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THE ROLE OF PERSONAL POLICY INTERESTS IN LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

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By

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Abstract

Mainstream literature on congressional behavior continues to concentrate on reelection as members' primary motivator, rather than exploring the other reasons for the legislative activities in which members engage. Although the district is an important, ever-present consideration for members as they decide how to allocate their legislative resources, service in Congress offers a range of opportunities for them to get involved with policies that are not directly related to their districts. Members can gravitate toward issues that they care about for reasons that are separate and distinct from the needs of their constituents. *When Politics is Personal* seeks to capture this little-researched, but important aspect of legislative behavior, to understand how personal interests impact legislators' policymaking activities. Through interviews with 60 members of the U.S. House of Representatives, this dissertation explores how personal interests influence members of Congress in their legislative activities.

Findings indicate that members of Congress are informed by the world around them as they decide which issues need to be addressed in the legislative arena. Rather than merely allowing their districts to define their legislative activities, members come to the Congress with policy goals of their own, influenced by their prior occupations, personal experiences, or social identities. This study demonstrates that members spend time and effort pursuing their personal agendas in Congress. They seek committee assignments that are of interest to them for personal reasons and introduce legislation that they have identified as necessary through their own

experiences. Most importantly, members actively champion these personal interest issues and work to move them through the process.

This study shows that personal interests can and do affect legislative activity, which has implications for representation as certain groups are provided a closer proximity to the policymaking table because they are fortunate enough to have a member in Congress to advocate for them. By bringing their personal interests to Congress, members are helping the groups that they identify with to have better access than others. Members actively advocate for interests and speak for groups that might not otherwise have a voice at the policymaking table. Because of this, members' personal experiences help to add diversity to the voices that are considered when Congress makes policy.

Chapter 1: Personal Policy Interests in Legislative Activity

Introduction

Representative Gary Miller's (CA-42) life is an American success story. Raised by a single mother and his grandparents in a poor suburb of Los Angeles, he is now one of the wealthiest members of Congress. Although he briefly attended community college, it was his hands-on education through a partnership with an experienced contractor that helped him to become a successful homebuilder. By his early twenties, Miller had started his first company, which eventually branched into four successful construction companies. (CQ Member Profiles, 2004). As his business prospered, so did his resentment for government regulations that he saw as impeding housing development in Southern California. This frustration is what propelled Miller into politics. His goal was to restrain the involvement of government in the building industry, which he felt was hindering the production of affordable housing. Miller's political career began in city government, but his six years there made him realize that government regulations at the state level also needed to be addressed. After four years in the state legislature, Miller took his fight to Congress, where he has spent his time calling for reforms of federal housing programs and the Endangered Species Act.

When he arrived in Congress, Miller set his sights on the Banking Committee because of its jurisdiction over housing issues. In his second term, the committee reorganized into what is now known as the Financial Services Committee, and Miller had the opportunity to join the committee. He immediately requested the Housing

Subcommittee, a move that surprised even the committee chairman, since it was not typically a member's first choice. Miller described his meeting with the chairman to discuss his subcommittee choices:

> When I was placed on the committee, there was an opportunity to meet with Chairman Oxley to request subcommittee assignments. Everybody else wanted to be on Capital Markets because they all assumed it would be the most powerful subcommittee. When I handed over the selection form to Oxley, he looked at it kind of puzzled and said, "You were the only one to select housing as your first choice." (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

While it took him a couple of terms to gain assignment to his preferred combination of committees, Miller says that he wanted to serve on Financial Services and Transportation because of their direct connection to housing, development, and growth issues, things he cares about because of his prior career.

In addition to his committee assignments, Miller created a caucus to focus on building and construction issues. Naming it the 'Building a Better America Caucus,' Miller said he started the caucus because when he came to Congress, he saw the need to highlight the issues that impact the construction industry:

> With BABAC, my goal is to make sure my colleagues understand the huge contribution the construction industry makes to our nation's economy and to make sure they know how legislation and regulations under consideration impact the construction industry. (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

Miller's prior occupational experiences have been the force behind much of his legislative activity in Congress. He has become well-known for his work to

promote affordable housing. In addition, Miller's advocacy for job training and apprenticeship programs can be traced, in large part, to his own experience starting out his career, where community college did not offer him the training he needed. Instead, he partnered with an experienced contractor to learn his trade.

In addition to representing his Southern California constituents, Miller has become the congressional spokesman for the construction industry. This is made quite clear in a Plumbing, Heating and Cooling Contractors newsletter, where a contractor reported the presentations that had been arranged by his national organization in the annual visit of local chapters to Washington, DC:

> [The first speaker was a] Representative from Kentucky. . . .Overall his presentation was quite good and well thought out. It was, however, a speech. I saw no passion and no real understanding of the problems that face contractors. . . . A good man, on our side, but not one of us. The next speaker [was] an entertaining speaker with absolutely nothing worth listening to. We got to hear about when he was a mayor. Boring. Anyhow, I was becoming deeply disappointed. I was fearing that this was an expensive waste of my time. The next speaker was Gary Miller, representative from California. . . . This guy has his stuff together. He threw away his prepared speech and delivered a bright scolding spanking to government, the environmental movement, the spotted owl, the Riverside Kangaroo Rat and the sand fly. Gary used to be a contractor and this guy talks like a contractor and he lets you know where he stands. He encompassed so many problems in government so quickly it was a genuine pleasure to know that he is on Capitol Hill. He is one of us. (PHCC Newsletter, April/May 2003).

"He is one of us." These words were not written by a constituent of the 42nd District of California. Rather, Miller's representational reach extends beyond the geographic boundaries of his district to people who share his occupational background. This is not to say that Miller does not act on behalf of his constituents. Rather, in addition to his work to represent his constituents, he has found a policy niche that is related to interests he gained from his prior career experiences. As a result, the construction industry has gained a loud voice, speaking and advocating for them in Congress.

Representative Gary Miller is not alone in representing interests that extend beyond his district lines. *When Politics is Personal* seeks to capture this aspect of congressional behavior, where members champion issues because of their personal interests. While some members' personal experiences can define and dominate their legislative careers, this subject often is ignored or overlooked by the political science literature. Instead, the focus remains fixed on constituency and interest group influence. This study shows that personal interests can and do affect legislative activity, which has implications for representation as certain groups are provided a closer proximity to the policymaking table because they are fortunate enough to have a member in Congress to advocate for them.

Personal policy interests are not confined to previous occupation. Rather, any personal experience that has a profound impact on a member can influence his or her legislative agenda. In addition, personal identification with an underrepresented group also can affect the issues members will champion. Understanding the impact

of these personal interests on legislative activity can lead to a more comprehensive understanding about the determinants of congressional behavior.

Relying on original interviews conducted with 60 sitting members of Congress during the 107th Congress, I consider the extent to which members' personal interests find their way into their legislative work. By looking at committee selection, bill sponsorship, and legislative agendas, I demonstrate that existing theories of legislative decision making have failed to adequately address the role of members' personal policy interests.

Why Study Members' Personal Policy Interests?

Constituent Representation

When the framers designed the U.S. House of Representatives, they intended for it to reflect the views of the people and for elected representatives to act in ways that would be responsive to their constituents. Of course, in the beginning states limited voting to white, male property owners. The extension of the franchise over time, while changing the composition of electoral constituencies, did not dramatically alter the demographic makeup of the House, which continues to be largely composed of wealthy, white males (Binion, 2000). Still, the founders envisioned that members would represent their voting constituents in Congress so that policy outputs would be reflective of the wishes of the electorate.

The extent to which the actions of members correspond with the desires of their constituents has been the subject of extensive contemplation among legislative scholars. In fact, several theories have been proposed to explain members'

representational behavior. For example, Wahlke, Eulau, Buchanan, and Ferguson (1962) introduced the concept of members acting as either instructed delegates, where their legislative actions mirror the express wishes of their constituents; trustees, where they exercise their judgment in determining what is best for the district; or politicos, where their roles alternate between delegate and trustee, depending on the issue being considered. Miller and Stokes (1963) extended this understanding of representation styles by connecting constituent opinions with members' legislative behavior. They discovered varying levels of congruence among members and their constituents, depending on the issue, and concluded that members are free to act as trustees on some issues precisely because they act as instructed delegates on others. By voting the way constituents prefer on issues about which the district is activated, members build the trust that allows them to pursue their own preferences on issues of less importance to their constituents.

Rather than a deliberate delegation of authority by constituents, other studies find that flexibility for members comes from the fact that constituents are not necessarily cognizant of the legislative activities in which members engage. Numerous scholars have demonstrated that constituents have little knowledge of what their representatives actually do while in Washington (Stokes and Miller 1962; JoHannes and McAdams 1981; Ragsdale and Cook 1987; Jacobsen 1997).

In addition to roll call voting, members engage in all types of policy formulation activities, including authoring bills and amendments, participating in informal negotiations, and engaging in debates on the floor and in committee. These

activities are less visible to constituents than voting, giving members considerable flexibility concerning which policies they pursue. According to JoHannes and McAdams (1981), while the number of statements a member makes on the House floor can increase electoral margins, the number of bills introduced or cosponsored does not have a significant impact. Similarly, Ragsdale and Cook (1987) fail to find a statistically significant relationship between the number of bills sponsored and an incumbent's vote share. Even when a member becomes a legislative entrepreneur on a particular issue, this does not necessarily translate into constituent support (Wawro, 2000). All in all, members' efforts to enact good public policy are no more likely to affect constituents' perceptions than merely talking about the issues constituents care about (Jacobsen, 1997).

Whether constituents are aware of members' legislative efforts or not, members work hard to gain and maintain the trust of their constituents so that they can have flexibility in the legislative activities they choose to engage in. According to Fenno (1978), home styles are used to earn constituents' trust so members are permitted to exercise their own judgment in Congress. Diligent attention to constituency service at home helps to give members leeway in exploring their own legislative interests (Cain, Ferejohn, Fiorina 1987). As one member interviewed for this study explained,

> I think the folks back home would forgive me for almost any vote I cast. They would not forgive me if I didn't return a phone call or if they had an issue that affected their family that the federal government

> was involved in and my office didn't at least try to help. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

Like Fenno (1978), Parker (1992) finds that members work to keep their constituents satisfied so they can maximize the discretion they are afforded by those they represent to pursue their own policy goals in Congress.

Trust is not solely gained through actions, though. Another way that members earn the trust of their constituents is to effectively demonstrate that they identify with them. Rather than monitoring every legislative move, constituents just want to know that their views are being represented in Congress. According to Fenno, members provide this assurance through their interactions with constituents back home (1978):

> Contextually and verbally he gives them the impression that "I am one of you." "I think the way you do and I care about the same things you do." "You can trust me because we are like one another" (58).

For members, a key component to moving from a delegate to a trustee, and therefore gaining discretion, is to convince their constituents that they are like them and think like them, so they can be trusted to act like them when making decisions on their behalf in Washington. Once this is accomplished, members have gained the ability to involve themselves in national issues that have little or no connection to their constituents. In fact, most members frequently find themselves unconstrained by constituency or district interests when making decisions about allocating their time and energy in Congress. According to one member interviewed for this study:

> Seventy-five to 80 percent of what I do is not district connected. What people want is, they want you to have a philosophy and to implement

> that philosophy in a consistent fashion and to communicate both why you do what you do and sometimes why you don't do what they thought you should do. But, it is the philosophy that gets you here. You have to convince, first in the primary and then in the general, that you most reflect a majority of the voters' views on issues that count. And once you get up here you can be a movement congressman. You can be a national congressman. You can be a constituent-service congressman. You can do almost anything you want as long as you continue to communicate and maintain the perception that you are doing what is best for your district. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

Through effective communication, members can gain the trust of their constituents and pursue a range of issues that may not be directly related to their districts.

Once members have flexibility, how do they decide which issues to devote their attention to in Congress? Contemporary scholarship in the field perceives members as acting to maximize a variety of goals and interests that extend beyond the needs of their constituents. In addition to getting reelected, Fenno (1973) suggests that members have two other basic goals: enacting "good public policy" and obtaining influence within the institution. He defines the policy goal as those areas that are of substantial personal interest, including prior work experiences and other personal experiences. Similarly, Parker (1992) argues that most of the policymaking discretion maximization that members work toward is so that they can pursue their personal goals in Congress.

While scholars have adapted Fenno's typology of members' goals in their analysis of voting behavior (Fiorina 1977; Kingdon 1989), committee assignments

(Shepsle 1978; Bullock 1976; Deering and Smith 1997), and participation (Hall 1996), they have not explored or further defined members' policy interests. Some scholars have suggested such interests can be traced to members' professional backgrounds (Deering and Smith 1997; Krehbiel 1991; Hall 1996). However, few have made any further effort to investigate the sources of members' policy interests in a systematic way. The focus instead has been on the impact of constituency (Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977), party (Cox and McCubbins 1993), and interest groups (Berry 1997; Hrebenar 1997; Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Wright 1985) on legislative activity.

Although scholars of congressional behavior have acknowledged that members advocate policies for reasons of personal interest, the reelection goal dominates the literature. Mainstream literature on congressional behavior continues to concentrate on reelection as members' main motivator, rather than exploring the other reasons for the activities in which members engage. This is mainly due to methodological difficulties in exploring members' personal interests, but also to a belief that reelection concerns are paramount among the goals suggested by Fenno (1973). This gap in the literature causes us to overlook the reality that, in addition to striving to address constituent, party, and interest group needs, members also pursue interests of their own in Congress. Without an understanding of those personal policy interests that are intense enough to translate into legislative activity, we still do not have a complete picture of the motivations behind members' initiatives in Congress.

Beyond The Geographic Constituency

Although the district is an important, ever-present consideration for members as they decide how to spend their legislative resources, service in Congress offers a range of opportunities for them to get involved with policies that are not directly related to their districts. Members can gravitate toward issues that they care about for reasons that are separate and distinct from the needs of their constituents. For example, Hall (1996) finds that women, minority, and older members of Congress are more likely to participate in the legislative process on issues that "evoke" the shared interest of these groups. In addition, Fenno (1973), Bullock (1976), and Deering and Smith (1997), all discover the importance of previous occupations in committee assignments, and Krehbiel (1991) and Hall (1996) find these important in policy considerations. Members, then, also can be considered representatives of groups they feel affiliated with, descriptively, occupationally, or experientially.

Conceptions of legislative behavior that assume that members' representation reaches only to the geographic boundaries of their district are incomplete. As the introductory example of the contractor's view of Gary Miller as "one of us" indicates, there are times when members identify with voters who do not reside within their districts. Pitkin (1967) proposes that, in addition to their districts, members also work on behalf of those who share certain characteristics with them. In what Pitkin argues is the intersection between descriptive representation and substantive representation, she claims that when members share characteristics with certain groups, they will advocate for their interests and represent their viewpoints.

There is disagreement in the literature about whether it is necessary to achieve descriptive representation in order for the interests of groups to be substantively represented in Congress. While some suggest that it is not required (Swain 1993; Hero and Tolbert 1995; Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran 1996), others have found that members who are descriptively similar to a group have different policy priorities than other members and are more likely to participate on issues related to the shared interest of the group they belong to (Thomas 1994; Hall 1996; Swers 2002). Mansbridge (1998) adds an important dimension to this understanding of representation by suggesting that members have more intense feelings about acting to represent the interests of a group in which they share common characteristics when that group is underrepresented in Congress. In these cases, the member feels a special responsibility to ensure the group's perspectives are included in legislative deliberations.

Research aimed at exploring the impact of descriptive and substantive representation has been limited to the difference that women and racial minorities in Congress make to legislative deliberations. However, the question of whether members speak for groups outside of their districts as a result of shared experiences may be just as relevant for other social and occupational identities. Learning about the range of background characteristics and experiences that can translate into legislative advocacy would be an important and meaningful extension of our understanding of the representative nature of Congress. In particular, it would shed

light on the various interests that are considered when Congress makes policy decisions.

Studies of interest group influence on congressional deliberations can help inform our understanding of the way in which various interests are represented when Congress formulates policies. The theoretical question that this body of literature attempts to address is whether there is a bias of representation due to the undue influence of certain sectors of society (Berry 1997). There is no question that interest groups exist to influence policies in a way that benefits, or at least does not harm, their constituencies. However, whether there is an inequitable sway on policymakers by certain interests has been of concern since our nation's founding, since such unbalanced influence would undermine the true democratic nature of our system of government. For example, in Federalist #10, Madison recognized that people with common interests would organize to influence policy outputs. However, Madison argued that these interests would be constrained by other groups with competing interests. Because there are so many varied interests, a representative government would not become dominated by any one, but would consider the views of all and ultimately produce good public policies.

Like Madison, pluralist scholars argued that a range of groups would participate in the formulation of policies and, as such, policy outputs would represent a compromise or consensus among the competing interests (Truman, 1951; Dahl 1961). No one interest would dominate. In reality, though, the policymaking process does not necessarily capture the interests of all stakeholders (Lowi, 1979; Walker

1966; Mills 1956). According to Berry (1997), "the governmental process is structured by many social, economic, and political divisions and biases that work to support the advocacy of some groups but not others." E. E. Schattschneider (1975) argued that the public interest is distorted in the policymaking process because only a few elites are able to participate. Since all interests are not equally represented during deliberations, this results in clear winners and losers in policy outputs.

