The Emergence of Strong Leadership in the 1980s House of Representatives
Author(s): Barbara Sinclair
Source: *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Aug., 1992), pp. 657-684
Published by: University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Southern Political Science Association
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2132306
Accessed: 11-02-2016 22:16 UTC

The Emergence of Strong Leadership in the 1980s House of Representatives

Barbara Sinclair
University of California, Riverside

Through a comparison of four carefully selected congresses, this study demonstrates that the current House majority party leadership, when compared to other post-World War II leaderships, is more involved in and more decisive in organizing the party and the chamber, setting the House agenda, and affecting legislative outcomes. An explanation for the emergence of strong leadership is offered and tested. I argue that, during the period under study, the costs and benefits to majority party members of strong leadership changed significantly. The study shows that the 1970s reforms and the 1980s political environment of split control and conflict between a conservative confrontational president and House Democrats greatly increased the difficulty of enacting legislation Democrats find satisfactory and thus increased Democratic committee contingents' and the Democratic membership's need for leadership help. Declining Democratic ideological heterogeneity and decreased opportunities for free-lance policy entrepreneurship reduced the cost of strong leadership to members. The study finds that, both over time and cross sectionally, the likelihood of leadership involvement is greatest when the members most need help and when the costs of the leadership's providing such help are lowest for majority party members and for the leadership itself and, further, that leadership involvement does increase the probability of legislative success.

That the 1980s saw the emergence of a strengthened majority party leadership in the House of Representatives is fast becoming the consensus view among congressional scholars (see Davidson 1988; Dodd and Oppenheimer 1989; Rohde 1989; Shepsle 1989; Sinclair 1989; Smith and Maltzman 1989). The broader political science community, in contrast, still largely depicts the House as highly decentralized and unamenable to either party or committee leadership. In fact, the new consensus rests primarily upon impressionistic evidence—journalistic accounts and a few participant observation and interview-based studies by political scientists (Berry 1989; Cohen 1987; Hook 1987; Palazzolo 1989; Sinclair 1989, 1990). Furthermore, there is no agreement upon an explanation for the phenomenon.

Congressional party leadership strength is generally believed to be a function of the strength of the political parties; vigorous parties with distinctive constituency bases which command the loyalty of most voters, ones which play an important role in the recruitment and election of candidates make

THE JOURNAL OF POLITICS, Vol. 54, No. 3, August 1992

strong legislative leadership possible (Cooper and Brady 1981; Rohde and Shepsle 1987). Given the relative weakness of contemporary American political parties, how could strong congressional leadership have emerged?

A consideration of the rationale underlying the relationship between external party strength and congressional party leadership strength provides the basis for an answer. Strong parties external to the legislature assure that, for most majority party members of Congress, the benefits of strong party leadership outweigh the costs, because strong parties make likely a high degree of intraparty consensus on the legislation members need to satisfy their reelection and policy goals. It is not external party strength per se but how it affects the costs and benefits to members of strong internal leadership that is the key. Consequently, changes in internal leadership strength might be the result of factors other than external party strength that influence those costs and benefits. To be sure, a very strong external party system may be the prerequisite for leadership as strong as that during the period of "Czar rule" (1890–1910 approximately); only such a party system may assure sufficient membership homogeneity to result in a cost-benefit calculation favorable to such highly centralized, directive internal leadership (see Cooper and Brady 1981). However, no claim that contemporary House majority party leadership is even close in strength to that of the "Czar rule" period is being made. Rather, the contention is that contemporary party leadership is stronger in the sense specified below than other post-World War II leaderships and that this change can be explained in terms of the costs and benefits to members of strong leadership.

My purpose here is, first, to establish rigorously that current House majority party leadership, when compared to other post-World War II leaderships, is stronger in the sense that it is more active and more decisive in organizing the party and the chamber, setting the House agenda and affecting legislative outcomes. Second, an explanation for the development of strong leadership is offered and hypotheses derived from it are tested. Briefly stated, I argue that the costs and benefits to majority party House members of strong leadership and the behavior on their part that makes such leadership possible have changed significantly. The 1970s reforms which increased the vulnerability of legislation to attack on the floor combined with the constraints of the 1980s political climate—split control, a conservative confrontational president who threatened Democrats' policy, power and reelection goals, the big deficits—have greatly increased the difficulty of enacting legislation, especially legislation Democrats find satisfactory. The majority party leadership possesses critical resources—control over the Rules Committee, for example—that, if Democratic members acquiesce in their use, can significantly increase the probability of legislative success. Consequently the benefits of strong leadership in terms of legislative outputs—to the Democratic membership, to Democratic committee contingents, to

Democratic committee leaders—are considerably higher in the 1980s and into the 1990s than they were in previous decades.

Changes that reduced the costs of strong leadership also occurred during the 1980s. Most important, the effective ideological homogeneity of the Democratic membership increased as the election constituencies of southern Democrats became more like those of their northern party colleagues and as the big deficits shrank the feasible issue space. In addition, the 1980s political environment, especially the deficit, made free-lance policy entrepreneurship, as practiced in the 1970s, much less feasible for moderates and liberals. Consequently when Democratic members practice the sort of restraint that makes strong leadership possible—by giving up the right to offer floor amendments on selected legislation, for example—they are not giving up very much.

A comparative statics research design is employed. Four congresses were chosen so as to maximize analytic leverage in terms of the variables posited as important in the explanatory sketch outlined above and in some plausible alternative explanations. The one-hundredth is the most recent congress for which all the needed data are currently available and the congress that, by general agreement, most clearly shows the full emergence of strong leadership. A prominent alternative explanation attributes strong, successful leadership in the one-hundredth Congress solely to the particular circumstances of that congress—especially to the lame-duck, weakened character of the president under conditions of divided control. That hypothesis can be tested by comparing party leadership in the one-hundredth with leadership in a congress comparable to it on those attributes. The most recent such congress is the ninety-fourth (1975–1976). Although not a lame duck, Ford was weakened by the Watergate scandal, his unelected status, and the Democratic congressional landslide of 1974. Control of Congress and the presidency was, of course, divided and had been since 1969. Democratic congressional strength was very significantly greater in the ninety-fourth than in the one-hundredth and Ford was probably weaker than Reagan; thus, if presidential strength and opposition party numbers in Congress are the key variables, the majority party leadership should be at least as active and as decisive in the ninety-fourth as in the one-hundredth. The ninety-first Congress (1969–1970) was chosen because it is a pre-reform congress and the first of the Nixon-Ford presidency; the ninety-seventh because it is the first of the Reagan presidency. By comparing the ninety-first and the ninety-seventh with the ninety-fourth and the one-hundredth, which are the last congresses of those presidencies, the effects of the president's political strength and of stage of the presidency can be assessed. As the ninety-first is a pre-reform congress and the ninety-fourth is the first in which the reforms are fully in place, comparisons over the four congresses allow some inferences about the effects of the reforms. The impact of the political environment of the 1980s

can be gauged by comparing the two congresses of the 1970s with the two of the 1980s.[1]

The Emergence of Activist Majority Party Leadership

Systematic data, this section shows, substantiate that the House majority party leadership has become more active in organizing the party and the chamber, setting the House agenda and affecting legislative outcomes. A demonstration that this change in the scope and rate of leadership activity translated into the leadership's becoming more decisive as well will be undertaken later.

