# *Congressional Careers and Party Leadership in the Contemporary House of Representatives**

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Changes in rules, membership, and norms in the U.S. House of Representatives have altered the "structure of opportunities" that shapes congressional careers. Although some attention has been given committee-based changes, relatively little has been written about the relationships between new career patterns and the party leadership. This article examines the Democratic leadership's attempts to deal with a democratized and decentralized House, largely composed of junior members. After demonstrating the extent to which the Democrats' "inclusive" strategy has expanded the number of leadership positions, the attitudes of junior members, in and out of the leadership, are examined to assess how such a strategy will fare. The results are mixed; junior leaders highly value the norm of compromise, for example, but they generally downplay the importance of personal cordiality, a norm that seems essential to an inclusive leadership style.

In the concluding essays of their recent edited works on the Congress, Lawrence Dodd (1981) and Norman Ornstein (1981) both see the changing congressional career as central to understanding contemporary legislative politics. Dodd emphasizes the personalization of conflict, as legions of junior members fight over "key congressional power positions-of-party leadership posts and subcommittee chairs [that] have not been filled historically by following well-established norms of seniority" (1981, p. 409). Ornstein notes a change in career incentives for many House members, who treat a House seat as a step up the political ladder, not as an ultimate career goal. With enhanced abilities to obtain political recognition, "the incentive . . . is to establish an independent name and reputation as quickly as possible" (Ornstein, p. 369). Thus "the House floor is often a free for all" and "the formerly widespread pride in legislative craftsmanship has steadily declined" (p. 368).

Price (1971, 1975), Polsby (1968), Bullock (1972), and Nelson (1977), among others, have demonstrated that congressional careers do relate to an era's legislative context (Cooper and Brady, 1981). As political scientists increasingly treat members of Congress as purposive actors, the career-context nexus takes on new meaning as a promising avenue for understanding a complex and changing institution. In particular, exam-

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ining the career patterns of party leaders may provide some valuable insights.

Over the years, scholars have produced a healthy, if not complete, literature on congressional party leadership (Peabody, 1976; Ripley, 1967; Cohen, 1980; Waldman, 1980). We know a good deal about the top party leaders and how they won their positions, but we have relatively little information about the early emergence of leadership talent. Neil MacNeil, for instance, noted the ability of the leaders to show "their friendship and approval" (1963, p. 111) for younger members by allowing them to preside over the chamber. We also have various accounts of the mentor-protégé development of particular members' careers, like Richard Bolling's sponsorship by Speaker Sam Rayburn.

The minimal attention given the initial emergence of leadership personnel largely reflects the realities of congressional careers during the "first wave" of modern legislative research, in the 1950s and 1960s. A junior member did not worry about moving into the leadership; as Peabody (1976, p. 52) observed, one's first concern was to win reelection, since "the vast majority of congressmen are most vulnerable, electorally, at the beginning . . . of their political careers." Then came a career phase when members were most concerned with their committee work.

> After four or five terms in office, Representatives are coming into some power of their own, if they have not yet transferred to the prestige committees of the House—Ways and Means, Appropriations, or Rules—they are likely to have enough seniority to have secured a subcommittee of their own. . . . Attendant with some of these responsibilities is the chance for greater interaction with party leaders. By and large, however, the lives of these mid-career members continue to be district and committee-centered (Peabody, 1976, p. 52).

By the time members had decided to seek leadership positions, at least through the 1960s, they had generally established their reputations within the House and had probably opted not to run for higher office.

The contemporary Congress provides a very different context for career development (Cooper and Brady, 1981). If the Rayburn-era House artificially retarded members' growth and development, that of the past fifteen years has acted like a hothouse to stimulate career advancement. With heavier workloads (Davidson and Oleszsek, 1981, ch. 2), greater democratization and decentralization (Dodd and Oppenheimer, 1981; Mann and Ornstein, 1981), and modifications in the apprenticeship and seniority norms (Loomis, 1981), younger members move quickly through the House "structure of opportunities" (Schlesinger, 1966). For example, at the beginning of the Ninety-Seventh Congress in 1981, the median seniority among majority members of both the Ways and Means and Rules committees was three previous terms.

The rapidity of advancements and the corresponding shape of congressional careers have definitely changed in recent years. The research at

hand examines the career patterns of Democratic House members elected within the past decade. The greater emphasis is placed upon movement of junior members into the party leadership's expanding ranks, but committee-based opportunities are discussed as well. This research addresses first the question of what contemporary congressional careers "look like"—especially in comparison to those of members who began their service in the 1950s and 1960s. It then considers what sorts of members move into the leadership today—a leadership that includes many more positions than it did a decade ago. To answer this latter question, data will be drawn from a continuing study of members of the Democratic "Class of 1974," who have responded to questionnaires and submitted to interviews over their congressional tenure. Finally, I examine some of the implications of career change for legislative behavior and the ultimate policy outcomes produced by the House.

## The Structure of Opportunities

### *I. The Committee System*

> A few of us were lucky. [recounts one House member who entered during the 1960s] Pure luck. I became a subcommittee chairman in my second term. For about three weeks, the ranking Republican, a senior member, whenever he'd see me—in the cloakroom or anywhere—would pretend to take off a plumed hat and would bow down before me with a sweep of his hand. [gestures] He'd say, "Mr. Chairrrmannn . . ." And I loved it![1]

If luck were crucial to career advancement in the House of the 1960s, it plays only a subordinate role today, at least within the committee system. Relatively early in a majority party member's House tenure, advancement to a committee position of real leverage—either a subcommittee chair or a power committee slot—is virtually guaranteed. Consider the figures in Table 1, which compare the career advancement of Democratic members of the Class of 1964 with that of their colleagues first elected in 1974.