The disparity in the representation of interests during the policy process can partly be explained by the fact that certain segments are not organized into special interest groups and those that are do not have the ability to advocate on all issues under consideration by Congress. According to Truman (1951), interest groups only form when a group of similarly situated individuals are adversely affected by an event or government action that affects their political or economic situation. Once formed, limited resources force groups to choose those areas of policy in which they will engage. According to Downs (1957: 254), "influencers usually operate in only one or two policy areas at once. This means that in each area, only a small number of specialists are trying to influence the government." Once they have determined where to concentrate their efforts, organized interest groups spend a significant amount of time and effort to ensure their perspectives are considered during policy formulation. As a result, the voices of those organized interest groups that have determined they have a real stake in the outcome are the loudest heard by policymakers. The perspectives of others who might also be impacted by a policy are

not similarly represented. As Parker (1996: 16) puts it, "those who can pay the price are also in a position to 'call the tune.'"

There is also a differential in interest group influence because certain groups have better access to policymakers than others. According to Tierney (1992: 204), "access begets influence, and unequal access begets unequal influence." Because interest groups do not have a vote in committee or on the floor, they must find members who are willing to advocate for them when formulating policy. Groups work hard to court allies in Congress that they can rely upon to represent their positions when legislative language is being negotiated (DeGregorio, 1997). Many scholars have attempted to understand the differing levels of access by interest groups. They explain that it has to do with political contributions (Parker 1996; Smith 1995; Conway 1991; Hall and Wayman 1990; Wright 1990; Langbein and Lotwis 1990), interest group membership in the district (DeGregorio 1997; 1990; Wright 1996), credibility and expertise (DeGregorio 1997; 1990; Walker 1991; Berry 1997; Schlozman and Tierney 1986), and organizational resources (DeGregorio 1997; 1990). What is missing in these explanations of interests being brought to the policymaking table is the influence of members' own backgrounds in granting access to certain groups. Members do not leave their prior experiences behind when they enter Congress. Rather, these experiences can cause them to devote scarce legislative resources to advocating for interests and speaking for groups that might not otherwise have a voice in Congress.

When interest groups find a member who shares the experiences of the group's membership, they will likely enjoy easier access and have a representative to advocate their viewpoint during legislative deliberations. While some scholars argue that interest groups focus on reinforcing the opinions of members who already agree with them (Wright 1990; Smith 1984; Matthews 1973), previous theories do not sufficiently explain the role that members' personal experiences can have in providing access and advocacy. It only makes sense that interest groups would have the most success with those members who have similar personal experiences and perspectives as the groups' constituency. However, scholars have missed this important factor when assessing interest group access. In addition, the literature does not contemplate the impact of members' personal experiences on policy formulation when an interest group does not exist to advocate a certain viewpoint.

This study aims to fill the gap in our knowledge of the interests that are present when policy is formulated in Congress. Whether an interest group exists or not, it is important to learn about how members' personal experiences can give certain interests a voice at the policymaking table. Such an extension of our current understanding of those interests that are represented when policy is formulated can help us reassess where our system is in relation to achieving the pluralist ideal, where the interests of all stakeholders are to be taken into account in policy decisions.

Exploring Personal Policy Interests in Legislative Activity

The fact that members pursue the interests of those they feel linked to because of a common experience or perspective, rather than because of the district they

represent, is well known on Capitol Hill. It can be found in the Dear Colleagues that members receive twice daily, where attention is often called to issues members care about due to their personal experiences, prior career experiences, and identifications with a particular group. Below are some examples of members using their personal experiences to demonstrate their own credibility to fellow members or to express the importance of an issue in Dear Colleagues:

> *Dear Colleague from Rep. Charlie Norwood, July 15, 2005:*
> As you may be aware, I was diagnosed with a serious lung disorder in 1998 called Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF). IPF is a debilitating lung disease that makes it difficult for a patient's organs to function normally due to the lack of oxygen. Luckily, I was fortunate enough to have received a single lung transplant late last year. However, this is not a treatment nor is it a cure. In this light, I urge you to join with me in supporting H.Con.Res 178, which recognizes the need to pursue research into the causes, a treatment and an eventual cure for Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. It also supports the goals and ideals of National Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis Awareness Week.

> *Dear Colleague from Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, July 19, 2005:*
> I would like to share these articles with you regarding my stepson, Douglas, and his fiancée on their upcoming deployment to Iraq. Please pray for them, along with all the other brave men and women of our armed forces. (Articles were attached about Rep. Ros-Lehtinen's stepson's deployment.)

> *Dear Colleague from Kay Granger, July 25, 2005:*
> I feel compelled to bring to your attention a matter of national concern. I am a former teacher and education is a top priority for me. Because

> of my deep personal commitment, I have served on the Boards of a number of educational institutions, and I currently serve as a member of the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) Board of Visitors. The Board, under the strong leadership of former Virginia Governor Jim Gilmore, is as engaged and attentive as any Board on which I have served.

> *Dear Colleague from Rep. John Boozman, July 26, 2005:*
> Before I was a Congressman, I was a Doctor of Optometry, and I have seen the devastation of glaucoma at first hand. Glaucoma strikes without warning and slowly deprives a person of their eyesight. . . . But if caught early and treated, glaucoma responds well to medication. Glaucoma blindness is preventable. That's why I joined the Congressional Glaucoma Caucus and have participated in many of their free screenings. I am writing to you today to invite you to join us as well. By doing so, you will be able to assist seniors in your district in the prevention and treatment of glaucoma.

While it is common knowledge on Capitol Hill that members champion issues due to their previous experiences, studies of legislative behavior have been slow to recognize or explore the role of personal interests in legislative activities. When discussing members' personal policy goals, Fenno (1973) acknowledges that some members base their committee selection decisions on previous experience, particularly prior occupation. However, he does not distinguish such interest that comes from personal experience from merely seeking committees that "deal with 'interesting,' 'exciting,' 'controversial,' and 'important' subjects" (1973: 9). For Fenno, the goal of enacting good public policy captures all sources of member

interest. While he calls it personal interest, he is not necessarily referring to the personal connection that members might have to their policy goals.

Studies of women in Congress have helped to assess whether members' truly-personal interests can impact their legislative priorities and activities. For the past two decades, research on female legislators has been built around the expectation that the presence of women in office will alter the policy outputs of legislative institutions. As far back as the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill (1869) argued that including women in governing bodies would be beneficial to society as a whole because women are able to make unique and effective policy contributions. Without women in the legislatures, he wrote, public policy suffers from the lack of a woman's perspective.

Mill's concerns have been echoed by political scientists in the modern era. For example, Stewart (1980), Flammang (1984), and Thomas (1994) argue that women bring a distinctive viewpoint to the legislative arena. According to Stewart (1980:113), "women in office actually bring about a new way of looking at issues and representing the constituency." Scholars assert that female legislators are better able to represent women's interests in Congress because of the "assumption that when our representatives look like us they are better able to understand and transmit our interests into the political arena" (Rosenthal 1998: 6). According to Darcy, Welch, and Clark (1987:12): "This argument suggests that men and women have different spheres in society, and, as a consequence, women have knowledge and insights into some matters that men do not have."

The body of research that suggests women legislators bring a unique perspective to policy deliberations can be extended to gain an understanding of other social identities that affect legislative activities. Experiences in members' personal lives beyond group identifications -- from their prior careers, familial experiences, or other personal experiences – are also likely to inform their voting decisions and lead members to allocate scarce legislative time and resources to issues related to these experiences. Just as women bring a unique viewpoint to legislative deliberations because of their expertise in some matters that men do not have, businesspersons, nurses, teachers, real estate developers, and members with other life experiences on certain issues can also be expected to bring perspectives and initiatives to Congress relevant to these experiences.

While personal experiences beyond group identification might be methodologically more difficult to measure, learning about their influence is a worthwhile endeavor in order to gain a more complete understanding of the motivations of members in their legislative pursuits. If members are personally motivated on an issue due to their own previous experiences, it would make sense that such fervor would affect their legislative activity. Indeed, Hall (1996) argues that the intensity of interest that a member has for an issue affects their participation on legislation. This is an area of study that should be further explored to help us understand the impact that members' personal interests have on their activities in Congress.

Recent research has revealed that not only are personal interests present in legislative activity, they are sometimes primary among the three goals outlined by Fenno (1973). For example, Hall (1996) discovers that personal policy interests can be more prominent in members' motivations to participate than electoral considerations. By studying the subcommittee, full committee, and floor consideration stages of the legislative process and distinguishing between both informal and formal deliberations, Hall is able to demonstrate the impact of personal interests on participation. According to Hall:

> Members may seek reelection, but they do so with a post-election purpose. In particular, they have their own policy agendas, which they actively pursue, independent of their district interests. . . . these relatively robust results hold true across subsets of members from different regions of the country, with diverse backgrounds, representing very different districts, acting at different times, in different contexts, under different chairs, and in different forums (137).

While Hall's seminal work on participation clearly demonstrates the importance of personal interests on members' activities, exploring the sources of these experiences is not his purpose. Hall develops a model explaining participation that includes variables for district interests and policy interests. Through interviews with staff members, where he asks them whether district or policy interests played a role in their boss' participation, Hall attempts to gauge the extent to which certain legislation is related to members' district or personal interests. Based on the responses of staff members, Hall finds that personal interests are important factors in

legislative participation. However, other than for the most measureable of personal experiences, namely, gender, race and age, which are factors that can easily be added to a quantitative analysis, Hall does not explore the specific types of personal interests that caused the members to be involved in the policy deliberations.

As with Hall, most studies of personal interest concentrate on background variables that are easily discerned from public records, particularly those related to group identification. For example, Swers (2002) employs a systematic analysis of bill sponsorships, cosponsorships, committee amendments, floor amendments and roll call voting to determine whether gender makes a difference in members' legislative activities. Swers confirms that gender differences are apparent at each stage of the legislative process, although they are most visible in bill sponsorship activity. She writes:

> While the imperatives of reelection every two years dictate that legislators will pay close attention to the needs of their districts, the demands of the district are best viewed as guidelines for members' legislative activity rather than policy directives. Within the boundaries of constituency preferences, representatives are free to develop specific legislative priorities. (126).

Hall (1996) and Swers (2002) have demonstrated that, in addition to representing their constituents, members do devote considerable legislative resources to their personal policy interests. However, neither study provides a comprehensive examination of what these personal policy interests are that motivate members to engage in legislative policymaking. While both acknowledge that occupational

background and personal experience can contribute to members' personal interest activity, their quantitative analyses do not extend beyond group identification.

In addition to their limited scope, both studies rely upon speculation regarding the personal policy interests of members. Hall asks staff members to speculate about the reasons for their boss' interest in a bill after that legislation has been considered. While congressional staff have provided the field with tremendous insight into the inner workings of Congress (Bullock 1976, Salisbury and Shepsle 1981; Rosenthal and Bell 2002), staff members may not be knowledgeable about how their boss gained interest in an issue. Although the staff may be well versed and able to respond to questions of priority and accomplishment for the current session of Congress, they may not be aware of the experience that caused their boss to become interested in the first place. Staff merely know that they have been directed to pursue certain priorities. There is often not time, nor opportunity, for them to learn about the reasons for such a directive. Indeed, in many cases it would be deemed inappropriate for a staff member to question the motivations of his or her boss for becoming active on an issue. This is completely dependent upon the relationship between the staffer being questioned and the member and on the issue at hand. However, it is virtually impossible in any systematic way to ensure that the staffer being questioned is privy to member's motivations because staff titles can not be relied upon to indicate any level of closeness to the member or length of service in the office.

Swers speculates about the types of bills that would cause women members to take an active role. She compares members' gender with a set of "women's issues"

bills she has compiled to determine whether women members are more involved in such issues than their male counterparts. Such comparisons are used to interpret members' motivations based on gender. The members are not asked directly about their motivations for legislative activity, causing findings about the impact of gender to be limited. This process also fails to account for the impact of a woman's perspective on other issues being considered by Congress. For example, Hall (1996: 209) discovered that women can bring a unique perspective to non-women's issues. He tells of a peanuts title bill that, on the surface, would not be considered a women's issue bill. Female legislators brought up concerns for low-income women because the title would affect the price of peanut butter, which would impact their capacities as care givers since peanut butter is a cheap source of protein for children. That these women relied on their experiences as mothers when analyzing a peanut bill exemplifies the necessity of casting a broad net over a range of issues in order to learn the actual impact of gendered perspectives on policy formulation. By determining the bills to focus upon, Swers' study has likely missed issue areas where female members' perspectives will affect their involvement in policy deliberations.

The focus of this research begins where Hall and Swers leave off. I attempt to build upon their work, to fill gaps in our understanding about the types of personal policy interests that impact legislative activity. This study differs from those that came before it in that I have the opportunity to query members directly about their motivations for engaging in legislative activities. Interviews offer the opportunity to gain insight into members' motivations not readily captured through other methods

(i.e. content analysis of markup transcripts and other legislative records, staff interviews). By interviewing members, I am able to move past speculation about member motivations and conduct an exploration of the sources of personal policy interests that translate into legislative activity across a range of issues. Currently, what we know about how personal interests affect agenda setting and policy formulation for members of Congress is minimal. This study attempts to fill this void, so that our understanding of members' motivations is more complete.

Methodology and Procedure

The impact of members' personal interests on their legislative activities warrants further examination. As has been demonstrated above, relatively little is known about the types of personal policy interests that impact members' legislative activities. Hall's study of participation provides a good point of departure for this inquiry. He not only detects personal interests, but finds that such interests sometimes dominate members' motivation to participate. While Hall finds that members act for reasons of personal interest, he suggests further research to explore the sources of these personal interests and argues that the lack of research exploring members' personal policy interests can partially be explained by the methodological difficulties in measuring personal interest. According to Hall (1996: 66),

> One must be able to assert, on prior empirical grounds, something about the particular goals or interests of individual legislators. Given that those interests are subjective and unobservable; given further that the connection between interests and observable behavior is a problematic matter about which one must theorize; and given further

> than no empirical methodology for measuring the subjective interests of legislators has been readily available, the legislative scholar is faced with no easy task.

This study attempts to overcome the methodological hurdles Hall discusses through interviews with 60 members of the U.S. House of Representatives during the 107th Congress. Direct interviews with members will allow the types of personal interests about which members feel passionately enough to result in legislative activity to be explored.

The main research question this study addresses is: How do personal policy interests influence the legislative activities of members of Congress? I attempt to shed light upon this question by learning more about the types of personal background experiences that are intense enough to have an impact on legislative activities. This will enable us to expand our traditional understanding about determinants of congressional behavior. In addition, we will have a better sense about the influence of personal policy interests in policy formulation; if members with certain backgrounds bring interests to Congress with them that affect their legislative activities, then they help provide a closer proximity to the policymaking table for certain groups in society.

This research relies upon information gathered from interviews with members of Congress. In addition, data on member backgrounds were collected using sources such as *CQ Online* and *CQ's Politics in America*. Information about the bills members sponsored was collected from the online *Legislative Information System of*

the U.S. Congress, which provides summaries for each introduced bill. Field observation was supplemental; service as a legislative staff member for more than six years, for two different House members, and responsibilities covering three different committees, helped me to gain an understanding of the dynamics of the legislative process, providing a context with which to understand my findings.[1]

Member Interviews

To better understand how personal interests affect members of Congress in their legislative activities, I conducted 60 interviews with members of the U.S. House of Representatives in 2002, prior to the adjournment of the 107th Congress. These interviews queried members about what they felt were their greatest accomplishments, their most pressing objectives and what generated their interest in these issues. In addition, members were asked to discuss the reasons they served on the committees to which they were assigned, whether there was any group other than constituents within their districts that they viewed themselves as representing, and their definition of effective legislators. The interviews were semi-structured, but open-ended, with times ranging from fifteen minutes to ninety minutes. Each interview was recorded and later transcribed.[2]

1 According to Babbie (1995:305-306), field observation is "especially effective for studying subtle nuances of attitudes and behaviors and for examining social processes over time. . . the chief strength of this method lies in the depth of understanding it may permit." I covered the Education and the Workforce Committee for Representative Marge Roukema (NJ-5) from January 2000 through December 2002. I covered the Financial Services Committee and Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for Representative Gary Miller (CA-42) from January 2003-present.

2 Initial drafts of the transcriptions were completed by the University of Oklahoma's transcription service. The transcripts were verified, edited, and finalized by Gary L. Gooch.

Of the 60 members interviewed, 37 were Republicans and 23 were Democrats. Eight served in party leadership positions, four were the chairmen or ranking members of full committees and 27 were subcommittee chairs or ranking members. Fifty-one members received 55 percent or more of the vote in their 2000 election. The average number of terms in office was 4.8 terms; 46 members had served in Congress for three or more terms. Five members were freshmen and six retired at the end of the 107th Congress.

Interviews were first solicited by sending request letters to all 161 members who served on the following three policy committees: Financial Services, Education and the Workforce, and Energy and Commerce[3]. Members who serve on policy committees are the focus, rather than prestige committees or constituency committees, because I am interested in maximizing variation in legislators' reasons for participation beyond constituent interests or institutional aspirations. According to Deering and Smith (1997:73), the following committees are largely composed of policy-oriented members: Energy and Commerce, Judiciary, Education and the Workforce, Financial Services, and International Relations.

