Parties as Procedural Coalitions in Congress:
Evidence from a Natural Experiment

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October 7, 2003

Abstract

We examine the degree to which parties act as procedural coalitions in Congress by testing predictions from the party cartel theory (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 1994, 2002). We obtain leverage on the question of institutional party influence by focusing on a "natural experiment" involving the behavior of exiting House members. We argue that retiring House members are no longer susceptible to party pressure, making them the perfect source (when compared to higher office seekers and reelection-seeking members) to determine the existence of party influence. Results from a pooled, cross-sectional analysis of the 94th through 105th Congresses (1975-98) suggest that party influence is indeed present in Congress, especially where the party cartel theory predicts: on procedural, rather than final-passage, votes. Moreover, we find that procedural party influence is almost exclusively the domain of the *majority party*. This latter finding is especially important in that most prior studies have been limited solely to investigating interparty influence.

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I. Introduction

The literature investigating party influence in Congress has exploded over the last decade. This has been due, in part, to concerns raised about the sorts of evidence presented in favor of party influence. Traditionally, congressional scholars have viewed roll-call based measures of partisanship, like measures of "party voting," "party strength," or "party cohesion," as sufficient to make the case for strong party influence (or discipline) within Congress. Recently, however, Krehbiel (1993, 1999a, 2000) has taken these scholars, and the traditional roll-call based measures of partisanship more generally, to task. Developing a preference-based model of congressional behavior, he contends that the traditional measures of party influence "increasingly … seem to be artifacts of preferences rather than evidence of party discipline, party cohesion, party strength, or party government" (Krehbiel 2000: 225). In effect, Krehbiel argues that partisanship within Congress could be interpreted as nothing more than an "electoral label" for different preference-based coalitions.

While Krehbiel's concerns have resonated with congressional scholars, they have not squelched efforts to uncover clear evidence of party influence within Congress. Moreover, the use of roll-call votes as the *means* of uncovering that evidence has not been viewed as problematic. Rather, new and innovative roll-call based approaches have been developed as a means of untangling the Gordian knot of preferences and partisanship: examples include a "non-partisan" interest group score (Binder, Lawrence, and Maltzman 1999),[1] a "party pressure" measure[2] (Snyder and Groseclose 2000), partisan "cut points"[3] (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal

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[1] For a critique, see Krehbiel (1999b).
[2] For critiques, see McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2001), Krehbiel (2003a, 2003b), and Cox and Poole (2002). For responses to the first two critiques, see Snyder and Groseclose (2001) and Groseclose and Snyder (2003).
[3] For a critique, see Cox and Poole (2002).

2001), partisan "roll rates"[4] (Cox 2001; Cox and McCubbins 2002), and a "net" Rice index of party difference (Cox and Poole 2002).[5]

This paper fits in the aforementioned tradition, by searching for party influence in Congress using a different approach to the study of roll-call voting. Rather than developing and applying new methods to "tease out" party influence, we pursue a different tack by applying an existing research design to a new set of data.

Our main focus will be in examining the degree to which parties act as *procedural coalitions*, i.e., "cartels" that organize the institution, via rulemaking and committee assignments, for partisan benefit (see, e.g., Cox and McCubbins 1993, 1994, 2002). Specifically, we examine the varying degrees to which parties influence the behavior of their members on two substantively different vote types: final-passage votes and procedural votes. Party cartel theory suggests that parties should exhibit more influence (exert more pressure) on procedural votes, relative to final-passage votes, all else equal. Moreover, the *majority party*, because of its control over the legislative organization and agenda, should exhibit *disproportionate* influence relative to the minority party.

To conduct our analysis, we apply a research design developed by Rothenberg and Sanders (2000), whereby House member behavior is analyzed *only* in the last six months of consecutive congresses. This design allows us to isolate members' vote choices *after* they have decided whether or not to exit the chamber, i.e., retire or pursue higher office. Our assumption is that retiring House members will no longer feel the "noose" of party discipline, and that this will be reflected in their voting behavior. Thus, by comparing the respective vote choices of retiring

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[4] For critiques, see Krehbiel (1999a).
[5] In addition, preference-based measures that are *not* derived from roll-call votes have been developed (see Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001).

House members, higher-office seekers, and reelection-seeking members across *different* subsets

of votes, we have a unique "natural experiment" that will allow us to identify whether significant

results are uncovered in areas where party influence is expected.

The paper is organized as follows. Section II discusses the theory of parties as procedural

coalitions, focusing primarily on the party cartel theory espoused by Cox and McCubbins (1993,

1994, 2002). Section III lays out our research design and explains how we obtain leverage on

the question of party influence in Congress by focusing on the behavior of exiting House

members. Section IV provides predictions from the party cartel and pure-preference based

theories and tests them, both *across* and *within* parties, using data on final-passage and

procedural votes from the 94th through 105th Congresses (1975-98). Section V concludes.

