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Eric Schickler: Disjointed Pluralism

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Disjointed Pluralism and Institutional Change

WHATEVER ELSE a national legislature may be, it is a complex of rules, procedures, and specialized internal institutions, such as committees and leadership instruments. Particular configurations of these rules, procedures, committees, and leadership instruments may serve the interests of individual members, parties, pressure groups, sectors of society, or the legislature as a whole. As a result, as any legislature evolves through time, little is more fundamental to its politics than recurrent, often intense, efforts to *change* its institutions. Congressional politics has depended crucially on such innovations as the “Reed rules” of 1890, the Senate cloture rule adopted in 1917, the creation of congressional budget committees in 1974, the House breakaway from seniority rights to committee chairmanships in 1975, and the package of reforms adopted by Republicans when they took over the House in January 1995.

What explains the politics of institutional change in Congress? How is it that congressional institutions have proven remarkably adaptable to changing environmental conditions and yet a never-ending source of dissatisfaction for members and outside observers? This book addresses these questions. The answers, I argue, can be found in the multiple interests that undergird choices about legislative institutions. Members have numerous goals in mind as they shape congressional rules and procedures, the committee system, and leadership instruments. Entrepreneurs who seek reform can devise proposals that simultaneously tap into an array of distinct member interests. But conflicts among competing interests generate institutions that are rarely optimally tailored to meet any specific goal. As they adopt changes based on untidy compromises among multiple interests, members build institutions that are full of tensions and contradictions.

The claim that members have multiple goals is by no means new. Fenno’s *Congressmen in Committees* (1973) is but one of several important studies that have explored how members’ electoral, policy, and power goals shape legislative behavior and institutions.¹ Nonetheless, an increasingly popular way to think about legislative institutions uses a single collective interest to explain the main features of legislative organization across an extended span of congressional history. Examples of this approach include Cox and McCubbins’s (1993) partisan model of legislative organization,

Krehbiel's (1991) informational theory of committees, and Weingast and Marshall's (1988) distributive politics model. Each of these theories attempts to show how legislative institutions are tailored to achieve a collective interest shared by members.

While such models have proven valuable in isolating important causal variables and in explaining specific features of legislative politics, focusing on the relationships among multiple interests generates additional insights into congressional organization. This involves much more than the claim that one has to look at everything—all imaginable interests and coalitions—to understand Congress. Instead, I argue that analyzing the interplay among multiple interests produces new generalizations about how congressional institutions develop. Such an analysis can help us understand both the adaptability and the frustrations that characterize congressional organization.

Based on an analysis of important institutional changes adopted in four periods, 1890–1910, 1919–32, 1937–52, and 1970–89, I argue that members' various interests makes “disjointed pluralism” a central feature of institutional development. By *pluralism*, I mean that many different coalitions promoting a wide range of collective interests drive processes of change. My analysis demonstrates that more than one interest determines institutional change within each period, that different interests are important in different periods, and, more broadly, that changes in the salient collective interests across time do not follow a simple logical or developmental sequence. Furthermore, no single collective interest is important in all four periods. Models that emphasize a particular interest thus illuminate certain historical eras, but not others.

These pluralistic processes of change do not in themselves require a dramatic revision in how we think about legislative institutions. Even if no model focusing on a single interest can explain everything about congressional institutions, critical insights may well emerge from a series of such models, each explaining a few key components of legislative organization. Eventually, a theory that synthesizes these approaches may be possible, providing a fuller understanding of the dynamics of congressional institutions.²

The qualifier *disjointed* suggests why that approach is only partly satisfying. By disjointed, I mean that the dynamics of institutional development derive from the *interactions* and *tensions* among competing coalitions promoting several different interests. These interactions and tensions are played out when members of Congress adopt a single institutional change, and over time as legislative organization develops through the accumulation of innovations, each sought by a different coalition promoting a different interest.³

This disjointedness calls into question the utility of a series of simple models that each seeks to explain a particular facet of legislative organization, and it also complicates efforts at theoretical synthesis. Models that focus on a single organizational principle, though valuable in many respects, deflect attention from how the relationships among multiple interests drive processes of change. Integrated theories that encompass several interests are potentially helpful but should not assume, as is sometimes apparently their implication, that institutions fit together comfortably to form a coherent whole (see, for example, Shepsle and Weingast 1994). Instead, my case studies suggest that congressional institutions are often ambiguous or contradictory.

Because the conceptual value of disjointed pluralism hinges on the many collective interests that motivate members, I first review prominent models of collective interests and the expectations that these models generate for institutional development. I then detail the implications of these multiple interests for understanding congressional change. Finally, I summarize the research design and review the findings from each period.

COLLECTIVE INTERESTS

Five distinct and partially contradictory kinds of collective interest could motivate the design of legislative institutions (see table 1.1). The first is rooted most directly in members' reelection interest, which potentially unites incumbents behind devices that increase their electoral security. The second consists of broad, institutional interests that also may unite all members: bolstering the capacity, power, and prestige of their chamber or of Congress as a whole. By contrast, the other interests are likely to divide members into competing groups. The third, members' interest in access to institutional power bases, can generate conflict between those who currently have disproportionate access and those who lack access. Similarly, the fourth, members' party-based interests, pits majority party members against members of the minority. Finally, the fifth, policy-based interests, is rooted in the connection between institutions and policy outcomes. Institutions may favor certain policies at the expense of others; as a result, ideological, sectional, and sectoral divisions over policy may spill over into conflicts about institutional design.⁴

In his classic study, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (1974), David Mayhew argues that virtually every facet of congressional organization can be understood in terms of members' shared *reelection* goal. As Mayhew and others point out, a variety of institutional arrangements promote reelection, including staffing and franking privileges (Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977); credit-claiming opportunities gained most often through pork-