Although some idiosyncratic elements may contribute to the differences in Table 1, taken at face value the structure of committee opportunities indicates that advancement to a position of power is almost automatic by a member's fourth term. Indeed, the problem becomes one of explaining why a member does not advance rather than why he or she does. To that end, let us consider the only three members of the Democratic Class of 1974 who, as of their fourth term, neither chaired a subcommittee nor served on a power committee: Georgia's Larry McDonald and Indiana's David Evans and Floyd Fithian.

[1] This quotation and others in this article come from personal interviews in which the congressional respondents were guaranteed anonymity.

TABLE 1

Committee-Based Structure of Opportunities in the House, 92nd and 97th Congresses

| Opportunity | Congress | |
|---|---|---|
| | 92nd (1971–72) | 97th (1981–82) |
| Subcommittee chairs | 128 | 139 |
| Power-committee positions[a] | 58 | 67 |
| Total | 186 | 206 |
| Subcommittees chaired by fourth-term members | 9[b] (33%) | 29[c] (66%) |
| Power-committee positions held by fourth-term members[d] | 2 (7%) | 12 (27%) |
| Total | 11 (41%) | 41 (93%) |

[a] Power committees are Appropriations, Rules, and Ways and Means.
[b] Class $N = 27$.
[c] Class $N = 44$.
[d] No members held a power-committee subcommittee chair.

In large part the failures of McDonald and Evans derived from their conservative leanings. McDonald, a member of the John Birch Society, was one of the most conservative members of the House. As Ehrenhalt (1981, p. 286) in his *Politics in America* profile observes: "McDonald's militant conservatism places him far outside both parties in the House, a free-lance conservative whose real allegiance is to the national politics of the New Right." Evans' conservatism was more conventional (he lost his reelection bid in 1982, after adverse redistricting), but he, too, suffered inside the House for his views. Again, to quote *Politics in America:*

> Elected in a conservative district in the 1974 Watergate landslide, he has taken extraordinary care not to give voters any ideological reason to turn him out of office. . . . Evans' determination to vote his district . . . has probably denied him a chance to gain much influence among House Democrats, who see him as being preoccupied, if not obsessed, with local opinion. . . . When an important subcommittee chairmanship opened up on Government Operations in 1979. Evans was passed over . . . . in favor of Toby Moffett of Connecticut [a fellow member of the Class of 1974] (Ehrenhalt, 1981, p. 400).

Fithian, on the other hand, simply represented an anomaly in his failure to land a subcommittee chair on either the Agriculture or Government

Operations committees. He drew the last seniority slot among his classmates on each of these committees, and not enough positions opened up for him to chair a subcommittee. In short, Fithian's unusual bad luck resembles a mirror image of the singular good fortune experienced by the member quoted at the beginning of this section.

The material presented in Table 1 allows for some further observations about the contemporary committee-related structure of opportunities. First, the Democrats have not engaged in much "devaluation" of the worth of subcommittee chairs and power-committee slots in the past decade (Westefield, 1974). Committee reforms slowed the proliferation of subcommittees to an extent, and, perhaps more important, given the 1971 caucus rule that allows a member to chair only one legislative subcommittee, there has been little need to devalue this currency much further. The subcommittee reforms, incidentally, did not initially affect the Class of 1964's advancement in any striking way; only four of these members gained new subcommittee chairs in the Ninety-second Congress (1971–72).

Although a few members of the Class of 1974 have gained some publicity in winning struggles for subcommittee chairs (e.g., California's Henry Waxman, Connecticut's Toby Moffett), for most individuals the march toward a piece of valuable committee turf has been relatively quick and painless. This pattern of rapid advancement holds both for other congressional classes and for the minority members. In the Ninety-eighth Congress, for example, only 4 of the 30 remaining Class of 1976 Democrats held neither a subcommittee chair nor a power-committee slot. All 10 of their Republican counterparts served either on a power committee or as a ranking member of a subcommittee.

If Irwin Gertzog (1976) could argue that committee assignments were "routinized" in the early 1970s, it now appears that a similar claim can be made for movement into positions of formal committee authority. In addition, these junior members generally express satisfaction with their committee experience. *Without exception,* of those members responding in 1980 (40 of 56), the Class of 1974 Democrats reported themselves satisfied with their committee assignments.

Such findings of rapid advancement and high rates of satisfaction may well indicate a general pattern in members' committee careers, but there does exist one important caveat: The Class of 1974 Democrats fortuitously arrived at the Capitol just as congressional turnover began to rise sharply—largely due to voluntary retirements (Cooper and West, 1981; Hibbing, 1982). Thus by the start of their fourth terms in 1981 the 44 remaining Class of 1974 members found themselves ranking behind only 95 other Democrats on the seniority ladder. This contrasts with the much less fortunate Democratic Class of 1964, who, in their fourth terms, still trailed 150 fellow partisans. If congressional turnover remains

near the levels of the recent past, future classes will probably move through the committee ranks more like the Class of 1974 than the Class of 1964, but no guarantees exist here (Hibbing, 1982).