II. Procedural Cartel Theory

Cox and McCubbins (1993, 1994, 2002) characterize political parties as legislative

cartels, which usurp the procedural (rulemaking and committee assignment) powers in the

chamber to produce outcomes favorable to (majority) party members. In effect, majority party

members delegate authority to central agents (chamber leaders), who use their powers to

structure the legislative agenda in ways that will foster the success of the party as a whole. This

is done in two ways. First, policy logrolls are constructed, with individual party members

extracting district-specific benefits while supporting the partisan agenda as a whole. Second,

"gatekeeping" is employed at the committee level, to prevent policies that are opposed by a

majority within the party from being referred to the floor. To prevent defection from the partisan

agenda, majority party leaders wield various "carrots and sticks" that can affect the electoral

fortunes of individual members. For example, prime committee assignments and privileged

positions on the legislative calendar can be bestowed or taken away, based upon the degree of

partisan "loyalty" that members exhibit. At the extreme, members can be kicked out of the caucus.[6]

At the heart of this partisan cartel is the insistence upon procedural control.[7] While majority party leaders stress the importance of producing policy outputs, they also understand the electoral realities that individual party members face. Often, district-specific politics will not allow certain members to support the party's policy positions. On those occasions, when those members' votes are not crucial to the outcome, majority party leaders will allow them to bow to electoral pressure and defect. However, *procedural matters* are quite different. As Sinclair (2000: 134) states: "Defecting from your party on procedural issues is considered a greater offense than defecting on substantive issues." This is because majority party leaders view the creation of new polices as *conditional* – based on the degree of preference heterogeneity within the majority party, the size of the majority party, etc. – but view blocking policies that would be detrimental to the party as *unconditional* (Cox and McCubbins 2002).[8] That is, while majority party leaders realize that voters often monitor final-passage votes on substantive matters fairly closely (Arnold 1990), leading to the need for occasional defection by individual party members, the same relation does not hold for procedural matters. Rather, procedural issues are fairly obscure, and the connection between them and policy is beyond the purview of (most) voters. Thus, majority party leaders do not associate electoral costs with procedural votes, and as a result hold party members to toe the line.

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[6] A recent example is James A. Traficant (D-OH). After voting for Dennis Hastert (R-IL) for Speaker at the beginning of the 107th Congress, Traficant was expelled from the Democratic caucus and had his committee assignments stripped (Cohn 2001: 6).

[7] The notion of partisan procedural control did not originate with cartel theory. Rather, it was a common feature in the traditional congressional literature (see, e.g., Jones 1964, 1968; Froman and Ripley 1965). Moreover, the notion of parties as procedural coalitions is a feature of other contemporary congressional theories, which are different from, but quite compatible with, cartel theory (see, e.g., Binder 1997; Dion 1997).

[8] The conditional nature of party government forms the basis of the "conditional party government" (CPG) theory, developed by Rohde (1991). For a fuller discussion of the similarities and differences between party cartel theory and CPG theory, see Finocchiaro and Rohde (2002).

Initial responses to the party cartel theory were mixed (see Schickler and Rich 1997a, 1997b; Cox and McCubbins 1997). Evidence was presented that was either at odds with a story of party control or consistent with a story of majoritarian (pure preference-based) control. Moreover, the very prospect of finding definitive evidence to support party influence was challenged on methodological grounds. Krehbiel (1993, 2000) noted that it is difficult, if not problematic, to measure members' preferences net of party. Traditional measures of party influence, like "party voting scores" and "party cohesion scores," cannot distinguish between partisan- and preference-based sources. In effect, Krehbiel argued that partisanship could simply be an electoral label used to distinguish different ideological beliefs (i.e., a sorting device), and, thus, institutionally could be nothing more than a good measure of preferences.

Partisan theorists rose to the challenge and began searching for measures of member preferences that were not tainted by party.[9] Binder, Lawrence, and Maltzman (1999) identified an interest-group index that was less correlated with party. Snyder and Groseclose (2000) parsed all roll-calls into "close" and "lopsided" categories and claimed that, when scaled, the former could be construed as "party pressured" preferences and the latter "party free" preferences. McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2001) developed a multiple "cut point" model to estimate a partisan dimension, separate from the primary preference-based dimension. Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001) incorporated a non roll-call based measure of preferences, based on surveys of members on a range of issues developed by Project Vote Smart. Finally, Cox and Poole (2002) generated an expected Rice cohesion score to compare with the actual score.

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[9] Scholars have also pursued other avenues to uncover evidence of party influence. Cox and Magar (1999), for example, used contributions from political action committees (PACs) to assess the value of majority status in Congress. In addition, Cox (2001) and Cox and McCubbins (2002) developed new ways to use roll-call votes, without seeking new preference-based measures, to test the predictions of party cartel versus majoritarian theories directly. The notion of "roll rates," the number of times the majority party opposes passage of a bill and loses, is applied in both papers – to committees in the former, and to the chamber as a whole in the latter.

Each of these studies uncovered evidence of party influence. And while none are methodologically impervious to criticism,[10] they each contribute to a larger goal. That is, no one study can be the "silver bullet" to put the parties versus preferences question to rest once and for all. Rather, a *body* of evidence is required, representing different methods, measures, time periods, and theoretical designs, to make a strong case.

