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# Who Whips?

## Party Government and the House Extended Whip Networks

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Little recent research on congressional parties has considered the relationship between the vast extended leadership and shifting partisan dynamics. This article draws on conditional party government theory to argue that elected House leaders use the extended whip networks to achieve somewhat different goals under weaker and stronger party government conditions and that these priorities are reflected in the whip systems' membership. Specifically, the whip system reflects caucus diversity under weaker party government but becomes disproportionately stacked with loyalists as party government conditions grow stronger; this shift reflects heightened leadership focus on agenda coordination and signaling under strong parties. The evidence on whip system composition and selection in the Democratic caucus (95th to 106th Congresses) provides very strong support for this argument. An examination of the Republican conference fails to support the main hypothesis but shows that the 1990s growing GOP majority whip network was unrepresentatively dominated by the cohort of junior members.

***Keywords:*** *U.S. House of Representatives; congressional parties; party whips; conditional party government; extended leadership*

In the 104th Congress, 86 House Democrats and 54 House Republicans—or about one third of the total House membership—served in their parties' extended whip systems. The vast whip networks of the 1990s were more than 3 times the size of their 1970s counterparts, and they offered the leadership a powerful potential tool for achieving collective party goals. These whip systems have received relatively little empirical consideration as a

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mechanism of partisan leadership, however, even as legislative scholars have paid a great deal of attention to congressional party power and to the sources of that power. The rapidly growing whip systems in both parties raise important unanswered questions about the role of the extended leadership in polarizing and strengthening political parties. Who serves in the whip networks, and why do they do so? What types of members does the leadership favor for these posts? How has the utility of the systems to members and to leaders changed during the past quarter century? And what can the answers to these questions tell us about the development of House leadership structures and about theories of party power in Congress?

Although these questions have not been fully investigated in recent Congresses, earlier research shed some light on the Democratic whip system's development, showing that House Democratic leaders chose a strategy of inclusion in constituting the growing whip systems of the 1970s and early 1980s. Faced with a heterogeneous party and growing participatory demands from some in the rank and file, Democrats created a large and representative system that would meet member demands, "socialize" the membership, and link the leadership to the diverse sectors of the congressional party (Sinclair, 1983, 1995; also see Garand & Clayton, 1986; Loomis, 1984; Rohde, 1991). What we do not fully understand is how the nature and role of the extended whip system have changed as the conditions underlying this strategy have changed. In answering the questions posed above, I argue that the changing partisan context of Congress has altered the utility of the whip systems for the House leadership. As the parties become more cohesive, top leaders have less incentive to create a diverse organization to gather information from various factions within the party and more incentive to create a unified front to send a clear message on party priorities and coordinate action on those priorities. I show that this shift helps to explain significant changes in the composition of the extended whip networks during the 1980s and 1990s in the House Democratic Party. The evidence from the more recently developed whip system in the Republican conference does not support the argument overall, but it does demonstrate that the 1990s Republican whip network heavily overrepresented the zealous group of very junior members.

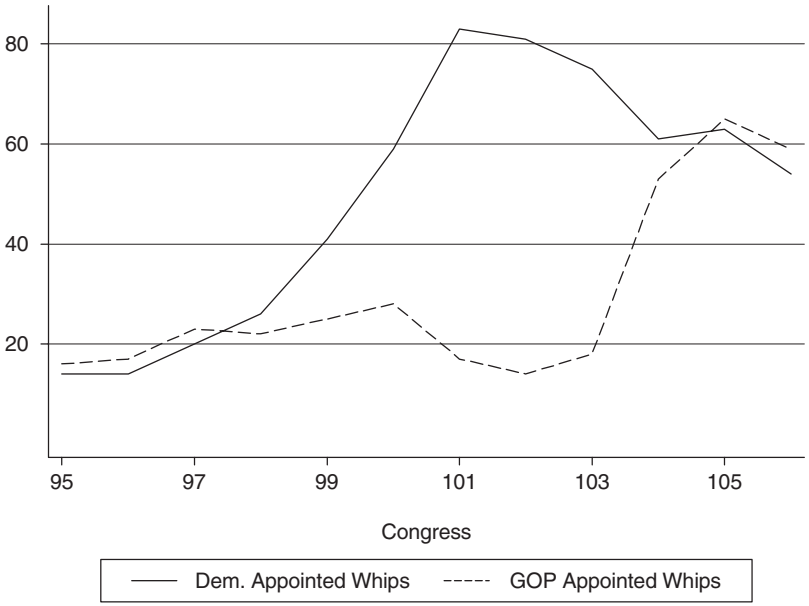
I begin the discussion by reviewing how the Democratic and Republican systems were shaped and expanded in the postreform period (mid-1970s through the present). I then outline a generalized argument about whip selection and whip system change based on conditional party government theory. Finally, I examine this argument through several types of statistical evidence and suggest some preliminary conclusions about changes in the House whip systems.

## Development of the Extended Whip Systems

In the House and the Senate, majority and minority whips have been in place since around the turn of the 20th century (Baker, 1998; Bradbury, Davidson, & Evans, 2006; Evans, Roscoe, Deering, & O'Neill, 2003; Gamm & Smith, 2002; Oleszek, 1985; Ripley, 1964; Smith & Gamm, 2002). The "whip system" did not extend much beyond the whip himself until the 1930s and 1940s, when both parties established networks of assistant or regional whips (Ripley, 1964). These systems continued relatively unchanged until the divided government years of the 91st to 94th Congresses (1969 to 1976), which began a period of modest expansion in the Democratic whip system. Democrats initially moved to expand the leadership network and its information-gathering and vote-securing abilities in response to Richard Nixon's presidency; an active Republican administration posed a threat to the congressional Democrats' agenda, and the loss of White House control meant the loss of external coordination for legislative leadership (Dodd, 1979). In 1970, Democrats expanded the deputy whip position into chief deputy and deputy whip positions; the deputy position was then divided again into two deputy posts in 1972 (Sinclair, 1983, pp. 55-56). Then, in 1975, the leadership added three at-large whips, for a total of 28 elected and appointed whip positions (Dodd, 1979, p. 31).

This pattern of slow growth in the early 1970s became nearly exponential growth in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with leaders developing a strategy of inclusion (Sinclair, 1983, 1995). Initially, the Democrats added to the at-large whip system in the 95th Congress, creating a 14-person appointed team dominated in that Congress by junior members and loyalists (Cooper, 1978; Waldman, 1980, p. 390). Then, in the first Congress of the Reagan administration (97th), Democratic leaders appointed an additional deputy and five more at-large whips. The number of appointive positions continued to expand, and by the end of the Wright speakership the number of at-large and deputy positions had increased such that the whip system comprised about 100 members, or nearly 40% of the Democratic caucus. All but 18 of the whips were selected by the leadership,[1] with most of the appointees (65) holding the at-large title. Through the 1990s, the system was sustained essentially in its late-1980s form: David Bonior modified the functions of top whip positions after the Republicans won control of the House in 1994 (Kahn, 1995), but the system has remained important to the minority leadership (Price, 2004, p. 195), and after a slight contraction in the mid-1990s, its size remained basically the same through the 109th