*II. The Party Leadership*

As the House has become more decentralized and democratized, Democratic party leaders have pursued two broad and seemingly contradictory strategies for enhancing their own strength. The leaders have, on the one hand, endeavored to centralize certain powers, while, on the other, they have sought to expand considerably the number of members within the leadership ranks. The centralization trend is relatively straightforward. The Speaker has won the right to nominate Rules Committee members (and its chair); he heads and exercises de facto control over the revitalized Steering and Policy Committee, which serves as both a committee on committees and a policy forum. The Speaker's power over bill referral has been enhanced, and the entire leadership—especially the whip system—has obtained increased staff resources (Dodd and Oppenheimer, 1981).

Beyond such attempts to centralize authority, the leaders have also responded to the changing context of a House filled with junior members who hold great expectations for participation and considerable resources to make those expectations come true. Sinclair (1981) notes that a strategy of broad inclusion was inappropriate to the Rayburn-era House or even to the institution of the 1960s. But "the post-reform House, in which rules allow and member expectations dictate wide participation, recognizes such a strategy [of inclusive leadership]" (Sinclair, 1981, p. 400). Aside from their expectations and resources, the large numbers of younger members require that some attempts at inclusion be made; in the Ninety-Seventh Congress (1981–82), 61 percent of the members had begun service in 1975 or later. Sinclair does touch on the expansion of the whip system, but she emphasizes the "task force" idea, which has brought many junior members into the leadership on an ad hoc basis. Although task forces do provide numerous leadership opportunities, the focus here remains on the formal and continuing leadership structure.

Changes in the formal structure during the past two decades are indicated in Table 2. During the Eighty-seventh Congress (1961–62) there existed a total of 61 leadership slots; only 22 fell under the heading of legislative leadership. Relatively few opportunities existed to obtain a leadership role, and virtually all the slots—legislatively relevant or not—were filled by senior members. This formal listing probably seriously overstates the number of real leadership opportunities, in that it includes as part of the leadership the Steering Committee, which Rayburn had

TABLE 2

Leadership Positions within the Majority Democratic Party: 87th (1961–62), 92nd (1971–72), and 97th (1981–82) Congresses

| Congress | Legislative Leaders | Other Leaders | Total Leaders |
|---|---|---|---|
| 87th | Speaker | Caucus chair | |
| | Floor leader | Caucus secretary | |
| | Whip | Patronage committee (3) | |
| | Deputy whip | Ways and Means members (15) | |
| | Zone whips (18) | Campaign Committee chair | |
| | | Steering Committee (18, plus 6 ex officio) | |
| | 22 | 39 | 61 |
| 92nd | Speaker | Caucus chair | |
| | Floor leader | Caucus secretary | |
| | Whip | Ways and Means members (15) | |
| | Deputy whips (2) | Campaign Committee chair | |
| | Zone whips (19) | Patronage Committee (3) | |
| | | Steering Committee (19, plus 7 ex officio) | |
| | 24 | 40 | 64 |
| 97th (restricted definition) | Speaker | Caucus chair | |
| | Floor leader | Caucus secretary | |
| | Whip | Campaign Committee chair | |
| | Chief deputy whip | Steering and Policy (20, plus 9 ex officio) | |
| | Deputy whips (4) | | |
| | At-large Whips (15) | | |
| | Assistant (zone) whips (23) | | |
| | Rules Committee (11) | | |
| | 57 | 30 | 87 |
| 97th (expanded definition) | Speaker | Caucus chair[b] | |
| | Floor leader | Caucus secretary[b] | |
| | Whip | Campaign Committee chair | |
| | Deputy, at-large, and assistant whips (43) | | |
| | Rules Committee (11) | | |
| | Budget Committee (18) | | |
| | Steering and Policy (25)[a] | | |
| | 100 | 3 | 103 |

[a] The total of Steering and Policy includes only those who do not qualify for the leadership in other ways (e.g., ex officio member Whitten, as Appropriations chair counts, but ex officio member Wright, as floor leader, does not).

[b] Caucus chair and secretary serve as ex officio members of Steering and Policy.

allowed to lapse in 1956. As Ripley (1967, pp 47–48) notes,

> When Rayburn died in late 1961, the liberal members of the party campaigned to reconstitute a steering committee. . . . The new Speaker, John McCormack, acceded to their wishes. . . . From 1962 through 1966 the new committee seldom met and had no effect on legislation or tactics. . . . Although formally labeled "advisory," the group was not even allowed to perform this limited—and perhaps meaningless—function.

By the Ninety-second Congress (1971–72), things had changed very little. In the decade following Rayburn's death, the formal leadership structure remained stable, even though neither McCormack nor Albert possessed the strong informal ties that permitted Rayburn to function effectively in the chamber (Cooper and Brady, 1981, p. 423).

As of the Ninety-Seventh Congress, however, the leadership structure had changed substantially in two basic ways (see Table 2). First, the absolute number of positions rose sharply, due largely to the growth in the whip system and the inclusion on the Rules committee within the leadership's orbit (in the wake of the Speaker's authority over the nomination of Rules Committee members). Oppenheimer (1977) has thoroughly detailed the Rules Committee's metamorphosis into an "arm of the leadership," but the increase in the number of at-large whips from an original three in 1975 to the current fifteen, has received less attention.[2] Dodd (1979) observes that the Speaker appointed the first at-large whips in response to pressure from the respective black, women's, and hispanic caucuses. Using the at-large slots to provide some balance to the results of the zone-whip elections remains central to these appointments. As one top leader recently put it, "The first goal is overall balance in the whip organization. The at-large whips are supposed to balance the electoral process. If there are no blacks or hispanics, we'd appoint some, or women . . ."