This paper is an attempt to add to that body of evidence, by offering a different perspective on the search for party influence in Congress. Whereas other scholars have focused on developing better methods and/or measures, we broaden the scope, by incorporating a research design developed by Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) that allows us to compare the behavior of exiting House members – retiring members and higher-office seekers – to reelection-seeking House members. In this way, we have a unique "natural experiment" with which we can examine behavioral differences across members based on the existence or nonexistence of a party constraint. A further examination of this research design and its application to different subsets of votes is the subject of the following section, to which we now turn.

III. Research Design

In their analysis of ideological shirking in the contemporary Congress, Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) employ an innovative research design whereby they compare changes in House members' vote choices (using W-NOMINATE scores) in the *last six months* of consecutive Congresses. The logic is straightforward: in the final six months of a given Congress, members will know with relative certainty whether or not they will be running for reelection to the next Congress and behave (vote) accordingly. This approach therefore provides an ideal forum to investigate behavioral change. Examining behavioral change across *longer* periods of time, such

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[10] See footnotes 1-4 for examples.

as across sessions or even entire Congresses, introduces possible measurement error, as many House members will switch "types" (from running for reelection to retiring, or from running for reelection to running for higher office, for example) and perhaps their behavior as well. As Rothenberg and Sanders (2002: 318) explain, "when searching for evidence of moral hazard, it is important to identify a preshirking period when the pursuit of reelection is certain and a postshirking period when exit is definite."

Whereas Rothenberg and Sanders focus on the general question of ideological shirking – whether exiting members alter their voting behavior more than reelection-seeking members – we believe that their research design, applied differently, offers a unique way to study party influence in Congress. That is, Rothenberg and Sanders (and most scholars working in the extant literature on shirking) make the implicit assumption that shirking relates to movement away from constituent preferences. More explicitly, once members decide that they will exit the chamber, the "electoral connection" (and the accompanying representative-constituency linkage) is severed, and they will begin to vote based not on constituent preferences, bur rather on their personal preferences. Of course, what is overlooked is the party constraint. If parties exert pressure on members to comply with the party agenda, especially on the *procedural* party agenda as the party cartel theory argues, then there is more to shirking than meets the eye. In effect, there is also a "partisan connection" (and an accompanying representative-party linkage) that must be taken into account.

Here, the two types of exiting members – retiring members and higher-office seekers – provide a unique "natural experiment" for sorting out potential party influence. We argue that the determinants of vote choice for the different member types are as follows:

(1) Reelection-seekers = f(personal preferences, party pressure, constituent preferences)

(2) Higher-office seekers = f(personal preferences, party pressure)

(3) Retiring members = f(personal preferences)

For retiring members, *both* the electoral connection and partisan connection are severed. We assume, then, that retiring members' vote choices are driven *solely* by their personal preferences. For higher-office seekers, the electoral connection is severed, but *not* the partisan connection. That is, higher-office seekers, while exiting the House, have another elective office in their sights, and campaign for that office under their traditional party banner. As a result, they endeavor to maintain good relations with the party hierarchy (for a variety of campaign-related reasons) and, we presume, strive to send signals that they are loyal party members. One powerful signal is to toe the line on votes important to party leaders in the House, even as they are exiting the chamber. We assume, then, that higher-office seekers' vote choices are shaped by *both* party pressure and their personal preferences.[11]

Thus, we argue that potential party influence can be ascertained by comparing the relative behavior of retiring members and higher-office seekers. If retiring members exhibit *significant* behavioral change that is also *above and beyond* that exhibited by higher-office seekers, we will interpret such results as evidence of party influence.

IV. Model and Results

To test the predictions of the party cartel theory, we apply the Rothenberg-Sanders research design to two categories of votes in a pooled, cross-sectional analysis. The first category incorporates only final-passage votes, which include all (final) actions taken on bills, conference reports, and joint resolutions, as well as those that occur under suspension of the rules. The second category incorporates all procedural votes, which include, among other things,

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[11] Reelection-seeking members, thus, serve as the baseline, as neither the electoral connection nor the partisan connection is severed. See Poole (2003) for a further discussion of the determinants of member vote choice.

motions to end debate, rise from the Committee of the Whole, recede and concur, disagree, order

the previous question, recommit, and instruct conferees. (See Appendix for a detailed

accounting.) To generate our final-passage and procedural vote categories, we employ a dataset

designed by David Rohde that classifies all roll-call votes cast in the House from the 83rd

Congress to the present by vote type.[12]

Model

Our dependent variable, similar to that of Rothenberg and Sanders (2000), measures

ideological change within each vote-based category.[13] To calculate the ideological-change

variable, we begin by generating first-dimension W-NOMINATE scores for House members, using

only those votes in the last six months of each election year. We then compute the absolute

difference of individual members' W-NOMINATE scores between consecutive congresses.[14] A

larger absolute difference corresponds to a greater amount of ideological change.