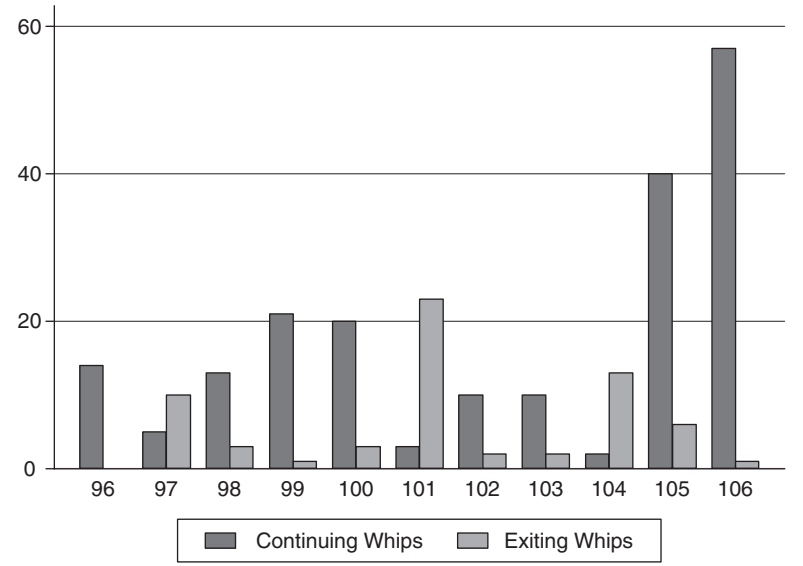
**Figure 1**
**Democratic and Republican Appointed Whips**




Congress (Billings, 2004). Figure 1 depicts the expansion of the Democratic whip network from the mid-1970s through the 1990s.

During the extended period of Democratic control in the House, the basic Republican whip system remained nearly constant in structure and size. In the 1960s and 1970s, the minority whip continued to rely on a handful of regional whips, a network of a dozen assistants within the regions and (usually) a deputy whip. Republicans adjusted their system several times in the 1980s, but the system remained compact. By the time of the last Democrat-controlled House, *Politics in America* listed a total of 19 Republican appointed whip positions, compared to 75 in the Democratic caucus. Although the GOP system's structure remained constant through this period, the *membership* fluctuated significantly. The election of new top whips—in the 97th, in the 101st, and, later, in the 104th Congresses—brought about significant turnover in the whip network, with most continuing members exiting the whip system, as illustrated in Figure 2. This pattern, which

**Figure 2**
**Continuity and Turnover Among Republican Whip System Members, 96th to 106th Congresses**




suggests a less institutionalized and more individualized system, was not replicated at any point in the Democratic network. No more than 15% of reelected Democratic whips exited the whip network in any Congress during this time period.

The significant shift in this small but fluid Republican whip organization came in 1995 with the Republican takeover of the House. After his election to the majority whip position in December 1994, Tom DeLay established an extensive whip organization consisting of two levels below the majority and chief deputy whips (Burger, 1994). Republicans named 13 deputy whips and 39 assistant whips in the 104th Congress (see Figure 1), with more whips added in both positions in the 105th, for a total of 66 whips (29% of the Republican conference). In short, the Republican majority under DeLay expanded the whip system by a factor of three during the course of just three Congresses, leaving the Republican whip network looking much more similar to its Democratic counterpart.

## Argument and Hypothesis

This much, then, is clear: The Republican and Democratic whip systems have grown substantially since the 1970s, with each House party now employing an extensive network that involves a sizable minority of the party's membership. What we have not yet fully explained is to what use the parties put these networks. Existing scholarship gives some attention to the Democratic extended leadership in the postreform period. During that time, segments of the rank and file increased their demands for participation in leadership processes. This development was both fueled by and complicated by the House's unpredictability, which was itself a result of the 1970s reforms and continued party heterogeneity. To meet member demands in a complex context, Democratic leaders followed a strategy of inclusion, drawing a broad and diverse subset of the caucus membership into leadership roles, including task forces and formal leadership positions (Sinclair, 1981, 1995). This strategy also allowed the leadership to give members "a stake in the leadership's success" (Sinclair, 1983, p. 75), thereby advancing party leaders' goals (Rohde, 1991, p. 90).[2]

In the time since the Democratic leaders first expanded the leadership ranks, the context in the House has changed significantly. Intraparty heterogeneity has declined, and party polarization has increased. Even as the context has shifted, though, the Democrats have continued to incorporate a wide swath of the caucus into the whip system, and the Republicans have rapidly expanded their whip network to incorporate a similarly large portion of the conference. Here, I offer an argument that builds off of conditional party government theory to explain the evolving importance of an expansive whip system to the party leadership in a highly partisan House.

## Conditional Party Government and the Extended Whip System

The familiar collective action model of legislative parties (Aldrich, 1995), informed by the conditional party government view of party power (Aldrich & Rohde, 2000, 2001; Rohde, 1991), provides the foundation for the argument. Very simply stated, the congressional parties exist to serve their membership and to overcome individualistic obstacles to long-term collective interests. When intraparty preferences are more homogenous and the distance between party medians is greater, the membership cedes to the party leadership more power over the legislative process to facilitate collective action.

Within this model, decisions about the extended whip system should reflect party government conditions as they relate to leader and member goals. Rank-and-file members make the decision to seek extended whip positions, and they also choose (implicitly, at least) to allow the leadership to create an extended whip system of a particular character. Meanwhile, the leadership chooses to constitute a whip network that will best allow the party to achieve collective goals under particular party government circumstances. To understand the extended whip systems and their composition, then, we should consider how the goals of both sets of actors relate to the whip system.

First, from the perspective of the individual member, what affects the choice to seek a position in the extended leadership? We know that the goals of individual members fall into several broad categories, including reelection, policy, and power (Fenno, 1973). Electorally, members have an incentive to seek an extended leadership post to forge a connection to the leadership that could facilitate constituency legislation and to gain access to information that might help the member advance constituency interests. Moreover, for members who represent districts with lopsided partisan characteristics, a position in the extended whip network also promises to enhance a party-based presentation of self.[3] The links to power and policy goals are more obvious. For House members with progressive ambition, a position within the extended leadership offers not only party leadership experience and a spot on the leadership "escalator" (Hibbing, 1991, pp. 61-62) but also connections with other members that will be valuable in seeking positions of greater status, especially elected posts. Members within the extended whip structure gain policy and procedural information and the opportunity to affect policy, even if in small ways. David Price (D-NC) has described the personal policy and power benefits of his at-large whip post very specifically:[4]

> My own involvement in whip operations has been useful in at least three ways. First, it has let me help mobilize support for measures that I thought were important . . . on which I had worked extensively in committee. Second, it has made me a partner, albeit a junior one, in leadership undertakings. . . . Finally, it has brought me into discussions of floor strategy and the last-minute alterations needed to maximize votes on various bills. . . . The vote counts and feedback garnered by the whip organization have served as a reality check for committee leaders and have given members like me a means of pushing for needed refinements in advance of floor consideration. (Price, 1992, pp. 85-86)

Because multiple goals are directly affected, demand for the extended whip posts should be high and relatively constant over time.[5]

For the elected party leadership, though, we should expect significant variation in how the whip system is viewed as party government conditions change.[6] Generally speaking, the extended whip network allows the leadership to gather information on the positions of the rank and file, and it provides a mechanism for coordination through information dissemination and persuasion when the party engages in collective policy action (Burden & Frisby, 2004; Evans et al., 2003). When the party is made up of diverse factions that can undermine any attempt to reach collective goals, the extended whip network's most crucial purpose is allowing the central leadership to collect information on the preferences of the rank and file—information that is vital for strategic choices about advancing party agenda items and avoiding electorally damaging mischief by factions within the party. When the party is more homogenous and the caucus looks to the leadership for more assertive direction and control on policy agenda items, the leadership's view of the whip network should shift. Under these conditions, the extended whip system's utility for sending clear policy signals to caucus members takes on added importance; the network facilitates the leadership's coordination of decisions that advance the more cohesive policy goals of the party.