For the Ninety-Seventh Congress, the balancing required was modest. The 23 elected whips included one black, two hispanics, and no women. The leadership added two blacks and two women among its at-large appointees. Beyond this obvious balancing, the appointed whips appear very similar to their elected colleagues (see Table 3). The leadership did appoint somewhat younger and more liberal (by Americans for Democratic Action [ADA] scores) members, but, for the most part, the appointed whips closely resemble their elected brethren.

More important than the absolute rise in the number of leadership slots is the legislative relevance of these positions. Under a restrictive definition of legislatively oriented positions (see Table 2), the number of such slots has increased from 24 in 1971–72 to at least 57 a decade later.

[2] If one counts the assortment of assistant whips, the number of appointees rises to 19; and 15 are labeled "at large" however.

TABLE 3

Age, Seniority, Party Support, and Ideology of Elected and Appointed Whips, 97th Congress

| Whips | Age[a] (1981) | Seniority[a] Average | Seniority[a] Median | 1980 Party Unity Score | 1980 ADA Rating |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elected ($n$ = 23) | 47.5 | 7.6 | 4 | 71.3 | 58.0 |
| Appointed ($n$ = 15) | 44.4 | 6.9 | 5 | 69.6 | 65.4 |

[a] In years, at beginning of 97th Congress.

A more realistic and expansive definition of legislative leadership includes members of both the Steering and Policy Committee and the Budget Committee. This raises the total number of slots to 100, which were occupied by 88 different members in the Ninety-seventh Congress. Steering and Policy, while most important as the Democratic committee on committees, has the potential to form much of the connective tissue between the Democratic caucus, the party leadership, and the House as a whole (Dodd and Oppenheimer, 1981b, pp. 55–56). But it is the Budget Committee that offers the most challenging current opportunities for the exercise of legislative leadership, especially by younger members.

*The Budget Committee as a Leadership Incubator*

> [A Budget Committee seat] is a prize, it is a plum, it is a leadership position.
>
> Majority Leader Jim Wright (Tate, 1983)

The party leadership has always held more than a passing interest in the membership of key committees—notably Appropriations, Ways and Means, and Rules. Subject to certain environmental constraints (e.g, a state's claim for a seat), the leadership clearly desires to retain as much influence upon, if not control over, these committees as possible. Witness Majority Leader Jim Wright's chagrin as sponsor of the successful candidacies of Texas "Boll Weevils" Phil Gramm and Kent Hance for the Budget and Ways and Means committees, respectively (Farney, 1981).

The House leadership did not immediately recognize the importance of the Budget Committee, created by the 1974 Budget Reform Act. After all, nothing guaranteed the ultimate success of the new budget procedures. By 1977, however, it had become apparent that the Budget Committee was increasing its power within the House and that the House leadership needed to exercise more control over the selection of committee members (Ellwood and Thurber, 1981; Schick, 1981, ch. 4).

What criteria has the leadership employed in selecting Budget Committee members in recent years? The data presented in Table 4 illustrate that neither party regularity nor liberalism (as measured by Conservative Coalition support scores) have played much of a role. Rather, the Steering and Policy Committee has used the Budget Committee as a testing ground for a new generation of leaders. Although the Budget members have not been especially young (Simon, Hefner, and Mineta were among the older members of the Class of 1974), they have possessed relatively little seniority. Only four of the eighteen Budget Democrats had served over three terms at the start of the Ninety-seventh Congress, yet it is these junior members who have provided much of the leadership in responding to the Reagan budget initiatives. Indeed, Budget Committee members take on a range of responsibilities that come close to mirroring those confronting the House in general and its leadership in particular. That is, Budget members must deal with a host of diverse policy complexities, accommodate the contradictory requirements of the overall budget with those particulars demanded by (sub)committee chairs, and decide whether to make political statements in the midst of economic policymaking. In addition, some, though not all, of the junior members have taken on the role of communicating committee (or committee faction) positions to the public, through the news media. Such a mix of roles corresponds well to the views of one senior House leader who saw a need for the next generation of leaders to be thoughtful and serious but also to serve as "articulate spokesmen, who can use the media." The Budget Committee provides a continuing forum for such junior members as Leon Panetta and Dick Gephardt, who have generally received high marks for both content and presentation in their budget-related actions.

TABLE 4

Support for Party Unity and Conservative Coalition in the 97th Congress: Budget Committee Democrats Compared to All House Democrats (1981 scores)

| | Support | |
|---|---|---|
| Democrats | Party Unity | Conservative Coalition |
| All Non-Southern | 76 | 28 |
| All Southern | 60 | 70 |
| All | 69 | 46 |
| Budget Non-Southern | 73 | 27 |
| Budget Southern | 54 | 69 |
| All Budget | 70 | 44 |

*Source: CQ Weekly Report,* 1 January 1982

**Summary**

Neither the committee-based nor the party leadership opportunity structure has remained stable over the past decade, as the shape of congressional careers has changed within the House. Advancing to a subcommittee chair or power committee position by one's third or fourth term is the rule to which few exceptions exist within the majority party. Coupled with the personal office resources that all members enjoy, this virtual guarantee of advancement means that members can expect to exercise real power relatively quickly after their arrival in the House. As Fenno (1978, p. 172–74) notes, the "protectionist" stage in a member's career often begins soon after his or her arrival on Capitol Hill. Still, committee-based power, while real, remains limited, especially given the extreme decentralization of subcommittee government (Davidson, 1981).