Overall, our dataset consists of 3,844 observations, representing all House members who

served in the last six months of consecutive electoral cycles from the 94th through 105th

Congresses (1975-98).[15] We begin with the 94th Congress due to data constraints – prior to the

93rd Congress we were not able to obtain a sufficient number of roll-call votes in each vote-

based category to generate reliable "final-six month" W-NOMINATE estimates.[16] Nevertheless,

the congresses in question are a logical set for analysis, as they cover the entire "postreform"

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[12] See Cox and Poole (2002) for a similar application of this dataset.

[13] For a more general application, see Poole and Romer (1993) and Poole and Rosenthal (1997).

[14] To generate an ideological change score in the 94th Congress, for instance, we calculated the absolute difference between members' W-NOMINATE scores in the last six months of the 93rd and 94th Congresses. Those members who did not serve in *both* congresses are dropped from the analysis.

[15] Following the lead of Rothenberg and Sanders (and others), we exclude members from Louisiana from our analysis, due to the unique system of House elections in that state.

[16] In addition, we were not able to obtain a sufficient number of roll-call votes in the procedural-vote category in the 96th Congress to generate reliable "final-six month" W-NOMINATE estimates. This explains the difference in sample sizes between the final-passage vote and procedural-vote categories.

period in the House, when procedural reforms were enacted to strengthen majority-party control (see Rohde 1991). Since our dependent variable is theoretically continuous, ranging from 0 to 2, we utilize OLS (with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors) for our analysis.

Our primary set of independent variables mirrors that of Rothenberg and Sanders (2000). We consider two ways of exiting the chamber: members may either retire from office or pursue higher (statewide) office.[17] Retirement may be either voluntarily or involuntarily. A voluntary retirement occurs when a member decides not to seek reelection to another term (for whatever reason), while an involuntary retirement occurs when a member loses a primary election for *either* the House or higher office. Dummy variables are used as proxies for each method of exit. Members who are *retiring* (either voluntarily or involuntarily) are coded one, with all other cases equal to zero. Members who run in the general election for *higher office* are coded one, with all remaining cases equal to zero.

To account for other factors that may influence member behavior, we include measures of electoral security and seniority for each House member. We operationalize *electoral security* as the percentage of the two-party vote that the member received in the previous election. This variable, which ranges from 0.5 to 1, allows us to tap short-term political forces that may affect the underlying degree of "safeness" for each incumbent. Our *seniority* variable measures the number of years of prior service at the beginning of each Congress.[18] Some studies in the congressional literature assume that members' positions become more entrenched as they become more established in the chamber. Others suggest that with more seniority comes greater discretion. By including this variable, we can test these different hypotheses.

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[17] Examples of higher-office positions would include Senate seats, Governorships, and Lieutenant Governorships.
[18] We utilized ICPSR study 7803 and the *Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, 1774 to Present* (http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp) to collect data on members' seniority as well as their decisions to retire and pursue higher office.

In addition, a member who represents a district that has been significantly altered through redistricting may be more likely to exhibit behavioral change as a function of seeking to represent his/her new constituency. To control for *district political change*, we collected presidential vote share data in both the old and the new congressional districts. As others have noted (see, e.g., Jacobson 2000; Brady et al. 2000), district-level presidential vote share can serve as a proxy for constituent preferences, and changes in the presidential vote share from one election to the next (as a result of changes in the composition of the district) can therefore reflect shifts in these underlying preferences. Using these data, we calculate the absolute difference between the Democratic presidential candidate's vote share in the old and new district for the congressional elections immediately following redistricting.[19] Thus, in non-redistricting years or for districts that have not been redrawn, *district political change* is simply equal to zero.[20]

We also include a *party switcher* variable, to control for those members who switched parties between consecutive Congresses. As Nokken (2000), McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2001), and Nokken and Poole (2002) illustrate, party switchers tend to alter their behavior significantly, as their change in parties also comes with a change in the underlying constituency being represented.[21] Without a sufficient control variable included in the model, the outlier nature of these party-switcher cases would lead to findings of greater ideological change than would otherwise be uncovered.

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[19] We collected presidential vote share for each Democratic presidential candidate from issues of *The Almanac of American Politics*, where such data is reported at the district level in both the old and new district.

[20] Since constituency-level factors are no longer relevant for those members exiting the chamber, we follow Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) by coding both the *electoral security* and the *district political change* variables as 0 for those members who are either seeking higher office or retiring.

[21] As McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2001: 686) argue, significant changes in party switchers' behavior are consistent with a "party effect," but the "source may not be internal to the legislature." Again, per Krehbiel's argument, it may be the case that party switchers are simply responding to new constituencies, in which case party may have an influence at the *electoral* level, but not at the *institutional* level. Since we are only concerned with the latter, we do not attempt to obtain leverage on the question of party influence via the *party switcher* variable.