TABLE 1.1 Summary of Collective Interests

<i>Collective Interest</i>	<i>Group for Whom It Is a Good</i>	<i>Predicted Authority Structure</i>
Reelection	Incumbents (vs. challengers)	
perks for incumbents (Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977)		Decentralized incumbent cartel
particularistic goods and pork (Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977; Fenno 1973)		Decentralized incumbent cartel
opportunities for individual entrepreneurial action (Mayhew 1974; Loomis 1988)		Individualistic entrepreneurship; decentralized committee system
position-taking devices (Mayhew 1974; Arnold 1990)		Decentralized incumbent cartel
Congress-centered		
congressional capacity and power (Dodd 1977; Sundquist 1981; Cooper 1988; Davidson and Oleszek 1976)	Congress as a whole (vs. executive)	Integrative mechanisms and central leadership instruments
policy expertise (Krehbiel 1991; Maass 1983)		Informationally efficient committee system controlled by floor
congressional prestige and popularity (Matthews 1960; Born 1990; Jacobson 1993)	Congress as a whole	Predictions unclear
chamber capacity and power (Diermeier and Myerson 2000)	Chamber (vs. other chamber)	Integrative mechanisms; multiple veto points
Individual power bases (Dodd 1977; Loomis 1988)	Juniors (vs. seniors)	Individualistic entrepreneurship; decentralized committee system
Party-centered		
majority party reputation and effectiveness (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Rohde 1991)	In-party (vs. out-party)	Party cartel or conditional party government
Policy-based		
ideological success (Krehbiel 1998; Schickler 2000)	Ideological bloc (vs. opposing bloc)	Rules promote policy positions of median voter on floor
sectional benefits (Bensel 1984; Holcombe 1925)	Regional bloc (vs. other regions)	Predictions unclear
sectoral benefits (Shepsle and Weingast 1984; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Hansen 1990; Burns 1949)	Bloc based on producer interests (vs. consumers or other producers)	Decentralized committee system

barrel, distributive policies (Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1973); opportunities for individual entrepreneurial activity (Loomis 1988); devices to avoid taking positions on difficult issues (Arnold 1990); and platforms for position taking on popular issues (Mayhew 1974). More generally, reelection-based models typically predict that Congress will have a decentralized committee system that spreads influence widely, thereby providing members with numerous opportunities to cultivate constituent support (Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977).

On observing the many incumbent-protection devices embedded in congressional institutions, Mayhew (1974, 81–82) suggests that “if a group of planners sat down and tried to design a pair of American national assemblies with the goal of serving members’ electoral needs year in and year out, they would be hard pressed to improve on what exists.” This raises the question: why do we need to go beyond members’ shared stake in reelection to understand congressional development? Why is the reelection interest, on its own, not sufficient? Part of the answer to this challenge is empirical: in the chapters that follow, I provide considerable evidence that other interests shaped important changes in congressional organization. But there are also strong theoretical grounds for the importance of multiple interests.

Notice first that the same member careerism that makes reelection a powerful influence on congressional organization has the potential to make other interests salient as well. The value of reelection hinges in part on Congress’s status as a powerful and prestigious institution.⁵ Maintaining congressional power is not something that members can simply take for granted. Indeed, the twentieth century has witnessed the decline of numerous elected legislatures (Huntington 1965). The most prominent threat to congressional power has been the rise of the modern presidency and the surrounding executive establishment. Therefore, one can expect careerist members to act in concert to defend congressional power, particularly following major episodes of executive aggrandizement. Examples include the committee consolidation brought about by the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (Cooper 1988; Dodd 1977) and the more centralized budget process provided by the Budget Act of 1974 in the wake of the battle over impoundments with President Richard Nixon (Sundquist 1981).⁶

A focus on *congressional capacity and power* can lead to two somewhat different expectations about congressional organization.⁷ Dodd (1977) and Sundquist (1981) argue that centralized leadership—typically in the hands of party leaders—is necessary for Congress to formulate coherent, broad-reaching policies and therefore to compete effectively with the executive branch. In their view, a fragmented, committee-dominated system has been the main source of congressional weakness. Sundquist in particu-

lar praises the 1974 Budget Act as an example of a centralizing change intended to safeguard congressional power.

In contrast to Dodd's and Sundquist's emphasis on centralization, Krehbiel's (1991) informational model suggests that a strong committee system facilitates congressional policymaking, provided that the committees are supervised by floor majorities.⁸ Krehbiel argues that committees are not autonomous entities but agents of the floor, supplying information that reduces legislators' uncertainty about the consequences of proposed bills. The floor creates committees that are representative of its own policy preferences, because representative committees are most likely to specialize and to transmit their information to the rest of the chamber (Krehbiel 1991). All members benefit from such a committee system, which boosts congressional capacity and power.⁹

Viewing Krehbiel in the context of Dodd and Sundquist reveals a tension: The need for specialized policy expertise leads to strong committees, but using this information in a coherent manner requires coordinating the activities of these committees. Whereas Dodd and Sundquist believe strong party leaders are essential for this coordination, Krehbiel's model suggests that floor majorities rein in and channel committee activities. Notwithstanding these differences, both Dodd and Sundquist and Krehbiel argue that members have an incentive to design institutions that promote congressional policymaking capacity.

While Congress-centered interests have led to several major reforms, members have at times defined institutional power more narrowly, in terms of their chamber rather than Congress as a whole. Interchamber rivalry has received little attention from congressional scholars, but Diermeier and Myerson (2000) have recently developed a formal model that highlights this dynamic. They conclude that the members of one chamber can increase their collective access to desired resources, such as campaign contributions, by adding more veto points in their chamber. In other words, House members stand to gain a greater share of contributions or other favored resources if lobbyists face more institutional hurdles in the lower chamber than in the Senate. Though none of the cases I examine fit this precise dynamic, there are several examples of institutional changes intended to empower one chamber relative to the other. For example, Joseph Cannon's (R-Ill.) revitalization of the speakership in the early 1900s derived bipartisan support from representatives' dissatisfaction with their chamber's decline relative to the Senate.¹⁰

Whereas all members may have a similar commitment to defending congressional power (or at least the power of their chamber), other collective interests divide members into competing groups. As Fenno (1973) and Dodd (1977) have pointed out, one of the reasons that members seek reelection is to exercise power as individuals. This ambition creates the

potential for conflict between members with disproportionate access to *institutional power bases* and those, such as junior backbenchers, who lack such access and therefore share an interest in decentralization (Dodd 1986). Indeed, several instances of institutional reform analyzed in this book derived support from junior members—often drawn from both parties—who advocated a greater dispersion of power bases (see Schickler and Sides 2000). Along these lines, Diermeier's (1995) model of floor-committee relations suggests that a sudden influx of junior members can undermine existing arrangements, leading to major institutional changes.