By opening up a large number of subcommittee chairs and power-committee slots, the House acted, as it often does, to satisfy the desires of its members—in this case for a piece of legislative turf. By producing such decentralization, however, the House exacerbated the problems of integration and leadership. The Democrats responded with further adaptations—including a broadening of the leadership to include many junior members. To borrow Fenno's (1973, p. 279) committee-based terms, the leadership has moved from a "corporate" style to a "permeable" one. For example, in 1971, of 27 fourth-term Democrats, only 2 could claim to be part of the formal party leadership, and those 2 qualified by serving on the Ways and Means Committee, the party's committee on committees. Contrast this to the success of 13 (of 44) fourth-term Democrats who occupied a total of 17 slots in the party leadership. As fourth-termers in the Ninety-eighth Congress, the Class of 1976 Democrats did even better; 15 of the 30 members served in some leadership capacity, occupying 17 slots all together. In addition, there exist major opportunities in leadership-appointed task forces and nonofficial groups, such as the Democratic Study Group and the Northeast-Midwest Coalition, headed in the Ninety-Seventh Congress by fourth-termers William Brodhead (Michigan) and Robert Edgar (Pennsylvania), respectively.

The structures of opportunity in the contemporary House contradict the older notions of a body where careers were generally slow to develop and clearly laid out for years in advance. The current patterns also seem clear—but only to the point of assuming an important committee position or, perhaps, placing one's feet on the first rungs of the party leadership ladder; we have yet to see how the junior members' legislative careers will eventually unfold. Although many observers have labeled the younger members as entrepreneurs, it also remains unclear—given the number of positions the house has created—how much risk exists in pursuing a

particular legislative career. A couple members of the Class of 1974 have failed in their bids for leadership positions (Matt McHugh and Paul Simon lost contests for the caucus chair and the Budget Committee chair, respectively), but almost all members have won some substantial positions of power early in their House careers.

## Moving into the Leadership

Despite the proliferation of leadership positions, demand continues to outstrip supply, at least among junior members. When asked if anyone had ever turned down a whip appointment, one top leader answered, "No, but there are a lot of responses like, 'Why him?' " As with most steps up the political ladder, advancing into the legislative leadership includes elements of self-starting from below as well as being tapped from above. One Democratic leader emphasized that it was essential to campaign for whip positions; "You need to ask," he said, "and probably ask all three members of the leadership [speaker, majority leader, and whip]." At the same time, even the most attractive candidates may need some help. Another senior, high-ranking Democrat commented that he had "tried systematically to assist 10 to 15 junior members [of the Class of 1974]—to get them on key committees. Only a couple know what I've done." Although this is not the place to go into the "elaborate ritual," in one member's words, of becoming part of the leadership, I can report some findings about the types of members who attain, early in their careers (by the fourth term), positions as party leaders.

The data here come from assorted *CQ Weekly Report* scores on party unity, conservative coalition support, and ADA ratings and from responses to a 1980 questionnaire distributed to the 56 Democratic members first elected in 1974.[3] I will construct and test six hypotheses, based on partisanship, ideology, ambition, institutional satisfaction, and adherence to norms. The broad expectations here are that junior leaders will be ambitious party loyalists of all ideological stripes, who will generally express support for the institution and its performance.

[3] One limitation of this paper is its focus on Democrats only. This is largely due to my reliance on data drawn from the large number (70) of Democrats first elected in 1974. In addition, the Republican experience in the modern House has been qualitatively different from that of the majority Democrats. A ranking member position is just not equivalent, for example, to that of a subcommittee chair, and party leadership slots are more attractive within the majority party. The exclusion of Republicans thus remains a liability, but not one that should diminish by much the study's value in exploring career development.

Questionnaire data come from responses of 40 of the 56 (72%) Democratic "Class of 1974" freshmen who remained in the House in 1980. Questionnaires were hand delivered to administrative assistants, who presented the instruments to the members.

*The Hypotheses*

1. Leaders will have higher party-unity scores than nonleaders.[4]

2. Leaders will not have different ideology-related scores than nonleaders (Sullivan, 1975, pp. 42–43).

3. Leaders will be more likely to express progressive ambition for offices outside the House than nonleaders.[5]

4. Leaders will express higher levels of satisfaction with the overall performance of the House than nonleaders.

5. Leaders will not see most limited-benefit norms as any more important than nonleaders; but

5a. Leaders will view specialization as less important than nonleaders.

6. Leaders will view general-benefit norms as more important than nonleaders.

*Findings and Discussion*

Before examining the data relating to these hypotheses, I might first note that the leaders drawn from the Class of 1974 (those members who occupy any of the slots identified earlier [Table 2] as part of the expanded leadership) are somewhat older and more politically experienced than their colleagues (see Table 5). One might infer that older "junior"

TABLE 5

Selected Characteristics of Leaders and Nonleaders among Class of 1974 Democrats

| Class of 1974 Members ($n$ = 44) | | 1980 Party Unity | 1980 C. Coal'n Support | 1980 ADA Rating | Pre-House Years in Elective Office | Age (1981) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All | Average | 68 | 36 | 61 | 3.2 | 43.7 |
| | Median | 73 | 20 | 72 | | |
| Leaders[a] | Average | 76 | 35 | 61 | 5.1 | 44.9 |
| ($n$ = 13) | Median | | | | | |
| Nonleaders | Average | 65 | 36 | 61 | 2.5 | 43.3 |
| ($n$ = 31) | Median | 70 | 23 | 72 | | |

[a] Per expanded version of leadership in Table 1.

[4] This hypothesis runs counter to William E. Sullivan's findings (1975) for *top* leadership, who are elected. Some members with little or no prospective loyalty are likely not to be considered for appointment, thus producing a somewhat higher level of support.