These arguments lead to expectations about the shape and composition of the whip networks over time. Specifically, the membership of the whip networks should reflect the particular utility of the system to the elected leadership in periods of weaker and stronger party government. When the parties are more fragmented and the leadership needs wide-ranging information about preferences throughout the caucus, the leadership will prefer a whip system that is representative of the caucus in key respects. Such a system will afford the elected leadership maximum information flow even as it helps to satisfy the demands of a diverse party caucus. When the party becomes more cohesive, the leadership will prefer a like-minded network of whips who can be trusted to send clear, unambiguous policy signals to the caucus as the leadership choreographs decision making toward a preferred outcome.

From this perspective, one key characteristic for understanding the whip system in changing contexts is the party loyalty of its membership. Under weaker parties, the composition of the whip system should be representative of the party caucus in terms of party loyalty as elected leaders prefer whips from across the spectrum of party factions. Under stronger parties, even as party loyalty may increase across the caucus, the party loyalty of whips should be higher than the loyalty of rank-and-file members. Party leaders will show

a preference for whips who will send unambiguous messages about party tactics, and the elected leadership will have less incentive to appease factions within the caucus through extended leadership appointments.

Because this argument centers on the party's attempt to move a core policy agenda, it applies most clearly to the House majority party. However, recognizing the interplay of policy and electoral goals in leadership choices, I also expect effects within the minority caucus because the minority leadership has a strong electoral incentive to articulate and coordinate collective action that draws a contrast with the party in power (e.g., Aldrich & Rohde, 2000, pp. 2-3).

In the empirical analysis that follows, I look for changes in the whip systems that coincide with strengthening party government conditions in the House. These conditions changed fairly rapidly in the 1980s, polarizing the chamber. To compare the whip systems in different partisan contexts, I divide the period under investigation (95th to 106th Congresses) in half for the multivariate analysis. The 101st Congress (elected in 1988), then, represents the starting point for strong conditional party government in the analyses. Admittedly, this demarcation oversimplifies the shift to stronger parties and a more polarized House; however, the late 1980s are the point at which party government conditions unambiguously reach a high plateau on a number of different measures. In the aggregate, various NOMINATE-based estimates of party government conditions climb to points at or near their local maximums in the 101st Congress (Aldrich, Berger, & Rohde, 2002), and measures of party conflict and dissimilarity reach high points around the same time (Coleman, 1997). Similarly, party unity had grown through the decade to a high point in the late 1980s (Rohde, 1991), a change that is particularly clear when Committee of the Whole votes are excluded (Roberts & Smith, 2003).[7] If we look to the individual-level sources of party government, we can also see that significant changes were in place by the late 1980s—cross-pressured members begin to disappear in the 98th Congress, and their numbers drop sharply through the 1980s (Fleisher & Bond, 2004). And at the individual level, we know that House polarization resulted from a process of individual conversion and replacement that intensified in the mid-1980s (Theriault, 2006). Finally, from an electoral perspective, district-level evidence suggests homogenization of members' constituencies by the late 1980s: Two-party vote shares increased in the late 1980s as each party's median vote share grew to greater than 70% in the 101st Congress (before experiencing a temporary decline in the early 1990s). To the extent that constituency homogeneity sets the stage for party strength (Cooper & Brady, 1981), this evidence further distinguishes the late 1980s as a plateau of high partisanship.

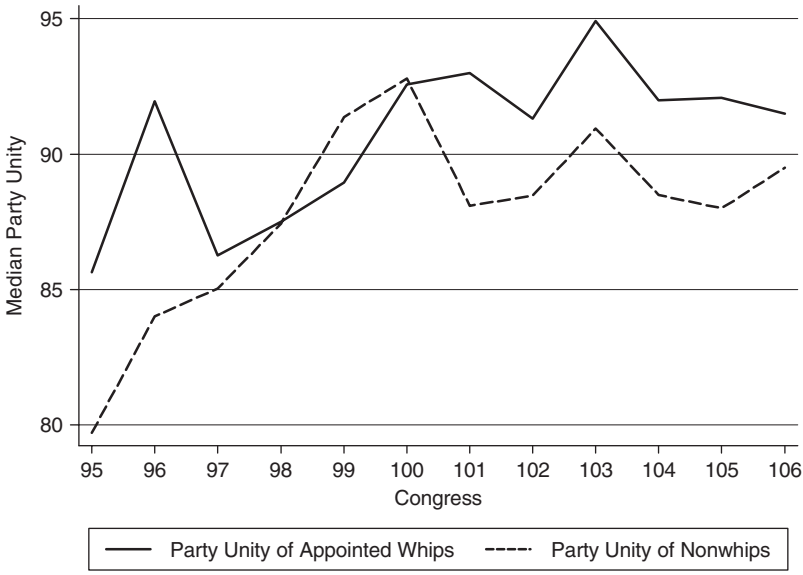
In short, although the polarization of the House was unquestionably a gradual and uneven process, the 1980s marked a culmination of multiple trends, with high levels of partisanship being reached by the later part of the decade. For the analyses, I separately examine the post-100th and pre-101st periods to capture the difference between established party conflict after the 100th Congress and weaker partisanship before that time. However, as I explain below, the multivariate analyses that rely on this division are robust to alternative specification of the periods.

## Data

Examining change in the whip systems requires identifying members within each party's whip structure over time, a task that involves some uncertainty. Because they provide consistent lists for both parties across the past several decades, I rely on editions of the *Congressional Quarterly* (*CQ*) *Almanac* and *CQ's Politics in America* for Democratic and Republican whip membership between the 95th and 106th Congresses.[8] The size of the *CQ* whip lists corresponds to journalistic reports on the size of the system in *National Journal*, *Roll Call*, and *The Hill*, and several published studies have relied on the *CQ* lists to identify the extended leadership (Grofman, Koetzle, & McGann, 2002; Heberlig, Hetherington, & Larson, 2006; Heberlig & Larson, 2007). However, the *CQ* lists clearly are not perfect: For example, the *CQ Almanac* does not list at-large Democratic whips for the 94th Congress, even though other sources report that three at-large positions were created in 1975 (U.S. Congress, 1975). It is also possible that the *CQ* rosters in some periods overlook members with purely nominal claims to whip titles—see, for instance, Canon's (1989, p. 422) observation about the large number of GOP members claiming "assistant whip" titles in the 1980s—although these "leaders" should not be included in this analysis in any event. In the end, the *CQ* data provide, at a minimum, the most consistent *available* lists of the membership at the core of each leadership operation in both parties over time.

Following common practice, I use party unity voting scores as a measure of loyalty for each member. These scores, modified from *CQ*'s raw party unity scores, reflect the attendance-adjusted (Rohde, 1991) percentage of party unity votes on which the member voted with the majority of her or his party, in which unity votes are defined as roll calls on which a majority of one party opposed a majority of the opposite party. Because *CQ* has not aggregated unity scores by Congress across the entire period of the analysis,