Organizing Party and Chamber

The expansion of the Democratic party leadership's role in organizing party and chamber that occurred during the 1970s as part of and in response to the reforms has been well documented and need not be belabored here (see Dodd and Oppenheimer 1977; Dodd 1979; Oppenheimer 1981; Sinclair 1983). Table 1 summarizes the leadership's enlarged role by showing the change in the leadership's powers to appoint members to three key entities—the Rules Committee, the Democratic Committee on Committees, and the Whip System. This augmented role in organizing party and chamber provides the majority party leadership with resources which, skillfully used, can significantly increase the probability of legislative success (see especially Sinclair 1983; Berry 1989).

Setting the Agenda

In December 1986, immediately after being chosen the Democrats' nominee for speaker, Jim Wright outlined a policy agenda for the majority party and the House. Deficit reduction achieved in part through a tax increase received the most press attention, but clean water legislation, a highway bill, trade legislation, welfare reform, and a farm bill were also included. In his acceptance speech after being elected speaker on January 6, 1987, and in his televised reply to Reagan's State of the Union address on January 31, Wright further specified and publicized the agenda, adding aid to education, aid to the homeless, and insurance against catastrophic illness.

Was this aggressive agenda-setting activity an anomaly or the culmination of a trend? To analyze agenda setting systematically and for many of the other analyses as well, the congressional agenda needs to be specified. There are obviously many different ways one could do so, none unassailable. Here

[1] Democratic strength in the congresses was—ninety-first 243 House, 58 Senate; ninety-fourth 291 House, 61 Senate; ninety-seventh 243 House, 46 Senate; one-hundredth 258 House, 55 Senate.

TABLE 1

THE PARTY LEADERSHIP'S ENLARGED ROLE IN ORGANIZING PARTY AND CHAMBER

Entity	Congress 91st (1969–1970)	94th (1975–1976)	97th (1981–1982)	100th (1987–1988)
Rules Committee	0	11	11	9
	15	16	16	13
Committee on Committees	0	8/2	8/3	8/4
	15	24	29	31
Whip System	2	5	21	59
	21	25	44	81

Note: Top figure is number of leadership appointees; figure to right, if any, is number of members who are ex officio from the leadership; bottom figure is total size.

Congressional Quarterly's list of major legislation, augmented by those measures on which key votes occurred (again according to *Congressional Quarterly*), is used to define the agenda. This produces a list of legislation considered major by very close contemporary observers.[2]

Agenda setting involves singling out, focusing attention on, and attempting to build pressure toward action on a problem, issue, or policy proposal. As the president is considered the premier governmental agenda setter in the American political system, House party leadership agenda setting must be assessed relative to presidential agenda setting. Presidential agenda setting seldom if ever involves the generation of original ideas about problems or solutions; and, not only do presidents borrow in the construction of their agendas, they are often at the mercy of events (Kingdon 1984; Light 1982). Nevertheless, when a president singles out a problem, issue, or policy proposal and calls for legislation, he increases the pressure toward and raises the expectation of action (Kingdon 1984, 25–28). Similarly, congressional party leaders are unlikely to be idea originators and they also must often react to events beyond their control. Yet they too, by highlighting a problem, issue, or policy proposal, can raise the probability of legislative action.

There are standard forums used by presidents for agenda setting, the State of the Union address being the most important (see Light 1982). The majority party leadership also has available forums that routinely receive considerable press coverage and that, therefore, it will favor for agenda-setting

[2] For the ninety-first and the ninety-fourth, the list of major legislation is obtained from the relevant *CQ Almanacs*; for the later congresses, from the periodic listings in the *Weekly Reports*. A very few items, on which there was no House action, that did not reach the floor in the Senate and were not items on either the president's or the leadership's agenda were deleted.

activities. The president's agenda is here defined as those items mentioned in the State of the Union address or its equivalent and in special messages of some prominence. Routine administration requests for reauthorization of legislation without major change do not qualify the items for agenda status. Majority party leadership agenda setting, if it occurs, will become manifest in the speaker's speech upon being elected to his office at the beginning of a congress, the party's reply to the president's State of the Union address, the leadership's reply to special presidential addresses, or in major news conferences. Although labeled a "reply," the speech the leadership makes after the State of the Union address or other special addresses is prepared without access to the president's text and is used by the leadership to make its own points to a broad audience, not to respond to what the president has said.

The agenda-setting process in U.S. national politics involves many players. Based upon *Congressional Quarterly*'s account, there are cases in which some other identifiable individual or group—most frequently one or a group of liberal entrepreneurs or a group like labor—are the primary agenda setters. These are classified into a looser category, labeled as "Other." Not all items are classified. Fairly frequently, an item attains congressional agenda status through routine processes—the need for reauthorization, the appropriations process. Once on the agenda, it may become a battlefield for those who see it as a vehicle for furthering their policy goals.[3]

Table 2 shows that presidents tend to dominate the congressional agenda during their first congress; in contrast, during the last congress of an eight-year administration, the president is only one of a number of players and, in the congresses here under study, not the most prominent.

Leadership agenda setting shows both cyclical and secular trends. In the ninety-first Congress, agenda setting by the Democratic House leadership was minimal at best. "The Speaker's philosophy, according to his friends, is that the Democrats' role under the Nixon presidency should be to keep the Kennedy and Johnson programs from being stripped by the Republicans" (*Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, January 9, 1970, 85). In his speech upon being elected speaker, McCormack proposed no agenda and, in fact, made no issue references. In response to the three-way 1968 presidential election contest, McCormack and Minority Leader Gerald Ford, on January 7, 1969, jointly endorsed electoral college reform. Only this could be remotely considered agenda setting.

[3] The president's agenda and that of the House Democratic leadership sometimes contain items in common. In the ninety-fourth Congress, energy legislation was on both agendas; in the one-hundredth, welfare reform and catastrophic health insurance were. Thus, those categories in table 2 are not mutually exclusive. The "Other" category is mutually exclusive of the other two. Although entrepreneurs often do attempt to use president's agenda items to further their own agenda, such piggy-backing attempts are not included in the "Other" category.

TABLE 2

THE LEADERSHIP'S EXPANDED AGENDA SETTING ROLE
(% OF AGENDA ITEMS)

Agenda Setter	Congress			
	91st	94th	97th	100th
President	48	23	44	23
Leadership	2	17	9	33
Other	34	35	16	23
N	50	48	45	40

By 1975, Gerald Ford was president. Serving out the final years of the disgraced Nixon's term, he was weakened by his loss of popularity following the Nixon pardon and by the Democrats' big gains in the 1974 elections. Under pressure from House Democrats, especially from liberals, to take advantage of the situation, Speaker Albert did play an aggressive agenda-setting role (see *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report,* March 1, 1975, 426–27; Jan. 25, 1975, 177–78; June 28, 1975, 1332–33.) In late 1974, he appointed a task force to draft an economic recovery program. The President took the effort sufficiently seriously that, on January 13, the day the task force's report was released, Ford gave a televised speech on economic and energy policy to try to preempt the Democratic program. In Albert's speech upon being elected speaker on January 14, and in his televised response to Ford's January 15 State of the Union address, he talked in some detail about the Democratic agenda of energy and economic stimulus programs.