Finally, we include twelve dummy variables to control for the twelve different congress-pairs (93rd-94th through 104th-105th) in our dataset.[22] The inclusion of congress-specific fixed effects is necessary because the W-NOMINATE procedure estimates individual Congresses *separately*. This is a potential problem, as the congressional environment is *not* static; among other things, the electoral context, the distribution of members and, more importantly, the issue agenda (a key element for measuring member ideology) vary from congress to congress (see Rohde 1991, 1992; Crespin et al. 2002; Roberts and Smith 2003). These substantive across-congress differences combined with the W-NOMINATE estimation procedure almost certainly produce different congress-by-congress choice spaces. As a result, congress-specific fixed effects must be included in the model, to control for shifts in the mean ideological change from one pair of congresses to the next (see Poole and Romer 1993; Poole and Rosenthal 1997).

Predictions and Results

As mentioned previously, party cartel theory posits that party members are first and foremost held to support the party on *procedural votes*. Thus, if the theory is valid, evidence of party influence should be uncovered in the procedural-vote regression. What will constitute evidence of party influence? *The coefficient on the retiring variable must be positive, significant, and significantly greater than the coefficient on the higher office variable.*[23] Again, retiring members are no longer representatively accountable to *either* constituency or party (the electoral *and* partisan connections have been severed), while higher-office seekers are no longer accountable to constituency but *still* accountable to party (*only* the electoral connection has been

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[22] Like Poole and Romer (1993), we run the model with a full set of dummies included, and thus without a constant.
[23] The coefficient must by *positive* because we assume that parties constrain behavior – when that constraint is removed, retiring members should shift their behavior toward their personal preferences. Because our dependent variable (ideological change) is measured in absolute-value terms, a positive coefficient indicates significantly greater change than reelection-seeking members (who are constrained by party throughout). Likewise, if constituency is also assumed to be a constraint, then the coefficient on the *higher office* variable should be positive as well.

severed). Thus, party influence is the "net" influence – the degree of ideological change above and beyond that attributable to constituency influence (i.e., simply severing the electoral connection).

Party cartel theory has nothing to say, however, about how members should behave when the electoral connection is severed, but not the partisan connection. So there are no explicit priors regarding the sign or significance of the *higher office* variable.

Regarding member behavior on final-passage votes, party cartel theory is more neutral. As Stewart (2001: 262) suggests, "party leaders may excuse some disloyalty on substantive votes, particularly for electoral reasons…" Again, party leaders' primary concern is maintaining (or winning) control of the chamber, so they are cognizant of members' need to represent constituent preferences, especially on votes that are likely to be monitored. While some anecdotal evidence exists to suggest that party leaders will on occasion pressure members to toe the party line,[24] demanding loyalty on final-passage votes generally is viewed as running counter to overall party goals. Thus, rather than take hard stands on policy issues and force reluctant members to vote accordingly, party leaders carefully consider the strategic environment and often select only those policies that comport with the preferences of most party members (Cox and McCubbins 1993: 155-57; 2002). As a result, we do not expect to observe evidence of party influence in the final-passage vote regression, so the coefficient on the *retirement* variable should *not* be significantly greater than the coefficient on the *higher office* variable.

What about a pure preference-based theory? Krehbiel (1999a: 58 *fn* 5) states: "I interpret ideal points as electorally *induced* preferences independent of intra-legislative partisan forces.

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[24] According to Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen (2003, Ch. 6: 7): "Such situations usually involve legislation that is a high priority of a president of the same party, whose success or failure will reflect on the party, and for which there are not enough supportive members of the opposition party to muster a majority."

This does not preclude … personal views from being components in preferences, in addition to the more salient constituency basis of representation." Thus, in Krehbiel's world, both the *retiring* and *higher office* variables *could* be positive and significant in *either* regression, if constituency preferences make up a sizeable portion of reelection-seeking members' ideal points *and* exiting members shirk from constituency preferences. However, the pure preference-based model makes *no* allowance for party influence, so the prediction is that the coefficient on the *retiring* variable will *not* be significantly greater than the coefficient on the *higher office* variable in *either* model.

These predictions are presented more formally in Table 1. *Both* the party cartel and pure preference-based theories predict that no party influence will be uncovered in the final-passage vote regression. However, the party cartel theory predicts that party influence will be uncovered in the procedural-vote regression, whereas the pure preference-based theory predicts no party influence. Thus, the pure preference-based prediction will serve as the null against the party cartel prediction in the procedural-vote regression.

[Table 1 about here]

Results of the two regressions appear in Table 2. First, there is no evidence of party influence on final-passage votes, consistent with the predictions of both theories.[25] We do, however, uncover evidence of party influence in the procedural-vote regression. The coefficient on the *retiring* variable is positive, significant ($p < .001$), *and* significantly greater than the

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[25] Evidence of party influence on substantive policy votes is mixed. In an analysis of two Congresses, Snyder and Groseclose (2000) find that party discipline on final-passage votes is relatively low generally, but somewhat higher on "landmark" bills. In an analysis of three Congresses that includes only about half of the overall membership (due to missing data on members' personal preferences), Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001) report a fair amount of evidence for party pressure on "close" final-passage votes. Finally, in an analysis covering 23 Congresses, Cox and Poole (2002: 486) find "below average" evidence of party pressure on substantive policy votes.

coefficient on the *higher office* variable ($t = 3.14$, $p < .001$, one-tailed test).[26] This latter result

supports the party cartel prediction and indicates that the pure preference-based prediction can be

rejected, as the observed ideological change was due to more than simply severing the electoral

connection.