Power bases are also particularly salient to careerist members. A member who plans to leave Congress soon is less likely to carve out a niche in the House or Senate than is one who plans to spend many years in Washington. This is not only because power bases can facilitate reelection, but also because careerist members may value power within Congress for its own sake. Therefore, members' power base goals, like the goal of safeguarding congressional capacity and power, have probably become more potent as careerism has increased.

At the same time, members' power base goals are often in tension with their interest in congressional capacity and power. Dodd (1977) argues that the drive for individual power leads to a highly fragmented authority structure.¹¹ Members end up placing policymaking responsibility in "a series of discrete and relatively autonomous committees and subcommittees, each having control over the decisions in a specified jurisdictional area" (Dodd 1977, 272). Individual entrepreneurship flourishes because each member can use her committee or subcommittee to initiate new policies or oversight activities. But, as noted above, the difficulty, according to Dodd, is that the resulting fragmentation impedes workable responses to broad policy problems. This, in turn, erodes the influence of the legislative branch as the president and bureaucracy acquire power at the expense of Congress. In the end, members' pursuit of individual power saps Congress of its power as an institution (Dodd 1977, 1986). This is but one example of important tensions among members' multiple interests.

Another important cleavage affecting institutional design is *party*. In Cox and McCubbins's (1993) formulation, majority party members are united by their stake in the value of their common party label. Party members suffer electorally if voters believe the party failed to adopt needed legislation, just as they benefit if voters credit the party with many legislative accomplishments. Majority party members are by no means helpless to affect how voters perceive their party. Cox and McCubbins (1993, 112) assert that "party records often can be changed in ways that affect the vast majority of party members' reelection probabilities in the same way." Thus, individual members' desire for reelection generates a collective interest in their party's reputation.

But majority party members face a dilemma. While they would all benefit from cooperative action, each individual has incentives to pursue narrow gains that jeopardize the party's reputation (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 123–24). The party resolves this dilemma by creating leadership posts that are both attractive and elective, thereby inducing its leaders “to internalize the collective electoral fate of the party” (1993, 132–33). Party leaders are charged with enforcing cooperation on matters important to the party's reputation and with using their influence over legislative procedures to promote party interests.

With the assistance of party leaders, majority party members collude to establish House institutions that provide built-in advantages for the party throughout the legislative process. The majority party constitutes a “cartel” that usurps the rule-making power of the House and uses that power to bias the legislative process in its favor. Rules are stacked in favor of the majority party's policy preferences, and committees are agents of the party (Cox and McCubbins 1993).

In contrast to Cox and McCubbins's portrayal of a consistent, strong bias in favor of the majority party, Rohde (1991) emphasizes variations over time in party strength (see also Aldrich and Rohde 1995; Binder 1997; Dion 1997).¹² Building on earlier work by Cooper and Brady (1981), Rohde argues that party government depends on the degree of majority party unity on the agenda items confronting Congress, and on the level of polarization between the majority and minority parties. Whereas Cox and McCubbins focus on members' common stake in their party's reputation, Rohde points to policy agreement as necessary for strong party action. When shared policy commitments exist, majority party members will structure the legislative process to promote those commitments. Therefore, Rohde's conditional party government model implies that Congress will resemble a party cartel when the majority party is unified on major policy issues, but that committees will enjoy considerable autonomy from partisan pressures when the majority party is divided.

Finally, *policy-based interests* may also divide members into conflicting groups. Institutions can have important effects on policy outcomes. As a result, members who share policy priorities can benefit by designing institutions that promote those priorities (see Remington and Smith 1998). As with party interests, when some members receive benefits in this category, others are likely to absorb costs.

It is plausible to conceptualize policy in terms of a single ideological dimension (see Poole and Rosenthal 1997). Thus, one hypothesis that emerges from a focus on policy goals is that changes in the chamber median—attributable to such events as big shifts in election results—will lead to changes in institutions (see Krehbiel 1998).¹³ Schickler (2000) argues that as the median voter moves closer to the majority party, she will work

with the party to adopt rules that strengthen majority leaders' agenda control. By contrast, when the median voter moves closer to the minority party, she will work with members of the minority to adopt changes that weaken majority leaders' agenda control, thus enabling cross-party coalitions to adopt their favored policies. An example of a change derived from such a shift in the "ideological power balance" would be the reforms launched by progressive Republicans and Democrats to weaken Speaker Cannon in 1909–10.¹⁴

Policy-based goals also may divide members into sectional or sectoral blocs. The Senate farm bloc of 1921 is a classic example of an institution serving the policy interests of a single sector (Hansen 1991). Pluralist models of iron triangles (Cater 1964) and rational choice distributive theories (Shepsle and Weingast 1984; Weingast and Marshall 1988) emphasize the effect of sectorally based policy interests on Congress's committee system. Both sets of models depict committees as unrepresentative bodies dominated by members who support programs in their committee's jurisdiction.

These are the five families of models. Congress's institutional arrangements can promote a variety of different collective interests: *reelection* for all incumbents; *congressional capacity, power, and prestige*, or more narrowly, the power and prestige of one chamber; plentiful access to *institutional power bases*; each *party's interest* in its reputation and effectiveness; and members' shared *policy interests*. An individual member may find several of these interests salient and as a result may move in and out of multiple, distinct coalitions, each of which prioritizes a particular interest.

In addition to highlighting the importance of a specific interest, each of the models described above can also be used to derive hypotheses about the conditions under which a given interest will be more or less prominent:

Electoral interests will matter more as member careerism increases (Mayhew 1974).