I targeted members who serve on the Financial Services, Energy and Commerce, and Education and the Workforce committees because of the breadth of issues under these committees' jurisdictions, which could allow for members to pursue a variety of interests. For example, the Committee on Financial Services

3 Interview request letters were from my former employer, Representative Marge Roukema (NJ-5), who was retiring at the end of the 108th Congress. Roukema served on both the Education and the Workforce Committee and the Financial Services Committee.

offers members the opportunity to pursue a range of topics, from banking and monetary policy to public housing and urban development. Similarly, the Education and the Workforce Committee has jurisdiction over both issues relating to education and children and those relating to the relationship between employers and employees. On the education side, issues the committee has jurisdiction over include: early childhood, elementary, secondary, and higher education; at risk youth programs; school lunch and child nutrition; child abuse prevention and adoption; and anti-poverty programs. On the workforce side, the committee considers issues related to: health care; job training; pensions; welfare programs; minimum wage laws, unions; and workplace safety laws. This committee could attract members who are interested in championing education issues, family issues, children's issues, health issues, pro-business issues, or laws to protect workers.

Even more diverse in the issues under its jurisdiction is the Energy and Commerce Committee, which covers issues ranging from consumer protection to energy to environmental protection to public health to telecommunications. Service on this committee provides members an avenue to become involved in much of the legislation before Congress; according to the Congressional Research Service, the committee receives the second highest number of bill referrals after Ways and Means. As such, policy oriented members with personal interests across a range of issues would be able to actively pursue their personal agendas through service on the Energy and Commerce Committee.

In addition to their subject matter diversity, targeting these three policy committees helps to ensure an adequate number of female members in the sample. This is an important factor to consider because research has found that as the number of women in legislatures increases, the attention paid to certain issues also increases (Vega and Firestone 1995; Thomas 1994, 1991, 1989; Kathlene 1994; Reingold 1992; Berkman and O'Connor 1993; Thomas and Welch 1991; Saint-Germain 1989). Saint-Germain (1989) discovered that the critical number of women in a legislature is fifteen percent. She finds that the issues addressed by women changed as their numbers increased. Similarly, Berkman and O'Connor (1993) find that as the number of women legislators increases, their ability to influence legislation increases. The three policy committees selected had the largest percentage of women in the 107th Congress, so female members theoretically would have the opportunity to pursue their interests without being constrained by the lack of a critical mass. For example, in the 107th Congress, 16 percent of the members serving on policy-oriented committees were women. Women comprised 12.2 percent on International Relations, 13.5 percent on Judiciary, 14 percent on Energy and Commerce, 20.4 percent on Education and the Workforce, and 18.6 percent on Financial Services.

From the 161 letters mailed to members serving on the three selected committees, 49 interviews were secured, a success rate of 30.43 percent.[4] In addition, because of Representative Roukema's relationships, interviews were gained with the

4 This is not necessarily a true reflection of the response rate to the request letter. Many more members responded, but scheduling difficulties due to the end of the session only allowed for a limited number of interviews to occur. I chose not to conduct further interviews into the 108th Congress.

House Majority Leader, five additional female members, and five members of the Appropriations Committee.[5] In the end, the interview sample consisted of 50 members who served on at least one policy committee, 13 members who served on prestige committees, and 29 members who served on at least one constituency committee.

Types of Personal Interests

This study seeks to learn more about those personal interests that are intense enough to result in legislative activity. Hall (1996) suggests that members derive their personal interests from their professional backgrounds, identification with a minority group, based on sex, race, religion, or sexual orientation, or other personal experiences. Hall's typology is utilized here to understand the basis of those personal interests that motivate members to use their legislative efforts to advocate for certain issues. Specifically, I organize the data about members' personal interest into the following categories: occupational interest, group identification, and other personal experience.

Occupational Experience

CQ's Politics in America 2002 was used to determine the previous career of each member interviewed. Of the 60 members, 21 were lawyers, 11 had careers in business or banking, nine in education, seven in public service or politics, five in real estate, five in health care, one in the military, and one in agriculture.

-- Table 1.1 About Here --

5 The appropriators can help shed light on members' ability to pursue their policy interests while serving on prestige committees.

The career categories above are useful in exploring the impact of members' career backgrounds on their legislative activity. It is important to note that while these occupational categories help to organize our understanding of members' personal policy interests, the interview responses were relied upon to actually determine whether a member's occupation in fact had an influence on their legislative activity.

Group Identification

Members' personal characteristics are also explored to determine whether the shared experiences they have as members of these groups are intense enough to translate into legislative activity. Factors such as sex, race, religion, and sexual orientation are considered to learn whether their membership in these groups can cause members to introduce legislation based on their desire to address issues related to these groups. Of the members interviewed, 48 were male and 12 were female; 52 were white, seven were black, and one was Hispanic; one was homosexual; and 14 were Catholic, 38 were Protestant, and four were Jewish. As with occupational experience, these group identification variables provide a way to organize the data. Members' interviews are relied upon to reveal whether their identifications with these groups caused them to pursue legislative activities on their behalf.

-- Tables 1.2 and 1.3 About Here --

Personal Experience

Interview responses also are used to determine whether members advocate for certain issues due to other personal experiences in their lives. Personal experiences are more difficult to ascertain than occupation or group identification without the

benefit of member interviews. They can be first-hand experiences, or interests derived from secondary sources, such as experiences of family members or friends. They can relate to members' hobbies, problems they experience with government or in the marketplace, or childhood or family experiences.

Legislative Activities

Our understanding of members' policymaking behavior up to this point has not adequately explored the influence of personal policy interests. This study looks at indicators of legislative activities to examine the way in which members' backgrounds and personal experiences influence their work in Congress. Not only will this provide a more complete picture of members' personal interests and their impact on the legislative process, it will also broaden our knowledge about the dynamics of legislative behavior. Three modes of legislative activity will be considered: (1) committee service; (2) legislation authored; (3) stated legislative accomplishments and priorities. By examining these three aspects of legislative activity, conclusions about the impact of personal policy interests on members' legislative activity can be reached.

Committee Service

During the interview, each member was asked the reasons for their committee service. By asking the question in this way, I was able to learn about the circumstances surrounding their assignment to each committee, including whether they selected the committees on which they serve. If they did choose a committee, I asked their reasons for selecting it. Responses were coded in the following

categories: district, ideology, lobby driven, personal interest. If the member's response was related to a personal interest, responses were further coded as occupational interest or personal experience. No members offered a personal interest explanation that did not fit into one of these two categories, so the group identification category was not used as a reason for committee selection. Because members serve on varying numbers of committees, ranging from one to four, responses were coded as one, indicating that they offered the specified reason, and zero if they did not. In addition, another variable was created to indicate whether members offered both a personal interest explanation and a district explanation for their committee choices.

Legislation Authored

To assess how personal interests are related to the bills members choose to sponsor, I gathered bill sponsorship information for the 107th Congress for the 60 members interviewed using the online *Legislative Information System of the U.S. Congress*. To determine members' motivations for introducing legislation, the interview transcripts and written notes from interviews were utilized, as well as background information about members from Congressional Quarterly's online *Member Profiles* at CQ.com and in *Politics in America 2002, the 107th Congress*. Using this information, each sponsored bill was counted if it reflected either district concerns or personal concerns. If personal, the following subsets were also used to reveal the source of the interest: occupation, experience, and group identification. The number of bills in each category was tabulated and then divided by the total

number of bills the member sponsored in the 107th Congress. This was done to allow for comparison across members. Because the number of bills members introduce vary, merely counting the bills they introduce for personal reasons could overstate the influence of personal interest. To ensure we understand the true impact of personal interest on bill introductions, I consider the proportion of a member's bill sponsorship agenda that is devoted to personal interest.

Legislative Accomplishments and Priorities

In the interviews, members first were asked to discuss the legislative accomplishments of which they were most proud. After they responded, they were asked what generated their interests in these issues. The non-retiring members then were asked to discuss their most pressing legislative interests and objectives. This was asked to tap those issues that were at the top of the agenda but had not yet translated into a legislative victory. Again, for each issue mentioned, I asked the member to discuss the source of interest in this priority. Responses were categorized as interests due to district, political ideology, personal interest, and lobbyists. Personal interest answers were further categorized as previous job, group identification, and other personal experience.

Organization of the Study

Chapters are organized to examine the impact of personal interests within each of the above legislative activities. Chapter 2 explores members' reasons for selecting the committees on which they serve. Committee assignments are critical in shaping a congressional career and influence the policy areas in which members will

find legislative opportunities. As a result, members devote considerable thought and effort to the selection process to ensure the committees on which they serve will help them attain their goals. Because committees differ in terms of jurisdiction and exclusivity, members must consider how their committee choices will allow them to accomplish the objectives they set out to achieve in Congress. This arguably is the most important choice for members to make because the majority of their time will be spent on issues that fall within the committee's jurisdiction and they will have the most influence over legislative outcomes on issues considered before their committees (Evans 1991, Hall 1996, Deering and Smith 1997; Schiller 2000). As such, learning the reasons for members' committee selections will help us understand whether members choose seats at policymaking tables that will impact issues they care about personally.

In Chapter 3, the bills members sponsored are analyzed to determine whether they are related to members' personal policy interests. By introducing legislation, members can formally demonstrate their interest in participating in the legislative process on an issue of importance to them. These bills represent those areas where members have chosen to devote their time and scarce legislative resources. As such, it is important to understand the extent to which members use bill sponsorship to pursue issues they care about due to personal interests.

Chapter 4 examines the existence of personal policy interests in members' proudest legislative accomplishments and top legislative priorities to fully capture the intensity of members' personal policy pursuits. Asking members to discuss their

accomplishments and priorities helps to gauge how strongly members feel about issues of personal interest to them, across the range of legislative activity. While committee selection and bill sponsorship help us to begin to understand the influence of member's personal interest on their legislative agenda, asking members to tell about what they view as their accomplishments and priorities help us understand the intensity of this interest.

Chapter 5 concludes the study by tying together the findings of the previous chapters to explore personal interest across the three modes of legislative activity. This will help determine where in the legislative process personal interests are most prominently revealed. This study's comprehensive examination of personal policy interests can help lead to a more thorough and accurate understanding of members' legislative activities. This chapter argues for further application of personal experience to our studies about members' behavior and discusses the implications of members' pursuit of their policy interests on our traditional conceptions about representation.

Conclusion

While members of Congress have long advocated for issues as a result of things they have experienced in their own lives, scholars of congressional behavior have not spent much effort learning more about these pursuits or the extent that such personal interests affect legislative activities. Instead, the focus has been on the impact of constituency and interest groups on members' initiatives. This leaves an important way that interests are brought to the policymaking table largely unexplored.

As *Washington Post* columnist Jeff Birinbaum recognizes, in addition to constituency and lobby influence, personal interests can affect the issues that are considered in Congress. He writes about Senator Gordon Smith's advocacy of mental health services and Medicaid funding, which are causes he championed after his son's suicide.

> Usually this column chronicles the craven reasons lawmakers take up causes: money, lobbying pressure, and hunger for power. But once in a while they are also compelled by matters of the heart. This is the story of one legislator who turned his family's loss into a public crusade. (Birinbaum, 2005).

Stories like this one about Senator Smith, where members personal experiences translate into legislative action, are not uncommon. However, little research has been done to explore the types of personal experiences that have enough of an impact on a member to alter their endeavors in Congress. This study aims to fill the gap in our understanding of how members allocate their scarce legislative time and resources by accounting for how their experiences can affect legislative priorities.

For the most part, members are given wide latitude to decide which issues they will champion during their congressional careers. While some of this time will be spent advocating for things important to their districts, members also focus their efforts on other issues that are important to them personally due to their prior occupation, personal experience, or identification with an underrepresented group. This study seeks to capture this little-researched but important aspect of legislative behavior, to understand how personal interests impact legislators' policymaking

activities. As Deborah Sontag (2002: 90) wrote in an article about how members' personal experiences affected their involvement in mental health parity legislation, "on many issues, politics really is that personal . . . ."

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Table 1.1: Occupations of Members Interviewed

Prior Career*	Republican	Democrat	Total N (%)	107th Congress** N (%)
Law	**9**	**12**	**21 (35.00)**	**156 (35.86)**
Business or Banking	**7**	**4**	**11 (18.33)**	**159 (36.55)**
Education	**8**	**1**	**9 (15.00)**	**92 (21.15)**
Public Service or Politics	**3**	**4**	**7 (11.67)**	**126 (28.97)**
Real Estate	**5**	**0**	**5 (8.33)**	**24 (5.52)**
Health	**3**	**2**	**5 (8.33)**	**14 (3.22)**
Agriculture	**1**	**0**	**1 (1.67)**	**25 (5.74)**
Military	**1**	**0**	**1 (1.67)**	**2 (.46)**
Total	**37**	**23**	**60**	**598*** **

* Source: *CQ's Politics in America 2002: The 107th Congress*
** Source: Ornstein, Mann, Malbin. 2002. *Vital Statistics on Congress 2001-2002.*
*** Members' occupations are not limited to one category, which has the effect of increasing percentages.

Table 1.2: Group Identification Characteristics of Members Interviewed

	Republican	Democrat	Total N (%)	107th Congress** N (%)
Gender				
Male	31	17	48 (80.0)	376 (86.4)
Female	6	6	12 (20.0)	59 (13.56)
Race				
White	37	15	52 (86.7)	380 (87.4)
Black	0	7	7 (11.7)	36 (8.3)
Hispanic	0	1	1 (1.7)	19 (4.4)
Sexual Orientation				
Heterosexual	37	22	59 (98.3)	
Homosexual	0	1	1 (1.7)	

** Source*:* Ornstein, Mann, Malbin. 2002. *Vital Statistics on Congress 2001-2002.*

Table 1.3: Religion of Members Interviewed

Religion*	**Republican**	**Democrat**	**Total N (%)**	**107th Congress N (%)**
Catholic	**7**	**7**	**14 (23.0)**	**125 (28.74)**
Jewish	**0**	**4**	**4 (6.7)**	**28 (6.44)**
Protestant	**27**	**11**	**38 (63.3)**	**182 (41.84)**
Baptist	3	5	8	
Episcopalian	4	2	6	
Lutheran	2	1	3	
Methodist	9	2	11	
Presbyterian	5	1	6	
Other	4	0	4	
All Other	**3**	**1**	**4 (6.7)**	**100 (22.99)**
Total	**37**	**23**	**60**	**435**

* Source: *CQ's Politics in America 2002: The 107th Congress*
** Source: Ornstein, Mann, Malbin. 2002. *Vital Statistics on Congress 2001-2002.*

Chapter 2: The Role of Personal Policy Interests in Committee Assignments

Introduction

Congresswoman Lois Capps was the 35th widow to win a House seat vacated as a result of the death of her husband. She was elected in a special election in 1998 when her husband, Walter, died of a sudden heart attack in October 1997, after serving less than one year in Congress.

Walter Capps was the first Democrat to represent the coastal California district since World War II. A professor of religion for more than 30 years at the University of California at Santa Barbara, Walter Capps was known for his study of the Vietnam War and conflict resolution. Walter Capps' professional experience landed him a seat on the House International Relations Committee, where he was praised for his expertise on foreign policy issues. He also served on the Science Committee, which allowed him to focus on issues important to his district, including bay dredging and space technology.

When Lois Capps was sworn in on March 17, 1998 to complete the 105th Congress, she was given the same committee assignments that her husband held. However, her career in nursing led her to immediately pursue an appointment to the prestigious Commerce Committee, where she could focus on health care issues. In December 1998, it was announced that Capps was one of only three Democratic Members of Congress to win the coveted committee assignment for the 106th Congress. While the plum committee assignment would afford her the opportunity to influence a range of issues, including commerce, trade, energy, the environment, and

telecommunications, the headline of Capps' press release announcing her appointment to the committee summed up her primary motivation for pursuing the Commerce Committee: "Former Nurse Makes Bipartisan Patients' Rights her Top Priority." Lois Capps explains her interest in health care issues in the following way:

> All of us, to a much larger degree than the public knows, bring our personal agenda to Congress with us. Mine is such a direct connection with my profession. When I first came in a special election, we were engaged in the Patients' Bill of Rights debate on the floor and I thought, I haven't really left my field at all. This is something dear to my heart. . . . I believe my voice is important here, not just because it is me, but because it represents a vantage point that is right where life and death issues reside and there should be a voice like mine here. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

Both Walter and Lois Capps worked to address the issues important to their constituents, including protecting the environment and banning offshore drilling. However, they also became involved in issues that were of personal interest to them due to their professional backgrounds. While they represented the same district, their committee assignment selections in Congress were different and can be attributed to their personal interest in issues they were familiar with from their previous careers. Regarding her campaign to gain appointment to the prestigious Commerce Committee, Capps said:

> I made the case, and I think it was credible, that a nurse's point of view on that committee would be a good thing, and I got on the committee. That has enabled me to work on a lot of issues on behalf of nurses. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

The selection of committee assignments based on personal interest is likely not isolated to the way that Walter and Lois Capps pursued their goals in Congress. If members come to Congress having been influenced by their prior occupation, personal experiences, or identification with an underrepresented group, they very well might seek ways to champion such causes during their congressional careers. To do this, they must be present when policy issues impacting these interests are decided. In the House of Representatives, this means that they need to serve on the particular committee that has jurisdiction over the issues in which they are interested.

Because committees provide a venue for members to achieve their goals, this chapter considers the extent to which personal policy interests are revealed in members' committee assignments. According to Fenno (1973, 1), "each member of each committee wants his committee service to bring him some benefit in terms of goals he holds as an individual congressman." While these goals most likely will include meeting the needs of the district, they also can be related to their personal policy interests. Unfortunately, while scholars of congressional behavior have acknowledged that members advocate policies for reasons of personal interest, the reelection goal has continued to dominate the committee assignment literature and few scholars have sufficiently explored the extent to which members' personal policy goals translate into the pursuit of particular committee assignments.

Such an oversight is critical because it affects our assessment of the representativeness of the institution. If members are bringing their personal interests to the committees on which they serve, it is likely to affect overall policy outputs.