[5] Again, this would not apply to top leadership positions, but rather the lower-level slots that junior members would ordinarily seek.

members will seek legislative leadership slots because they see their House seat as their terminal elective office. Such an interpretation, however, runs headlong into the stated, progressive ambitions of these members (see Table 6). More important, apparently, is previous experience in elective office. Of the 13 (as of 1982) Class of 1974 leaders, 8 (62%) held a prior elective office, for an average of 5.1 years. Only 11 of their 31 colleagues (35%) had similar experience. Such seasoning can play a role in the top leaders' decisions to tap a junior member for a leadership position. Speaker Carl Albert, for example, appointed a fellow Oklahoman, Clem McSpadden, to the Rules Committee as a 1972 freshman. Tip O'Neill commented at the time that "McSpadden is the Speaker's own personal choice. He served twenty years in the state senate and is a tremendously powerful man in his home state" (Matsunaga and Cheng, 1976, p. 59). Such experience (and personal ties) may assist some members, but this remains the exception, not the rule.

*Hypotheses 1 and 2: Party Unity and Ideology.* Turning to consider these elements and the relevant hypotheses, we find that leaders' party unity scores, as of 1980, ran a bit higher than those of nonleaders (see Table 5). When their conservative coalition support scores and ADA scores are compared, leaders and their colleagues are virtually indistinguishable. For the most part, leaders appear as slightly party-conscious "middlemen"; these findings give some tentative confirmation to hypotheses 1 and 2.

*Hypotheses 3 and 4: Ambition and Institutional Satisfaction.* The idea of career advancement, especially when competition is involved, implies some requisite ambition. The question here becomes, however, does

TABLE 6

Progressive Ambition and Expressed Satisfaction with House among Members of Class of 1974

| | Progressive Ambition[b] | | Overall Satisfaction with House | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Repondents[a] ($n$ = 40) | Yes (%) | No (%) | Highly Satis. (%) | Some Satis. (%) | Some Dissat. (%) | Very Dissat. (%) |
| Leaders ($n$ = 11) | 64 | 36 | — | 45 | 45 | 9 |
| Nonleaders ($n$ = 29) | 48 | 52 | 3 | 24 | 62 | 10 |
| All | 52.5 | 47.5 | 2.5 | 30 | 57.5 | 10 |

[a] Data gathered in 1980; 40 of 56 eligible members responded.
[b] Question asked: Have you ever seriously contemplated running for higher office?
[c] Row does not add to 100% due to rounding

progressive ambition for office(s) *outside* the House correlate at all with the desire or ability to advance *within* the House? I see two reasons for linking these types of advancement. First, one member of the Class of 1974, Chris Dodd, has already won, consecutively, a House leadership position (Rules Committee) and a Senate seat. Second, and more generally, a series of conversations with members, staff, and journalists has convinced me that, at least among those who express ambitions, the desire for advancement is relatively undifferentiated. In addition, the top leaders expect their fellow members to be ambitious. As one senior party leader put it: "You've got to ask yourself, 'Do you want to sit on the heating and ventilating subcommittee or do you want to become a whip?' There may be some guys who don't want to move up. They may be satisfied with their life and all. But most of the people around here are not like that." Although about half of the Class of 1974 respondents expressed no desire to run for higher office, those in formal leadership slots were somewhat more ambitious (see Table 6). The differences, while not extremely large, do indicate that advancement inside the House can and does coexist with the ambitions for higher office. As Ornstein (1981) notes, service in the House may well be a steppingstone in a career rather than a capstone to it.

Despite their desires to advance from the House, the Class of 1974 leaders expressed somewhat higher levels of satisfaction with the body than do their nonleader counterparts. Almost half (45%) of these junior members reported at least modest satisfaction with the "overall structure and operations of the House"; in contrast, over 70 percent of the nonleaders expressed some level of dissatisfaction. Without performing multivariate analysis and conducting more interviews, we are unlikely to understand definitively why leaders are more satisfied, although they scarcely remain enthralled with the House. Perhaps their modest level of satisfaction reflects their career success, perhaps it mirrors their ability to deal with the vicissitudes of the legislative process. Whatever, we may gain some further insight by looking at the extent of their endorsement of House folkways.

*Hypotheses 5, 5.a, and 6: Leaders and Norms.* In a useful attempt to grapple with changes in the modern Senate, Rohde, Ornstein, and Peabody (1974) developed the notions of general and limited benefit norms. The former reward all members and the entire institution (the House in this case), while the latter reward members differentially. Limited benefit norms—like seniority, apprenticeship, and, to an extent, specialization—have declined in importance in a modern Congress full of activist younger members (Asher, 1973; Loomis, 1981). At the same time, some general benefit norms, most notably that of "institutional loyalty," have fared no better, while others, like expertise and hard work, remain strongly held by most members (Fenno, 1978, Loomis, 1981).

In comparing leaders to nonleaders, I expected to find few differences in the importance accorded limited benefit norms. The single exception lies with specialization, which I thought the leaders, as generalists, would value less than their nonleader colleagues, almost all of whom possess some committee turf. Both the general expectation and the exception are supported; no differences exist in the moderate importance each group gives to apprenticeship and seniority. Nonleaders, however, are almost twice as likely (50% to 27%) to label specialization as "very important" for achieving success in the House. One possible explanation here could arise from differing perspectives on specialization. Leaders may view specialization as a limited benefit norm, while nonleaders may see it more in general benefit terms.