Congressional capacity and power will be more salient following episodes in which the president has gained influence at Congress's expense (Dodd 1977; Sundquist 1981).

Members' interest in institutional power bases will generate pressure for decentralization following an influx of junior members that substantially alters the seniority distribution (Dodd 1986; Diermeier 1995).

Majority party interests will be particularly important when the majority party is internally unified and has policy preferences that are sharply different from those of the minority (Rohde 1991).

Policy-based interests will generate pressure for institutional changes when electoral shocks and other exogenous factors substantially shift the location of the median voter on the floor (Krehbiel 1998; Schickler 2000).

The chapters that follow include some evidence that is consistent with each of these hypotheses, and the concluding chapter assesses their relative contributions. But while such hypotheses about particular collective interests are helpful, focusing on the relationships among competing interests can produce a fuller understanding.¹⁵ A single interest has only rarely proven sufficient to generate a major change in legislative institutions. Instead, intersections among multiple interests typically drive individual changes and the process of institutional development more generally. Thus, analyzing how different combinations of interests come together to promote and shape institutional change can lead to important new insights into congressional development. Disjointed pluralism takes up this challenge.¹⁶

A THEORY OF DISJOINTED PLURALISM

If a single collective interest dominated battles over legislative organization, institutions should be well tailored to achieve that specific goal. If, for example, members' shared interest in reelection dominated, then Congress would look like the cooperative cartel of incumbents described by Mayhew (1974). Virtually all aspects of legislative organization would promote reelection. Similarly, if majority party members' shared interest in their party's reputation and success dominated—perhaps as in the contemporary British House of Commons—then every important aspect of congressional organization would be stacked in the party's favor.

Contrast this to a situation in which no single collective interest is dominant. Any institutional change that promotes one interest is likely to affect other interests that some members find important. On the one hand, these interdependencies create problems: designing institutions to achieve a particular goal is complicated by the need to balance that goal against competing interests. On the other hand, multiple goals create opportunities for coalition building: if institutions were evaluated along a single dimension, a single organizational outcome preferred by a majority would be likely, and it would be impossible to split that majority without changing individual members' underlying preferences. By contrast, as Riker (1986) has pointed out, it is easier to find a proposal that defeats the status quo if there are multiple evaluative dimensions present (see Arrow 1951; McKelvey 1976).

Disjointed pluralism attempts to generalize about both these problems and opportunities. Four claims are central to my argument.

Claim 1: *Multiple collective interests typically shape each important change in congressional institutions.* With few exceptions, the process by which Congress adopts a specific institutional change reflects not just a single

collective interest but multiple interests, and the interactions among coalitions promoting these interests typically determine the effects of each change. The “unintended effects” of an institutional innovation often derive not from the failure of members seeking a single goal to anticipate the consequences of their actions, but rather from the tensions among the *multiple interests* that produced the change in question.

In many cases, a confluence of interests allows a specific change to serve as a “common carrier,” whereby several groups support the change, but each group believes it will promote a different interest. As Lindblom (1965) points out, different groups can agree on a course of action for very different reasons (see also March 1994). To assume, therefore, that each group interprets a given reform in the same way is to ignore powerful mechanisms through which political actors can coordinate their efforts. A proposed institutional change will more likely be adopted if it taps into multiple bases of support.

An example of a common carrier change is the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, which united backbenchers in both parties. Liberal Democrats hoped the LRA would serve their policy interests by limiting the power of conservative Democratic committee chairmen, and junior Republicans hoped it would promote their individual power goals by providing more opportunities for rank-and-file participation. Republicans and liberal Democrats shared a temporary interest in passing the Reorganization Act, but they each emphasized distinct consequences of the reform that were not fully compatible. Understanding the complex implications of the Reorganization Act is impossible without attention to this conjunction of interests. It is noteworthy that liberal Democrats’ and junior Republicans’ demands were complementary in this case. More generally, a group is more likely to be in the winning coalition if its interests can be seen as complementary, rather than contradictory, to the interests of other groups (see March 1994).

While the common carrier model is based on a (perhaps temporary) confluence of interests, multiple interests may also shape institutional changes in more conflictual ways. Although those initiating a change may have a single, clear goal in mind, they often are forced to make concessions to opponents of this goal, or to members who are not hostile to the basic purpose of the reform but nonetheless believe it might adversely affect some other interest. One cannot equate the initiators’ goals with the final outcome of these compromises.

If one envisions institutional design as simply selecting a policy from a unidimensional continuum, this is not necessarily an important point. For example, if reformers want to require 100 signatures on a discharge petition, while opponents prefer 218, and neither side is strong enough to enact its preferred solution, a compromise figure of 150 might be

adopted.¹⁷ In such a case, the resulting policy outcomes will presumably be somewhere in between the positions favored by the two camps.

But institutions and institutional changes are rarely unidimensional. A change in one element of a complex reform proposal may affect other elements of the proposal in significant ways. For example, proponents of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 sought to enhance Congress's position relative to the executive by strengthening congressional committees and by providing new integrative devices, such as party policy committees and a centralized budget process, to coordinate committee activities. The moves to strengthen committees succeeded, but the integrative devices were dropped from the bill. Foes of these features supported the general goal of challenging executive primacy, but also wanted to protect committee autonomy and limit the role of legislative parties. Strengthening committees without providing integrative devices reinforced the developing "feudal" system of committee power centers. Chapter 4 shows that in the long term these changes had only ambiguous effects on congressional power. Thus, the conflicts among competing collective interests may result in institutions that are poorly suited to achieving some widely shared objectives.

This does not mean that institutional changes are typically failures. The interactions among competing interests need not produce undesirable outcomes. Furthermore, when these interactions do lead to negative consequences, members will likely have opportunities to find new institutional solutions. The point, however, is that such institutional solutions do not embody a single, specific principle of legislative organization, and it cannot be assumed that they achieve any *particular* goal very well.