This is because committees are the central location for policy formulation in the House. Committee members have the ability to not only influence the panel's agenda, but they also can impact the shape of the legislation that is ultimately recommended by the committee for floor action. To be successful, members need a seat at the dais on the committee that has jurisdiction over their policy goals. Therefore, an assessment of committee selection can help inform us about a potentially significant way that interests are given a voice during policy deliberations.

This chapter explores how members' personal policy interests affect committee selection, which has a profound influence on the shape of congressional careers and decisions about where, among the range of issues facing Congress, members will focus their attention. Instead of speaking for their districts or campaign contributors, this chapter will help us to assess the extent to which members actively seek to position themselves to be able to advocate for those they feel affiliated with due to their own personal experiences.

Choosing Committee Assignments

There is no question that committee assignments are critical in shaping a congressional career and influence the policy areas in which members will find legislative opportunities. As the Congressional Management Foundation, an organization that provides training and support to new members of Congress, explains:

> Perhaps the most important event for a freshman that occurs between the election and the first day of a new Congress is the allocation of committee assignments. These assignments often determine the

> character of a Member's first term, if not career. Indeed, they are often the key to successful congressional careers and successful policymaking (Congressional Management Foundation, 2002; 15).

Clearly, choosing and securing desired committee assignments is essential.

As a result, members devote considerable thought and effort to the selection process to ensure the committees on which they serve will help them attain their goals. Because committees differ in terms of jurisdiction and exclusivity, members must consider how their committee choices will allow them to accomplish the objectives they set out to achieve in Congress. The types of committees on which members will seek appointments will depend on whether they choose to focus on their district, national issues, or a particular policy area. The following is advice offered by the Congressional Management Foundation (2002: 21) regarding members' selection of committees:

> Do you want to focus on constituent services or be a national legislator? Will you become an expert in foreign affairs, health care, banking, or the environment? Are you from a "safe" district or will you likely face a difficult reelection battle in two years? The answers to these types of questions, combined with the information you've assembled about the committees, should help you narrow your choices.

A substantial body of literature supports the concept that members' decisions about their committee assignments are affected by district considerations (Adler and Lapinski 1997; Browne 1995; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Rohde and Shepsle 1973). In addition, several previous studies have

considered the electoral implications of committee assignments (Perkins 1980; Fowler, Douglass, and Clark 1980; Bullock 1976). Indeed, one member interviewed explained the advice he received from his party's leader about the importance of the district in committee work:

> This is something Dick Gephardt told us one time, that whenever we vote you will be a happy member if you just follow the simple rules. You vote your conscience first, you vote your district second, and you vote your party last. He said, "that works against my interest sometimes, but you have got to do that." In your committee assignments, you look at what you can do for your district. No one else represents your district -- you are it. No one else is going to protect its interest. No one else will make sure it is competitive in whatever the federal government is doing. You have to remember that. You are the only spokesperson for your district. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

While district considerations are paramount, members' committee assignments also are constrained by their respective party's assignment processes. Each party steering committee considers seniority, experience, background, ideology, election margin, state delegation support, leadership support, geographic balance and district concerns when allocating committee assignments. These factors do not carry equal weight for each member in each instance, either when they ask to be assigned to a particular committee or when the party steering committees formally make assignments. One member's story about his committee selection experience demonstrates the complexity of the process and the interplay of these factors:

> I came up here very naive. I was the only Republican Appropriations Chairman that had ever been chosen in North Carolina. I was the Appropriations Chairman for Education in the North Carolina Senate and it had never happened to a Republican before. So I came up here and had all kinds of grandiose ideas. I wanted to be on Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, or Appropriations. Trent Lott was the whip at that time and he said: "Freshmen don't get those committees." And I said, "what about Banking?" and he said, "Hell, I can't even get you on Banking. But we've got one committee assignment and if you'll take it, I'll give you a good one to go with it." I should have known better. And so in questioning me, he asked me, "Where do you stand on unions?" I told him, "Hell, I've been fighting them all my life." He said "that's what we're looking for." And so he said, "Okay, we'll put you on Education and Labor." He gave me Transportation as my give-me. It was great and I got a road paved and some airports taken care of and so forth. I only stayed there about a year and a half. My wife obviously wanted me to get on International Relations and I did too. So, we got on International Relations and I'm still on Education and Labor. (Member Interview, 9/24/02).

As the above example demonstrates, steering committees ultimately decide the committees to which members are assigned. While there was some negotiation involved above, there are times when members are assigned to committees they did not request. For example, one member of Congress explained that in order to get his top choice he had to accept two committee assignments he did not ask for:

> Transportation was the one I really wanted to be on. Banking and Government Reform were not on the list I submitted. But I did enjoy Banking, it was a good Committee and I liked Chairman Leach. It was

> amazing being just sworn in and the first bill we had was Gramm-Leach-Bliley. So, I had to go from zero to a hundred in picking up knowledge on banking issues. My regional director on the Steering Committee called me up and said, "Hey, you're on the Banking Committee" and I said "Banking Committee? I barely know how to use my ATM card!" (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

Another member described a similar experience in not requesting to serve on the committees on which he was first assigned. He explains the committee request process and credits his leadership for their wise choice of assigning him to the Financial Services Committee.

> I don't know how the Republicans do it, but when we get here, they give us this little sheet and we're supposed to list four committees that we prioritize. Now, you're never going to get the first two because you're always going to be asking for very exclusive committees. They tell you to put it on there anyway because there's kind of a historical function to it. You have to be consistent --"did you always want to be on Commerce?" You know, that kind of stuff. You have a wish list.
>
> I will tell you, my first two committee assignments did not appear at all in my four choices. I was looking at Education, for instance. I didn't get Education. I ended up on Financial Services. Everyone told me I was going to end up on Financial Services. It's unique because my father was Chairman of that committee and I think they just thought tradition and everything else. As it turns out, that was a blessing and a real godsend and I will say that leadership knew better than I did because it did turn out to be a wonderfully rewarding assignment. I always think in terms of do I stay on Financial Services? As it turns out with the Bank Modernization Act and corporate

> governance, we were at the forefront of some of the major stuff that was happening. So, it's turned out to be an exciting assignment. And then they increased the jurisdiction of the Committee, so maybe I was just at the right place at the right time. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

In addition to the constraints listed above, the party steering committees restrict the number of committees a member can serve on, which may force members to be strategic in their prioritization of requests. House rules generally limit committee service to one exclusive committee or two non-exclusive committees (House Rule X, clause 5(b)(2)(A)). Table 2.1 presents the breakdown of committees considered exclusive or non-exclusive by each of the political parties for the 109th Congress.

--Table 2.1 About Here --

In summary, the committees on which members are assigned are very important in shaping their congressional careers, although there are a number of constraints in the process that may cause them not to receive their first choice. While it is important to acknowledge that there are some cases of members who are assigned to committees they did not request, it remains beneficial to our understanding about the influence of personal policy interests to learn what we can about members' reasons for serving on the committees on which they actually choose.

In addition to district and steering committee considerations in their committee selection decisions, members also pursue committee assignments that are related to their policy interests or career goals (Deering and Smith 1997; Perkins 1980; Bullock 1976; Fenno 1973). Previous studies have proposed typologies of

House committees based on the motivating factors driving members' committee selection preferences. Committees have been categorized based upon the motivations of members who serve on them, as influence and prestige committees, policy committees, and constituency committees (Deering and Smith 1997; Bullock 1976; Fenno 1973). [1] However, this is not a perfect classification of committees. While Deering and Smith (1997) classify the Energy and Commerce Committee as a policy committee, one member interviewed chose the Energy and Commerce Committee because of the ability to pursue issues important to his district. He remarked:

> When I was first elected in 1980, I went to the majority leader, Jim Wright, a fellow I had known since we were both 12 years old. He had a lot to do with deciding which committees we got on. He understood I was of the oil patch and that I had the oil patch in my district. I needed to be on Energy and Commerce. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

Committees also have been classified based on the external effects of their policies, as committees with uniform externalities[2], targeted externalities[3], or mixed

[1] *Influence and prestige committees* include Rules, Appropriations, and Ways and Means. *Policy committees* include Energy and Commerce, Judiciary, Education and the Workforce, Financial Services, International Relations, and Government Reform. *Constituency committees* include Agriculture, Armed Services, Resources, Transportation and Infrastructure, Science, Small Business, and Veterans' Affairs. See Deering and Smith, 1997.

[2] Decisions on *committees with uniform externalities* should impact each members' district equally. Such committees include Appropriations, Rules, Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, Science, Veteran's Affairs, Transportation and Infrastructure, Government Reform, and House Administration. See Cox and McCubbins, 1993.

[3] The output of *committees with targeted externalities* serves a specific set of interests, so only a narrow set of constituents are affected. These committees include Agriculture and Resources. The other committees listed, District of Columbia and Merchant Marine and Fisheries no longer exist and their jurisdictions have been captured in other standing committees. See Cox and McCubbins, 1993.

externalities (Cox and McCubbins 1993)[4]. This typology assumes that the primary motivation for members when choosing committees is the extent to which such an assignment addresses the needs of their constituents. Still other scholars classify congressional committees on the basis of whose interests are served by the legislative committees. For example, distributive theorists suggest that members are motivated to serve the interests of their constituencies through their committee assignments (Rundquist and Ferejohn 1975; Adler and Lapinski 1997). But informational theorists argue that the institution is organized into committees so that labor is divided among lawmakers who are issue specialists (Cooper 1970; Krehbiel 1991).

Each of these approaches offer a limited account of the reasons that members are motivated to select certain committees. While some of these explanations continue to assume that reelection is the dominant goal of members, others acknowledge that the pursuit of policy is also a chief reason members select certain committees. According to Deering and Smith (1997), in varying combinations, the three goals suggested by Fenno (1973) - reelection, pursuing "good" policy, and gaining institutional prestige – are considered by members when making committee selection decisions. Because at the individual level most members are motivated by multiple goals in pursuing committee assignments, they argue that only one goal is typically emphasized for each committee selected. In their view, members are able to

[4] *Committees with mixed externalities* have output that affects both specific and broad constituencies. These include Financial Services, Education and the Workforce, International Relations, and Judiciary. See Cox and McCubbins, 1993.

satisfy both their own policy interests and the needs of their constituents through their committee assignments by serving on more than one type of committee.

For those members who serve on exclusive committees, they are able to satisfy the needs of their constituents and their policy goals through service on one committee. This is because members are only allowed to serve on one exclusive committee, rather than choosing different committees for their district and policy goals. Out of necessity, such committees enable members to pursue both their reelection and policy goals. For example, members interviewed found service on the Energy and Commerce Committee to allow for the pursuit of both district and policy goals. One member said he needed to serve on the committee due to its jurisdiction over issues critical to his district. However, he also developed an interest in energy policy while serving on the committee and devoted legislative resources to this issue.

> I chose the committee because of the breadth of the issues and the jurisdiction. My district has a lot of telecommunications industries and data centers. Broadband issues and telecommunications are important. It was important to my district and I liked those issues and had a good working knowledge of them. In the competition to get onto the committee, you have had to prove to the chairman of the leadership that you have some knowledge of the issues considered by the committee and that is where I was able to separate myself. That is why I was the only new person put on the Telecommunications Subcommittee.
>
> The telecommunications fits my district and I like it, but I have to admit that most of my work is really focused on energy issues. I think energy is one of those things that is important to our nation's future. It

> may not be registering on the polls in my district, but I personally believe that it is one of the single most important issues that face us as a nation and what our future will be. The more and more dependent we become on foreign oil, the less choice we have in our own economy, in our own household but also especially in foreign policy. I have been trying to stake out an expertise in fuel cells and push for more research and development in fuel cell technology, that type of thing. If you would have asked me two years ago if that would have been my niche, I would have said no. (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

According to another member interviewed, the Energy and Commerce Committee allowed him to be both an issue specialist based on his previous occupation and to engage in district-level representation:

> My region and my background [as an engineer] -- I asked to be put on the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Science Committee. . . I think your constituency -- your district -- dictates a little bit what you focus on. You're not going to have a congressman from Connecticut who would focus on energy issues because there is not much energy in Connecticut in terms of production. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

While previous conceptions of committees are useful, the bottom line is that the committee system is structured to ensure members have the opportunity to pursue both district and policy goals. This chapter's focus is on the source of the policy considerations that motivate members in their selection of committee assignments. By learning more about what interests beyond the district motivate members to select certain committees, we will be better able to assess how members use committees to achieve their goals and how such legislative efforts affect policy outputs.

This inquiry will also offer insights into the role of committees in the larger legislative process. An extensive body of literature has developed assessing how representative committees are of the parent chamber (Adler and Lapinski 1997; Maltzman 1997; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Krehbiel 1991; Hall and Grofman 1990; Shepsle and Weingast 1987). Committee bias has been found to be largely dependent on the primary goals of legislators, as an unrepresentative committee is composed of members who hold views that differ from those of the membership of the chamber as a whole. If this is the case, members pursuing their personal policy interests could create legislation that is not representative of the chamber. To discover the extent to which committees are composed of what Hall (1987) calls "interesteds," we must broaden our understanding of the reasons that members select committees in the first place.

Personal Interests in Committee Selection -- Data and Methodology

To assess how personal interests affect members of Congress in their selection of committee assignments, I conducted 60 interviews with members of the U.S. House of Representatives in 2002, prior to the adjournment of the 107th Congress. For the purposes of this chapter, these interviews queried members about the reasons for their committee service. While the exact wording used was structured to the conversational nature of the exchange, for each member the question was asked in such a way to reveal the circumstances surrounding members' assignments to each committee, including whether they actually selected the committees on which they

were ultimately assigned. Each committee on which a member served was discussed separately during the interview.

If members chose a particular committee, I asked their reasons for selecting it. Reasons offered included district, ideology, lobby influence, and personal interest. If members said that they selected a committee because of a personal interest or because of the needs of their district, such responses were coded as either district[5] or personal.[6] If the member's response was related to a personal interest, the responses were categorized as to the type of personal interest they expressed. Specifically, responses were further coded as occupational interest or personal experience.

Members serve on varying numbers of committees, ranging from one to four. In order to compare across members, a uniform system of coding was necessary. To address the disparity in the number of committees on which members serve, responses were coded as one, indicating that they offered the specified reason for the committees they selected, and zero if they did not. These responses were coded one time rather than per committee. For example, if a member served on the House Armed Services Committee because there was a military installation in the district, the district interest variable for this member would be coded as one. If that same member served on the Education and the Workforce Committee because of a prior occupation as a teacher, the personal interest variable value would also be one. Further, the occupational experience variable would be coded as one. Another

[5] An extensive body of research exists that indicates district interests influence Members' legislative activities (Mayhew 1974, Fenno 1978, Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987, Kingdon 1989, Hall 1996).
[6] Fenno (1978), Krehbiel (1991), Hall (1996), Deering and Smith (1997) mention personal policy interests as affecting legislative activity.

variable was created to indicate whether members offered both a personal interest explanation and a district explanation for their committee choices. In the example above, the member would receive a one for this variable as well, indicating that committee service was divided between district considerations and personal policy interests.

While this method of coding has the potential effect of limiting conclusions that can be reached from the interview data, it allows for the comparison across members to learn about the impact of personal interest in committee selection decisions. To counteract the limitations of such coding, actual quotes from the interview transcripts are used to help elucidate the statistical findings.

In addition to the interviews themselves, information about members' occupational backgrounds and demographic characteristics was collected using sources such as *CQ Online* and *CQ's Politics in America*. The sample size for this study precludes sophisticated statistical analysis of members' responses. However, I supplement qualitative findings with simple frequency distributions and chi square analyses to explore the role of personal backgrounds in members' committee selections.

The Role of Personal Policy Interests in Committee Assignments

The results of the analysis of the interviews with members indicate that, although district service is important in the choice of committee assignments, members also freely gravitate toward committees that have jurisdiction over issues they care about for reasons other than district needs. While the committee typologies

discussed above are useful in identifying member goals, interviews with members can provide a less speculative way to understand the reasons that members select the committees on which they serve. For example, while 48 percent (n=29) of members serve on what are considered constituency committees, 70 percent of those interviewed (n=42) attribute their committee selection to district concerns.[7] Similarly, while almost 82 percent (n=49) serve on committees classified as policy committees, 93.3 percent (n=56) base their selection of at least one committee on personal interest. These differences demonstrate that established typologies do not neatly capture members' goals for committee assignments and suggest that some policy committees can actually serve district interests and some constituency committees can also serve policy interests.

-- Table 2.2 About Here --

As discussed above, some committees are better than others at allowing members to address both district needs and personal policy interests, particularly the exclusive committees. However, the results indicate that only half of the 20 members interviewed who serve on exclusive committees[8] said that they considered both parochial and personal interest when making committee selections. For those members who serve on exclusive committees, personal interest was more of a factor in their selection decision than district concerns. In fact, 90 percent (n=18) of these members said they based their exclusive committee selections on personal interests.

[7] Chi-Square test, p = .002.
[8] See Table 2.1 for committee list. Exclusive Committees in the 107th Congress included Appropriations, Rules, Ways and Means, and Energy and Commerce.

Only two serving on exclusive committees considered solely district needs when making their selections. Both of these members serve on the Appropriations Committee. Clearly, while exclusive committees allow greater opportunity to serve both district and personal interests, more members explain their initial decision to serve on such committees as relating to issues that are of personal interest rather than of importance to the district.