[Table 2 about here]

Additional Results

The prior results are certainly encouraging for the party cartel theory. But we want to dig

even deeper. Specifically, we want to investigate the "engine" of party influence in Congress:

the majority party. As Cox and McCubbins (1993, 1994, 2002) argue, the majority party sets the

legislative agenda in the House, via its control over the speakership, committee chairmanships,

and the Rules Committee, which biases outcomes toward the interests of majority party members

(and away from minority party members). Positive agenda power is exercised on policies where

the majority party is in more agreement, while negative agenda power is a virtual constant (as

committees "close the gates" on "bad" policies). After settling on a partisan agenda, the majority

party leadership seeks to bring it to fruition by demanding strict loyalty on procedural matters.[27]

Time is a scarce resource, and behavior that will delay or obstruct the majority party agenda will

not be tolerated (and will be punished accordingly). Thus, for the party cartel theory to truly

have validity, (a) party influence must be observed *within* the majority party and (b) this

majority-party influence should be disproportionately large relative to minority-party influence.

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[26] Here, $t = \dfrac{\hat{\beta}_1 - \hat{\beta}_2}{\text{se}(\hat{\beta}_1 - \hat{\beta}_2)}$, where $\hat{\beta}_1$ is the coefficient on *retiring* and $\hat{\beta}_2$ is the coefficient on *higher office*.

[27] An anecdote underscores this notion. According to Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen (2003, Ch. 6: 17): "[In late 2002, House Speaker Dennis Hastert] endorsed Majority Leader Tom Delay's (R-Texas) proclamation that a Republican member of the party's organization who voted against the party on any procedural matter would be excused from service." While this is almost certainly an exaggeration, it indicates the priority that party leaders place on procedural party loyalty.

Often, however, methods and measures developed to uncover party influence, like the "party pressure" method developed by Snyder and Groseclose (2000), are unable to determine the *source* of the party influence.[28] This is because the measures themselves are inherently *partisan* in nature – in the Snyder-Groseclose case, the measure is a party dummy variable – which provides a way to investigate party influence *across* parties, but not *within* parties (as these measures provide no intraparty variance).[29] In response to these methodological limitations, Groseclose and Snyder (2003: 107) state: "We are confident that scholars with more creativity will think of other ideas and assumptions that will form the basis for additional tests of [minority-party versus majority-party influence]. We eagerly await the results of such research."

While we do not claim to be more creative than Groseclose and Snyder, we do believe our approach can distinguish between majority-party and minority-party influence. This is because our method for identifying party influence is inherently *nonpartisan* in nature – comparing the relative behavior of retiring members and higher-office seekers, or more specifically the coefficients on the *retiring* and *higher office* variables. Thus, we are able to break our full House dataset into majority-party and minority-party components and run our basic econometric model on each. This will allow us to identify majority-party and minority-party influence on both final-passage and procedural votes.

Formal predictions of our separate analyses appear in Table 3. Once again, the party cartel and pure preference-based theories generate similar predictions on final-passage votes, that is, party influence should not be observed within *either* the majority or minority party. With

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[28] In a recent exchange with Krehbiel (2003a, 2003b), Groseclose and Snyder (2003: 104) acknowledge that their "statistical method cannot discriminate between majority-party influence and minority-party influence." According to Krehbiel (2003a: 95), this is problematic: "Because the literature on parties in Congress emphasizes majority-party strength, the inability of the coefficient to isolate party-specific effects is a serious drawback in the ongoing hunt for genuine party discipline."

[29] The "net" Rice index of party difference, developed by Cox and Poole (2002), is also unable to uncover intraparty influence.

regard to procedural votes, the party cartel theory predicts that party influence should be observed within the majority party, but is somewhat unclear about what should be expected within the minority party. While Cox and McCubbins (1993: 262-69) provide some evidence to suggest that majority party influence should be *greater* than minority party influence, it is not clear whether minority party influence should be *significant*. Thus, we can infer no definitive prediction in this case. Finally, as before, the pure-preference based theory predicts no party influence within *either* the majority or minority parties.

[Table 3 about here]

Results of final-passage and procedural vote regressions by majority and minority party status appear in Table 4. As predicted by both theories, we uncover no evidence of party influence in the final-passage regression within the majority party. However, we *do* observe evidence of party influence in the procedural-vote regression within the majority party – the coefficient on the *retiring* variable is positive, significant ($p < .033$), and significantly greater than the coefficient on the *higher office* variable ($t = 2.00$, $p < .028$, one-tailed test).

[Table 4 about here]

With regard to the minority party, we observe *no* evidence of party influence in the procedural-vote regression. These results suggest that the minority party does *not* operate as a procedural cartel, and that the evidence of party influence uncovered in the full model (Table 2) is due solely (or nearly so) to majority-party discipline. Finally, we observe what initially appears to be evidence of minority-party influence in the final-passage vote regression, suggesting that the minority-party leadership pressures minority-party members on substantive votes. However, upon closer inspection, a party influence story is ruled out: while the coefficient on the retiring variable is positive and significant ($p < .01$), it is *not* significantly

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greater than the coefficient on the *higher office* variable ($t = 0.20$, $p < .425$, one-tailed test). This suggests that, in this case, the explanatory power from the *retiring* variable is being driven by deviations from constituency preferences. In other words, retiring minority-party members exhibit greater ideological change than reelection-seeking minority-party members, and that difference is a function of the constraining influence of constituency.