Moving to consider a range of general benefit norms (see Table 7), the data confirm, with a single important exception, hypothesis 6 that leaders will support these folkways more fully than will those outside the leadership. Although all these junior members generally view hard work and expertise as very important, leaders are especially strong in their endorsements of these entrepreneurial and achievement-oriented norms. Leaders also breathe a bit of life into the weakened norm of institutional loyalty. Only a single Class of 1974 leader sees it as completely unimportant, for instance, in contrast to almost half (46%) of the nonleaders. All of these findings, while in the predicted direction, are relatively

TABLE 7

Support for Norms among Leaders and Nonleaders, Democratic Class of 1974

| | Leaders ($n$ = 11) | | | Nonleaders ($n$ = 29) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Norms[a] | Very Important (%) | Somewhat Important (%) | Not Important (%) | Very Important (%) | Somewhat Important (%) | Not Important (%) |
| Limited Benefit | | | | | | |
| Seniority | 18 | 64 | 18 | 10 | 59 | 31 |
| Apprenticeship | 9 | 55 | 36[b] | 5 | 54 | 41 |
| Specialization | 27 | 73 | — | 50 | 50 | — |
| General Benefit | | | | | | |
| Expertise | 91 | 9 | — | 62 | 38 | — |
| Hard work | 82 | 18 | — | 71 | 29 | — |
| Inst'l. loyalty | 18 | 73 | 9 | — | 54 | 46 |
| Compromise | 91 | 9 | — | 34 | 62 | 3 |
| Cordiality | 36 | 64 | — | 38 | 52 | 10 |

[a] Norm data comes from response to question: How important would you rate the following (list of norms) for your personal success within the House?

[b] For apprenticeship only, "not important" and "can't judge" responses were merged.

modest. When we turn to support for compromise and cordiality, however, things change.

First, leaders express overwhelming support for the norm of compromise: almost all of them (91%) regard it as very important. This comes as no surprise, given the role of legislative leaders, but what is startling is the lack of support given compromise by nonleaders. Only about a third (34%) see it as very important. I collected these data in 1980, before some of the Class of 1974 members moved into the leadership. I thus surmise that the leaders have tended to view compromise as important throughout their legislative careers, rather than adopting this view only upon reaching the leadership.

When these junior members rate the importance of cordiality in achieving legislative success, the findings change dramatically. First, virtually no difference exists between leaders and nonleaders in their support of cordiality as an important norm. Second, only about a third of either group place it as central to their success in the legislative process (see Table 7).

How can we reconcile the leaders' sense that compromise is important with their downgrading of cordiality? These norms traditionally have gone hand in hand. One key to the personalized, inclusive leadership style required in the modern House appears to be a leader's maintenance of cordial relations with as many colleagues as possible. A possible reconciliation of the findings emphasizes a new "policy entrepreneur" style of leadership (Price, 1972; Uslaner, 1978). Such a style would recognize that compromise is essential, and perhaps even desirable. But compromise would not necessarily be connected to an irrelevant cordiality; rather compromise would rise from the same entrepreneurial style that emphasizes expertise and hard work. The need to compromise would simply come as the natural last stage of the legislative process—taken as far as it could go by diligent, expert members.

These findings fit snugly with Ehrenhalt's observations (1982, p. 891) that "Partisan conflict has been growing steadily in the House for the past few years, not only in key roll-call votes, but also in personal conduct on the floor." Dating this increasing partisanship from the Ninety-fourth Congress, he notes that the "climate had made aggressive partisans out of some veteran Republicans who once had cooperated routinely across the aisle." As a result, when "The Republican classes of 1978 and 1980 came to Washington spoiling for a fight . . . , there were few senior people on their side of the aisle left to restrain them."

To summarize, the findings here provide some hope for senior party leaders. They have recruited into their ranks members who consistently support most general benefit norms central to institutional performance. The lower-echelon leaders' view of compromise as very important seems especially significant, given their colleagues' doubts about its worth.

There remains, however, a lingering problem: Can leaders who have few resources be effective without valuing personal cordiality? This question leads to speculation about the relationship between careers and legislative-policy performance.

## Careers and Legislation

> In the end, the thing the House needs most is legislators. What's important is getting things through—then you've done everything. . . . Running the House is the only thing that makes a difference. The subcommittees, in the end, become special interests. A legislator needs to function as a generalist.
>
> Senior Democratic Leader, 1982

The old, stable House career structure did produce, by design or happenstance, some resourceful and strong legislators—usually among the committee chairs rather than the party leaders. One strong leader, Sam Rayburn, served first as a committee chairman before becoming speaker. The old committee system, whatever its flaws, did provide for substantial socialization of future leaders. The new House career structure allows for little such seasoning. Rather it places great legislative responsibilities upon members soon after they enter the body. The opportunity afforded a junior member to win an important subcommittee chair does not guarantee that he or she will manage effectively the subcommittee's legislative business.

The democratizing reforms of the 1970s deprived the House of one major legislative leadership stratum—the "powerful committee chairmen." As usual, the body adapted to a felt need; at the party leadership's urging the House centralized some powers within the ranks of the top leaders and simultaneously expanded the numbers of both continuing and temporary leaders.

All in all the legislative results of these changes have scarcely been encouraging. One O'Neill success did encompass both the centralizing and inclusive themes of leadership adaptation. His creation of a 1977 Ad Hoc Energy Committee helped pass Carter's initial energy proposals (Vogler, 1982; Oppenheimer, 1981). With subsequent delays and defeats in the Senate, however, the House leadership's initial victory became exceedingly expensive, given the political debts incurred by the leadership during the legislative process.