In the first congress of his presidency, Reagan was in a stronger position vis-à-vis House Democrats than Nixon had been in 1969. Reagan had won with a larger margin, Republicans had picked up more House seats and had won control of the Senate, and, having run an issue-based campaign, Reagan could claim a policy mandate.

Nevertheless, House Democrats did make some attempt to counter Reagan with their own agenda. Although O'Neill in his speech accepting election as speaker simply pledged cooperation, in April he announced a Democratic economic program which had been drafted by a task force chaired by Dick Gephardt (*Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report,* 619–20). During the first half of 1981, the political tides were running too strongly in Reagan's favor and this agenda setting attempt sank without a trace; it produced neither legislation nor good publicity. In 1982, however, House Democrats, helped by the developing recession, were a little more successful. A leadership-appointed task force chaired by Jim Wright drafted an economic program consisting mostly of various sorts of jobs programs which did become an important part of the congressional agenda. Thus,

while a politically potent president dominated the agenda-setting process in the ninety-seventh Congress, the Democratic House leadership played a greater role than its counterpart had in the ninety-first, even though conditions were less favorable for Democrats in 1981–1982 than in 1969–1970.

In the one-hundredth Congress the Democratic leadership was the single-most prominent agenda setter. Reagan asked for little new in 1987 or 1988. Since most of the requests in his State of the Union address had been rejected by more friendly congresses, their dead-before-arrival status was hardly surprising. Even the low 23% figure gives a somewhat inflated impression of Reagan's agenda-setting role; four separate Contra aid measures are included. Of course, by virtue of battles Reagan had won in previous congresses, Reagan did have a major, if indirect, impact on the agenda. All decisions during the one-hundredth Congress were made in the context of the big budget deficits that had resulted from Reagan's policies.

Nevertheless, in the one-hundredth Congress, the Democratic leadership played a considerably more prominent agenda-setting role than the president. That its role was an order of magnitude greater than that of the similarly situated leadership in the ninety-fourth, and that the leadership in the ninety-seventh also engaged in some agenda setting, suggests that agenda setting is no longer an extraordinary function for the majority party leadership to perform but rather is becoming expected when control of Congress and the presidency is divided.

The Increase in Leadership Involvement

A party leadership may become more actively involved in affecting legislative outcomes by increasing its role in the shaping of legislation, in the structuring through procedure of floor choices, in vote mobilization, or in other aspects of legislative strategy. The current leadership appears to be more involved than its predecessors of past decades in all these ways (see Sinclair 1989; Berry 1989); however, constructing valid measures of the incidence of each of these activities over the four congresses seems overambitious given the data available. Instead, more global and presumably more robust measures of leadership involvement in the items constituting the congressional agenda are constructed.

The first measure, intended to distinguish some leadership involvement from no involvement, is based upon answers to the following questions: (1) Was the bill a part of the leadership's agenda? (2) Did the speaker or the majority leader advocate passage during floor debate? (3) Did *Congressional Quarterly*'s account report the leadership as being involved? If any one of the answers is "yes," the leadership is considered as having been involved. A second more refined measure distinguishes major from minor involvement on the basis of the mode or modes of involvement reported by *Congressional*

Quarterly. Four modes are distinguished: (a) the leadership uses its control over scheduling, the Rules Committee, or other procedure to advantage the legislation; (b) the leadership is involved in a floor vote mobilization effort; (c) the leadership is centrally involved in some other aspect of legislative strategy; or (d) the leadership participates in shaping the content of the legislation by talking or negotiating with or among the committee(s) or with the Senate or with the president. Major leadership involvement is defined as engaging in shaping legislation (e.g., d) or in any two of the other activities (e.g., 1, 2, a, b, c.)[4]

As table 3 shows, leadership involvement has increased steadily and significantly over the four congresses. The House majority leadership was involved in less than half of the items on the congressional agenda in the ninety-first Congress; it was involved in 83% in the one-hundredth. Major involvement has increased even more. In 1969–1970, the party leadership played a major role as defined above in only 28% of the legislation on the congressional agenda; in 1987–1988, it played such a role on 60% of that legislation. To the extent the president's agenda makes up a disproportionate share of the most important and controversial items on the congressional agenda, the growth in leadership involvement on presidential agenda items indicates a leadership increasingly involved on the central legislative issues of a congress.

TABLE 3

THE INCREASE IN LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT ON THE CONGRESSIONAL AGENDA (% OF AGENDA ITEMS)

	Congress			
Leadership Involvement	91st	94th	97th	100th
Some	46	60	67	83
Major	28	40	38	60
On President's Agenda	42	64	75	89

EXPLAINING THE EMERGENCE OF STRONG PARTY LEADERSHIP

A systematic presentation of the explanation sketched in outline above requires an explicit theoretical framework. By assumption, legislation is the

[4] Since the measures rely fairly heavily upon *Congressional Quarterly*'s accounts, one might ask whether the findings of increased leadership involvement are simply a function of more thorough coverage by *CQ*. Available evidence indicates that this is not the case. From the ninety-first through the one-hundredth Congress, there is no significant increase in total number of pages in CQ Weekly Reports. In a regression equation of total pages for a congress as a function of time (coded 0 for the ninety-first, 2 for the ninety-second, etc.) the unstandardized regression coefficient is 11.2, $t = .45$, $r^2 = .02$. The correlation between total pages and total index references to the speaker and majority leader is .11.

currency of congressional life; members of Congress care about what is and is not placed on the discussion agenda, what is and is not brought up for decision, and what is and is not passed because the advancement of their goals of reelection, policy, and influence is affected thereby. In assuming members are concerned not only with what they can and must talk about and vote on but also with what passes, this research follows Fenno (1973, 1978) not Mayhew (1974) as it does in the related assumption that members have multiple goals (also see Hall 1987).

Majority party members of the House expect the party leadership as their elected agent to facilitate the advancement of their goals, especially though not exclusively in those ways that require collective action. Specifically, they expect the leadership to facilitate the passage of legislation. Leaders attempt to meet their members' expectations because they value their leadership positions.

Leadership in legislatures can be conceptualized as having been instituted to ameliorate problems of collective action (Rohde and Shepsle 1987; McCubbins and Sullivan 1987; see also Cooper and Brady 1981; Jones 1981). The passage of legislation requires coordination and coalition building, yet even though members do have an interest in legislation passing, it may well not be in any member's individual interest to bear the costs of the necessary coordination and coalition building. Leaders are designated to perform these tasks and are, in effect, paid with influence. That is, leaders are given by their members certain resources to enable them to carry out the tasks with which they are charged. Of necessity, these are resources that enable the party leadership to involve itself in and affect the outcomes of the legislative process. Of course, the magnitude of the resources granted can vary enormously and, over the course of House history, has, in fact, done so.

The strength of the majority party leadership—its capacity for involving itself in and affecting the outcomes of the legislative process—derives from the resources members have given the leadership and from the extent to which members are willing to let leaders exploit those resources. The leadership's resources are relatively fixed at a given point in time by rules, though they do change over time as they did during the period under study here. The speaker's right to nominate all Democratic members of the Rules Committee and the large leadership staffs are examples. The extent to which members are willing to let leaders exploit their resources is potentially more variable. Members' willingness to vote for rules reported by the leadership-controlled Rules Committee or to listen to leadership advice on how to shape a passable bill may vary even though rules granting resources remain unchanged.