These findings of disproportionate majority-party influence are consistent with the view that Congress is structured to favor the majority party. That is, as Aldrich and Rohde (2000) argue, it may well be that minority-party leaders *try* to pressure members, but they simply do not possess the procedural and organizational advantages enjoyed by majority-party leaders. For example, the power loci in the House, like the Speakership and the Rules Committee, that go hand-in-hand with majority status offer an assortment of "chits" that can be used to influence members – bonus committee seats, committee chairmanships, privileged positions on the legislative agenda, parliamentary insulation (through the granting of special rules), and pork-based side payments, just to name a few.[30] There are no analogous power loci for minority-party leaders, producing far fewer (and less enticing) chits for them to dispense in the "party-influence game."

To recap, a summary of our party-influence findings appears in Table 5. The null hypothesis of no party influence (which is represented by the predictions of the pure preference-based theory) can be rejected in two cases: the procedural-vote regression in *both* the full and majority-party models. These results comport well with the general predictions of the party cartel theory, in which parties are considered to be first and foremost procedural coalitions and the legislative agenda is driven (almost exclusively) by the majority party.

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[30] See Aldrich and Rohde (1998, 2000) for a lengthier examination of the institutional advantages enjoyed by the majority party.

V. Conclusion

In this paper, we set out to examine the extent to which political parties in the U.S. Congress operate as procedural coalitions. In particular, we set out to test predictions from the party cartel theory, which suggests that party leaders (especially majority-party leaders) pressure party members to toe the line on votes that affect the legislative agenda in the House, with the promise of "carrots" for good behavior and the threat of "sticks" for bad behavior.

To this point, determining whether party influence exists in Congress has been hampered by the problem of finding good measures to differentiate between partisan and preference-based influences. While innovative strides have been made in recent years to obtain better preference-based measures, they can only help us resolve *part* of the story. That is, such measures can help us determine whether party influence generally is present, but not the *distribution* of that party influence, i.e., whether the influence is due more to the majority party or the minority party.

Our approach allows for intraparty analysis. This is due, in large part, to the nonpartisan nature of our key variables. We focus on exiting House members and compare their vote choices to those of members running for reelection, in a research design that focuses on member behavior in the last six months of consecutive Congresses. Parsing the exiting members into two categories – retiring members and higher-office seekers – allows us to isolate possible party influence. That is, retiring members' vote choices are a function simply of their personal preferences (they sever the electoral connection *and* partisan connection), while higher-office seekers' vote choices are a function of their personal preferences as well as party pressure (they sever the electoral connection, but *not* the partisan connection). Thus, if retiring members

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exhibit significant behavioral change that is above and beyond that exhibited by higher-office seekers, we take that as evidence of party influence.

Our initial findings suggest that the general prediction of the party cartel theory is substantiated, as evidence of party influence is uncovered on procedural votes but not final-passage votes. These results are consistent with other recent studies that report greater party discipline on procedural votes (see Snyder and Groseclose 2000; Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Cox and Poole 2002). In addition, we find that this procedural party influence is driven almost exclusively by the *majority party*. In fact, we find *n*o evidence of significant procedural influence in the minority party analysis. This set of results is also consistent with the party cartel theory, and, moreover, it is especially noteworthy in that few studies are able to offer empirical evidence at the intraparty level.

In terms of impact, the degree of procedural party influence that we uncover appears initially to be fairly small: members who no longer face a party constraint exhibit an additional ideological shift of nearly .09 on the [0, 2] interval. However, to evaluate the relative impact, this shift must be compared to the average level of congress-to-congress ideological change for *returning members*, which is just over .35.[31] *Thus, when the party constraint is eliminated, a more than 25 percent increase in ideological change is produced*. This result underscores the significant effect that parties have on member behavior, and is consistent with the large party effects reported elsewhere by Snyder and Groseclose (2000). Thus, while preference homogeneity within congressional parties has increased substantially in recent decades (Rohde 1991; Aldrich 1995), the constraining influence of party remains a critical factor in determining member vote choice.

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[31] This result is based on a weighted average of the twelve congress-specific variables in our model, while measuring continuous variables at their means and dichotomous variables at their modes.