-- Table 2.3 About Here --

Members of the House who are not appointed to an exclusive committee generally are limited to service on no more than two non-exclusive standing committees. However, members interviewed for this study served on between one and four committees. To learn about members' committee selection decisions when they have more than one option, it is instructive to examine the combination of committee assignments to determine the way in which members balance their assignments between policy interests and district concerns. Forty-four percent of those interviewed (n=26) serve on both policy and constituency committees and 63 percent (n=38) offer both district and policy explanations for committee assignments.[9] This is consistent with Deering and Smith's finding that while members might be policy oriented, they often split up their committee assignments so that one committee on which they serve has a connection to district needs (72).

[9] Chi-Square test, $p = .009$. It is important to note that while 15 percent (n=9) of members based their committee selection on ideology and one member attributed membership to lobby influence, all sixty members explained service on at least one of their committees as due to either personal interest or district interest.

While scholars have found that committee choice has little influence on electoral outcomes (Bullock 1972, Fowler, Douglass and Clark 1980), results here do suggest that those members who have tighter races tend to serve on committees that can help their districts. Using logistic regression analysis, a statistically significant inverse relationship is revealed between service on constituency committees and general election results. As Table 2.4 demonstrates, as members receive a larger percentage of the vote in a general election, they are less likely to serve on constituency-oriented committees. This further indicates that members choose to allocate their committee assignments in a way that will help them succeed in their dual roles as lawmakers and representatives (Davidson and Oleszek, 1996; Sinclair 1996).

-- Table 2.4 About Here --

In addition to representing their districts, members assign importance to issues from their background experiences that have influenced them. When the members interviewed cited policy goals in explaining their committee selection decisions, they were referring to personal interests 100 percent of the time. This corroborates Fenno's description of the policy goal as "help[ing] to make good public policy in an area of substantial personal interest" (1973, 13). The question then becomes what are these personal interests that are intense enough for members to devote their committee service to, especially when members can only hope to serve on two or three committees at most? Findings reveal that for committee assignments, such

personal policy interests are derived from both prior occupational experience and other personal experiences that have profoundly affected members' lives.

Occupational Experience

When members come to Congress, they arrive having been influenced by their previous careers. This is particularly true when it comes to committee selection. Seventy-two percent of members (43) chose to serve on a particular committee due to their previous occupation. More than 85 percent of those members who selected committees based on occupational background served on a policy committee.

Some previous occupations seem to have more of an influence on committee selection than others. All of those with real estate backgrounds chose policy committees[10] because of their previous career experience. In addition, when excluding those members who serve on Appropriations and Ways and Means,[11] 90 percent of the business/bankers, 83.3 percent of the educators, and 80 percent of the health professionals chose policy committees because of their professional backgrounds. In contrast, only 52.38 percent of the lawyers selected policy committees due to their legal experience. This is likely because while those from the business, education, and health sectors can all unite around common occupational themes, there are a range of career paths attorneys can pursue. As such, a background in law does not necessarily lead all members who were lawyers to focus their legislative efforts on the same defined set of policy issues.

[10] According to Deering and Smith (1997), *policy committees* include Energy and Commerce, Judiciary, Education and the Workforce, Financial Services, International Relations, and Government Reform.

[11] Deering and Smith (1997) call the Appropriations and Ways and Means committees *influence and prestige committees*. They are excluded here because they are not considered *policy committees*.

-- Table 2.5 About Here --

Law

Findings indicate that lawyers' previous career experiences influence their committee selections, although not as much as members from other professions. Ninety percent of the lawyers interviewed made their committee selections based on personal interest, which can be either from their previous career experiences or another personal experience. When considering the former, a statistically significant difference is revealed between lawyers and non-lawyers in the selection of committees based on previous career experiences (62 percent compared to 77 percent)[12]. Every lawyer who said that their previous career experience influenced their committee selection served on at least one policy committee, as defined in the literature by Deering and Smith (1997).

While lawyers make decisions about committee service based on interest derived from their career experiences, they also make committee selections because of the needs of their districts. Almost 70 percent of the lawyers interviewed who attributed at least one of their committee selections to occupational interests (9 members) also responded that district considerations influenced at least one of their committee selections. Only two of the lawyers interviewed based their committee selections solely on district needs. Four attributed their committee assignments to previous occupational experience alone.

[12] Chi-square test, p=.027. See Table 2.6.

When members serve on committees based on their previous experiences as lawyers, they tend to serve on committees where their expertise can be utilized. As such, members with a background in law are not concentrated on the Judiciary Committee, as might be expected. Only three of the members interviewed with a law background (14.29 percent) served on the Judiciary Committee. In contrast, lawyers assigned to the following committees exceeded the number assigned to the Judiciary Committee: Financial Services (11 members), Energy and Commerce (5 members), Government Reform (5 members), Education and the Workforce (4 members), and Transportation and Infrastructure (4 members). A member who chose the Judiciary Committee attributed his selection of this committee to his work as a U.S. Attorney. He explained:

> I chose to serve on the Judiciary Committee because that's my background. Having served as a United States Attorney and having been involved in the legal profession now for many years, to me that was the one committee of all committees in Congress that I personally wanted to serve on. I believed the issues would be most interesting to me. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

The same member also attributed his choice to serve on the Government Reform Committee to his previous work experience. He said he was a member of that committee:

> [b]ecause of my work as a prosecutor and having been very actively involved in anti-drug efforts and drug cases as a U.S. attorney. We have done particularly important work I think, on drug issues. I have traveled down to South America with the Committee and have

> participated in the Speaker's Drug Task Force. That's really been an important role for that Committee to try ensure that our anti-drug effort continues properly and that the funding is there. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

A tax attorney explained that he served on the Budget Committee because of his previous occupation:

> I am a budget guy, numbers guy. I know budgets very well. Done them all my life. I am a tax attorney. The budget committee was a very good use of my knowledge. As good as you can get. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

An appropriator said that his choice to serve on the Commerce, Justice, State subcommittee was based on his background as a lawyer serving small business clients:

> I was a small town lawyer. I practiced by myself so I had a lot of experience with tax, did tax work for small business people and individuals. I did a lot of work for them in their business transactions. It is small town businesses, not big corporations. I brought that experience with me to Congress. (Member Interview, 10/7/02).

In summary, 62 percent of members interviewed with a prior career as a lawyer based their committee selection decisions on where their occupational expertise could be utilized. This is lower than members interviewed from other career backgrounds. Almost 70 percent of those lawyers that cited career experience as a reason for committee selection also considered district needs when making their committee selections.

Business/Banking

Members interviewed who had prior careers in business or banking made their committee selections based on their occupational experiences more than all other careers except real estate.[13] While all but one of the members with business or banking backgrounds cited their previous occupation as the reason for their committee selection (91 percent), only 67 percent of the other members interviewed based their committee selection decisions on their career experiences. All of the members who attributed their committee selections to their prior careers in business or banking served on policy committees, except for one member who secured a seat on the Appropriations Committee and served on two subcommittees that have jurisdiction over business issues—Commerce, Justice, State and Labor, Health and Human Services. Other than the appropriator, every member with either a business or banking background served on at least one of three committees that have jurisdiction over business issues: Financial Services, Energy and Commerce, or Education and the Workforce.

Members with backgrounds in business and banking do not ignore the needs of their districts when making committee selections, although district considerations are not as prevalent as for other professions. Forty percent of the members with backgrounds in business and banking (4) based all of their committee selection decisions on prior career experiences, while 60 percent (6) divided their choices between personal interests and the needs of their district.

[13] Chi-square test, p=.027. See Table 2.6.

The disparity between the extent to which members with backgrounds in business and banking choose their committee assignments based on their previous occupations (91 percent) compared to lawyers (62 percent) could have implications for the policy outputs of House committees. There is a narrowing of the gap in the two most prevalent professions in the House of Representatives, business and law. A decade ago, law was the leading occupation in the House, surpassing the second most frequent occupation, business and banking, by 14 percentage points. Today, previous careers in business and banking are as frequent as careers in law, a shift that occurred in the 104th Congress with the Republican takeover in the House. Based on the members interviewed for this study, a statistically significant relationship was found to exist between selecting committees because of a previous career and partisan affiliation.[14] This suggests that Republican control in the House, which has led to more businessmen/bankers who choose policy-oriented committees based on their professional backgrounds, could eventually impact the makeup and outputs of policy committees.

Unlike lawyers, who when basing their committee selection preferences on their occupational experience consider the specific issues they dealt with in their previous careers, members with backgrounds in business tend to have the similar motivation of reducing government regulation over businesses. Indeed, two members specifically mentioned OSHA when explaining their reasons for serving on the Education and Workforce Committee. One member said:

[14] Chi-Square test, p=.008

> I ended up on the Workforce part of that committee being probably the most business-oriented guy on the whole committee. The truth of the matter is, I ended up being Chairman of a Subcommittee on Fair Labor Standards Act and the National Relations Board and OSHA because of my experience in business . . .it gives me what you might call a fairly conservative approach to government regulations. And when I had the opportunity for that subcommittee, I thought the best thing I could do for both labor and business was to see if I couldn't change the attitude of OSHA. It never changed in the 20-30 years since it was formed, nobody had ever changed any of it. It had always had the reputation among business people: "My God, here comes OSHA, we're going to get fined for something." The employees of OSHA, the inspectors, were paid on the basis of penalties that they issued. So, what we tried to do is change that whole attitude. And we did change it in such a way that OSHA now is really kind of respected by business, in the fact that it comes in and will go through your plant and show you where you have safety problems and give you a chance to fix them up. It has worked beautifully. Businessmen no longer fear OSHA; they think it's probably a very good advisory group. The inspectors are no longer getting paid to destroy everybody. Their basic job now is to make sure it is a safe place to work, which is what it should have been all along. (Member Interview, 9/24/02).

Similarly, another member said that he became a member of the Education and Workforce Committee after the Speaker asked him to help reign in OSHA. He said he had experience as a small business owner with OSHA:

> I got put on the Education Committee for one purpose and that purpose was to calm down OSHA. Back in 1993 and 1994, Kennedy and Ford were trying to put an OSHA inspector in every office. It was awful.

> Now, as the subcommittee chairman that has jurisdiction over OSHA, we've got it calmed down a lot, but there are other issues that we've got to deal with. One is the National Labor Relations Board, one is unions, and one of them is the Beck decision -- how employees who happen to be union members are forced to pay dues and that dues-money is used for things they do not believe in. The nature of doing my work got me interested in that committee.
>
> Commerce was my number one choice. I got what I wanted, and then when Gingrich came to me and said "I want you to do this other too," I said "Great, I have experiences with OSHA." The government was and still is too big, too regulatory. I focus on the loss of freedoms we are feeling because of the arrogance of some people up here that think they know exactly how everybody ought to live. I was sick and tired as a professional and as a businessman of all the darn regulations. People up here sitting in their ivory towers were telling me what to do and didn't have the first clue of what we were having to do at home. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

In addition to addressing government regulations, some members with a business background also focus on representing the perspective of small businesses across issues. One member said that his business background helped land him seats on committees that had jurisdiction over issues that could impact small businesses, namely, the Ways and Means, Education and the Workforce, and Small Business Committees. He said:

> When the Congress changed hands to Republican, I was put on Ways and Means that year. In addition, Gingrich decided the Education Committee wasn't conservative enough so he put me on that to try to

> beef up the committee. I've been on that ever since. As you know, I am now chairman of one of the subcommittees. Small Business was an adjunct because I had run a small business. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

Other members with a business background try to bring their business perspective to the problems facing government, such as spending. For example, one member chose to serve on the Budget and Appropriations committees because of his interest in balancing the budget.

> I was a businessman. I thought they were doing dumb things in Washington and I thought the deficit spending was immoral. They were building up these billions of dollars in debt. To me that was just stupid and we needed to make some tough decisions in spending. I campaigned as a fiscal conservative -- deficit spending and the debt. I wanted to get on the Budget Committee and the Appropriations Committee. Having a balanced budget was the goal. (Member Interview, 11/13/2002).

Members with backgrounds in banking gravitate toward the Financial Services Committee, where they can use their professional expertise to inform policy formulation. A former accountant selected the Financial Services Committee because of his knowledge of issues under its jurisdiction due to his previous career. When asked about his choice to serve on the Financial Services Committee he said:

> Well, I have a license to practice accounting and I was in the finance business in my younger years. I still have a license to practice accounting, so banking and finance are of interest to me because of

> what I did a lot of years ago in the finance business and banking business. (Member Interview, 9/12/2002).

Similarly, a former investment banker chose the Financial Services Committee because of its jurisdiction over financial issues. He said that he is drawn to fiscal and economic policies, which caused him to also seek to serve on the Budget Committee (Member Interview, 9/10/2002). Because of his background as an investment banker, CQ called this member "a natural to serve on the Financial Services Committee."

Another member said that he chose the Financial Services Committee because of his knowledge and interest in banking issues. He explained that he and his brother bought interest in a small bank and sat on its board and from that experience he saw firsthand the government red tape that banks had to deal with (Member Interview, 9/5/02).

In summary, members with business and banking backgrounds tend to select committees based on their previous career experiences, particularly regarding their desire to reign in government regulations on small businesses. Ninety-one percent of members interviewed with a background in business and banking selected a committee because of their occupational experience while only 67 percent of the other members based their committee selection on their previous career.

Real Estate

All of the members who had real estate backgrounds said that they chose at least one of their committee assignments based on their previous occupation. In stark

contrast, only 69 percent of those members without a real estate career based their committee selection on previous career experiences[15]. While those with real estate backgrounds come to Congress to involve themselves in policy related to their prior career, it is not at the expense of the needs of their districts. All but one of the members with a real estate background served on both policy and constituency committees. Further 60 percent (3) attributed their committee selection decisions to both prior career experiences and district considerations.

Members with a real estate background tend to serve on committees where housing and development issues will be discussed. In fact, four of the five members with backgrounds in real estate serve on the Financial Services Committee, which has jurisdiction over public and private housing and urban development. Three of the five serve on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which has jurisdiction over economic development issues. One member said that he requested to serve on the Housing Subcommittee because of his experience as a home builder and developer:

> I have more knowledge than any person on the subcommittee. I don't mean to brag about that, but I have spent thirty years dealing with housing issues, environmental issues, process issues, and insurance. I have worked on HUD projects. I have witnessed the in-depth process of HUD and how it actually works in the real world. And I look at issues from a realistic perspective as individuals have to face them—as individuals that have to live under these laws that we pass. There is a difference between watching a movie on TV and having to produce

[15] Chi-square test, p=.027. See Table 2.6.

> and direct that movie. There is a huge difference and we have too many people on the subcommittee who watched it on TV. (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

This member also explained his choice to serve on the Transportation Committee because of the relationship between the issues under that committee's jurisdiction to housing:

> Growth and transportation issues are associated with the housing industry. I think they are directly associated. (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

Another member said that when the opportunity presented itself through the retirement of one of the members of his state delegation, he sought assignment to the Banking Committee[16] because of his prior career in real estate.

> Shortly after I arrived here, our member on the Banking Committee retired from the Congress and I decided that was an area of interest I wanted to pursue as a former real estate person. (Member Interview, 9/25/02).

In summary, all members interviewed who came from a real estate background requested to serve on at least one committee because of their interest in housing and development issues derived from their prior career experiences. This is the highest percentage among all of the career backgrounds. No members from the real estate profession that were interviewed said that they only selected committees

[16] The Banking Committee's name changed to the Financial Services Committee in the 107th Congress. In the interviews, members used both names, sometimes depending on when they started serving on the committee.

based on district needs and 60 percent took the interests of both their constituents and their prior occupations into account when selecting committees.

Education

All but one of the former educators said that their previous career influenced their committee selection. The one exception was a member of the House leadership who attributed his desire to serve on the Energy and Commerce Committee to the ability to influence more than half of the bills considered in Congress. While 89 percent of educators base their committee selection decisions on prior career experiences, 69 percent of non-educators do.[17]

All but one of the educators interviewed who said their career backgrounds influenced their committee selections chose committees with jurisdiction over education issues, namely the Education and the Workforce Committee or the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations Subcommittee. The remaining educator who said that his occupational background influenced his committee selection chose to serve on the Small Business Committee because of his interest in issues impacting small businesses. He said:

> When I was teaching, I had an education consulting business. It wasn't an extensive small business background, but it was a little bit of background. The challenges that small businesses face are either health care, taxes, paperwork, or regulatory burdens. They are pretty enormous challenges for the people who start small businesses, the entrepreneurs who take the risk and work so hard to make small businesses successful. We should not be setting the bar even higher

[17] Chi-square test, p=.027. See Table 2.6.

> for people who have that kind of entrepreneurial spirit and the wisdom and the insight to start a business and to create jobs and create wealth. We should be trying to make things easier for them to be able to do that. (Member Interview, 9/19/02).

Obviously, this case demonstrates that some members have career backgrounds that do not neatly fit in one career category over another. This member could have been categorized as either an educator or a small businessperson.

While educators select committees based on their prior career experiences, they do not make that decision at the expense of their districts. Only one educator selected a committee based on personal interest alone. Further, all of the members with an education background who selected a committee based on their prior career experience also selected a committee because of district considerations. Across the professional backgrounds of members interviewed, educators responded that committee selection was based on district interests more often than others, even the lawyers.

Members interviewed who were former teachers requested to serve on committees with jurisdiction over education issues. One member requested to serve on the Education Committee because his experience as a teacher caused him to believe that a strong education system could solve other societal problems:

> Being a former teacher, I know that the best way to get better health care and housing and employment, less crime, more hope is through education. Education is the key; if it works, those other issues fall in line. I felt that this was an area that I wanted to focus on as a teacher. I

> asked to go on the Education Committee. (Member Interview, 10/17/02).