**Figure 3**
**Democratic Appointed Whip Party Loyalty**

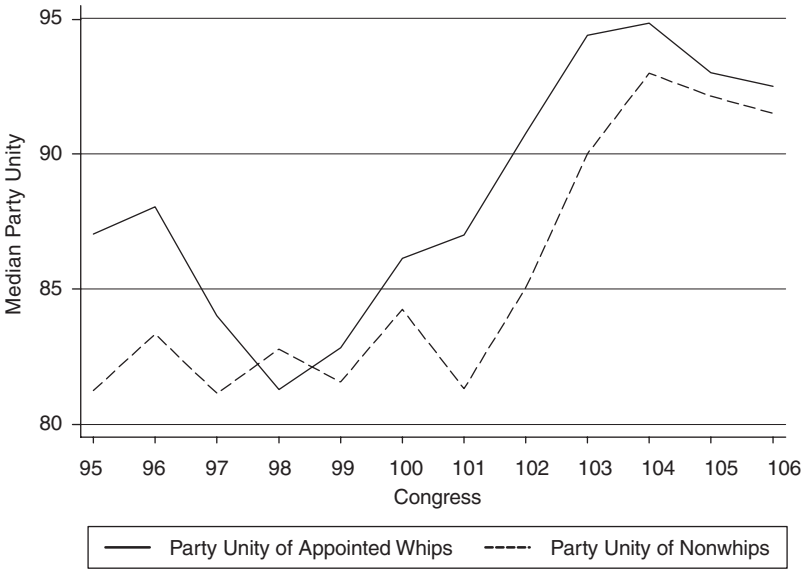



I generate unity scores for each Congress by averaging the two session scores for each member.[9]

## Analysis

Descriptive data provide a useful starting place for understanding change in the whip networks. At a general level, when inclusion is operative, we should expect to see that the extended whip network looks like the caucus in key respects. Figure 3 displays the median party loyalty of appointed Democratic whips compared with other House Democrats from the 1970s through the late 1990s.[10] In the 1970s (95th and 96th Congresses), when the extended whip system remained very small, the few appointed whips showed much higher levels of party loyalty than did their nonwhip counterparts. This finding is in keeping with contemporary reports on the Democratic whips in the mid to late 1970s, which emphasized loyalty among the small group of appointed leaders (see Cooper, 1978).

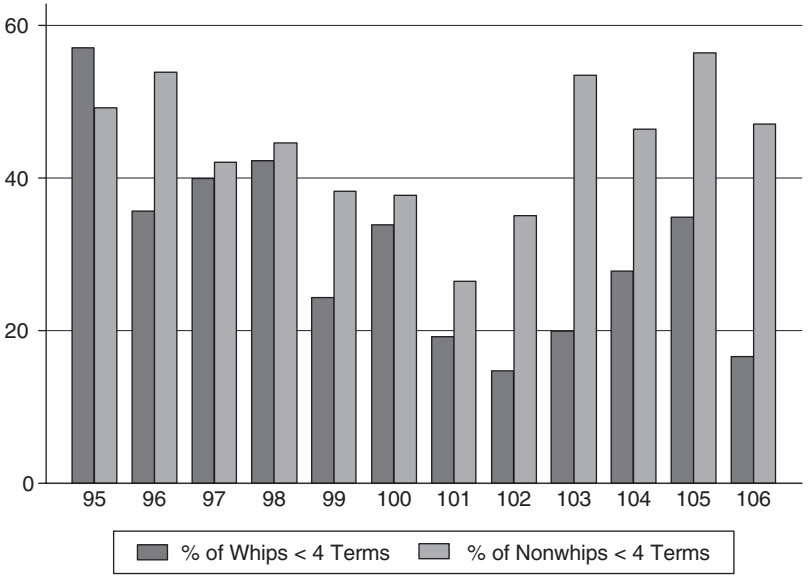
**Figure 4**
**Republican Appointed Whip Party Loyalty**




As the Democratic whip system grew rapidly in the early 1980s (see Figure 1), however, the loyalty of appointed whips and other members converged. This pattern is consistent with the expectation that leaders will choose a diverse and representative whip system when the party is more heterogeneous, and it supports the conventional expectation of an inclusive strategy. However, the pattern changes after the 100th Congress: As party government conditions reached a peak, appointed Democratic whips became consistently more loyal than their nonwhip counterparts. Descriptively, some loyalty differences appear also in the Republican whip system data. Later Congresses featured consistently higher levels of appointed whip median loyalty relative to other Republican members, although the absolute differences between whips and nonwhips were smaller than in the Democratic caucus, as Figure 4 illustrates.

When the leadership selects a diverse whip system under weaker party government, we might expect the whips to mirror the factions of the caucus in other ways as well. In particular, an open whip system should include

**Figure 5**
**Democratic Whip Career Stages, 95th to 106th Congresses**




members from across the spectrum of career stages and cohorts; junior and senior members should be well-represented. Descriptive data for the Democrats illustrate this trend in the years of weaker parties and greater intraparty conflict. When the whip system began to draw in large numbers of members after the 96th Congress, the proportion of more junior members (< 4 terms) in the whip system was roughly equal to the proportion in the full caucus (Figure 5). By the 102nd Congress, the Democratic system became decidedly skewed toward more senior members. This compositional shift is in keeping with the parallel changes in whip loyalty—under unified parties, when the whip system becomes desirable primarily for coordination, leaders likely find that more senior members are more predictable carriers of the party agenda, and the goals of inclusion and communicating across intraparty factions take a backseat. In contrast to this clear Democratic pattern, the much smaller Republican whip system does not show a clear shift in seniority patterns during this period, and the proportion of junior members fluctuates from Congress to Congress.

## Cross-Sectional Analysis

On the surface, the Democratic whip system broadly reflects an inclusive, representative strategy in the postreform era, but the picture appears to change by the late 1980s. In Tables 1 and 2, I examine more comprehensive evidence that the whip systems became less broadly representative of the rank and file in the late 1980s and 1990s. These tables present models of each party's whip system in each Congress from the 95th to the 106th, with the individual member as the unit of analysis. For each Congress, a separate logit model regresses an indicator of each member's appointed whip status on the member's party unity scores and a series of control variables.[11] The control variables include, first, member tenure (logged number of terms served), on the expectation that members of differing seniority will be represented (and the tenure variable will be insignificant) under weaker parties and that more senior members will be preferred under stronger parties. A second variable controls for the member's two-party vote share in the most recent election cycle, on the assumption that electorally safer members will have more freedom to pursue party leadership activities. A third variable controls for Southern members, recognizing that the South played an important role in both parties' coalitions in this period and that the leadership may have seen a particular incentive for either rewarding or appeasing Southerners with whip positions. Finally, I control for ideological proximity to the party median using an indicator for members in the middle third of the party's distribution of DW-Nominate scores. Following the conventional "middleman" hypothesis, members closer to the party's ideological median should be more likely to be whips. Ideological centrism within the party and party loyalty are only weakly related across all members and the full time frame ($r = .22$) and in each party in the earlier and later periods.[12]

The Congress-by-Congress analysis of the Democratic whips in Table 1 supports the expectation that the system's composition shifted toward a more loyal, more senior membership when party government conditions reached a high level. Party unity is not a significant predictor of whip status in most of the pre-101st Congresses; it positively predicts whip membership only at the .10 level (one-tailed) in the 96th and 97th Congresses, before the sharp increase in the size of the whip system. In each Congress after the 100th, loyalty is a positive and significant predictor of whip status. With other factors controlled, member tenure is also related to membership in the whip system only in the period of strong party government, supporting the conclusion from the descriptive data that the leadership placed