From the perspective of the individual majority party member, party leadership strength is a two-edged sword. The stronger the leadership, the more

it can help in passing legislation the member wants or, of course, in obtaining other outcomes the member desires, such as keeping legislation off the floor or from enactment. But the stronger the leadership, the more it can help others pass legislation or obtain other outcomes that are detrimental to the member's goal advancement. In calculating optimal leadership strength, a member will assess both the extent to which he needs leadership help to attain his goals and the likelihood that the uses to which the leadership will put its strength will on balance advance rather than hinder his goals.

It follows then that the balance of benefits to costs to members should determine leadership strength. When benefits are perceived as significantly outweighing costs for a substantial majority, members should be more willing to grant their leadership additional resources and/or to allow their leaders to exploit fully the resources they already possess. Conversely, when costs are perceived as higher than benefits, party leadership strength should decrease.

The Changing Costs and Benefits of Strong Leadership—Hypotheses

How then have the benefits and costs to majority party members of strong leadership changed in the period under study? The answer provided here should be read as an interrelated set of hypotheses. In the next section, the most central of those hypotheses will be tested, allowing the adequacy of the answer to be assessed.

The House reforms of the early 1970s made legislation more vulnerable to change on the floor. The recorded teller vote, the reduced powers of the committee chairmen, and the enhanced resources of rank and file members made it much more difficult for committees to pass their legislation intact (Dodd and Oppenheimer 1977). Consequently, committee majorities and committee leaders needed help at the floor stage more frequently than they had in the pre-reform era. And, as the result of some of the reform era rules changes, the party leadership had acquired additional resources usable toward that end.

Increased jurisdictional conflicts among committees and the House's inability to realign jurisdictions further broke down committee autonomy and created a need for an outside arbiter when committee leaders could not agree. The multiple referral rule formalized the speaker's role and gave him new powers to set reporting deadlines for legislation referred to more than one committee. To the extent that committee leaders and committee majorities want their legislation to get to the floor—and they usually do—leadership help became increasingly needed and increasingly valuable.

If the greater difficulty of getting complex legislation to the floor and of passing bills without alteration in the 1970s increased committee leaders' and committee majorities' need for help from the leadership and, thus, the

benefits of strong leadership, the costs of strong leadership nevertheless remained substantial. The reformers were in part motivated by rank-and-file members' desires to expand their opportunities for participation in the legislative process. Beneficiaries of the change would see a contraction of such opportunities as a major cost. The Democratic party, never ideologically homogeneous, was very badly split in the 1970s (see Sinclair 1982; Ornstein, Mann, and Malbin 1990, 199, 201). To traditionally divisive labor and civil rights issues were added energy, environment, and the constellation of issues growing out of the Vietnam War. The more heterogeneous the membership, the higher are the potential costs of strong leadership. When party members differ radically in the policies they need for reelection or those they favor as good public policy, a member must always fear that the exercise of strong leadership will be detrimental to the advancement of his goals. Leaders are aware that by helping one segment they are often hurting another and consequently will use their resources with care.

In the 1980s, deep policy divisions between President Reagan and House Democrats and the huge budget deficits made passing legislation Democrats found satisfactory even more difficult. The major battles came to revolve around budget resolutions, reconciliation bills, and other omnibus measures often centering on questions of basic priorities. These are must-pass bills and only the party leadership possess the coordination capacity required to put together and pass such legislation. In sum, the 1980s political climate increased Democratic committee contingents', Democratic committee leaders', and the Democratic membership's need for help in passing legislation to advance their goals. And only a strong party leadership could provide that help.

In addition, the 1980s saw a decrease in the costs of strong leadership. Most important, the effective ideological homogeneity of the Democratic membership increased as the election constituencies of southern Democrats became more like those of their northern party colleagues and as the big deficits shrank the feasible issue space. No appreciable segment of the Democratic membership need fear that, as a consequence of the exercise of strong, policy-oriented leadership, their reelection chances will be reduced. Furthermore, the 1980s political environment, especially the deficit, made free-lance policy entrepreneurship, as practiced in the 1970s, much less feasible for liberals. Independent advocacy of new programs, especially if they are costly, had little chance of success. Consequently practicing the sort of restraint that makes strong leadership possible entailed no great cost.

This is a complex historical explanation and cannot be rigorously tested in toto. A number of key component parts can, however, be substantiated. The following changes that increased the benefits of strong leadership because they increased majority party members' need for help in passing legislation were hypothesized:

1. Legislation became more vulnerable to attack and change on the House floor in the 1970s in the wake of the reforms.
2. The structure of conflict changed over the period under study with deep policy divisions between president and House Democrats becoming more frequent in the 1980s.
3. The structure of legislation changed as multiply referred bills and omnibus measures increased in frequency.

The following changes that decreased the costs of strong leadership were hypothesized:

4. The ideological heterogeneity of the House Democratic membership decreased in the 1980s.
5. Opportunities for legislative entrepreneurship decreased in the 1980s.

The next several sections will substantiate that these changes did, in fact occur. The data will show that the trends are clearly evident on the major legislation that constitutes the congressional agenda as here defined. I will thus have demonstrated that these changes and the increase in leadership activity documented above occurred together. My argument is that these changes, through their impact on members' assessments of the costs and benefits of strong leadership, account for the increase in leadership activity. To bolster that argument, the relationship between leadership involvement and its costs and benefits as hypothesized above will be examined cross-sectionally. If, within a congress, the leadership is more frequently involved when the benefits to members are greatest—when members most need help because, for example, the president opposes the legislation—and when the costs to members are lowest—when Democrats are united, for example, then my argument about the causal relationship over time is strengthened.

The explanation here offered hinges upon the premise that leadership involvement increases the probability of legislative success. The final task will be testing whether, in fact, that is so. Showing that leadership involvement on a measure is associated with legislative success will lend credence to my explanation and will complete the demonstration that House majority party leadership has become stronger over the period under study. Strength was earlier defined in terms of activity and impact on outcomes. Greater activity has already been documented; showing that this activity has an impact upon outcomes will, thus, complete the task.

Increased Floor Vulnerability of Legislation in the 1970s

That legislation became more vulnerable to attack and change on the House floor in the 1970s in the wake of the reforms has been most thoroughly documented by Smith (1989). He shows that during the 16-year

period 1955–1972 amendments offered on the floor of the House approximately doubled from about 400 to about 800; the number then abruptly jumped to 1,425 in the next congress (ninety-third, 1973–1974) and remained high in the ninety-fourth and ninety-fifth peaking at 1,688 in 1977–1978 (31). Amendments then began to decline and stood at about 1,000 in the ninety-ninth Congress (1985–1987). Amendments decided by teller or recorded vote display the same trend, increasing from 55 in the mid-1950s (eighty-fourth) to 107 in the early 1970s (ninety-first). With the institution of the recorded teller vote in the ninety-second, they jumped to 195 and, with the switch to electronic voting, again shot up to 351 in the ninety-third. The number of such amendments peaked at 439 in 1977–1978 and has declined since (Smith 1989, 31).

This change in floor-amending activity is clearly evident on the major legislation that makes up the congressional agenda as here defined. In the pre-reform ninety-first Congress, those measures that reached the floor were subject, on average, to 1.5 amendments decided by a teller or recorded vote and, on average, .4 amendments per bill were adopted. By the reformed ninety-fourth Congress, the mean number of amendments offered per measure had more than tripled to 5.3 and the mean number adopted more than quadrupled to 1.8 per measure (see also Smith 1989, 18–19).