Claim 2: *Entrepreneurial members build support for reform by framing proposals that appeal to groups motivated by different interests.* Common carriers do not happen spontaneously. Instead, entrepreneurial members define issues so as to facilitate cooperative action among legislators who might normally oppose one another. Many of the changes I analyze were made possible by innovators who devised proposals that tapped into several distinct member interests. For example, in 1894, minority leader Thomas Reed (R-Maine) relentlessly filibustered to force majority party Democrats to accept his rules for limiting minority obstruction. While Reed believed these rules would promote congressional capacity and would help a future GOP majority govern effectively, his dramatic filibuster induced an urgent partisan interest in reform among Democrats, who feared that they otherwise would appear incompetent.

What drives individual entrepreneurs, such as Reed, to promote institutional changes that benefit some larger group? As Cox and McCubbins (1993) note, party leaders may have incentives to pursue changes that help their party because they will gain additional power and perquisites if the

party retains (or captures) majority status. Again, the leader receives rewards that lead him to internalize the collective fate of his party. But party leaders are not the only entrepreneurs. The initiator of a nonpartisan change may also receive special benefits from its adoption. For example, a member who proposes the creation of a special committee generally becomes chair of that committee and thereby stands to gain personal power or an electoral benefit. Indeed, there are numerous cases in which entrepreneurs promulgate changes that promote a broad collective interest and that simultaneously provide a narrower, special benefit for themselves.¹⁸ The efforts of entrepreneurs thus can help overcome collective action problems and advance the interests of groups that, unlike parties, lack the advantages of a formal organization (see Frohlich, Oppenheimer, and Young 1971).

Entrepreneurs' promotion of common carriers also gives us new leverage on the role of individual leaders in shaping congressional institutions. By the 1980s, most congressional scholars viewed institutional context as the primary determinant of leadership style (Cooper and Brady 1981; Rohde and Shepsle 1987; Sinclair 1990). Yet recent studies of specific committees and leaders suggest that individual leaders can make a substantial difference (Strahan 1990; Reeves 1993; Evans 1991; Peters 1998). The challenge then becomes incorporating leadership into a broader theoretical perspective. Entrepreneurial leaders exercise influence not chiefly by command or force of personality (though these occasionally are useful). Rather, the case of Reed, among others, suggests that entrepreneurs succeed by devising proposals and framing issues in ways that appeal to distinct member interests.¹⁹ Thus, leadership is not an idiosyncratic residual that defies systematic analysis. Strategic innovation by would-be leaders is endemic to legislative politics and rooted in the pluralism of member interests.²⁰

Claim 3: *Congressional institutions typically develop through an accumulation of innovations that are inspired by competing motives, which engenders a tense layering of new arrangements on top of preexisting structures.* A third feature of congressional development illuminated by a focus on multiple interests is the layering of new arrangements on top of preexisting structures intended to serve different purposes (see Orren and Skowronek 1994). At any point in time, Congress's authority structure consists of elements intended to favor the most salient interests during past moments of institutional creation. New coalitions may design novel institutional arrangements but lack the support, or perhaps the inclination, to replace preexisting institutions established to pursue other ends. While each individual change is consciously designed to serve specific goals, the layering of successive innovations results in institutions that appear more haphazard than the product of some overarching master plan.²¹

This layering process is in some ways path-dependent (Pierson 1998; North 1990; Aldrich 1994; Hughes 1991). The options available to decision makers today depend on prior choices. Preexisting institutions often create constituencies dedicated to the preservation of established power bases (see Remington and Smith 1999). As a result, institution-builders often attempt to add new institutions rather than dismantle the old.

If legislative institutions were geared toward a single collective interest, then this historical dynamic might not matter: a unique optimal solution to institutional design questions would likely emerge. But when multiple dimensions are relevant to members, a single dominant solution is less likely. As Aldrich (1994) points out, in such a situation the outcome will depend on the path followed (see also March and Olsen 1984).

An example of this path-dependent layering process occurred in 1974, when Congress created budget committees to provide an integrated fiscal policy. The Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 superimposed the new budget committees on a decades-old structure of authorization, appropriations, and revenue committees. The budget committees' task of integrating fiscal policy was complicated because they had to work with committees that did not have a stake in the success of the new process. Sundquist (1981, 438) underscores this temporal dimension: "if the Congress were being organized anew, it may be doubted that a three-tier structure would be designed, with budget, authorizing, and appropriations committees all involved in the major decisions on every program every year." But too many members had a stake in their existing power bases to allow the dismantling of the old budgetary system.

The effects of an institutional change are thus mediated by tensions between that new arrangement and an entrenched authority structure designed to serve other interests. Along these lines, Riker (1995, 121) observes that "no institution is created *de novo*. Consequently, in any new institution one should expect to see hangovers from the past. . . . There is no reason to expect these hangovers to be internally consistent or to fit perfectly with the goals of reformers." Thus, congressional institutions generally are not well-tailored solutions to particular collective interest problems, and instead often embody contradictory purposes.

Claim 4: *Adoption of a series of changes intended to promote one type of interest typically will provoke contradictory changes that promote competing interests.* While the concept of path dependence illuminates the layering of successive innovations, its emphasis on continuity underestimates the incidence of major changes in congressional institutions (see Thelen 2000 for a related argument). Rather than pushing Congress in one particular direction, the multiple interests motivating members produce a more wayward, or even oscillatory, trajectory.