**Table 1**
**Democratic Appointed Whip Status by Congress (95th to 106th)**

| | 95th | 96th | 97th | 98th | 99th | 100th | 101st | 102nd | 103rd | 104th | 105th | 106th |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Party unity | 0.016 | 0.035* | 0.035* | 0.014 | –0.009 | 0.020 | 0.039** | 0.031** | 0.038** | 0.025** | 0.037** | 0.035** |
| | (0.019) | (0.027) | (0.024) | (0.022) | (0.016) | (0.019) | (0.017) | (0.017) | (0.018) | (0.015) | (0.017) | (0.017) |
| Party centrist | 0.048 | 0.373 | 1.291*** | 0.205 | –0.054 | 0.476* | 0.720*** | 0.436* | 0.748*** | 0.317 | 0.141 | –0.284 |
| | (0.561) | (0.603) | (0.490) | (0.430) | (0.374) | (0.318) | (0.288) | (0.286) | (0.316) | (0.350) | (0.338) | (0.376) |
| Tenure (log) | –0.198 | 0.216 | –0.178 | 0.261* | 0.116 | –0.106 | 0.091 | 0.384** | 0.755*** | 0.388** | 0.546*** | 0.934*** |
| | (0.241) | (0.311) | (0.320) | (0.180) | (0.201) | (0.202) | (0.198) | (0.187) | (0.168) | (0.206) | (0.195) | (0.241) |
| Vote share | 0.012 | 0.062*** | 0.038*** | 0.004 | –0.005 | –0.007 | –0.016 | 0.003 | –0.003 | 0.005 | 0.002 | 0.009 |
| | (0.011) | (0.017) | (0.014) | (0.013) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.010) | (0.009) | (0.012) | (0.013) | (0.013) | (0.011) |
| South | 0.289 | 0.307 | 0.632 | –0.286 | –0.305 | –0.037 | –0.042 | –0.035 | 0.137 | –0.114 | 0.342 | 0.326 |
| | (0.542) | (0.565) | (0.652) | (0.603) | (0.451) | (0.364) | (0.337) | (0.322) | (0.329) | (0.371) | (0.363) | (0.387) |
| Constant | –4.664*** | –10.90*** | –8.442*** | –3.881** | –0.538 | –2.474* | –3.350** | –4.485*** | –5.487*** | –3.982*** | –5.089*** | –6.194*** |
| | (1.509) | (2.714) | (2.353) | (2.267) | (1.640) | (1.869) | (1.605) | (1.648) | (1.764) | (1.439) | (1.589) | (1.714) |
| *N* | 272 | 261 | 234 | 259 | 251 | 252 | 256 | 267 | 255 | 195 | 202 | 210 |

Note: Cell entries are logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Rare-events logit estimation used for 95th to 99th Congress models.
*$p < .10$, one-tailed. **$p < .05$, one-tailed. ***$p < .01$, one-tailed.

**Table 2**
**Republican Appointed Whip Status by Congress (95th to 106th)**

| | 95th | 96th | 97th | 98th | 99th | 100th | 101st | 102nd | 103rd | 104th | 105th | 106th |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Party unity | 0.021 | 0.028** | 0.027* | –0.005 | 0.013 | 0.012 | 0.015 | 0.007 | 0.040 | 0.043* | 0.025 | 0.045** |
| | (0.019) | (0.015) | (0.017) | (0.012) | (0.013) | (0.012) | (0.017) | (0.023) | (0.035) | (0.032) | (0.025) | (0.027) |
| Party centrist | –0.435 | –0.408 | –0.090 | –0.079 | –0.349 | –0.260 | –0.483 | –0.400 | –0.209 | 0.504* | 0.204 | 0.177 |
| | (0.600) | (0.635) | (0.507) | (0.557) | (0.509) | (0.497) | (0.663) | (0.706) | (0.580) | (0.357) | (0.337) | (0.336) |
| Tenure (log) | 0.464** | 0.982*** | –0.049 | –0.064 | 0.261 | 0.200 | –0.626 | 0.194 | 0.742*** | –0.973 | –0.786 | –0.543 |
| | (0.264) | (0.292) | (0.370) | (0.308) | (0.312) | (0.285) | (0.326) | (0.247) | (0.213) | (0.279) | (0.240) | (0.254) |
| Vote share | –0.002 | 0.018 | 0.035** | 0.018 | 0.018 | 0.021* | 0.007 | –0.019 | 0.024* | 0.028** | 0.009 | 0.017** |
| | (0.016) | (0.021) | (0.018) | (0.017) | (0.017) | (0.014) | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.016) | (0.014) | (0.015) | (0.010) |
| South | 0.006 | –0.272 | –0.053 | 0.486 | 0.207 | 0.274 | 0.125 | –0.218 | –0.457 | –0.376 | –0.165 | –0.090 |
| | (0.606) | (0.696) | (0.549) | (0.556) | (0.479) | (0.473) | (0.598) | (0.634) | (0.566) | (0.365) | (0.340) | (0.338) |
| Constant | –3.928** | –6.779*** | –6.444*** | –2.687** | –4.343*** | –4.293*** | –2.802* | –1.524 | –8.005** | –6.301** | –2.858 | –5.572** |
| | (1.820) | (1.691) | (1.854) | (1.304) | (1.346) | (1.506) | (1.724) | (2.546) | (3.633) | (3.055) | (2.378) | (2.472) |
| *N* | 141 | 155 | 192 | 163 | 180 | 176 | 176 | 166 | 175 | 234 | 226 | 220 |

Note: Cell entries are logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Rare-events logit estimation used for 95th to 103rd Congress models.
*$p < .10$, one-tailed. **$p < .05$, one-tailed. ***$p < .01$, one-tailed.

less emphasis on the representativeness of the system. Proximity to the Democratic ideological center is an independent factor in explaining whip membership, although mostly during the middle part of the period—after the party had grown stronger but before the Democrats lost majority status. The electoral variable has an effect on whip membership only in the immediate postreform period, when the parties were relatively weak and the whip system remained smaller, and Southern status is never an independent predictor of whip status.

The patterns are not the same for House Republicans (Table 2), and there is less evidence of a cohesive strategy or change over time. Party unity is weakly significant in only a few Congresses—the 96th and 97th and later in the majority-Republican 104th and 106th Congresses. Southern region and party centrism do not significantly predict whip membership at any point, and two-party vote share has an uneven effect across the Congresses. The one variable that shows a fairly clear pattern is tenure, although its influence runs counter to the initial expectations in some Congresses. Seniority was positively related to whip status in a few of the early minority-Republican Congresses; later, in the larger, post-1994 Republican whip system, seniority was a *negative* predictor of whip status (highly significant in a two-tailed test). Overall, the uneven patterns among the GOP appointed whips do not provide the expected evidence for change in loyalty and seniority as party government conditions shift.[13] The irregular results in Table 2 do, however, clearly reflect the Republicans' tendency to revamp the whip network regularly with the election of each new Republican whip (see Figure 2), in contrast to the evolutionary patterns in the Democratic system. And the unexpected effects of tenure reveal an interesting trend that I further explore later in the article.

## Time-Series Cross-Sectional Analysis: Democratic Caucus

These Congress-by-Congress analyses offer an overall picture of the whip systems' composition, but they leave some unanswered questions. In particular, we do not know whether party loyalty—particularly the high levels of Democratic whip loyalty after the 100th Congress—reflects systematic biases in selection into the system or is simply the result of members' socialization once they are in the extended leadership. This analysis also does not allow any conclusions about members' whip system participation over time in the context of other factors—that is, whether whip membership is in part "sticky," a matter of property rights, and whether accounting for this possibility affects inferences about other factors.