Amendments decided on a recorded vote can vary considerably in significance from killer amendments and major substitutes altering the thrust of the legislation entirely, on the one hand, to those having little policy impact on the other. To provide a more refined assessment of the impact of amending activity on committee floor success, all the amendments adopted to a measure were examined as were other votes on the measure such as on recommittal, passage, or approval of the conference report. A committee was judged to have clearly won on the floor if the legislation passed without the acceptance of any amendments of real consequence.[5] From the pre-reform ninety-first Congress to the reformed ninety-fourth Congress, the win rate for committees on the floor declined from 70% to 57%. Yet, given that the president was weaker in the latter congress and the Democratic seat margin in the House much larger, committees might have expected their floor success to increase. Clearly, then, legislation did become more vulnerable on the floor and committee majorities found it increasingly difficult to pass their legislation intact.

[5] *Congressional Quarterly*'s judgment, the content of the amendment and the extent to which the committee fought the amendment were the bases of judgment. There were few borderline cases; which amendments are key is almost always clear because all relevant actors are agreed. Consequently, coding clear losses is also straightforward; they occur when key votes—on major substitutes, killer amendments, or, of course, recommittal, passage, etc. are lost. Not all cases fall into the clear win or the clear loss category; a committee may defeat some but not all major amendments. Such cases were placed into intermediate categories which are, however, less reliable and are not reported here.

The Changing Structure of Conflict and its Consequences for Legislative Success

To demonstrate that frequent deep policy divisions between the president and House Democrats distinguish the 1980s from the previous decade, measures on the congressional agenda were classified as to whether or not they clearly pitted the president against the preponderance of House Democrats. For a measure to be coded as doing so the president must have a clear publicly-stated position, two-thirds or more of House Democrats must vote together on all important roll calls on the measure and the president's position and that of House Democrats must be directly opposed.

Table 4 shows a major change in the structure of conflict between the early 1970s and the late 1980s, with the frequency of battles pitting House Democrats against the president increasing from only 18% of congressional agenda items in the ninety-first to 61% in the one-hundredth Congress. Although the frequency does not increase significantly between the ninety-fourth and the ninety-seventh as a proportion of all measures that reached the floor, it increases very substantially as a proportion of presidential agenda items. Ronald Reagan's agenda was a much greater threat to Democrats' legislative goals than Nixon's or Ford's had been. The final column suggests that Reagan in the ninety-seventh Congress, his first, was an especially potent threat. On fully one-half the battles pitting president against House Democrats, Reagan was on the offensive advocating policy change and thus threatening Democrats with an outcome worse than the status quo; Democrats were on the defensive attempting to defeat or alter Reagan-supported measures, a situation in which even winning meant only preserving the status quo.

During the 1980s, then, House Democrats often found themselves in direct opposition to the president whose party also controlled the Senate from

TABLE 4

THE CHANGING STRUCTURE OF CONFLICT: INCREASE IN POLICY BATTLES PITTING PRESIDENT AGAINST TWO-THIRDS OR MORE OF HOUSE DEMOCRATS

	President vs. House Democrats Alignment as % of		% President on Offensive
Congress	Items That Got to Floor	President's Agenda Items	of President vs. House Dem. Items
91	18	8	25
94	42	27	0
97	47	45	50
100	61	67	4

1981 to 1986. The result in the ninety-seventh Congress was a low legislative success rate for Democratic committee contingents and for the Democratic membership. Committee majorities won on balance on final disposition on 48% of the measures on the congressional agenda in the ninety-seventh Congress compared with 57% in the ninety-first and 70% in the one-hundredth.[6] The ninety-seventh winning proportion of 48% is not very different from the 49% in the ninety-fourth; however, as the data in table 4 showed, the stakes were considerably higher in the ninety-seventh than in the ninety-fourth. In fact, the committees' win rate when the committee and the president disagreed was much lower in the ninety-seventh than in any of the other congresses—22% versus between 47% and 65%. In the ninety-seventh Congress, on measure pitting House Democrats against the president, Democrats won on final disposition on only 28% of the measures. (See table 9 and table 10 and the accompanying discussion below for a further analysis of win rates.) In the early 1980s, then, Democrats were having great difficulty not only in passing legislation that would advance their goals but even in blocking legislation inimical to their goals.

The Changing Structure of Legislation: Multiple Referral and Omnibus Bills

Multiple referral of legislation and omnibus measures were hypothesized to stimulate leadership involvement. Both types of measures have become more prominent on the congressional agenda. The multiple referral rule went into effect in 1975, and, in the ninety-fourth Congress, about 6% of the measures on the congressional agenda as here defined were multiply referred; this grew to 12% in the ninety-seventh Congress and to 28% in the one-hundredth. Thus, multiply referred legislation now constitutes a significant proportion of the congressional agenda of major legislation (see also Collie and Cooper 1989).

The political climate of the 1980s, it was argued, led to the domination of the agenda by omnibus measures, especially ones dealing with basic questions about priorities. Institutional change—the budget process instituted in the mid-1970s—fed into and provided one of the vehicles for this development. Budget resolutions are, by definition, omnibus measures that involve decisions about priorities.

[6] On the basis of the *Congressional Quarterly* account a judgment was made as to whether the committee and, where relevant, the president and House Democrats as a group had on balance won or lost on final disposition. This judgment is often somewhat more subjective than the classification concerning winning and losing on the floor where votes provide an important guide. Because most major legislation that is enacted involves some compromise after committee consideration—most frequently in conference—the classification of winning on balance is considerably less demanding than the classification of winning on the floor and just requires that the committee (or the president or House Democrats) achieved a favorable compromise. Where a measure involved a clear cut conflict between two sides and the result appeared to be an even compromise, the measure is placed into a middle, no clear winner, category.

TABLE 5

THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF FLOOR COALITIONS
(% OF AGENDA ITEMS)

Coalition Structure	Congress			
	91st	94th	97th	100th
Party	13	28	30	61
North/South Dem. Split	53	40	28	11
Party—North/South Split Mix	2	21	18	14
Cross-Cutting	7	5	8	11
Universalitic (90% + or voice)	22	7	15	5
N	45	43	40	38

In the ninety-first Congress no item on the congressional agenda could remotely qualify as omnibus. In the ninety-fourth, only the four budget resolutions (first and second each year) did. In the two congresses of the 1980s, by contrast, 20% of agenda items were omnibus measures and these included much of the most important legislation of those congresses—budget resolutions, reconciliation bills, full-year continuing resolutions (e.g., omnibus appropriations bills).

In the 1970s and early 1980s, then, the potential benefits of stronger leadership increased as institutional changes and changes in the political environment increased the Democratic membership's and Democratic committee contingents' need for help in passing legislation that would advance their goals.

Declining Costs of Strong Leadership: Decreasing Ideological Heterogeneity and Entrepreneurship Opportunities

Leadership activity did increase in the mid-1970s and early 1980s as was shown earlier (table 3), but the full development of strong leadership, it was hypothesized, depended upon a decline in the costs of strong leadership. Specifically, the ideological heterogeneity of the Democratic party in the 1970s was hypothesized to have retarded the development of strong leadership while the party's growing homogeneity in the 1980s made that development possible.