More specifically, successful innovations that promote a specific member interest tend to generate a reaction in which members seek to protect competing interests. The exclusive pursuit of one interest means other interests are neglected, eventually provoking legislators to change tacks and aggressively pursue these other interests. In particular, those members who are disadvantaged by current organizational arrangements will have strong incentives to seek reform. They can appeal to a subset of the current winning coalition by offering them a gain in terms of some objective that is not well served by existing institutions (see Riker 1986). Therefore, even when one interest reigns, it is setting up a predictable reaction. The multiple interests that motivate members are ultimately irreconcilable and preclude the triumph of a majority party cartel, rampant member individualism, or any other coherent model of organization.²²

The resulting pattern of innovation and response should be evident when a series of changes push congressional organization in a single direction. The 1890–1910 period is perhaps the best example. Republicans pursued their partisan interests through several changes centralizing control in the House in the early to middle 1890s. However, this threatened competing interests, in particular members' power as individuals. The resulting dissatisfaction led to the 1899 election of a figurehead Speaker, David Henderson (R-Iowa), who members hoped would provide less aggressive leadership. But Henderson's weakness sparked further dissatisfaction as the House soon began to lose influence to the Senate. Joseph Cannon capitalized on this discontent in 1903, gaining wide support for reinvigorating the speakership. But his alleged excesses eventually led to a new round of decentralization in 1909–10 as progressive Republicans and Democrats "revolted" against Cannon. The 1970s–1980s also fits this pattern nicely: the extreme fragmentation brought about by the reforms of the early 1970s prompted Democrats to enact countervailing measures that strengthened majority party influence. This, in turn, provoked minority Republicans to embrace a far more confrontational strategy. By contrast, innovation-and-response is less evident in the 1920s and 1937–52 because there was no comparable push in a single direction.²³ Thus, if a series of changes promote one specific interest at the expense of others, members who share those other interests are more likely to organize to defend their priorities.

This does not mean that members' diverse interests always bring legislative institutions back to some stable, compromise equilibrium. In contrast to traditional pluralism, which views institutions as "pillars of order" in politics (Orren and Skowronek 1994, 312), *disjointed* pluralism portrays institutions as multilayered historical composites that militate against any overarching order in legislative politics. Congressional development is disjointed in that members incrementally add new institutional mechanisms,

without dismantling preexisting institutions and without rationalizing the structure as a whole (see Braybrooke and Lindblom 1963). The resulting tensions mean that significant numbers of members will ordinarily be dissatisfied with established ways of doing business. This enables entrepreneurs to devise innovations that serve as common carriers, momentarily uniting those dissatisfied with the status quo. As a result, institutional development is an ongoing, open-ended process. The interplay of coalitions promoting contradictory objectives produces institutions that are tense battlegrounds rather than stable, coherent solutions.

ASSESSING INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Ultimately, the relationship between members' interests and institutional development is an empirical question. To begin to answer this question, I focus on four periods: 1890–1910, 1919–32, 1937–52, and 1970–89. These periods have been selected based on three criteria. First, I focus on the time since the House became a fully (or almost fully) majority-rule-based institution in 1890. This strategy allows comparisons between the majoritarian House and the nonmajoritarian Senate, while avoiding the additional complexities pertaining to the pre-1890 quasi-majoritarian House. A second criterion is that each period extends at least one decade and can appropriately be viewed as a single unit with common themes throughout.²⁴ A final criterion is that the periods include eras of Republican as well as Democratic majorities. The first two periods encompass much of the long era of Republican national hegemony, and the latter two periods most of the recent era of Democratic dominance.²⁵

Within each period, I focus on changes in any of three main elements of the congressional authority structure:

Changes in the rules, procedures, and practices governing how matters reach the floor and how they are considered on the floor in the House or Senate.

Changes in the committee system. These include the creation of new committee units (or the abolition of existing units), changes in committee jurisdictions, changes in the powers or mode of operations of a specific committee (or of committees in general), and changes in methods of appointment that determine how representative committees are and whether assignments are used to induce loyalty.

Changes in leadership instruments. These include changes in the types of members who become leaders and changes in the roles played by leaders. Possible roles include, but are not limited to, punishing dissidents, enforcing agreements, acting as impartial

brokers, keeping peace in their party or chamber, and defending the prerogatives and prestige of the institution. Leadership instruments are not limited to formally designated party leaders or official party organizations but can in principle serve a party, a faction, or the floor. The criterion for selection is importance, not who is served.

I focus on change because it offers an important window into the dynamics of legislative institutions. When members seek to change legislative organization, they test the control of competing coalitions over these institutions and bring the effectiveness of these institutions in promoting specific collective interests into sharp relief. Scholars have a unique opportunity to investigate institutions when they are “up for grabs.” Furthermore, efforts to change institutions are a major part of legislative politics. However, our understanding of how members coordinate to enact such changes is limited. Yet it is precisely these processes—in which members with different interests interact to create new institutions—that affect the kinds of changes adopted and their long-term implications.

I attempted to identify important changes in rules, the committee system, or leadership instruments by reviewing approximately thirty secondary sources on each period. These sources are varied and therefore should not bias case selection in favor of a particular theoretical camp or collective interest. I included an institutional change in this study if five or more sources suggest that the change substantially affected congressional operations.

This case selection method has the drawback of relying on scholars who may cite one another about the importance of a change. If the first scholar cited was mistaken, then subsequent authors who rely on the first scholar’s account will perpetuate this misimpression.²⁶ To mitigate this problem, I supplement these secondary sources with primary sources and with more specialized secondary accounts. This prevents overemphasizing a change that a handful of secondary sources too eagerly label important.²⁷ Appendix A includes a more detailed discussion of case selection, including a list of the sources used and a few examples of changes that narrowly failed to qualify for consideration.

For each change, the key questions are who sought the change, what interest or interests were pursued through the change, how was the change adopted, and what its implications were for congressional operations and outcomes. I also evaluate the changes within a given period more broadly in terms of whether they sought to (and in fact did) create, augment, or destroy an authority structure that approximated an incumbent cartel (Mayhew 1974), a majority party cartel (Cox and McCubbins 1993), a system of decentralized committee baronies (Shepsle and Weingast 1984;

Weingast and Marshall 1988), a set of informationally efficient committees that are agents of the floor (Krehbiel 1991), a system of individualistic entrepreneurship (Dodd 1977; Loomis 1988), or a series of centralized integrative mechanisms. In addition, I examine the relative significance of different kinds of control coalitions, including universalistic, majority party, ideological, issue-specific, distributive, and junior-member coalitions.

