties are likely to be distinctly advantaged over other coalitional groups that might form. Moreover, parties have acquired substantial institutional advantages over competing coalitional groups. In the House, these advantages appear to give the majority party an edge that allows it to move policy choices away from the chamber's median position and toward the party's median position.[8] Why would majority party members close to the chamber median tolerate such a thing? Perhaps because they benefit from being tolerant in ways that have nothing to do with policy choices and outcomes.

And What About the Senate?

The Senate has received very little attention from positive theorists of congressional institutions. The absence of a general germaneness rule or limitation on debate, the ease with which legislation is held on the floor and not referred to committee, the unstruc-

tured amending process on the floor, the complexities of Rule XXII, majority party leaders' prerogatives, and several other features of the Senate distinguish it in crucially important ways from the House. Are we to conclude, following the Weingast-Marshall argument, that senators care less than representatives do about enforcing reciprocity across committees? Might we conclude, following Krehbiel's logic, that senators need fewer incentives than representatives to generate the information their colleagues require? And, following McCubbins's reasoning, should we infer that senators have less at stake than representatives in the reputations of their parties?

The consequences of neglecting the Senate are obvious. Krehbiel's analysis of special rules cannot be applied to the Senate because the Senate does not use special rules. We should ask why the Senate fails to protect the handiwork of some of its committees. Presumably, motivating Senate committee members to specialize should be as difficult as motivating House committee members. Surely differences in the character of legislation affect the nature of information problems just as much in the Senate as in the House. And yet the Senate offers virtually no procedural safeguards to any of its committees.

From Cox and McCubbins, we expect parties to exercise special care in making assignments to those top committees whose policy jurisdiction is most relevant to party reputations. In the House, therefore, Appropriations, Budget, Rules, and Ways and Means are given special treatment by both parties. But what of the Senate? Senate Republicans allocate committee assignments on the basis of seniority. And both Senate parties informally guarantee every member an assignment on one of the four top committees—Appropriations, Armed Services, Finance, and Foreign Relations. Why don't Senate parties manage committee assignments as House parties do?

Clearly, something about the context of the Senate—its size, jurisdiction, terms of office, constituencies, inherited rules—shapes its institutional arrangements in critical ways. In future work, we should remember the Senate.

Conclusion

We are sympathetic to recent efforts to develop positive theories of congressional institutions. The basic thrust of the arguments—that institutional arrangements are the products of collective choice by goal-oriented legislators—is promising. We also believe that principal-agent models are consistent with how legislators see the relationship between committees and the parent parties and chambers. And we

find many useful insights about congressional institutions in recent studies that seek to explore the implications of fairly simple models.

Yet it is plain to us that no single principal-agent relation, no single goal, and no single dimension of conflict dominates congressional politics, at least not for long. This has led us to doubt the viability of theories that fail to account for variation in principal-agent relations, goals, and dimensionality. Unless we are aiming for a theory of a small number of House committees in the late twentieth century, we must move to a larger developmental theory that accounts for the diversity, as well as the central tendency, of congressional institutions.

Forrest Maltzman is Assistant Professor of Political Science, George Washington University, Washington, DC 20052. Steven S. Smith is Professor of Political Science, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455, and Associate Staff Member, Governmental Studies Program, The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC 20036.

APPENDIX

We analyzed all contested votes on amendments for measures associated with each of the four committees' jurisdictions for the 94th, 96th, 98th, and 100th Congresses. Contested votes are those on which at least 10% of the members voted in the minority. For more detail on the methods used, see Maltzman 1993.

Statistical Tests for Divergence and Disagreement Scores

Because the data are neither normally distributed nor drawn from independent samples, a Monte Carlo simulation was conducted to determine the statistical significance of the divergence and disagreement scores. For each committee, 200 random groups, each of the committee's size, were chosen. Divergence and disagreement scores (committee versus chamber; committee contingent versus party) were calculated for each group. Statistical significance was judged from the number of randomly generated committees whose scores were larger than the actual score. If fewer than 10 of the 200 randomly generated committees had scores larger than the actual score, we inferred that the actual score reflected a statistically significant difference—divergence or disagreement—between the groups.

We should note that we did not use a standard nonparametric difference of medians test for the disagreement scores (Wilcox 1991; Wilcox and Carlin 1986). A difference in medians test would be based on the fact that majority positions pivot on the median voter for any dimension. However, such a test assumes independent samples. Since committee members are also members of the larger chamber or party and may influence the chamber's agenda, the groups we are comparing (committee members and the chamber as a whole) are not independent. The Monte Carlo tests do not assume independence.