**Table 3**
**Binary Time-Series Analysis of Democratic Appointed Whip Status, 95th to 106th Congresses**

| | 95th to 100th | 101st to 106th |
|---|---|---|
| Party unity$_{t-1}$ | 0.215 | 0.409*** |
| | (0.194) | (0.115) |
| Party centrist$_{t-1}$ | 0.746*** | 0.538*** |
| | (0.274) | (0.177) |
| Tenure (log) | 0.293* | 1.209*** |
| | (0.184) | (0.143) |
| Vote share | 0.006 | –0.006 |
| | (0.006) | (0.006) |
| South | –0.080 | –0.057 |
| | (0.329) | (0.220) |
| Available posts | 0.041*** | 0.026*** |
| | (0.006) | (0.007) |
| Nonwhip terms | –0.328*** | –0.714*** |
| | (0.056) | (0.054) |
| Constant | –3.953*** | –2.853*** |
| | (0.551) | (0.652) |
| *N* | 1,096 | 1,194 |
| $\chi^2(df)$ | 83.25(7) | 222.58(7) |
| *p* | < .001 | < .001 |

Note: Cell entries are coefficients for population-averaged logit models with robust standard errors in parentheses. The nonwhip terms variable represents a control for each member of Congress's duration outside the appointed whip system at time *t* (Beck, Katz, & Tucker, 1998; see text for discussion).
*$p < .10$, one-tailed. **$p < .05$, one-tailed. ***$p < .01$, one-tailed.

To examine individual whip system membership over time, I use binary time-series cross-sectional (BTSCS) models, with a dependent variable indicating each member's appointed whip status at time *t*. Separate models are presented for each party and, to examine the effects of the independent variables under differing party government conditions, for the early (95th to 100th) and later (101st to 106th) Congresses. Each model accounts for the leadership's choices over whip system membership by using information available to the leadership at the start of each Congress: members' party loyalty in the previous Congress (*t*-1), proximity to the party center in the previous Congress (*t*-1), tenure (*t*), two-party vote share (*t*), and Southern region. By accounting for loyalty (and ideological location) at *t*-1, these models help to distinguish the causal effect of loyalty on whip membership. The models account for the duration dependence of whip status—the possible tendency of whips to remain whips once in the system and the possibility that members

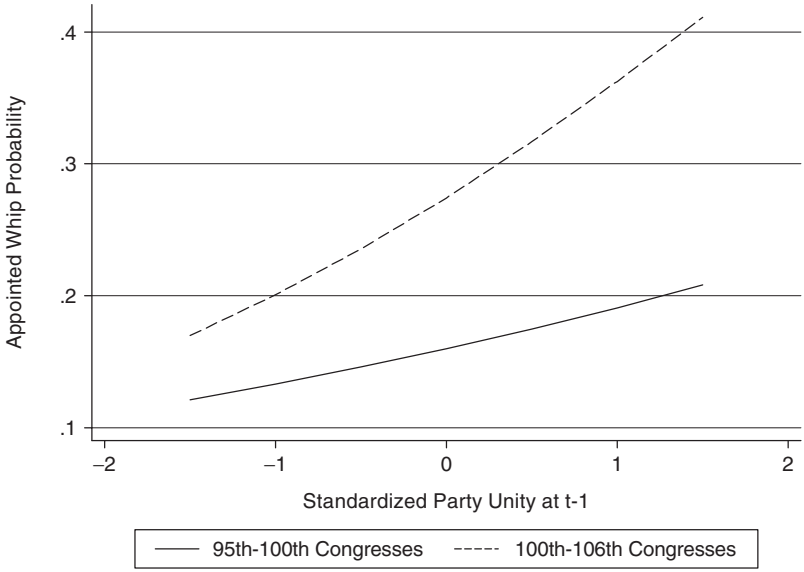
experience some decreasing likelihood of selection the longer they remain outside the system, other things being equal—with a variable for the number of Congresses the member had been outside the system at time *t* (Beck, Katz, & Tucker, 1998).[14] Finally, because this analysis pools data across Congresses, and because the sizes of the whip systems vary over time, the models control for the available whip posts at *t* as well.

The results for the Democratic caucus in Table 3 support the hypothesis that, under strong party government, party leaders use party loyalty as an indicator of a member's qualification to assist in centralized coordination efforts for collective action. In the period of stronger party government (second column), members with higher relative party unity levels in the previous Congress are more likely to be selected as whips, even when the significant effects of proximity to the party median are controlled for. Seniority effects also are positive and significant in this model, with more senior members more likely to serve as Democratic whips. The negative and statistically significant coefficient on the *nonwhip terms* (Congresses outside the system) variable accounts for the stickiness of whip service—the tendency of past whips to continue serving and for members to become less likely to enter or reenter the system the longer they have been outside of it, when the effects of tenure are controlled for. In the earlier period, the results are somewhat different—the coefficient for party unity is positive but not statistically significant. Ideological centrism remains a significant predictor, however, as does tenure (at weaker levels), and the controls for *nonwhip terms* and the number of available appointed whip posts are similarly significant in the expected directions.[15]

The substantive impact of party loyalty on the selection of Democratic whips can be illustrated using the results from the models in Table 3. The predicted probabilities of whip system membership at *t* across a reasonable range of standardized party unity values ($-1.5 < z < 1.5$) are shown in Figure 6. The more steeply sloped top line shows the increasing likelihood of whip system membership as party loyalty at *t*-1 ranges from lower to higher values, other factors held constant, in the later period.

One additional test may help to further demonstrate the causal effect of loyalty on whip membership—that is, to demonstrate that high levels of loyalty are not merely a consequence of involvement in the extended leadership. In the Democratic party, a relatively constant number of *elected* whips—chosen as assistant or zone whips by members from a particular region—served across the 95th to 106th Congress period. These whips were subject to the same "inclusive" effects of party participation as their leadership-appointed counterparts, but their selection mechanism was independent of the top leadership. In Table 4, I predict elected Democratic whip

**Figure 6**
**Predicted Probability of Democratic Whip System Membership**




status at time *t* using the same set of predictors. None of the independent variables (aside from the duration variable) are significant in either period, with the exception of seniority, which is a significant and positive predictor of elected whip status after the 100th Congress. Neither party unity nor ideological location is a significant factor in elected whip service—a result that is confirmed by a separate Congress-by-Congress analysis (not shown). In short, appointed Democratic whips in more recent Congresses are members who have displayed higher than normal levels of loyalty, but elected whips are not; these results strongly suggest differences in selection rather than differences that solely result from partisan socialization.

## Time-Series Cross-Sectional Analysis: Republican Conference

As the earlier discussion outlined, the GOP extended whip system differed from the Democratic system in important ways during most of this period. In addition to the obvious fact that it was a minority whip system until the

**Table 4**
**Binary Time-Series Analysis of Democratic Elected Whip Status, 95th to106th Congresses**

| | 95th to 100th | 101st to 106th |
|---|---|---|
| Party unity$_{t-1}$ | 0.070 | 0.177 |
| | (0.150) | (0.168) |
| Party centrist$_{t-1}$ | –0.093 | –0.177 |
| | (0.265) | (0.282) |
| Tenure (log) | 0.243 | 0.340** |
| | (0.195) | (0.199) |
| Vote share | 0.001 | –0.005 |
| | (0.007) | (0.009) |
| South | 0.104 | –0.051 |
| | (0.316) | (0.293) |
| Nonwhip terms | –1.027*** | –0.651*** |
| | (0.190) | (0.095) |
| Constant | –1.147** | –0.933 |
| | (0.663) | (0.729) |
| *N* | 1,096 | 1,194 |
| $\chi^2(df)$ | 30.53(6) | 60.70(6) |
| *p* | < .001 | < .001 |

Note: Cell entries are coefficients for population-averaged logit models with robust standard errors in parentheses. The nonwhip terms variable represents a control for each member of Congress's duration outside the elected whip system at time *t* (Beck, Katz, & Tucker, 1998; see text for discussion).
*$p < .10$, one-tailed. **$p < .05$, one-tailed. ***$p < .01$, one-tailed.