There are two main units of analysis in this study: the individual change and each period as a whole. With respect to each case, the null hypothesis is that a single collective interest accounts for the change in question. The alternative hypothesis is that multiple collective interests played a *significant* role in generating the change. As noted in the first claim above, there are two main scenarios in which multiple collective interests play a significant role: two or more distinct interests can reinforce one another, as in a common carrier change, or alternatively a change intended primarily to serve a single interest may be compromised by concessions to competing interests. The null hypothesis is a reasonable baseline, given that it is parsimonious and that numerous important studies attempt to show that a single member interest can explain key features of legislative organization (Mayhew 1974; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Krehbiel 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993).²⁸ In order to reject the null hypothesis, a single interest must be insufficient to explain the content and adoption of the change in question. If a single interest is sufficient and additional interests played only a minor role in buttressing that dominant interest, then the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

What counts as sufficient evidence to reject this null hypothesis? Obviously, if one defines each interest narrowly, then it will be much easier to find multiple interests operating than if one or two interests are defined so broadly as to encompass all possible motivations. The most important question is how broadly to define the reelection interest. One might argue that it is the source of most of the other interests that I identify, such as partisan, policy, or power interests, because pursuing these other interests is simply a strategy to achieve reelection. Indeed, Cox and McCubbins's party cartel model is rooted in the reelection drive: members seek a positive party reputation because it increases their reelection chances. But a key point is that the reelection interest, in isolation, does not divide majority party from minority party members (or liberals from conservatives, westerners from easterners, juniors from seniors, and so on). Only in the context of party-based divisions does the reelection interest produce a collective interest among some members in their party's reputation. While this collective interest may be derived from individual members' electoral calculations, it nonetheless leads to different expectations about congressional organization than those generated by the reelection interest in isola-

tion. Similarly, policy interests and power base interests—though perhaps rooted in electoral calculations—divide members into competing camps, and as a result generate different expectations from incumbents' shared goal of reelection. Therefore, it is appropriate to distinguish between the reelection interest and other collective interests, which though perhaps rooted in electoral goals, nonetheless unite a subset of legislators against another group of members.

To sum up, an institutional change will be considered partisan if members of one party support the change because they believe it will enhance the reputation or effectiveness of their party (which in turn may be expected to increase party members' reelection chances). Policy interests will be cited when policy preferences have a significant impact on support for reform.²⁹ Similarly, power base goals will be cited when the evidence indicates that a subset of members favored a change because it would increase their access to power. By contrast, a change will be considered to serve members' electoral interests if it promotes reelection in a way that at least potentially unites all incumbents, rather than splitting members along partisan, ideological, sectional, or sectoral lines.³⁰ Finally, congressional (or chamber) capacity, power, or prestige will be considered significant if the evidence indicates that members supported a change because it would boost the institutional standing of Congress or their chamber.³¹

Given this definition of each interest, several types of data will be used in determining whether multiple interests were involved in a change. In some cases, I analyze roll call votes or cosponsorship data quantitatively to estimate the contribution of different interests. In such a situation, one test of the null hypothesis would be whether two or more variables—where each is a valid indicator for a distinct collective interest—have a significant impact on members' votes or cosponsorship behavior. One difficulty is that even when roll call data are available, the impact of certain collective interests may be impossible to estimate quantitatively. In particular, it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure members' interest in congressional capacity and power.³²

When appropriate data are unavailable for a quantitative test, I rely on qualitative evidence, including floor debate, committee hearings, newspaper accounts, members' biographies, and other specialized works by historians and political scientists. In evaluating this information, I use several decision rules:

1. A member statement that cites a collective interest is *not sufficient* to establish that this interest motivated a change. For obvious reasons, members have incentives to justify their actions as beneficial to the institution or to the public, even if those actions have a more

partisan or parochial motivation. In judging whether members' statements citing broad, institutional interests are merely masking a narrower motivation, I use two primary criteria:

a. If several members from opposing parties or ideological factions cite a common motivation for a change, then it is reasonable to conclude that the members' statements are not merely camouflaging a partisan or ideological motivation.

b. If a member consistently supports a given change, even as that member's own direct political interests shift over time (such as when the member moves from majority to minority party status), then it is more plausible that the member's statements are not camouflaging a partisan motivation.

2. In evaluating information from secondary sources, I emphasize specialized studies of the change in question more than general-interest works. For example, in evaluating the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy in 1946, I rely more on Green and Rosenthal's *Government of the Atom* (1963), which focuses almost entirely on the JCAE, than on *Congressional Quarterly's* (1982) general history of Congress from 1776 to 1981.

3. Furthermore, I consider evidence from secondary sources more convincing if multiple sources independently reach similar conclusions. If several sources agree that a particular interest played an important role, and the later sources are not all simply citing the same earlier source as the basis for their judgement, then there are stronger grounds to conclude that interest played a significant role.

More generally, regardless of whether quantitative data are available for a specific case, to understand its causal dynamics I draw upon as wide a variety of sources as possible, from member statements to specialized scholarly studies. To the extent feasible, I avoid relying upon a single source—be it a single member's statement or the findings of a single historian or political scientist—to establish the relevance or irrelevance of a collective interest. That said, the cases obviously vary in the amount of information available. When the evidence base is thin, I reach more tentative conclusions. Such cases are clearly identified in the substantive chapters.

Much the same logic is involved in establishing whether an entrepreneur played an important role in devising common carriers. In evaluating this claim, it is first necessary to determine whether a change in fact did tap multiple interests. If so, the next question is what role, if any, an entrepreneurial member played in building the coalition behind the change. Was the change simply an obvious move that most members easily grasped, or did it entail significant creativity in agenda setting, framing, or other forms of manipulation by an entrepreneur? Evidence for evaluating this

possibility will be drawn from the same types of sources and evaluated using the decision rules outlined above.

To evaluate the third and fourth claims about disjointed pluralism, I focus on each period as the unit of analysis. In each period, I examine to what extent a single interest dominated congressional development, or alternatively, whether multiple collective interests produced the patterns of path-dependent layering and innovation and response identified in claims 3 and 4. This involves, in part, counting the number of changes that are accounted for by each interest. But it also involves analyzing the relative importance of the various changes and their aggregate effect on congressional operations. Furthermore, evaluating these claims requires examining the temporal dynamics of the changes: in what way, if any, do earlier changes lead to and shape the effectiveness of later changes? Claim 3 generates the expectation that tensions between an innovation and pre-existing institutions will often compromise its effectiveness. Claim 4 generates the expectation that successful changes promoting one member interest will provoke further changes that safeguard competing interests.