Voting was more partisan and House Democrats more cohesive on party votes in the late 1980s than at any time in the last four decades. In the one-hundredth Congress, the typical Democrat voted with a majority of his party colleagues on 88% of those votes that divided Democrats from Republicans. This average party unity score is the highest for Democrats from 1925 to the present. For the period 1951 through 1970, House Democrats' average party unity score was 77.6%; this fell to 73.8% for the period 1971–1982. After the 1982 election, the scores began rising and averaged 85.3% for the period

1983–1988. During these last three congresses, the proportion of roll calls on which a majority of Democrats voted against a majority of Republicans also increased, averaging 55.4% compared with 37.2% during the 1971–1982 period.

David Rohde (1988) has shown that in the past two decades the electoral constituencies of northern and southern Democrats became more similar. The character of the prominent issues of the 1980s may also have contributed to this high cohesion. What is important here, however, is its impact upon the structure of conflict and upon the costs of strong leadership.

The ideological heterogeneity of the Democratic party in the early 1970s manifested itself in frequent disagreements between a committee majority and Democratic liberals. Of all the agenda items that reached the House floor and elicited some conflict in the ninety-first Congress, fully 33% saw liberal Democrats in opposition to the committee majority's position. This declined to a mean of 16% in the ninety-fourth and ninety-seventh and to only 5% in the one-hundredth Congress.[7]

In the ninety-first Congress, over half the measures on the congressional agenda divided northern from southern Democrats on the House floor (see table 5). A major change occurred during the congresses under study. Over time, floor coalitions were increasingly likely to be partisan and decreasingly likely to be characterized by a split between northern and southern Democrats.

The political climate of the 1980s, House members report, constricted the opportunities for policy entrepreneurship (see, for example, Price 1989, 424–26). The data on agenda setting presented in table 2 provide some evidence that this perception has, in fact, influenced member behavior. Certainly the agenda setting role of identifiable individuals or groups other than the president or the leadership was less in the 1980s than in the 1970s. The impact of the big deficits can be seen in the character of the legislation successfully placed on the congressional agenda by identifiable individuals or groups in the one-hundredth Congress. Although in all but two cases the agenda setter was in the liberal camp broadly defined, only one of the bills in question cost money. Only the legislation providing an apology and reparations to Japanese-Americans interned during World War II entailed a significant cost to the government. By implication, the deficit depressed entrepreneurial activity.

When the environment precludes freelance entrepreneurship, when policy battles between Democratic committee contingents and significant groups within the party are rare rather than standard, when major legislation most frequently splits Democrats from Republicans rather than northern

[7] *CQ*'s account is relied upon. *CQ*'s reports of liberal opposition to a committee-reported bill are usually corroborated by roll call evidence but sometimes liberals were not able to force a recorded vote.

from southern Democrats, the potential costs of strong leadership to House Democrats have clearly decreased.

Patterns of Leadership Involvement

If variations in the costs and benefits to members of strong leadership determine variations in the rate of leadership activity over time, such variations across measures should be related to the cross-sectional pattern of leadership involvement. That is, the likelihood of party leadership involvement should be greatest when the members most need help and when the costs of the leadership's providing such help are lowest for majority party members and for the leadership itself.

Because passage of omnibus and multiple referred legislation may require negotiation and coordination activities beyond the capacity of committee leaders, party leadership involvement should be more frequent on such bills than on other legislation. As table 6 shows, omnibus measures entail leadership involvement; the leadership was active on every omnibus measure in the congresses under study. Generally, multiply referred legislation is more likely to draw leadership involvement than singly referred, nonomnibus legislation.[8] The increase in multiply referred measures and, more importantly, the increase in omnibus measures, has contributed to the change in leadership role. They do not completely explain the increase in leadership activity, however. Even among singly referred, nonomnibus measures, leadership involvement has increased.

The structure of conflict on a measure is a major determinant of the need for leadership help and of the costs of its provision. Democratic committee leaders and committee contingents are more likely to need leadership help to pass their legislation when the committee and the president disagree than otherwise as the president can be a formidable opponent. In fact, in every congress except the ninety-first, the leadership was substantially more likely to involve itself when committee Democrats faced a hostile president (see table 7).

The costs of leadership involvement to party subgroups and to the leadership itself are higher when the party membership is split and lower when it is united. To be sure, an intraparty split increases the difficulty of passing legislation, and consequently the proponents' need for help. Under certain circumstances, the party leadership will be forced to involve itself despite its membership being badly split (see Sinclair 1983, especially 127–28, 190–213). However, on balance, one would expect the costs of such involvement

[8] Because multiple referral and omnibus measures were strictly defined, there is little overlap. Thus, although reconciliation legislation typically involves large numbers of committees, it is not technically multiply referred. The omnibus trade bill in the one-hundredth Congress which involved 11 committees is a multiply referred omnibus bill.

TABLE 6

LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT BY TYPE OF MEASURE

Type	Congress 91st	94th	97th	100th
Omnibus	—	100	100	100
Multiply Referred	—	100	60	82
Other	46	54	58	77

TABLE 7

LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT AND THE STRUCTURE OF CONFLICT

% of Items in Which Leadership Was Involved	Congress 91st	94th	97th	100th
When Committee/ President Disagree	40	65	74	87
All Other Measures	49	53	59	67
When Committee/ Liberals Agree	69	52	70	96
When Committee/ Liberals Disagree	50	50	67	0
On Partisan Measures	83	92	75	91
On North/South Dem. Split	54	47	82	50
On President vs. House Dem. Measures	75	72	72	96
All Other Measures	40	53	63	65

to outweigh the benefits and, consequently, one would expect intraparty splits to depress the likelihood of leadership involvement. In fact, in all four congresses, the leadership was more likely to involve itself when the committee and liberal Democrats agreed than when they disagreed; in three of the four congresses, leadership involvement was more likely on partisan measures than on those that split the party along north-south lines. The ninety-seventh Congress, which is the exception, illustrates the circumstances under which the party leadership becomes actively involved despite a severe split among its members. Many of the measures at issue in 1981–1982—the first budget resolution (Gramm-Latta I) for example—were so important to the preponderance of the Democratic membership that the leadership had to involve itself despite the costs of its activity in terms of the leadership's relations with southern Democrats.

Leadership involvement can take varied forms, some more expensive than

others in terms of the leadership's relations with party subgroups. The figures in table 7 for leadership involvement when the committee and liberal Democrats disagree hide an interesting trend in type of leadership activity. In the pre-reform ninety-first Congress, when the leadership involved itself it supported the committee, even though in these instances that meant taking sides against an appreciable subgroup in the party. In the ninety-fourth and ninety-seventh Congresses, in contrast, leadership involvement more frequently took the form of mediation and damage control activities. The leadership involved itself *and* took sides (always supporting the committee), on only 17% of the measures that provoked a committee-liberal conflict in the ninety-fourth and 22% in the ninety-seventh Congress.[9]

Measures that pit the president against the bulk of House Democrats combine high benefits with low costs and consequently should elicit high leadership involvement. As table 7 shows, leadership involvement is considerably higher on such measures than on others.