In a related vein, Sinclair (1981) reports some successes with inclusive task force tactics, but these seem overshadowed by the near complete disarray of House Democrats during the 1981–82 budget fights. The leadership can act only as effectively as the institutional context allows. The question thus becomes—what are the realistic limits of leadership? Some members, like Udall, Obey, and Bolling, think (or hope) that the

House can be led farther and more firmly than do such compromise seekers as James Jones and Richard Gephart. The following statements and related discussion consider career patterns and their relation to the House's capacity to legislate.

1. *The current House structure of opportunities produces a chamber with many leaders and few followers.*

How many members can the House and its controlling Democrats usefully designate as leaders? The approximately hundred slots so identified cheapens the notion of leadership, but an inclusive strategy, which seems appropriate, requires some such breadth. Not all in the leadership can actively lead. One upshot of this devaluation may be that members will use leadership positions much as they use their subcommittees and their personal offices: They will employ their slots to gain publicity (advertise), claim credit, and take positions—and thus add to, not reduce, the body's fragmentation[6] (Mayhew, 1974, pp. 49–73).

If we add workgroup chairs (subcommittees, committees, task forces, and some important nonofficial caucuses) and membership on the Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees to those holding formal leadership positions, far more than half the Democrats qualify as leaders. Aside from some first and second term members, few "pure" followers remain. This surely complicates the legislative process, as negotiations among members become increasingly complex.

2. *Given the findings about cordiality and compromise among junior members, neither younger leaders nor followers seem adequately prepared for their roles.*

David Obey, about the same age as many Class of 1974 Democrats, exemplifies the problems of a leader who works hard, develops expertise, devotes himself to the institution, remains open to compromise, but who will not, at least not frequently, act cordially toward his colleagues. As Richard Cohen (1982, p. 233) observed, "Obey critics—and some admirers—almost invariably refer to his 'abrasive' personality and occasional temper tantrums, which, they say, limit his influence." But even Obey, identified by one senior member as "without doubt, the best legislator in the House" sees a great need for civility, especially toward the institution and its processes. Obey notes that "There is much less civility in the House these days, not in the sense of being gentle in debate, but Members using every little statement to try to kick people out of the House or to take cheap shots at 'politicians' or 'bureaucrats' (Cohen, 1982, p. 235).

[6] Alternatively, by creating so many leadership slots the Democrats may have acted to increase individual members' stakes in how effectively the House is run. Although the Democratic caucus adopted some modest centralizing changes for the Ninety-eighth Congress, there exists little evidence that most members have acted in less self-interested ways.

If, according to the Class of 1974 data, the leaders downgrade cordiality, that does represent a serious problem—but it pales before the nonleaders' view of compromise as an only moderately important norm. When such an attitude is coupled with a low estimation of cordiality and the turf-conscious behavior often prevalent among subcommittee chairs, the combination scarcely bodes well for a productive legislative process.

3. *Career-related risk is not great within the House of Representatives; the "entrepreneurial" image of younger members is largely fiction, at least in terms of career advancement.*

Given their steady and usually certain advancement into subcommittee chairs and power committee slots, junior members, have needed few entrepreneurial skills. For every Henry Waxman challenging a more senior member for a key subcommittee chair, ten junior Representatives moved routinely into their bits of committee turf. Likewise, with the devaluation of formal leadership positions, many, though not all, members could obtain such a slot. The entrepreneurial metaphor thus does not do much justice to members' early advancement within the House. The entrepreneurial notion may become more relevant and accurate when we examine (a) the advancement into top leadership positions and (b) what members do with their positions, especially in terms of pushing various policy alternatives.

4. *With the proliferation of formal leadership positions, the importance of informal ties may increase.*

If institutional forces such as the political party or the committee leadership or even the president do not ordinarily provide adequate linkage for building majority coalitions, other relationships may gain in significance. The Northeast-Midwest Coalition, for instance, desires to define many issues along regional lines. Caucuses do provide some legislative integration (Stevens, Mulholland, and Rundguist, 1981), but not on a regular basis. Indeed, the sum of caucus activity may well produce a more fragmented and self-interested institution. Less visible, but perhaps more important, may be the strength of informal ties among members who were socialized together or who share common interests. As California's Norman Mineta, a Democratic Deputy Whip, who also has served on the Budget and Steering and Policy Committees, has stated (1976): "The differences between senior and junior Members are often not due to seniority *per se*, but rather reflect the differences in the issues that were important when a Member was first elected. The interests of new Members tend to reflect new and emerging interests, while veterans echo the issues and styles of problem-solving that prevailed when they first came to Congress."

Certainly the initial days of service for the Class of 1974 Democrats, with the sacking of three committee chairs and their apparent exercise of power, did bring many of these members close together, as did their

strong class organization. And they continue to rely on each other. Staff aides of several Class of 1974 members noted that these representatives maintain some regular contact with their colleagues—Baucus, Tsongas, and Dodd—who have won Senate seats. Informal ties, based on shared experiences and common world views, may serve to link these members together more strongly than will formal bonds of leadership.

In sum, regardless of the number of leadership slots and proliferation of task forces, more legislative cohesion will not develop unless legislators emerge who can use their expertise and diligence in combination with civility and a spirit of compromise. Otherwise, fragmentation may visit the leadership much as it has the subcommittee system. An expanded structure of opportunities will produce the illusion of career advancement without providing for adequate leverage to help turn nominal leaders into actual legislators.

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