104th Congress, the Republican system was much smaller (Figure 1) than the Democratic system between the 98th and 104th Congresses and much more fluid in its membership (Figure 2). This Republican system does not provide support for the general argument about party power and whip selection, as the BTSCS analysis of GOP whip membership in Table 5 shows. In the 95th to 100th Congresses, Republican whip membership was largely a function of seniority and, to some extent, electoral security. In the later period of stronger party government conditions, none of the hypothesized variables—including party loyalty at *t*-1—have a measurable independent impact on whip selection.

## Appointed Whips Under the Republican Majority

Viewed alongside the Democratic findings in Table 3, the Republican party results show that the general argument about party loyalty and the

**Table 5**
**Binary Time-Series Analysis of Republican Appointed Whip Status, 95th to 106th Congresses**

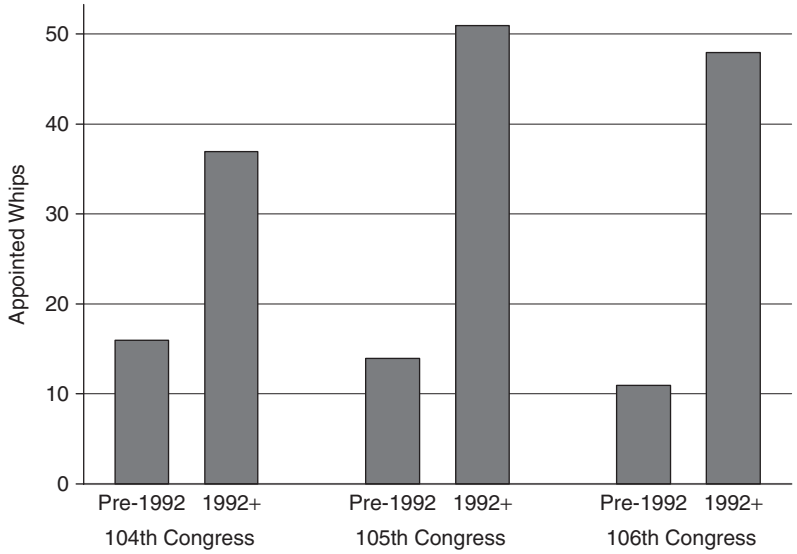
| | 95th to 100th | 101st to 106th |
|---|---|---|
| Party unity$_{t-1}$ | 0.177 | 0.146 |
| | (0.155) | (0.134) |
| Party centrist$_{t-1}$ | 0.115 | 0.072 |
| | (0.275) | (0.218) |
| Tenure (log) | 0.515** | 0.072 |
| | (0.240) | (0.203) |
| Vote share | 0.017** | 0.003 |
| | (0.010) | (0.007) |
| South | 0.119 | –0.155 |
| | (0.318) | (0.225) |
| Available posts | 0.163*** | 0.019*** |
| | (0.036) | (0.006) |
| Nonwhip terms | –1.797*** | –0.839*** |
| | (0.216) | (0.105) |
| Constant | –5.253*** | –1.023* |
| | (1.235) | (0.647) |
| *N* | 695 | 978 |
| $\chi^2(df)$ | 138.03(7) | 77.38(7) |
| *p* | < .001 | < .001 |

Note: Cell entries are coefficients for population-averaged logit models with robust standard errors in parentheses. The nonwhip terms variable represents a control for each member of Congress's duration outside the appointed whip system at time *t* (Beck, Katz, & Tucker, 1998; see text for discussion).
*$p < .10$, one-tailed. **$p < .05$, one-tailed. ***$p < .01$, one-tailed.

whip systems is supported only in the particular context of the Democratic system. However, recognizing that the Republican system changed very rapidly after the 1994 elections—and began to look much more like its Democratic counterpart—the composition of the majority Republican system merits some additional examination and consideration. Not only did the GOP system explode in size for the 104th Congress, but it also now served the majority leadership. These changes could be expected to strengthen the focus on policy coordination and place a greater premium on loyalty and cohesiveness: A much larger whip system poses a risk of greater agency loss for the top leadership, and the demands of majority status make reliable signaling of party priorities more imperative.

The new majority Republican whip system was marked by several changes that are obscured in the BTSCS models but that some additional

**Figure 7**
**Cohorts in the Republican Whip System,**
**104th to 106th Congresses**




descriptive analysis reveals. First, the whip system of the 104th Congress, under new majority whip Tom DeLay, experienced massive turnover: Only two members of the GOP's 103rd Congress whip system remained, and more than 50 new whips entered (see Figure 2). Thereafter, in the 105th and 106th Congresses, the whip system was notably stable, in a pattern resembling the Democrats' low-turnover approach. Who were the new whips in the GOP majority system? Overwhelmingly, they were representatives of a junior cohort of Republicans elected during or after the high-turnover elections of 1992 and 1994. Figure 7 divides the membership of the majority Republican networks by cohort, showing that each of the post-1994 GOP whip systems was dominated by members elected in or after 1992. This cohort, from which more than 80% of the GOP whips were drawn by the 106th Congress, was not only a driving force in the new majority (Rae, 1998) but also unrepresentative of the conference. Conference-wide, the 1992-plus cohort that defined the majority whip system was significantly more conservative and significantly more loyal than the older cohort,[16] and

the effects of this new breed of Republicans are evident in the whip system, in which party loyalty emerges as a predictor of whip involvement in the 104th and 106th Congresses (see Table 2) even as tenure takes on a strongly negative effect as a result of the cohort bias in the new majority system.

Overall, although the pooled BTSCS results do not reveal the expected shift in the GOP system as party power reached a high point, we *do* see that Republicans implemented wholesale changes in their whip system as they took majority control of the House. These changes are primarily visible through the overwhelming dominance of the junior cohort in the whip system, which we know was a crucial source of support and direction for the new majority. Although the initial tests of the party loyalty hypothesis are not clearly supported in the Republican case, the post-1994 patterns are, at a minimum, in keeping with the expectation that the leadership will prefer more predictable and reliable communicators of the party agenda at times of strong party government.[17]

## Summary and Discussion

Who whips? The answer involves an understanding of how the changing partisan context of the House has shifted the leadership's incentives in constituting the whip networks. In the Democratic caucus, the rapid increase in the size of the whip network began at a time when party heterogeneity was relatively high but factions within the party threatened to thwart collective goals. At this time, an extended whip system allowed leaders to gather information and maintain connections across segments of the party. With other factors accounted for, the whip system began to reflect the rank and file on key dimensions as it grew larger, and more loyal members were no more likely than less loyal members to be selected into the expanding system. As strong party government emerged by the late 1980s, the Democratic leadership had an incentive to constitute an extended whip system that could contribute more reliably to communication and coordination of the more cohesive party's collective agenda—even as it had less need to create a diverse extended leadership system in a less-fractured caucus. On loyalty and seniority, the whip system became less representative, but it became much more cohesive, even when compared to the increasingly homogenous caucus.[18]

These long-term patterns of loyalty and seniority in the Democratic system are not identically replicated in the Republican system: Until the GOP took the majority, its whip network remained small and fluid in membership,

apparently heavily influenced by changes in the top elected leadership. The general argument, as applied to both parties, about the timing of the extended whip changes receives only partial support in this article, then. But the closer examination of the majority Republican whip networks does suggest that the top leadership began to orient the whip system more aggressively toward cohesive policy coordination, as the general argument anticipates. After the Republicans controlled the House and expanded their whip system, the network's composition quickly became unrepresentative of the full conference, with a particular bias toward the dominant cohort of very junior—and more conservative and loyal—members.