Similarly, another member attributed her interest in serving on the Education Committee to her background as a teacher:

> I was very grateful, very happy, to be on the Education Committee because I had been an educator and teaching had been my first profession. I loved it and was always dedicated to public education. I taught history and government at the secondary school level. So, it was a continuation of my first love and first profession. It was not only logical, but one in which I had a direct personal interest. (Member Interview, 11/15/02).

An appropriator sought service on the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee because of his experience as a teacher and principal.

> I was a school teacher for seven years and a principal. Consequently, here I am with the checkbook for part of the education system. The experience that I had has been extremely valuable to me in that role. (Member Interview, 10/7/02).

A college professor attributed his selection of the Education Committee to his previous experience.

> Education was my first choice. Well, Appropriations was my first choice, but there were no freshman, no sophomores either. I chose Education because I am an educator by background. (Member Interview, 10/2/02).

Another college professor discussed how his previous career experience was influential across his committee assignments. He said:

> I didn't choose all of them. If you look at each of them, there's a reason I'm on. Science, I'm on because I'm a scientist. Education, I'm on because I'm an educator. I spent an enormous amount of time in the last two years trying to improve math and science education. I'm on science because I'm a scientist and education because I taught for twenty-two years at the college and university level and was heavily involved with elementary school science.
>
> I'm on the House Administration Committee because Newt Ginrgrich asked me to computerize the House. It was probably one of the most thankless jobs I've ever done, but I knew that going in. When I got here, a lot of the offices didn't have a single computer, and the worst part was the computer system servers didn't talk to each other and it was easier for me to send an email to Moscow. Newt put me in charge of that immense amount of work, but I got it done. That automatically put me on the House Administration Committee because they had jurisdiction over all the administration of the House and the biggest item was the computer system. It's the most costly item under their jurisdiction, so I'm still there.
>
> I've had a lot of library experience. I served on the city library board, the county library board, and state library board, so I'm the chairman of the Joint Library Committee. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

Another college professor, a statistician, was interested in census issues so he requested to serve on the Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Subcommittee.

He was also interested in education issues, so he selected the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations subcommittee.

> C-J-S is where the census is funded. That's the reason I wanted to get on that. I didn't get on it initially, but when I did the third census issue, I wanted to be on the census appropriations part of it and that is the reason I got on C-J-S.
>
> Labor-HHS was my first goal; I got on that when I first got on appropriations in 1995. I have been involved in education, so that was the most interesting one to me. (Member Interview, 11/13/02).

In summary, all of the educators interviewed served on policy committees and all but one used their prior career experience as the basis of at least one of their committee assignments. While educators focus on issues related to their career experiences when coming to Congress, they do not neglect the needs of their districts. Every educator who selected a committee based on prior career experiences also selected a committee based on district considerations.

Health Care

All but one of the members with health backgrounds said that their prior careers led them to seek certain committee assignments. The one exception is a member who is very active on health issues, but serves on the Education Committee because of a different personal experience that has caused her to champion policies to combat gun violence (see later discussion).

While members with other professional backgrounds tend to balance their prior career interests with district considerations, the members interviewed with

health backgrounds focus on prior career experience when they decide upon which committees to serve. Only one member with a health care background served on both a policy and constituency committee. This member was one of two who based committee selection on both prior career experiences and district considerations. While this might be explained because many of the members interviewed with a health care background served on the exclusive Energy and Commerce Committee, where members are typically given just one committee assignment, all but one of the members interviewed with a health care background served on more than one committee.

Four of the five members interviewed with health care backgrounds served on either the Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over health care issues, or the Education and the Workforce Committee, which has jurisdiction over federal programs for children and employer-provided health care. A dentist explained why he sought assignment to the Energy and Commerce Committee:

> That was one of the committees that had areas of interest to me, one of which was health care. There's not anything we really do in that committee that I don't find pretty interesting. I don't have any expertise in the energy part, at least I didn't then, but I do now. It wasn't anything they were doing that was brain surgery. I figured I'd could learn it. But, the health care part was a natural place for someone like me to go. (Member Interview 10/16/02).

Similarly, a nurse explained that the jurisdiction of the Energy and Commerce Committee matched her interests in health policy:

> This is a very good arena for me to work. It can keep me busy as long as I am in Congress. I have bills in my head lined up to go way back. Healthcare is such a mess: Reforming HMO's, the high cost of prescriptions, hospital reimbursement rates, doctor reimbursement. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

The former social worker chose both Energy and Commerce and Education because of the focus of these committees on children's issues.

> When I got on Energy and Commerce, because it is an exclusive committee you're not supposed to serve on any other committees. Early on, there were vacancies on the Education Committee. This committee is about children, kids. It is also where they do the child abuse stuff. It is also where they do the special education stuff. I like going into schools, I like talking to kids, I like to see how the programs that we work on for things like Title I -- the kids who have particular difficulties -- whether that is working or not. (Member Interview 9/13/02).

In summary, members with prior careers in health care seek assignments to committees with jurisdiction over health issues, particularly the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Education and the Workforce Committee. Unlike other professional backgrounds, members from health care fields do not tend to divide their committee assignments between policy interests and district considerations. In fact, those with health care backgrounds had the lowest percentage of members responding that they selected committees based on serving the needs of the district. Conversely, more than half of members with health care backgrounds sought committee assignments based solely on personal interests.

Other Occupations

There are cases where members serve on what are typically considered constituency-oriented committees because of their previous occupations. According to Deering and Smith (1997), constituency committees help members focus on issues important to their districts. Constituency committees include Agriculture, Armed Services, Resources, Transportation and Infrastructure, Science, Small Business, and Veterans' Affairs. While this may be true for many members, interviews reveal that these committees are also attractive selections for those members who have occupational experiences with the issues such committees have jurisdiction over. As one member with background in physics explained his service on the Science Committee:

> I've always joked that I'm the only even-handed person on the Science Committee, because everyone there is on the Science Committee not because of an interest in science but because there is a science facility in their district. They feel they should be on the Science Committee in the interest of that facility or of the people who work there. I'm not there because of a science facility. I'm there because I'm a scientist and I'm interested in science. I don't have any major facilities of any sort in my district, so I can be very objective. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

A former Air Force Officer, who had previously served on the National Security Council staff at the White House, said that she was interested in the Armed Services Committee because of its jurisdiction over national security issues:

> In the 106th Congress they added me to the Intelligence Committee, obviously because of my national security background. In this Congress, I asked to move from Intelligence to Armed Services as my second committee and they gave me the waiver to do that. Intelligence was interesting, but it is very narrow and I work for the long-term. I wanted a broader scope on national security issues and the Armed Services Committee gave me that opportunity. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

A farmer selected the Agriculture Committee and Financial Services Committee because of his interest in agriculture issues:

> I am on Agriculture because I am a farmer by trade. My formal academic training is in agriculture. I enjoy it and I have my most seniority there. My second committee assignment is Financial Services. And there again, not all of my classes at college were, because I was an ag-economics degree, necessarily in agriculture. I spent my time in intermediate business economics just like everyone else and finance classes and all that sort of thing, so I have a financial interest. (Member Interview, 9/12/02).

Similarly, one member explained that his interest in serving on the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee came from his background as a farmer:

> We all bring to this job whatever our life experiences are. I grew up on a dairy farm so I got an appreciation of land and trees and crops and so on. That is what propelled me to the Interior Subcommittee. I live on a farm. I really like outdoors. I have a national park on my farm, only I pay for it. We have trails and we have water and trees I have planted and so on and so on. All those trees around the lake are just a small part of our plantings. Natural Resources is a natural for me. I

> like parks. I like natural things. When I moved over to Appropriations, you submit your choice of subcommittees. My first choice was Interior and I have been on it for 28 years. Of course, when it came time after we became the majority, it was a natural for me to chair. (Member Interview, 10/7/02).

In summary, while some committees are known to attract members because of the needs of their district, certain occupational backgrounds also cause members to select those committees. Members interviewed with prior careers in science, the military, and agriculture selected committees with jurisdiction over these issues. While Cox and McCubbins' (1993) committee classifications take the district benefits of certain policy committees into account, findings here suggest that the policy benefits of certain constituency committees should also be considered.

Personal Experiences

While professional backgrounds can have an influence on the committees on which members choose to serve, members also select committees based on other significant experiences in their lives. More than 56 percent (n=34) of the members interviewed chose to serve on a committee because of a personal experience unrelated to their occupation. These included members' experiences due to their sex, race, or religion and also other primary or secondary experiences.[18]

For the most part, members who were interested in service on a particular committee because of personal experiences chose to serve on policy committees. In fact, almost 97 percent (n=29) of those members who said that they selected a

[18] These interests, which are distinct from occupational experiences, will be referred to as 'personal experiences.'

committee because of a personal experience serve on a policy committee, when controlling for those that serve on the Ways and Means and Appropriations Committees.[19] This overwhelming percentage does not mean that these members ignore the needs of their constituents. Rather, many pursue both personal and district interests by dividing their committee selections between the interest they derived from personal experiences and district considerations. More than 73 percent of members (n=22) who selected committees because of prior personal experiences also selected committees for district reasons.

Sex

> [The Banking and Currency Committee] became a perfect place to right the wrongs of the credit discrimination she and friends of hers whose husbands had died or deserted them had experienced. As my mother tells the story, the committee was considering legislation barring banks from denying anyone a loan because of race, national origin, or creed. According to Mamma, she snuck into a back room, wrote the words "or sex or marital status" in longhand into the text of the bill, made copies, and then brought them back to her colleagues, saying in her sweet, southern way, "I'm sure the omission of women was just an oversight on your part." It helps to have a woman in the right place at the right time. (Roberts 1998: 26).

As the above story illustrates, female members' experiences as women in society can impact policy outcomes, as long as they are "in the right place at the right time." The results of the analysis of the interviews reveal that these experiences as

[19] Deering and Smith (1997) call the Appropriations and Ways and Means committees *influence and prestige committees*. They are excluded here because they are not considered *policy committees*.

women influence members' choices of committee assignments. While more than half of both male and female members say that they select committees because of their personal experiences, women do so more often (67 percent compared to 54 percent).

-- Table 2.7 About Here --

Although many of the women interviewed cited personal experiences as their motivation for choosing at least one of their committee assignments, there was no specific pattern in the actual committees that were selected. Women did not simply select committees that have jurisdiction over what some would consider traditional "women's issues." Rather, women serve on a range of committees that address a variety of issues. Of the women interviewed, four served on the Financial Services Committee, three served on Transportation and Infrastructure, and two served on Appropriations, Energy and Commerce, Education and the Workforce, Veterans' Affairs, and Government Reform. Only one woman served on the following committees: Ways and Means, International Relations, Small Business, Budget, and Armed Services. This variety indicates that women see a range of committees, both policy and constituency oriented, as helpful in achieving their personal policy objectives.

Women do not ignore the interests of their districts when selecting committees. Only two chose committees solely based on interest derived from personal experience. Half of the women who selected a committee based on their personal experience also selected a committee because of the needs of their district.

Importantly, though, only one woman interviewed selected all of her committees due to district considerations.

When women choose committees because of a personal experience, they tend to either seek membership where they believe a woman's voice is underrepresented or to pursue issues that they care about because of their experiences as mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, or women in the workforce. On the other hand, there are cases where women do not choose to highlight their experiences as women, but are placed on committees because their party leadership wants to demonstrate that a woman's voice is present there.

Three of the female members interviewed explained their interest in serving on committees that were viewed as prestigious and in need of a woman's voice. One female member explained that she wanted to serve on the Ways and Means Committee because of its status and also to demonstrate that women can address the "hard issues." She said:

> I wanted to be on the Ways and Means Committee because it's a powerful committee. I've been on the tax committee in the state legislature and I knew that, frankly, they wanted credibility. As a woman in business, you need to have credibility on hard issues and so I knew I had to be able to demonstrate that I could deal with taxes. And I did get on the committee because I could demonstrate that. (Member Interview, 10/10/02).

Another member said that she chose to serve on the Financial Services Committee because of its prestige and also because of the breadth of issues under its jurisdiction. When asked why she selected the committee she said:

> Well, it is perceived universally as being a powerful committee. All of the money changes there and you impact the way banks do business. You impact consumer protection from financial institutions. And the International Monetary Fund is under Financial Services. We just saw the big protest about that in terms of how some of the countries can be better served if we just forgive their debt rather than to continue to charge them interest and that kind of thing. There are Third World countries that had to go through the till to get our support from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. They needed another way to address financial constraints. And that way, I thought, would be to just relieve the debt, period, and let them get a jump start and become an economic leader. Credit card debt, predatory lending, and housing comes under the committee too. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

She went on to explain that a woman's perspective could be helpful in mediating the tension between consumers and financial institutions:

> We have a lot of consumer challenges in the district. We have the highest rate of foreclosures and a high rate of bankruptcies. I also have a lot of financial institutions. And I think that women can serve in a leadership capacity, where they can work with both and not be combative and not be adversarial but rather to try to understand the positions and concerns on both parts and try to mediate or come up with some mutually agreeable kind of solution to some of the issues that are out there without injuring the profits of the financial

> institutions and not injuring the pocketbooks of the consumers. I think all of that is possible. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

The only woman veteran in Congress felt that it was important that a woman serve on the Armed Services Committee:

> Frankly, I saw the Armed Services Committee as needing strengthening and the Speaker saw the same. In addition to that, Tilly Fowler retired at the end of the last Congress. I am sensitive to the face that we put on leadership in this House. I think it is important to have people who can communicate about defense in a way that people understand in positions of potential leadership on our committees. I saw that as something that I could do. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

While some may want to highlight their perspective as women, others do not choose to have the fact that they are women impact their committee assignments. However, party leaders might view a member's gender as essential for championing the party's agenda on a particular committee. For example, a female Republican was named to the powerful Appropriations Committee in her freshman year after listing Commerce, Banking, and Transportation as her top choices because the party felt they needed a woman on the panel to address healthcare and education issues. As she explained:

> I really had no idea that I would get on Appropriations. There was only one woman Republican that had been on Appropriations and she retired the year I was elected. Leadership felt like they needed a woman -- someone who was a mom -- and that I would be an articulate spokesman for the conservative perspective on issues that are largely seen as women's issues. I can remember going around to the steering

> committee chairmen and asking if they would help me get on those committees [Commerce, Transportation, and Banking] and Dick Armey pulled me aside and said, you know, we're not going to put you on those committees, we're going to put you on the Appropriations Committee. My kids say I ran for Congress to run away from home -- to think about things other than health and education, all the things I spent my time at home worrying about. I got here only to find that's what I wound up thinking about here too. (Member Interview, 11/14/02).

While this member ended up on the committee that could benefit her district more than the other committees she requested, the mother of six would also be able to bring her personal perspective to the table as the issues of healthcare and education were debated. However, this was clearly not her intent when deciding which committees to request.

Another female member said that she did not receive the committee assignment that she would have preferred, in order to pursue her interest in health issues. Instead, she was placed on committees where her perspective as a businesswoman could be highlighted. While she did not select the committees on which she was given, Financial Services and Small Business, she says she is satisfied with her assignments.

> Nobody expected me to win. I had never run for national public office in my life. I ran because I thought it was the right thing to do. Nobody saw me coming. I knew, because I had run other people's races, how to win the race. But then I had to learn the job, and when I came down

> here they just simply put me on these two committees. I was in the largest freshman class of Republicans they had ever had in Congress.
>
> I wanted to be on Commerce so I could do medical stuff, because I'm a professional patient advocate. I wanted to do medical things. I'm a businesswoman, so I'm glad to be on Small Business. I wanted to be on Small Business. I'm glad to be on Financial Services, very glad. Because being on Financial Services is again something that ties in well with small business and with business in general. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

In addition to seeking committees due to the desire to add a woman's voice there, women also select committees to pursue policy agendas related to their experiences as women—mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, and in the workforce. The most poignant example of this is a member whose husband was killed and son was seriously wounded by a deranged gunman on a commuter train. According to this member, "I came to Congress to work on reducing gun violence in this country." She explained that she requested the Education Committee because:

> It really comes down to why I came to Congress on reducing gun violence. To me, education is the building block and hopefully will help not having young people get into drugs and alcoholism or violence or joining gangs or ending up in jail I felt that the two issues went very well together. I choose to stay on that committee. I think everybody in this country, every parent, wants the very best education for their child, and we have some problems out there.
>
> I'm really proud of the work that we have done on the Education Committee. We have been able to get gun safety issues in legislation

> and statistics of violence in schools. A couple of years ago, there was a shooting where a young girl was killed and there was no nurse in her school. I was able to get in legislation, No Child Left Behind, that federal monies could be freed up where schools could hire a nurse for the school. There have been a lot of victories like that. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

Some women are advocates for women's interests long before they come to Congress. One member got her start in politics as a young housewife who wanted to require grocery chains to include dates on food. According to her CQ profile, her "activist approach began as a stay-at-home mother in the early 1970s, when she helped launch a successful nationwide campaign to require freshness dates on food products." In her interview she said that from this experience: "I was transformed from an ordinary housewife to an ordinary housewife who could make a difference." She explained that as a member of Congress, she aims to convey the message that she will be a voice for those who need one, such as battered immigrant women, retired Americans, consumers, and women. Her campaign slogan is: "put a fighter on your side." (Member Interview, 9/10/02).