Regressional analysis (and probit as well) show that the best predictors of leadership involvement are whether the measure is omnibus or not and whether the measure pits the preponderance of House Democrats against the president.[10] Thus, cross-sectionally as well as longitudinally, leadership involvement is associated with circumstances in which members need help to pass legislation and the costs to party subgroups of the leadership's providing that help are relatively low.

Strategic Use of Special Rules

Leadership strength, it was argued earlier, is a function not only of the resources leaders are given by rules but also of the extent to which members are willing to allow leaders to fully exploit those resources. If, in fact, the benefits of strong leadership increased and the costs decreased as argued, majority members should have become increasingly willing to allow the leadership to use its resources aggressively and, if leaders do respond to

[9] These findings suggest that in the wake of the reforms the party leadership became relatively more responsive to the Democratic Caucus, which was and remains predominately liberal.

[10] The ordinal character of the dependent variable "leadership involvement" (coded 0 for none, 1 for some, 2 for major involvement) makes the use of regression somewhat suspect. The regression coefficients, unstandardized and standardized, and the values of t are:

	B	Beta	*t*
Omnibus	.86	.31	3.9
Dem. vs. Pres	.54	.30	3.8

The adjusted $R^2 = .202$

A probit analysis with involvement dichotomized as major versus none or minor produced very similar results. The same two variables are the best predictors and are significant at better than the .001 level.

their members' need for help, they should, in fact, show an increase in the aggressive use of resources.

Perhaps the single most vital resource the leadership was granted during the reform period was full control over the Rules Committee. The special rule under which a measure is brought to the floor can be used to structure choices so as to advantage the leadership position (see Sinclair 1983, 1989; Bach 1981a, 1981b). Smith (1989, 75) and others (Cheney 1989; Bach and Smith 1988) have demonstrated the declining use of simple open rules since the mid-1970s. Table 8 shows that the major legislation under discussion here was decreasingly likely to be brought to the floor under an open rule; complex rules which often but not always restricted amending activity and that in other increasingly complicated ways structured floor choices became the norm (for details, see Bach and Smith 1988 and also Sinclair 1989). The increased employment of such rules on leadership agenda items and on measures in which the leadership is active strongly suggests that the leadership came more and more to use such rules strategically. Certainly the data—and direct evidence (see Berry 1989) as well as vocal Republican objections (see Cheney 1989)—attest to highly aggressive leadership use of this key resource in the 1980s.

The Impact of Leadership Involvement on Legislative Success

Leadership strength was earlier defined in terms of activity and impact upon outcomes. One leadership can be said to be stronger than another if it

TABLE 8

CHANGING CHARACTER AND INCREASED STRATEGIC USE OF SPECIAL RULES

	Congress			
	91st	94th	97th	100th
% of Floor Items Considered Under:				
Other than Standard Open Rule	20	21	43	76
Complex Rule	4	19	33	68
% of Leadership Agenda Considered under Closed or Complex Rule	0	50	100	85
% of Items with any Leadership Involvement Considered under Closed or Complex Rule	26	32	60	81
% of Items with Major Leadership Involvement Considered under Closed or Complex Rule	29	32	71	88

is more active in the legislative process and if this activity has an impact on legislative outcomes. The increase in activity or involvement having been shown earlier, it now becomes necessary to demonstrate that leadership involvement does, in fact, increase the likelihood of legislative success. Doing so will complete the demonstration that House majority party leadership has become stronger over the period under study. It will also lend further credence to the explanation which has been offered. The benefits of strong leadership to members, which are an important component of my explanation, obviously exist only if leadership help in the legislative process makes a difference in outcomes.

Table 9 shows, on those measures where the president opposed the committee, committee success was considerably higher in the one-hundredth Congress than in any of the earlier congresses under study. Thus, committees under conditions that make them especially vulnerable were most successful both on the House floor and in terms of final disposition of the legislation in that congress in which the leadership was most active. The comparison between the one-hundredth and the ninety-fourth Congress is especially supportive of the importance of leadership involvement since the two congresses are similar in that the president was weak in both.

Since the committee's need for help is an important determinant of leadership involvement, the leadership tends to involve itself on the most difficult issues. Nevertheless, in three of the four congresses, committee win rates are higher when the leadership is active than when it stays on the sidelines; leadership involvement does appear to increase committees' probability of legislative success. In the ninety-seventh Congress, however, the relationship is reversed, a result, it appears, of the very tough issues on which the leadership attempted to build coalitions in opposition to President Reagan. The leadership was active on all of the measures on Reagan's core

TABLE 9

THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT ON COMMITTEE SUCCESS WHEN PRESIDENT AND COMMITTEE DISAGREE

	Congress			
	91st	94th	97th	100th
Committee Won on Floor:				
% of All Measures	46	60	59	73
% When Leadership Involved	50	68	50	81
% When Leadership not Involved	43	46	83	25
Committee Won on Balance on Final Disposition:				
% of All Measures	47	52	22	65
% When Leadership Involved	83	60	18	67
% When Leadership not Involved	22	36	33	50

TABLE 10

THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT ON HOUSE DEMOCRATS' SUCCESS ON MEASURES PITTING THE PRESIDENT AGAINST TWO-THIRDS OR MORE OF HOUSE DEMOCRATS

	Congress			
	91st	94th	97th	100th
Democrats Won on Floor:				
% of All Measures	75	83	61	91
% When Leadership Involved	83	92	54	96
% When Leadership not Involved	50	60	80	0[a]
Democrats Won on Balance on Final Disposition:				
% of All Measures	38	44	28	78
% When Leadership Involved	50	54	23	77
% When Leadership not Involved	0	20	40	100[a]

[a] $N = 1$.

agenda and, in 1981, lost a series of major battles to the popular president (Sinclair 1983). The defeats might, of course, have been worse had the leadership stayed on the sidelines. Clearly, while leadership help can increase the probability of legislative success, it cannot assure it regardless of other conditions. Thus, the very low success rate on final disposition in the ninety-seventh reflects Republican control of the Senate.

Table 10 tells much the same story. On those measures pitting House Democrats against the president, Democrats were more successful on the House floor and much more successful in terms of final disposition in the one-hundredth Congress than in the other congresses under study. Again the comparison between the ninety-fourth and the one-hundredth is especially instructive since in both cases House Democrats faced a weakened president. Yet despite Democrats' much bigger numbers in the ninety-fourth (291 versus 258), they were more legislatively successful in the one-hundredth. Again with the exception of the ninety-seventh Congress, Democrats were more likely to win when the party leadership was active than when it stayed out of the battle.[11]

Probit analysis shows that even after the character of the floor coalition is taken into account, leadership involvement in interaction with presidential

[11] As there was only one one-hundredth Congress measure pitting House Democrats against the president on which the leadership was not involved, it is not the difference in win rates but the magnitude of the 100th win rate that is important.

position significantly influences committee floor success.[12] A committee is more likely to win on the floor if floor coalitions are partisan rather than ones splitting Democrats regionally. Committee floor success is also positively and significantly related to the extent of leadership involvement and whether the president and the committee agree or disagree, with the probability of success being highest when the leadership is involved and the committee and the president agree, next highest when the leadership is involved in a major way and the committee and the president disagree, and lowest when the leadership is not involved.