Finally, we do not in any way view our analysis as the last word in the debate regarding party influence in Congress. Rather, we believe (perhaps stretching the bounds of hyperbole) that we have laid an additional brick in the wall of scientific inquiry. That is, our conception of social science is one of *normal science*, where individual scholars make modest strides toward the construction of a collective body of evidence. The last decade has produced a great deal of new knowledge regarding the institutional organization of Congress, and tough questions (posed by Krehbiel among others) have forced congressional scholars to seek better theories and more definitive evidence. As Fiorina (1995: 311) argues: "The legislative subfield illustrates the progress made by a genuine research *community*." In this paper, we believe we have added to the existing empirical literature on party influence in Congress by showing, in a new way, that parties act as procedural cartels. In addition, we believe we have taken the next step, by showing that procedural party influence is almost exclusively the domain of the *majority party*. We hope that our latter finding will spark additional dialogue and debate within the community of congressional scholars. Quoting Fiorina (1995: 311) once again: "It's all part of the conversation, and collectively we are the better for it."

Appendix – Description of Vote Type Variables

Final Passage Votes
Passage of a Bill
Final Passage of Conference Report
Final Passage of Joint Resolution
Suspension of Rules for a Bill
Suspension of Rules for a Joint Resolution
Passage over Presidential Veto
Suspension of Rules for Conference Report
Motion to Suspend the Rules and Concur

Procedural
Motion to End Debate
Motion to Rise from the Committee of the Whole
Motion to Disagree
Passage of Rules (Special Rule)
Motion to Recede
Motion to Order Previous Question
Motion to Recommit
Motion to Instruct Conferees
Motion to Recede and Concur
Previous Question on Special Rules

Source: Rohde, David W. *Roll Call Voting Data for the United States House of Representatives, 1953-2000.* Compiled by the Political Institutions and Public Choice Program, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, 2003.

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Table 1: Party Influence Predictions

	Party-Influence Predictions	
	Final-Passage Vote Regression	Procedural-Vote Regression
Party Cartel Theory	0	+
Pure Preference-Based Theory	0	0

Table 2: Ideological Change by Vote Type (94th through 105th Congresses)

Variable	Final Passage Votes	Procedural Votes
Retiring	0.006	$0.064^{†††}$
	(0.022)	(0.026)
Pursuing Higher Office	0.003	-0.025
	(0.033)	(0.032)
District Political Change	0.141	0.478*
	(0.272)	(0.210)
Electoral Security	0.003	0.037
	(0.025)	(0.031)
Seniority	0.0005	-0.0003
	(0.0005)	(0.0007)
Party Switcher	0.078	0.267*
	(0.065)	(0.132)
Number of Cases	3844	2931
R^2	0.423	0.466
F	54.04	89.84

<u>Note</u>: Twelve congress-specific dummy variables not reported. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)
† $p < .05$, †† $p < .01$, ††† $p < .001$ (one-tailed tests)

Table 3: Additional Party Influence Predictions

	Majority Party Model	
	Party-Influence Predictions	
	Final-Passage Vote Regression	Procedural-Vote Regression
Party Cartel Theory	0	+
Pure Preference-Based Theory	0	0

	Minority Party Model	
	Party-Influence Predictions	
	Final-Passage Vote Regression	Procedural-Vote Regression
Party Cartel Theory	0	?
Pure Preference-Based Theory	0	0

Table 4: Ideological Change by Vote Type, Majority and Minority Parties (94th through 105th Congresses)

Variable	Majority Party Model		Minority Party Model	
	Final Passage Votes	Procedural Votes	Final Passage Votes	Procedural Votes
Retiring	-0.029	0.058†	0.088††	0.037
	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.036)	(0.038)
Pursuing Higher Office	0.003	-0.022	0.078	0.013
	(0.037)	(0.041)	(0.055)	(0.037)
District Political Change	0.032	0.592*	0.128	0.116
	(0.330)	(0.288)	(0.438)	(0.319)
Electoral Security	-0.015	0.033	0.081	0.020
	(0.031)	(0.038)	(0.043)	(0.045)
Seniority	0.0008	0.0006	-0.0006	-0.0019
	(0.0007)	(0.0009)	(0.0007)	(0.0011)
Party Switcher	0.071	-0.027	0.042	0.353***
	(0.051)	(0.029)	(0.066)	(0.107)
Number of Cases	2242	1707	1602	1224
R^2	0.518	0.345	0.320	0.740
F	50.95	45.16	19.02	120.94

<u>Note</u>: Twelve congress-specific dummy variables not reported. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

† $p < .05$, †† $p < .01$, ††† $p < .001$ (one-tailed tests)

Table 5: Summary of Party-Influence Findings

H$_0$ (No Party Influence): *Retiring $\hat{\beta}$ = Higher Office $\hat{\beta}$*
H$_A$ (Party Influence): *Retiring $\hat{\beta}$ > Higher Office $\hat{\beta}$*

Full Model	
	Result
Procedural-Vote Regression	Reject Null ($t = 3.14, p < .001$)
Final-Passage Vote Regression	Cannot Reject Null ($t = 0.10, p < .455$)

Majority Party Model	
	Result
Procedural-Vote Regression	Reject Null ($t = 2.00, p < .028$)
Final-Passage Vote Regression	Cannot Reject Null ($t = -0.89, p < .815$)

Minority Party Model	
	Result
Procedural-Vote Regression	Cannot Reject Null ($t = 0.83, p < .203$)
Final-Passage Vote Regression	Cannot Reject Null ($t = 0.20, p < .425$)