In the 107th Congress, this member served on the Financial Services and Government Reform Committees, which she said she selected due to her personal policy interests. In explaining her choices she said she was interested in consumer issues because "care beyond self is characteristic of women." She admitted that her first priority was to secure a seat on the Energy and Commerce Committee, which is the one exclusive committee where she could really pursue her personal interests.

Since our interview, she has moved to the Energy and Commerce Committee and is the ranking member of the Subcommittee of Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection.

In summary, personal experiences influence female members' choices of committee assignments more than their male counterparts. While some women seek to serve on certain committees because they want to ensure a female perspective is present in policy deliberations, other women do not choose committees because of their gender. Rather, sometimes committee assignments are imposed upon them by their leadership because they are women. Other women choose certain committee assignments because of their life experiences as women, which have made them an advocate for a particular issue.

Race

There are also differences between racial minorities and white members in their selection of committee assignments based on personal experiences. While 54 percent of white members chose at least one committee due to personal experience, 75 percent of non-white members did. None of the non-white members selected committees solely based on district considerations and only half of them based their decision on both personal and district interests. The other half of the non-white members interviewed focused their committee assignments solely on personal interests.

-- Table 2.8 About Here --

The minority members interviewed were universally concerned about community revitalization. They selected committees that could help them to redevelop poor areas, such as the Financial Services Committee (5 members), which has jurisdiction over housing and financial institutions, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (2 members), which has jurisdiction over economic development, and the Education and Workforce Committee (2 members), which has jurisdiction over welfare and education policy. In addition, non-white members were interested in foreign policy, with two assigned to the International Relations Committee in the 107th Congress. One black member had served on the Financial Services and International Relations committees prior to his elevation to the exclusive Energy and Commerce Committee.

Some of the non-white members attributed their interest in community revitalization to their childhood experiences. For example, one member said he grew up in public housing and as a result understood the importance of bringing financial investment, rather than government subsidies, to distressed areas. He said:

> The Financial Services Committee is important for redeveloping communities because we have to get banks and financial institutions engaged so they will invest in communities. In my community, I thought there were golden opportunities for financial institutions to invest and it just needed to be brought to their attention.
>
> My interest comes from growing up in urban New York. I was raised in public housing and therefore have a keen interest in the means to economically redevelop communities. And to do that in a way that brings corporate America in and not just continues to pour certain

> subsidies and certain programs the government can bring. I think what probably has affected me most is the environment that I grew up in. It was a relatively poor community and living in it, I learned what to do fix it and help revitalize it. In my background as an attorney, the person that most influenced me was Thurgood Marshall, and looking at how he was able to change things through "the system." That is what I would like to do, not necessarily through the judicial system, but within the legislative system. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

Others were interested in community revitalization based on their personal observations about what is best for communities. Such comments were not related to the particular districts they represented but to redevelopment in general. One member selected the Financial Services Committee because he was focused on increasing homeownership to revitalize communities:

> The committee has oversight over HUD, as well as community development. Those are two of my points of interest. When you build new homes or you rehab homes, then you start to stabilize communities. It has a snowball effect because then you do it block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood and then these young couples come back and hopefully support school districts. It has a snowball effect. Hopefully, that also adds the incentive for businesses to relocate there and to provide services to the people. We hope homeownership initiatives will have the snowball effect. (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

A member whose father had preceded him in Congress, would have preferred the Ways and Means Committee but settled for the newly-created Financial Services Committee where he could impact community investment:

> My dad was my predecessor in Congress and he served on Ways and Means, so I really wanted to serve on the Ways and Means Committee. The Financial Services Committee was created, it was the Banking Committee before I got here, so they expanded some of its responsibilities. When you consider its jurisdiction, those issues tie into what happens on the Ways and Means Committee – with money, credit and finance. You look at ways to revitalize communities, urban and rural. I think you have to look at how you use those tools to be able to do it. (Member Interview, 10/3/02).

Another member explained that he selected the Banking Committee because he was concerned about the ability of minority businesses to access capital. He said:

> I chose Banking because access to capital was one of the major issues relating to business growth. I was concerned about banking policies and particularly discrimination issues relative to banking. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

In addition to concerns about community redevelopment, minority members also selected committees because of a personal interest in foreign policy issues. These members selected the International Relations Committee. One member interviewed divided his committee assignments between the Financial Services Committee and the International Relations Committee. He explained that he had a long interest in international relations issues:

> I have always had an interest in world affairs. That is why I am happy and requested to serve on the International Relations Committee. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

While some minority members care about international relations generally, some are interested in issues affecting a specific area of the world. For example, one black member interviewed has become the advocate on issues relating to Africa. According to his CQ Profile:

> [His] career has been marked by an unwavering commitment to addressing the problems of Africa. While other lawmakers pursue more popular causes, he continues to fight for heightened U.S. attention and aid to the world's poorest continent.

This member explained that he chose the International Relations Committee because of his interest in Africa:

> I am on International Relations because I have a special interest in Africa. I was involved in refugee work with the YMCA. I became the second African-American president of the national YMCA in 1970. The YMCA served as a world-wide organization of ninety countries at that time and therefore it thrust me into more international activities. I took a strong interest in international development in Africa, in particular, and that's where my focal point here in Congress has been -- Africa and its problems. (Member Interview, 10/17/02).

Of course, service on a policy committee that has jurisdiction over an issue a member cares about because of their personal interests may not be as attractive as service on a prestigious committee. One member's interest in serving on a committee with jurisdiction over foreign policy was not as strong as his desire to move up in Congress by serving on an exclusive committee. He gave up his seat on the International Relations Committee when he was assigned to the Energy and

Commerce Committee. He explained his initial selection of the International Relations Committee:

> I've always been interested in foreign affairs. I interned at the State Department for two summers when I was much younger. As I said, I had a long term long standing interest. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

In summary, three-quarters of the minority members interviewed chose their committee assignments because of a personal experience, compared to 53.8 percent of other members interviewed. Minority members' personal interests tended to focus on either community revitalization or foreign affairs.

Religion

In addition to sex or race, some members select their committee assignments due to their involvement in religious groups or activities. Two of the members interviewed attributed their committee selection to such experiences. Both of these members chose the International Relations Committee.

One member explained her request for the committee as related to her involvement with the Jewish community:

> I was very active prior to coming here in the pro-Israel community. I have been very active in the Jewish community, both locally and nationally. I was born into it -- I was very active since I was a kid, I would say starting in Junior High School. I always wanted to serve on the International Relations Committee. And I had an opportunity, there was an opening -- I was absolutely thrilled. I got it in my sophomore year. I was lucky enough to get on the Middle East and South Asian subcommittee. After 9/11, wouldn't you know that would

> be the absolute place to be? I mean, you are talking about Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Iran, Iraq and the entire Middle East. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

Another member explained his request for the same committee as resulting from his personal interest after participating in charity work with his church in Central America.

> I am on the International Relations Committee and Chairman of the Western Hemisphere subcommittee. My wife and I, we've been working in Central America for 35 years, so the ability to assist in the peace process in both the war in El Salvador and the war in Nicaragua was very satisfying and helpful. I think we actually did some good. My wife will now say we might actually have changed history a little bit. (Member Interview, 9/24/02).

In summary, these cases demonstrate that members' involvement or affiliation with religious groups can influence their choices of committee assignments.

Primary or Secondary Experiences

In addition to personal interests that members have as a result of their identification with a demographic group, members interviewed also said that they selected committees because of personal experiences they had in their lives or by witnessing the experience of someone close to them. One member said that he selected the Education Committee because he felt that his own education was important. As the son of a former shipyard worker, he was the first in his family to go to college. He said:

> I always wanted to serve on the Education Committee because access to education made a difference in my life. (Member Interview, 9/11/02).

Another member said the year he spent teaching in Africa "had a profound effect" on him and gave him "a lot of time for reflection." He attributed his service on the International Relations Committee to this experience and to his interest in foreign policy that came from both of his parents being from other countries. (Member Interview, 9/5/02). According to his CQ Profile,

> His father, a physician, was born in South Africa and grew up in Kenya. His mother, who trained as a nurse, is from England. They became U.S. citizens in 1995.

An appropriator, who is interested in mental health and substance abuse issues because of his own personal experience with depression and his family experience with mental illness and substance abuse, said that he selected the subcommittees that could help him focus on these issues. While he has a specific policy focus, rather than a district focus, he explained that he chose the Appropriations Committee because he feels our national priorities are set through our funding allocations:

> The greatest reflection of where our nation's priorities are, I believe, is where we spend our money. All the rhetoric in the world won't add up to the dollars that can be appropriated toward one priority or another. Really, the greatest reflection of our nation's priorities is through what we spend our money on. (Member Interview, 10/3/02).

In pursuing his personal interest in mental health issues, he chose subcommittees that make funding decisions for our nation's health research agenda, and education and justice systems:

> I am interested in mental health and education and child development, so I got on Labor, Health and Education. I am interested in prevention and juvenile justice issues and judiciary and our criminal justice system, which I think is our secondary mental health care system. That is why I am on Commerce, Justice, State. I really see the two dove-tailing very well. In fact, one of the things I am anxious to do in the time that I have in the Congress is to work to integrate the monies that go to prevention in Judiciary with those monies that go into healthcare in HHS and those monies that go into child development in the Department of Education because they all are going after the same set of issues. Yet, they are often appropriated independent of one another. They have very good reason to be appropriated independent from one another in some respects but in others there is no reason why they can't work more coherently amongst one another. (Member Interview, 10/3/02).

As is evidenced in the case above, in addition to first-hand experiences, members select committees because of experiences of their family members or friends. A member who serves on the Veterans' Affairs Committee said he was interested in serving on this committee because of his father and father-in-law, who both served in World War II. He explained:

> My dad was a World War II Navy pilot. I have sensitivity to those issues. Now, my father-in-law is a World War II veteran in the Army

> and I have concerns about the way in which Veteran Services interacts with veterans. (Member Interview, 9/25/02).

Another member chose to serve on the Science Committee because of his interest in diabetes, which came from his daughter's suffering from the disease.

> I'm on the Science Committee. I got asked by Newt Gingrich to serve on that committee. He came to me. He's been a real strong advocate in diabetes. I believe he'd seen my work and was satisfied with it because it relates to diabetes and he is a scientific-minded person anyway. He asked me how I would like to be on the committee and I said sure. (Member Interview, 11/19/02).

In summary, members' experiences in the world as they live their lives, and the experiences of those close to them, can be significant enough to affect their selection of committee assignments. These experiences can come from childhood, they can be related a health problem either the member or someone close to them is experiencing, or they can come from a negative experience in the marketplace or with a government agency.

Conclusion and Implications

This chapter extends our understanding of the motivations of members by examining the personal policy interests that members pursue when seeking committee assignments. One member interviewed explained that "Every member is different. Every member has their own set of priority goals and visions for what the service in the Congress may mean to them." This analysis provides a tentative first look at how

those "priority goals" that are motivated by personal policy interests impact legislative behavior.

While previous studies have focused on members' goals within specific committees, this study considers member choices across committees, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how members use their committee assignments to achieve distinct objectives. Rather than discounting the role of district interests, it provides confirmation that members serve a dual purpose as national lawmakers and local representatives.

The evidence presented in this chapter indicates that many members do not hesitate to involve themselves in issues that they are interested in for reasons other than district representation. Instead, they freely draw upon their occupational and personal experiences when deciding how to allocate their committee assignments. This demonstrates that the constituency variable is more complex than originally conceived. Constituency does not necessarily refer to those within the geographical boundaries of a member's district. Rather, members have extended their representational reach to encompass occupational, group, and personal interest constituencies. This can have implications for the policy outputs of committees as members evaluate policy in terms of how it impacts their non-district constituencies and become what Bullock (1976) called "interest group spokesmen."

Indeed, studies of interest group influence in Congress indicate that groups seek sympathetic audiences among committee members because the committee stage is where they can exert the most influence over the shape of policy (Hall and

Wayman 1990; Berry 1997). According to Hall and Wayman (1990: 803), "the more likely certain members are to support the group, the more active it would want them to be." It stands to reason that interest groups would have more success among members who are predisposed to agree with them due to their personal backgrounds. While Hall and Wayman (1990) consider the district goal in assessing the way in which interest groups mobilize members to participate at the committee level, it is arguably more important to assess the ways that members' personal experiences provide interest groups access to policy formulation in committees.

Although a substantial body of literature on congressional committees has examined whether committees are representative of the parent chamber, the literature does not clearly demonstrate whether committees systematically produce biased policy outputs. This is because such studies do not fully capture the conditions under which bias can appear. By testing differences between the preferences of committees and the chamber as a whole utilizing only the district goal, scholars miss the important influence of personal interests on policy formulation. While the reelection goal has dominated scholars' interest in committees as preference outliers, future research should pursue the implications of members' pursuit of their personal policy interests on the extent to which the committee is representative of the full chamber.

One member interviewed described an effective legislator as "one who is able to consistently make sure that his or her views are understood and articulated and taken into account by their colleagues and who, when there is the need for a particular action involving their district, has the credibility to be listened to, taken into account

and treated as an equal by their colleagues and by the Administration." In order to gain a more complete understanding of how representative policy outputs in Congress truly are, future research should explore the effects of replacing the term "district" in this quote with a conception of constituency that takes into account members' personal policy interests.

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Table 2.1: Committee Classifications[20]

Democrats	Republicans
Exclusive	**Exclusive**
Appropriations	Appropriations
Rules	Rules
Ways and Means	Ways and Means
Energy and Commerce[21]	Energy and Commerce
Financial Services[22]	
Non-Exclusive	**Non-Exclusive**
Agriculture	Agriculture
Armed Services	Armed Services
Budget	Budget
Education and the Workforce	Education and the Workforce
Energy and Commerce[23]	
Financial Services[24]	Financial Services
Government Reform	Government Reform
Homeland Security	Homeland Security
House Administration	House Administration
International Relations	International Relations
Judiciary	Judiciary
Resources	Resources
Science	Science
Small Business	Small Business
Transportation and Infrastructure	Transportation and Infrastructure
Veterans' Affairs	Veterans' Affairs
Exempt	**Exempt**
Standards of Official Conduct	Standards of Official Conduct
Select Intelligence[25]	Select Intelligence

[20] Source: "House Committees: Categories and Rules for Committee Assignments." Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, February 25, 2005.
[21] For members first serving on the panel in the 104th Congress and subsequent Congresses.
[22] For members first serving on the panel in the 109th Congress and subsequent Congresses.
[23] For members who served on the panel before the 104th Congress.
[24] For members who served on the panel before the 109th Congress.
[25] Not listed as such, but treated as exempt.

Table 2.2: Comparison of Committee Typologies and Member Responses

	Based on Committee Typology % (n)	Based on Member Response % (n)
Serving Constituency Interests	48 (29)	70 (42)
Pursuing Personal Policy Interests	82 (49)	93 (56)
Both Constituency and Personal Policy Interests	44 (26)	63 (38)

Table 2.3: Committee Selection Explanations of Members Serving on Exclusive Committees[a]

	Member Explanation % (n)
Serving Constituency Interests	60 (12)
Pursuing Personal Policy Interests	90 (18)
Both Constituency and Personal Policy Interests	50 (10)
Constituency Interest Only	10 (2)
Personal Interest Only	40 (8)

a. 20 members served on exclusive committees.

Table 2.4: Impact of General Election Results on Service on Constituency Committees

Variable	B	Standard Error	Significance	Impact
General Election Results	-.060	.027	.024	.941
Constant	3.951	1.777	.026	51.992

Model Chi-Square (Improvement): 6.349 (1 df); p=.012

Table 2.5: Committee Selection Explanations by Occupation

Member Explanation for Committee Selection	Law (N=21) % (n)	Business/Banking (N=11) % (n)	Real Estate (N=5) % (n)	Education (N=9) % (n)	Health (N=5) % (n)
Serving District Interests	76.2 (16)	54.5 (6)	60.0 (3)	88.9 (8)	40.0 (2)
Pursuing Personal Policy Interests	90.5 (19)	100.0 (11)	100.0 (5)	100.0 (9)	100.0 (5)
Occupational Interest	61.9 (13)	90.9 (10)	100.0 (5)	88.9 (8)	80.0 (4)
Both District and Personal Policy Interests	66.7 (14)	54.5 (6)	60.0 (3)	88.9 (8)	40.0 (2)
District Interest Only	9.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
Personal Interest Only	23.0 (5)	45.5 (5)	40.0 (2)	11.1 (1)	60.0 (3)

Table 2.6: Occupational Experience Explanation for Committee Assignment by Career

Reason for Committee Selection Was Occupation	YES % (n)	NO % (n)	TOTAL % (n)
Law	61.9 (13)	38.1 (8)	21
Education	88.9 (8)	11.1 (1)	9
Real Estate	100 (5)	0 (0)	5
Business/Banking	90.9 (10)	9.1 (1)	11
Health	80.0 (4)	20 (1)	5
Public Service/Politics	28.6 (2)	71.4 (5)	7
Military	100 (1)	0 (0)	1
Agriculture	0 (0)	100 (1)	1
TOTAL	**71.7** **(43)**	**28.3** **(17)**	**60**

p=.027 (7 df)

Table 2.7: Committee Selection Explanations by Sex

Member Explanation for Committee Selection	Male (N=48) % (n)	Female (N=12) % (n)
Serving District Interests	68.8 (33)	75.0 (9)
Pursuing Personal Policy Interests	93.8 (45)	91.7 (11)
Personal Experience	54.2 (26)	66.7 (8)
Both District and Personal Policy Interests	62.5 (30)	66.7 (8)
District Interest Only	6.3 (3)	8.3 (1)
Personal Interest Only	31.3 (15)	25.0 (3)

Table 2.8: Committee Selection Explanations by Race

Member Explanation for Committee Selection	White (N=52) % (n)	Non-White (N=8) % (n)
Serving District Interests	73.1 (38)	50.0 (4)
Pursuing Personal Policy Interests	92.3 (48)	100.0 (8)
Personal Experience	53.8 (28)	75.0 (6)
Both District and Personal Policy Interests	65.4 (34)	50.0 (4)
District Interest Only	7.7 (4)	0.0 (0)
Personal Interest Only	26.9 (14)	50.0 (4)

Chapter 3: The Role of Personal Policy Interests in Bill Sponsorship Activity

Introduction

Bill Emerson was elected to Congress in 1980 to represent Southeast Missouri. A longtime smoker, he died on June 22, 1996, at age 58, after an eight month battle against lung cancer. At the time of his death, he was in his eighth term, and in line to become chairman of the House Agriculture Committee. As the number two Republican on the committee, Emerson focused his legislative efforts on farm policy, an issue important to his predominately agricultural district.