A final methodological issue is the definition of the dependent variable, institutional change. As noted above, I define *institution* broadly to include leadership instruments, the committee system, and rules and procedures. Such a broad definition is necessary because there are many alternative organizational paths by which members can pursue their interests. Understanding congressional organization requires dealing with each of these types of change.

Still, defining institutional change broadly means that some cases simply are not fair tests for certain theories. For example, Cox and McCubbins's (1993) majority party cartel model cannot be expected to explain changes in minority party organization, such as the creation of the Conservative Opportunity Society in 1983. Furthermore, as the COS illustrates, not all of the changes required majority approval. These changes may not feature the same dynamics as changes that require approval on the floor. In the empirical chapters, I note when a case is not relevant to assessing a specific theory. In chapter 6, I consider the question of whether certain theories better account for one type of change than other types of change and attempt to show that the four claims of disjointed pluralism hold if one examines only those changes that required approval by a floor majority.

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE FOUR PERIODS

Even in 1890–1910, a period encompassing the longest successful era of party government in congressional history, multiple collective interests shaped institutional development. Majority party interests were, of course,

critical, but minority party interests and concerns about congressional capacity also shaped House rules in 1891–95, when the Democrats were briefly in the majority. Moreover, the 1909–10 reforms that brought this period to a close were dramatic triumphs for a cross-party coalition of minority Democrats and insurgent Republicans that was united by a confluence of ideological, partisan, and power base concerns.

However, the 1909–10 rules changes did not repeal most of the innovations adopted by Republican majorities under Speakers Thomas Reed and Joseph Cannon, but rather added new devices, such as the consent and discharge calendars, that protected the minority and individual members. Thus, the reforms layered new mechanisms that empowered cross-party coalitions on top of a structure that still advantaged the majority party in other ways.

The main tension throughout the 1890–1910 period was between Republicans' shared interest in maintaining control of Congress, and progressive Republicans' interest in working with like-minded Democrats to pass legislation opposed by conservative Old Guard Republicans. House Republicans were able to mitigate this tension until the pressure for progressive policy departures became too great in 1909–10. Although Senate Republicans also built a party cartel of sorts, members were determined to protect their individual prerogatives and thus limited Republican successes in shaping Senate institutions.

From 1919 to 1932, the House majority party was once again more successful than the Senate majority in promoting its interests. Five of the ten significant institutional changes were initiated by House Republicans and were at least partly intended to improve the GOP's effectiveness. But some of these Republican moves were also responses to pressure for decentralization in the ideologically divided GOP. Cross-party coalitions rooted in ideological and sectoral interests also shaped institutional changes during this period, particularly in the Senate. Even in the House, cross-party coalitions enjoyed notable victories in 1924 and in 1931. In both cases, ideological concerns interacted with members' personal power interests to promote reforms that loosened majority leaders' agenda control.

From 1937 to 1952, majority party interests receded further in importance. The main collective interests were defending Congress from presidential aggrandizement and promoting the cross-party conservative coalition. Those were distinct interests: the congressional-executive rivalry, which motivated the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 and the 1940s boom in congressional investigations, cannot be reduced to policy differences between congressional majorities and the president. Liberals as well as conservatives backed these changes and expressed similar concerns about Congress's institutional viability. But other, competing interests

also shaped each of these changes. As noted above, the Reorganization Act's integrative devices were removed because of concerns about committee and individual member prerogatives.

The onset of loyalty investigations in 1938 and the transformed role of the Rules Committee in the late 1930s were above all cross-party coalition successes. These investigations benefited conservatives in both parties and undermined the Democratic party nationally. Democrats responded with a few institutional changes of their own, but these were mostly compromised by competing interests. The 21-day rule of 1949–51, for example, temporarily countered Rules Committee obstruction, but did not eliminate many of the strategic advantages that the committee accorded conservatives.

One of the major tensions in this period was between Democratic leaders who saw themselves as largely responsible to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, and the rank and file in both parties who believed their leaders were not adequately defending Congress as an institution. A second tension was that efforts to challenge executive primacy had to accommodate members' desire to expand individual entrepreneurship and protect their committee power bases.

In the 1970s–1980s, party interests returned to prominence, but they interacted with junior members' power base interests and with a renewed concern that Congress had lost too much ground to the executive branch. The result was an array of institutional changes that augmented majority party influence and helped coordinate spending decisions, but also facilitated entrepreneurship by junior members. Although Democrats' party-building efforts were compromised by the need to accommodate pressures for decentralization, they nonetheless successfully reinvigorated party government. This success, however, led Republicans to embrace Newt Gingrich's (R-Ga.) strategy of launching aggressive new attacks on Democrats and the House as an institution. These attacks led not only to Jim Wright's (D-Tex.) resignation as Speaker in 1989, but also to a more general decline in the standing of the House.

Chapters 2 through 5 provide a detailed analysis of each of these periods, while chapter 6 assesses the evidence and discusses the implications of disjointed pluralism for legislative institutions. The epilogue briefly discusses how disjointed pluralism illuminates developments in the 1990s. One final point warrants emphasis: the argument that disjointed pluralism characterizes congressional development does not imply that generalizations about institutions and institutional change are impossible. Instead, disjointed pluralism calls attention to features of congressional institutions that are generalizable across historical eras. Multiple collective interests typically shape individual institutional changes. Institutional development repeatedly appears disjointed as new arrangements are layered on top of

preexisting structures intended to serve competing interests. While the mix of collective interests salient to members has shifted over time, the institutional and societal pressures that inform those interests remain sufficiently diverse to ensure that no single member interest dominates for long. As a result, institutional change is consistently characterized by the interplay of competing coalitions promoting multiple, potentially conflicting interests.