

# The new kids are on the block: incentives for House caucuses to disregard seniority in leadership assignments<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Note: Code and Replication data can be found on github:  
DamonCharlesRoberts/seniority-project

# The Puzzle

- Scholars propose that the (now) informal seniority system works as a useful heuristic for the caucus to elect more senior members in the House (see Taylor, 2019)
  - This has a number of assumptions tied to it
- This project seeks to determine under what circumstances may it be beneficial for the caucus to replace incumbents in leadership positions with less senior MC's.

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  - Others have argued that parties are more powerful (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 2005)

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  - Fenno says that they have three goals
    - Reelection
    - Achieve more power/influence
    - Good public policy
  - Mayhew states that they are primarily concerned with reelection
  - The caucus has goals to ensure that they retain majority status

# Adjusting motivations

$$C_\beta = \mathit{argMax}(\beta_i) \quad (1)$$

$$i_\beta = \mathit{argMin}(\beta_i) \quad (2)$$

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$$\prod \text{argMax}(\beta_i) > \prod \text{argMin}\beta_i \equiv C_\beta > i_\beta \quad (3)$$

$$\prod \text{argMax}(\beta_i) \approx \prod \text{argMin}\beta_i \equiv C_\beta \approx i_\beta \quad (4)$$

# Adjusting motivations

$$m_{\beta} = \mathit{argMin}(\beta) \quad (5)$$

$$\prod \mathit{argMax}(\beta_m) \approx \prod \mathit{argMin}(\beta_m) \equiv C_{\beta} \approx m_{\beta} \quad (6)$$

# The Game

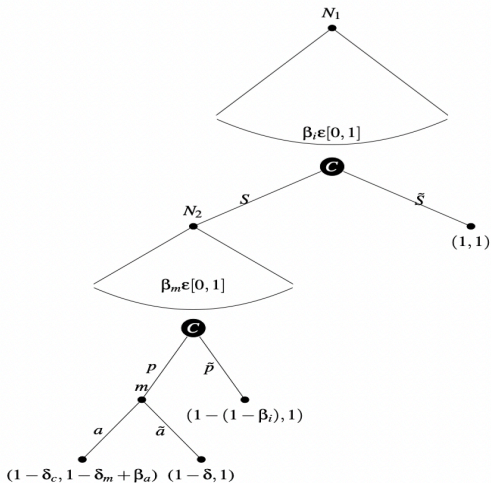
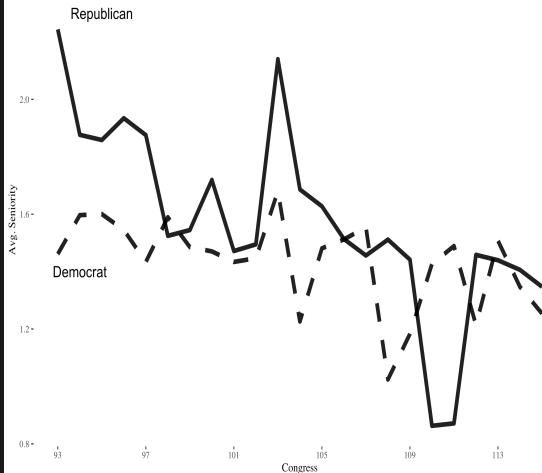


Figure 1: Incentives for finking on seniority system

# Descriptive empirics

Figure 3. Average Seniority by Party- House



Damon Roberts | Data sources: Volden and Wiseman Legislative Effectiveness Data - House data from 1973-2018.  
Notes: Data is constrained only to those who hold a subcommittee or committee chair position, a majority or minority leadership position, or a seat on the Appropriations committee.

Average Seniority is an average calculated from subtracting the current term's first calendar year from the member's first term's first calendar year in Congress then standardized from the avg. seniority of all copartisan colleagues.

# Questions/Comments?