In sum, the evidence from the Democratic caucus, and from the Republican conference to an extent, reveals a significant change in the whip networks, a change that coincides with the shift in party government conditions. These findings provide some new support for the conditionality of party government, for the strengthened role of leadership in coordination and agenda setting as party membership becomes more cohesive. Here, we see leaders of the stronger parties forming whip networks that are increasingly well suited for sending clear policy signals on core leadership goals. Similarly, we see that the increasingly loyal rank and file are willing to be "whipped" by a more extreme and less representative group as conditions for party government become more favorable. The whip networks, as Cooper and Brady's (1981) general predictions would lead us to expect, reflect a leadership "oriented to command and task or goal attainment" under stronger parties instead of remaining "oriented to bargaining and the maintenance of good relations" (p. 424), as they were under weaker conditions.

The findings in this article build on and extend earlier and very recent arguments about the extended leadership. Rohde's (1991, chap. 4) initial articulation of the conditional party government perspective emphasizes the then-emerging role of extended leadership structures in achieving party policy objectives and the increasing importance of loyalty to leadership appointments, a view that this research elaborates and illustrates across a longer period. Recent work by Heberlig and colleagues (2006; Heberlig, 2003), in turn, has argued that both parties' leaders have favored members with high levels of party campaign contributions in allocating committee and leadership positions since the mid-1990s. The research presented here demonstrates that the majority leadership's focus on constructing a highly loyal whip system in the 1980s and early 1990s served the policy objectives of the newly unified party; the Heberlig et al. work on the most recent Congresses shows that this instrumental use of the leadership system has evolved to incorporate the parties' immediate collective electoral goals as well (see also Heberlig & Larson, 2007).

A few important caveats about the limits of the approach in this article are in order. First, the time frame under examination here is one of significant—and, no doubt, interrelated—changes that go beyond the simple polarization of the parties and the resulting changes in leadership power. For instance, divided government politics, which we know helped motivate the very early expansion of the Democratic whip network (Dodd, 1979), undoubtedly affected leadership activity in the 1980s. The shift toward a more polarizing issue agenda (e.g., Coleman, 1997) likely was relevant as well. However, precisely separating out the overlapping effects of party polarization and these other contemporary changes goes beyond the scope of this article and remains an unfinished task for congressional scholarship more generally. Second, I should emphasize that, as is often the case when one is studying patterns of change in recent history, there are possible idiosyncratic explanations at work that could also explain my findings. In particular, it is possible that individual leadership style could help to explain the choice of a more unified whip network. If we compare a relatively conciliatory leader of the 1970s majority, such as Tip O'Neill, to a more pugilistic leader of the 1990s majority, such as Tom DeLay, this alternative explanation would seem to have some validity. However, leadership style cannot be taken out of its institutional context (Cooper & Brady, 1981). In this case, conditional party government theory predicts that changes in the House's partisan environment will lead to the rise of more combative and divisive leaders and those leaders' use of the institutional structures to advance party goals. Viewed from this perspective, the growth of the extended whip systems and their increasingly loyal membership closely follows the House's systematic changes in the 1980s and 1990s.

## Notes

1. The assistant or zone whips and the majority whip continued to be selected by regional and caucus election, respectively (Sinclair, 1995, p. 119).

2. For other empirical examinations of inclusion in the 1970s and 1980s, see Garand and Clayton (1986), Garand (1988), and Loomis (1984).

3. I offer this as an assumption rather than an empirical claim here, although this connection among one-party districts, a partisan home style, and partisan legislative activity is one that merits separate empirical investigation.

4. Price (1992, p. 85) also explains that he deliberately sought a whip post by attending whip meetings as a nonwhip and by volunteering for task forces.

5. Some increase in demand, of course, would be associated with a changing mix of member goals in the chamber. Arguably, it is an increase in the importance of policy goals that helped increase demand for extended Democratic leadership positions—and, thus, the number of available positions—during the initial inclusion period of the 1970s.

6. I thank Eric Heberlig for very helpful conversations on this portion of the argument.

7. Roberts and Smith (2003) demonstrate that House polarization occurred in several surges, beginning with a surge in the postreform era that was followed by a significant surge in the mid to late 1980s among Democrats, in particular. Although the shifts of the 1980s yielded considerable polarization, Roberts and Smith show that Republican cohesion did not show the same pattern as the majority Democrats until the 1990s.

8. *Congressional Quarterly* (*CQ*) does not, for instance, provide a full list of whips after the 106th Congress. See Crabtree and Billings (2002) and Cohen (2004) on Roy Blunt's secrecy regarding GOP whip rosters, which may contribute to this problem. My empirical analysis ends with the 106th Congress because of the unavailability of consistent whip rosters in subsequent Congresses.

9. *CQ* unity data are drawn from Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research study 7645 (pre-98th) and from the annual *CQ Almanac* tables (post-97th). In the pooled analyses, I have normalized the unity scores by Congress and party to ensure comparability, even as unity levels change overall.

10. The data set excludes a handful of extreme outliers on the party unity measure—those whose party unity score was less than 25%, putting them below the first percentile of members in the early period. These outliers include 10 members of the 95th, 7 members of the 96th, 5 members of the 97th, 2 members of the 98th, and 1 member of the 99th. Most are Democrats from the South or Southwest, such as Larry McDonald (D-GA), who earned a Democratic unity score of 3.8% in the 95th. A few Republicans are also affected, such as Charles Whalen (R-OH, 95th Congress GOP unity score of 16%). None of the outliers served as whips, and I exclude them to avoid skewing the results. Still, their exclusion has little effect on the conclusions.

11. Rare-events logit estimation (King & Zeng, 2001) is used when the appointed whips make up less than 20% of the caucus or conference (through the 99th Congress for Democrats and through the 103rd for Republicans).

12. I include the ideological centrism variable to account for the traditional expectation that party "middlemen" are more likely to serve as leaders and on the basis of the empirical evidence that party centrism and party loyalty are largely distinct measures in this period. Excluding the party centrism variable, however, has little effect on the statistical inferences from the party loyalty variable in the results overall. The loyalty variable sees marginal increases in significance (to $p < .10$, one-tailed) in two models when centrism is excluded: the early-period Democratic binary time-series cross-sectional model and the Democratic cross-sectional model for the 100th Congress.

13. Party loyalty's insignificance in most of the GOP models demonstrates that the differences in median loyalty in Figure 3 are not substantial enough to reach statistical significance, a finding that is also supported by *t* tests on party loyalty by whip status in each Congress.

14. The duration variable equals zero where the member was in the whip system at *t*-1. The pooled models in Tables 3 to 5 are population-averaged logit models (see Zorn, 2001). These findings are robust to alternative specification in the form of conventional logit models with robust standard errors clustered on member ID number.

15. The decision to divide the models between the 100th and 101st Congresses is, I have argued, well justified by data about changing party government conditions. Still, treating this shift as an abrupt cutoff is somewhat artificial, so it is important to note that the contrasting effects of party unity, and the other inferences from these pooled models, are robust to alternative choices about the time frames. Moving the cutoff for the models from 100th–101st to 99th–100th—also a plausible interpretation of the party government data—has little effect on the results.

16. *t* tests on cohort-average DW-Nominate and party unity scores for the 104th to 106th Congress period show significant differences at $p < .01$.

17. The later emergence of this effect (and the GOP expanded whip system itself) parallels Roberts and Smith's (2003) finding that higher levels of partisanship appeared later for Republicans than for Democrats, around the time of the majority takeover.

18. It should be acknowledged that some of the shift in composition during the strong-party period might reflect self-selection by members. I have argued that demand for whip positions should be relatively high across time; however, it is plausible that some less-loyal members would find participation in the whip system unattractive once the whip system was focused on mobilizing a cohesive party. Still, this phenomenon should reflect a response by some low-loyalty members to a larger, ongoing trend brought about by the leadership's reorientation of the existing system.

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