Clustering Procedure

A Yule's Q matrix was calculated for each committee's set of votes. A hierarchical clustering technique was applied that generated clusters of votes with an average Yule's Q of 0.7. For each cluster, direction was assigned arbitrarily and scale scores were calculated for all members. Any clustered vote with a correlation of less than 0.3 with the overall scale was eliminated.

After isolating specific clusters, we scored every member who voted on either one-third or five (whichever number was smaller) of the votes included in a portion of the congresses that made up each set of clusters. No member who cast fewer than three votes on a particular issue dimension received a score, in order that no vote could have too much influence on any single cluster. From the individual scores, we were able to identify the committee, committee party contingent, the chamber, and the caucus medians for each dimension.

We aggregated across congresses to ensure that we had enough votes to form valid or meaningful clusters. As a result we had to treat all members who served on the committee during any of the congresses included on a particular dimension as a committee member. This approach reduced the probability that we would find significant differences between committee and noncommittee members.

NOTES

1. See Maltzman 1993. Jurisdiction is based upon whether a bill was referred to, reported by, or discharged from a particular committee or whether a report was filed by that committee. For the 96th, 98th, and 100th Congresses, this information was attained from LEGISLATE. For the 94th Congress, this information was obtained from the index to the *Congressional Record* and the Final Calendar of the House of Representatives. Bills whose jurisdiction consisted of more than two committees are excluded from the analysis. Because multiple referral has been used more frequently in recent years, more bills are excluded from the 98th and 100th Congresses than from the earlier congresses. By relying upon the actual committee of origin, we have identified the votes that are appropriate for testing a jurisdiction-specific hypothesis.

We define *mildly contested* as meaning that the majority position represents 90% or less of all the votes cast in the chamber. We chose this threshold to exclude nearly unanimous votes that are primarily symbolic or procedural. By including almost every vote that occurred, we avoid the artificial extremism that is incorporated into most interest group ratings.

2. That is, it is the mean absolute difference between the percentage yea for the committee and the percentage yea for the chamber. The chamber mean is based upon the vote of every member of the House, including committee members. The reason we calculate the absolute mean difference is that we do not want to subjectively interpret the meaning of a yes or no vote. Since we are interested in whether the committee votes differently from the floor and we want a mean of that difference, we have made the difference scores absolute. We incorporate committee members into the floor mean because the statistical test that we used does not necessitate their removal and because committee members belong to the committee of the whole and thus should not be excluded. Of course, this decision suppresses the differences between the committee and the chamber as a whole.

3. We use both means and medians because we recognize that neither measure is sufficient for portraying the central tendency of chamber, party, and committee

preferences. Formal perspectives that model the political ascendancy of the median voter suggest that median, not mean, is the appropriate measure. If the goal of comparing committee to floor voting records is to determine whether they vote alike, the use of medians is clearly justified. However, when roll-call data are used as a surrogate for member preferences, the appropriateness of medians is not self-evident. Members of Congress are offered a dichotomous choice when voting, and so medians may disguise important preference differences. To determine the significance of our disagreement and divergence scores, we conducted a Monte Carlo simulation (see the Appendix).

4. This test is a chi-square test that determines whether the distribution of noncommittee members (or caucus members) is the same as the distribution of the committee (or the committee contingent within the caucus) around its median. Since the test requires independent samples, we exclude committee members when computing both the chamber and caucus medians.

5. Both Appropriations and Energy and Commerce were more successful than 95% of the randomly selected committees.

6. The effect of placing the floor in the middle of each scale and plotting the committee, the party contingents on the committee, and the caucuses in relation to their distance from the floor is to standardize each dimension. Thus, one should not conceptualize each line as representing comparable distributions. Inevitably, on some dimensions all members are more clustered than on other dimensions.

7. Both dimensions that cross the traditional left-right spectrum resulted in outliers. Since previous research has shown that most votes are aligned with a dominant dimension (Poole and Rosenthal 1985), this observation highlights one of the problems with using roll-call data to ascertain the role performed by a committee. As Rohde (1994) suggests, the votes that are most likely to show a committee's outlier tendencies are the votes that are the least likely to occur.

8. Dion and Huber (1993) demonstrate that party control of the Rules Committee and the special rules it reports is critical to bending policy choices away from the preferences of the median member of the House and toward the median member of the majority party.

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