Conclusion

During the last two decades, as this research has shown, a number of institutional and political changes that increased the potential benefits of stronger leadership to majority members of the House occurred. The reforms which made legislation more vulnerable to attack on the floor, the change in the structure of legislation with multiple referral and omnibus legislation, the change in the structure of conflict with a preponderance of Democrats increasingly pitted against the president in the 1980s all made passing legislation Democrats favor more difficult and consequently increased Democrats' need for help. The costs of strong leadership also decreased during this period as the ideological heterogeneity of the Democratic membership decreased and freelance policy entrepreneurship became less feasible.

I have also shown that, during this period, the party leadership became more active in the legislative process, and that leadership involvement is associated with legislative success. I thus concluded that the House majority

[12] The interaction variable is coded as follows. Its relationship to the dependent variable is also given.

Leadership Involvement	Pres/Comm	Code	% Committee Won
Major	Agree	5	80.0
Minor	Agree	4	78.6
Major	Disagree	3	71.2
Minor	Disagree	2	56.3
None	Agree	1	53.3
None	Disagree	0	51.5

"Disagree" here includes partial as well as complete disagreement. The results are highly similar if the mixed cases are excluded.

Floor coalition is coded 1 for partisan; −1 for North/South split, and 0 for other.

The probit coefficients and standard errors are:

Leadership involvement/Pres position interaction	.162	(.07)
Floor coalition	.299	(.14)

party leadership did become stronger over this period. Furthermore, since cross-sectionally as well as over time, leadership involvement is highest when the benefits to members are high and the costs relatively low, I concluded that the increase in leadership strength is, in fact, a result of members' changed calculations of the costs and benefits of such leadership.

Thus, majority party leadership in the House became stronger during what most scholars consider a weak party era. Although there is considerable controversy about the exact trajectory and the meaning of change in the American party system, certainly few would argue that either party organization or party in the electorate has strengthened so substantially as to lead us to expect a strengthening of congressional party leadership. (For a sampling of the range of viewpoints, see Maisel 1990.) These developments no longer appear contradictory, however, when the relationship between external party strength and internal party leadership strength is conceptualized in terms of costs and benefits to members. When parties external to the legislature are strong, the benefits to members of strong internal leadership are likely to outweigh the costs because strong external parties make likely a high degree of intraparty consensus on the legislation members need to further their reelection and policy goals. If benefits and costs, not external party strength per se, are key, then other factors that influence those costs and benefits may produce changes in internal party leadership strength and that is what has been argued—and, I believe, shown to be the case—here.

The character of the factors responsible for the strengthening of internal party leadership, of course, have implications for its likely persistence. The Democratic membership's increased ideological homogeneity is, in considerable part, the result of long-term changes in the supportive constituencies of southern Democrats and those changes are not likely to be reversed.[13] The institutional alterations are also likely to be long-lasting. However, the political environment which constricted the issue space thus contributing to effective Democratic ideological homogeneity, made free-lance policy entrepreneurship largely unfeasible, and resulted in a structure of conflict in which Democrats badly needed their leadership's help to pass legislation may change in the short term. In sum, factors other than strong external parties may produce strong majority party leadership in the House; however, as those factors may be less stable, the persistence of strong leadership based upon them is less assured.

Manuscript submitted 12 June 1990
Final manuscript received 16 July 1991

[13] This increase in the homogeneity of the parties' constituency bases may have a positive impact upon external party strength. Certainly the parties' literature would lead one to expect that.

References

Bach, Stanley, 1981a. "Special Rules in the House of Representatives: Themes and Contemporary Variations." *Congressional Studies* 8:37–57.

Bach, Stanley. 1981b. "The Structure of Choice in the House of Representatives: The Impact of Complex Special Rules." *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 18:553–602.

Bach, Stanley, and Steven S. Smith. 1988. *Managing Uncertainty in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Berry, John. 1989. *The Ambition and the Power*. New York: Viking.

Cheney, Richard B. 1989. "An Unruly House." *Public Opinion* 11:41–44.

Cohen, Richard E. 1987. "Quick-Starting Speaker." *National Journal* 19:1409–13.

Collie, Melissa P., and Joseph Cooper. 1989. "Multiple Referral and the 'New' Committee System in the House of Representatives." In *Congress Reconsidered*, ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Cooper, Joseph, and David W. Brady. 1981. "Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn." *American Political Science Review* 75:411–25.

Davidson, Roger. 1988. "The New Centralization on Capital Hill." *The Review of Politics* 49:345–63.

Dodd, Lawrence C. 1979. "The Expanded Roles of the House Democratic Whip System: The 93rd and 94th Congresses." *Congressional Studies* 7:27–56.

Dodd, Lawrence C., and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds. 1977. *Congress Reconsidered*. New York: Praeger.

Dodd, Lawrence C., and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds. 1989. "Consolidating Power in the House: The Rise of a New Oligarchy" In *Congress Reconsidered*, ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Fenno, Richard. 1973. *Congressmen in Committees*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Fenno, Richard. 1978. *Home Style*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Hall, Richard L. 1987. "Participation and Purpose in Committee Decision Making." *American Political Science Review* 81:105–27.

Hook, Janet. 1987. "Speaker Jim Wright Takes Charge in the House." *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 45:1483–88.

Jones, Charles O. 1981. "House Leadership in an Age of Reform." *Understanding Congressional Leadership*, ed. Frank H. Mackaman. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Kingdon, John W. 1984. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Light, Paul, 1982. *The President's Agenda*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Maisel, L. Sandy, ed. 1990. *The Parties Respond*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

McCubbins, Mathew, and Terry Sullivan, eds. 1987. *Congress: Structure and Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oppenheimer, Bruce I. 1981. "The Changing Relationship between House Leadership and the Committee on Rules." In *Understanding Congressional Leadership*, ed. Frank H. Mackaman. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Ornstein, Norman J., Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin. 1990. *Vital Statistics on Congress 1989–90*. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute.

Palazzolo, Dan. 1989. "The Speaker's Relationship with the House Budget Committee." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL.

Price, David E. 1989. "From Outsider to Insider." *Congress Reconsidered*, ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Rohde, David. 1988. "Variations in Partisanship in the House of Representatives: Southern Democrats, Realignment and Agenda Change." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC.

Rohde, David. 1989. "Democratic Party Leadership, Agenda Control and the Resurgence of Partisanship in the House." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, GA.

Rohde, David, and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 1987. "Leaders and Followers in the House of Representatives: Reflections on Woodrow Wilson's 'Congressional Government.'" *Congress and the Presidency* 14:111–33.

Shepsle, Kenneth. 1989. "The Changing Textbook Congress." In *Can the Government Govern?*, ed. John H. Chubb and Paul Peterson. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Sinclair, Barbara. 1982. *Congressional Realignment*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Sinclair, Barbara. 1983. *Majority Leadership in the U.S. House*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sinclair, Barbara. 1989. "House Majority Party Leadership in the Late 1980s." In *Congress Reconsidered*, ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Sinclair, Barbara. 1990. "The Congressional Party: Evolving Organizational, Agenda-Setting, and Policy Roles." In *The Parties Respond*, ed. L. Sandy Maisel. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Smith, Steven. 1989. *Call to Order: Floor Politics in the House and Senate*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Smith, Steven, and Forrest Maltzman. 1989. "Declining Committee Power in the House of Representatives." Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta.

Barbara Sinclair is professor of political science, University of California, Riverside, CA 92521.