Although Bill Emerson's wife of more than twenty years, Jo Ann, was a Washingtonian, she was able to wage a successful campaign to win his congressional seat. Jo Ann was not a stranger to politics. As a child, her father was executive director of the Republican National Committee for many years. After college at Ohio Wesleyan University, Jo Ann returned to Washington where she served as the deputy director of communications at the National Republican Campaign Committee and subsequently spent 20 years as a lobbyist, working for the American Insurance Association and the National Restaurant Association.

Jo Ann Emerson's campaign to succeed her husband was called "Team Emerson," and she pledged to continue his efforts for the district. Although her opponents tried to highlight her lack of ties to Southeast Missouri, her campaign was successful, and on November 6, 1996 she won a simultaneous special election to finish her husband's term and a general election for a new term. When she was sworn in on January 7, 1997, she became the first woman to represent the 8th District

of Missouri. Emerson was assigned to the two committees on which her husband served: Transportation and Infrastructure, and Agriculture. According to Congressional Quarterly,

> Although she was born and raised in the Washington, D.C., suburbs and lived most of her life there, Emerson has worked to develop the same kind of bond her husband had with her southeast Missouri constituents. She continues her husband's annual summer agricultural tour of the district. She constantly points out that the 8th is the poorest of Missouri's nine congressional districts and told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that she could not let her husband's work languish. "People like the way they were being represented, and I knew I could carry on in that manner," she said (CQ Member Profiles, 2002).

Jo Ann Emerson is by all accounts a "city-girl," who was elected to represent an agricultural district in rural Missouri. According to her CQ Member Profile, to succeed she "has become a self taught expert on agricultural policy" and has worked hard to carry on her husband's priorities (CQ Member Profiles, 2005). Indeed, 41 percent of the legislation (9 bills) sponsored by Jo Ann Emerson in the 107th Congress were bills originally introduced by her husband.

In the 106th Congress, Emerson was awarded a seat on the prestigious Appropriations Committee, and was assigned to the Agriculture, Energy and Water Development, and Transportation subcommittees. These subcommittee assignments would allow her to carry on the work of her late husband on behalf of the 8th district, particularly in his efforts to bring federal resources home for local projects. Emerson

has made it her top priority to ensure rural areas get their fair share of federal resources.

> The most pressing initiative that I have been working on for the past two years, and will continue to do forever is leveling the playing field for rural America or allowing rural America to have equal access to government opportunities. My district is the largest and the most rural in the state (Interview, 10/8/02).

In addition to carrying on the work of her husband, though, Emerson has found a niche of her own and has used the discretion given to her by her constituents, as a result of her tireless work on their behalf, to actively pursue an issue of deep personal interest to her. In the 107th Congress, 32 percent of the bills (7 bills) introduced by Jo Ann Emerson were prescription drug and Medicare-related. For example, she sponsored a bill to allow for tax credits to senior citizens for premiums paid under Medicare Part B, a bill to provide for an outpatient prescription drug benefit under Medicare, a bill to provide affordable prescription drugs to low-income Medicare beneficiaries and stop-loss prescription drug coverage for all Medicare beneficiaries, and a bill to allow for the re-importation of prescription drugs from other countries. While these issues can be viewed as important to seniors everywhere, there was a more personal reason behind Emerson's fervent efforts. According to Emerson, she championed the prescription drug issue because of her experience with her mother-in-law, who could not afford the medications prescribed to her.

> My own personal experience with my mother-in-law who has been ill, and is just getting worse all the time, is why I have been so focused on the issue of prescription drugs. My mother-in-law pays about nine hundred dollars a month for prescription drugs and she only has a certain amount of savings. She is living in an assisted living center. We now have this pot of money that dwindles every month. Her Social Security and teacher's retirement don't cover the costs of everything (Interview, 10/8/02).

Emerson's experience with her mother-in-law's situation has made her a passionate advocate for solving the prescription drug problem for seniors. Once considered an insider with party leaders, because she was a female Republican with conservative values and had a strong knowledge of the legislative process from her years as a lobbyist, this issue has left Emerson at odds with party leadership on one of their most important priorities. In 2003, she cast the deciding vote on the Republican Medicare prescription drug bill after forcing leaders to agree to schedule a vote on drug reimportation legislation and to use the outcome of that vote as the House's official bargaining position during conference meetings with the Senate. As described in a report by Congressional Quarterly after passage of the Medicare bill:

> The [reimportation] issue had been [at] a turning point on June 27, when the House first passed H.R. 1. On that night, Emerson, in tears, switched her vote from "no" to "yes" after GOP leaders promised her a floor vote on a separate drug importation bill authored by Gutknecht. She was the difference in the one-vote margin of victory (CQ Weekly 11/22/2003, Page 2875).

Emerson's gamble paid off in the short term, when the drug reimportation bill she negotiated to have brought to the floor passed the House by a vote of 243-186, despite the strong opposition of the Republican leadership and the Bush administration. However, when the Medicare prescription drug conference report came to the House floor, the reimportation provisions were not included. According to Congressional Quarterly's account of the House vote on the final Medicare prescription drug conference report,

> During a dramatic, night-long vote, Emerson voted no and then hid behind a banister on the Democratic side of the chamber while Republican Whip Roy Blunt, on an arm-twisting mission, searched for her in vain. "At that point, it was high drama. I didn't want to miss anything," Emerson said later. "They didn't talk to me because they didn't find me" (CQ Member Profiles, 2005).

In the end, Emerson's reimportation bill died and the Medicare prescription drug conference report passed by a vote of 220 to 215, with Emerson voting no. While her party support score has consistently averaged approximately 90 percent, the political capital she used in going against her party leadership on their number one priority and pressing for a vote on a difficult issue for the rank-and-file members has likely caused her to no longer be considered as the "special favorite of House GOP leadership" (CQ Member Profiles, 1998).

Jo Ann Emerson is a member who must focus much of her time on demonstrating to her constituents that, although she is not originally from rural Missouri, she is an effective representative for them in Congress. The fact that she has been reelected five times indicates that her efforts have been successful. While

charged with the task of acting on behalf of her district, she has also used her position in Congress to actively engage on an issue that she feels strongly about because of her own personal experience with her mother-in-law. Not only did she introduce legislation on the drug reimportation issue, she also worked with fellow Republicans to draft compromise legislation, which she ultimately, single-handedly, forced to the House floor for a vote. The salience of the prescription drug reimportation issue was not unique to Emerson's district; this was not a vote about farm subsidies or the Freedom to Farm Act. While her position is consistent with her rural district's interests, it was Emerson's personal experience with her mother-in-law that moved her to wage an intense legislative battle against her own party leadership.

Like Jo Ann Emerson, other members of Congress advocate for issues that they have identified as in need of federal intervention through their own personal life experiences. While she served on committees that enabled her to address the needs of her district, bill sponsorship provided Emerson the opportunity to pursue her personal policy interests. According to Hall (1996:55), "[l]egislators are members of what the sociologists call a free profession, in the sense that they individually set their own schedules and decide the topics of their attention." We learned in the previous chapter that members do in fact base their committee selection decisions on interests derived from personal experiences. Once members are assigned to a committee, they have numerous opportunities to become involved in a variety of issues. The question becomes the extent to which members' personal life experiences consume their legislative activities once committee assignments are made.

This chapter moves us another step closer to understanding the role of members' personal interests in policy formulation by assessing how members' personal experiences affect their choices of the issue areas in which they become engaged. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the role of personal policy interests in the bills that members sponsor. To learn more about the way in which members' personal interests are revealed in the bills they introduce, I compare interview responses and biographical information of the members interviewed with the bills they sponsored during the 107th Congress. This systematic analysis of bill sponsorships will provide an opportunity to consider the extent to which members actively pursue their personal policy interests in Congress and will help us to better understand how personal policy interests motivate members in their decisions about where, among the range of issues facing Congress, to focus their legislative activities.

The Decision to Sponsor Legislation

> Lawmakers are led to their choice of legislation by many factors: parochial interest, party reference, and often, crass calculation connected to campaign fundraising. But there is a motivator that is rarely discussed that can be just as potent: a personal brush with adversity. Congress is an intensely human place where personal experience sometimes has powerful repercussions (Wall Street Journal, October 2, 1987, 1, quoted from Davidson and Oleszek 1996: 230.)

Bill sponsorship provides a meaningful opportunity to assess how members' personal policy concerns are revealed in their legislative activities. By introducing legislation, members can formally demonstrate their interest in participating in the

legislative process on an issue of importance to them. These bills represent those areas where members have chosen to devote their time and scarce legislative resources. Previous research has found that choices in this regard provide a strong indicator of those issues for which a member wants to acquire a reputation among colleagues and constituents (Schiller 1995; 2000; Swers 2004). This chapter examines the extent to which a members' previous occupation, experience, or identification with a group affects the bills in which members decide to become the primary sponsor.

Benefits of Bill Sponsorship

Although it is a primary function of Congress to pass laws, the value of bill introductions to an individual member is not typically tied to final passage. In fact, a majority of introduced bills are never enacted into law. For example, in the 107th Congress, 7,029 bills and resolutions were introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives and 3,762 in the Senate, but only 377 became law (Legislative Information System of the U.S. Congress website). While they may not have made it through the entire process, 17.06 percent, or 1,199, of House bills saw action in committee or subcommittee, through either hearings or markups. The full House favorably acted upon 17.29 percent of introduced bills (1,215), 40 percent (486) of which were passed by roll call vote.

While the prospects for successfully moving a bill through the legislative process are dim, the truth is that members have recognized a value to bill sponsorship beyond our typical conception of this tool as a vehicle to enact public law. Members

introduce bills for a variety of reasons, including to propose policy alternatives, to stimulate debate, to appease interest groups or the executive branch, to develop a reputation of issue-expertise among colleagues, or to demonstrate to their constituents that they are actively seeking ways to solve a particular problem at home (Swers 2002; Schiller 1995). Universally, when members introduce bills, they are making an effort to take ownership of a policy alternative.

In addition, while an individual bill might not make it all the way through the legislative process on its own, through bill sponsorship a member's policy suggestions are on the table to be considered for inclusion within a larger legislative vehicle. As one frustrated member recounted regarding a policy proposal he authored:

> It is very seldom that you have that sense of pride because it has your name on it. I know there have been a couple of occasions where I have had the proposal, but it didn't go anywhere. You have to remember there are not that many successful ones. There is a pecking order in Congress. There is a pecking order on the Committee. You really have to have a good idea and, this is not to cast dispersions but, it is not going to be yours at the end of the process anyway. It finds its way in there, but it is someone else who is the sponsor. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

Another member explained that it was unlikely that his name would be on a bill that made it through the process:

> The problem is, on the federal level, there are not big wins if you're a member that isn't a chair or ranking member. You win your battles

> over the short phase or with small projects or small things. I was in the state legislature 20 years and in my last session I passed 60 bills. In Congress, I could be here 200 years and never pass 60 bills. So, you don't have those big wins because there are so many of us. We all work together on certain issues. (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

While members might prefer to have their bills move through the process individually, the reality is that the "packaging" of a number of legislative proposals into larger bills has been growing in frequency in recent years (Krutz, 2001). Omnibus bills provide a tangible opportunity for members to enact their policy goals. This is because omnibus bills succeed. According to Krutz, "a significant proportion of major lawmaking is undertaken with this method, and many bills in Congress see the light at the end of the legislative process because they become attached to invariably successful omnibus bills" (136). One member of leadership described the reality of putting together passable legislation:

> To even hope to be a leader in Congress you have to be more interested in putting a Mosaic together than you do in building a missile. You are going to hit lots of different points and at the end of the day look at those points and see what you've got. An effective member works hard and puts in the time, understands that almost never will what we do on the House floor be exactly the way they would have done it, and understands the important balance between what is possible and what is not. (Member Interview, 10/7/02).

Another member of leadership explained that moving difficult legislation takes efforts beyond just a good policy proposal:

> Most members here don't understand what it takes to pass a difficult bill. They think it is legislative stuff. That is only a small part of it. We have to put out a communications apparatus to keep the bill moving ahead and keep it in front of people's eyes. And you better have a coalitions apparatus -- people who are supportive of the product who will work within their organizations and work with the legislative process as well to help keep moving this thing along. Very few members understand, at least from my experience, that the combination of these three things are critical to achieve success. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

In the end, while the prospects for an individual bill's passage is dim, the language of the bill can potentially make its way to the president's desk by becoming attached to a larger vehicle. This makes bill introduction a beneficial endeavor for members to undertake in order to claim pride of authorship of a policy alternative.

Costs of Bill Sponsorship

Bill sponsorship is an important tool that members use to fulfill a variety of goals. However, the costs associated with sponsorship cause members to use this option sparingly. There are countless pressing national issues that can be addressed through legislation and there is no limit to the number of bills a member is allowed to introduce. A member quickly realizes, however, that he or she must be strategic in deciding where, in the multitude of issues facing the nation, to spend his or her time and energy because there is no way to be the leader on everything.

In the decade between the 97th and the 107th Congress, members sponsored an average of 17.75 bills per session (Legislative Information System of the U.S.

Congress website). This number is quite low relative to how many pressing issues confront Congress in a given term, indicating that members use bill sponsorship only on those issues that achieve a certain threshold of importance to them. When contemplating bill sponsorship, members must decide in which areas they will focus their attention. Introducing a bill in one area will likely cause members to not have time to devote resources to bill introduction in another area (Hall 1996; Swers 2004). According to one member, such resource constraints caused him to be strategic about how to focus his legislative efforts to ensure effectiveness:

> My difficulty is limiting our staff resources and my time to where you can achieve the goal and not get spread too thin. I would much rather do three things well than promise ten and do nothing. That is the problem for us. It is time constraints and resource limitations. (Member Interview, 9/25/02).

A calculation of the costs of bill sponsorship must be weighed against potential benefits of having legislation introduced on the subject with the member as a primary author. One member described the cost-benefit calculation of bill sponsorship in the following way:

> You find a place where you feel most comfortable and where you see the greatest result. If you are going to invest that kind of time and energy, then you have got to get the most bang for your buck because you could get something that really doesn't have that much consequence, economically, socially, politically or whatever. You don't want to do that. You have to pick and choose. (Member Interview, 9/24/02).

According to Schiller (1995), there are three types of costs members incur when deciding to sponsor legislation: resource costs, opportunity costs, and political costs. First, the time and energy members and staff spend on an issue are called *resource costs*. In addition to meeting with relevant groups and constituents about a policy problem and potential solutions, members and staff must work with the Office of Legislative Counsel to draft the legislative language, prepare statements, bill summaries, and Dear Colleagues to encourage colleagues to cosponsor the bill and outside groups to support it, and work with committee and party leadership to see that the bill makes its way through the legislative process. With a typical staff size of eight in the Washington, D.C. office, including four or five assigned to legislative activity, the resource costs for choosing to author legislation are high (Chief Administrative Officer, 2004). When deciding which bills to champion, one member distinguished between his legislative priorities as district issues and "discretionary" issues. He explained his process for determining which areas to invest time and energy in the following way:

> With my discretionary time, I will look at those issues where I think the resolution of it makes a difference to the people, the principals who are affected by the legislative goal. That is a consideration for whether you invest your time to go after a particular goal. Even though I have been here for 16 years, it goes by so quickly. We were in the minority for so many years, we couldn't set agendas. With term limits on our chairmanships, six years is the blink of an eye in congressional life. If you don't focus on the highest priority, maximize the public benefit return on what you are able to go after, I think you are frivolously

> using a very rare opportunity. I do look at the issues in that way. The staff come to me with a large number of potential directions to go in December or January. In January or February we try to set up the agenda for the cycle and go through them in that relationship: district-driven necessities and the philosophic, Don Quixote agenda. (Member Interview, 9/25/02).

Time constraints are a fact of life for members. The legislative schedule is grueling and often does not leave time for much else. When members consider adding another bill to their legislative portfolio, the toll it will take on their time, in a personal sense, is also part of the calculation. One member interviewed lamented about the time pressures of being a member of Congress:

> The thing is, it is all-consuming. In freshman orientation, the members of the two latest classes anonymously provided information for the orientation for the 108$^{th.}$ Then, there was a very confidential, private meeting of the Democrats by themselves, the Republicans by themselves and then the freshman are told the way it really is. When they tell you that they are all going to try to make time, so you can balance your time with your family, don't believe it. There are scheduled things that will disrupt your life and they are going to tell you to make sure you balance-- forget it. You are just going to try to survive this process. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

Second, Schiller points out that there are *opportunity costs*, which come from ignoring other issues to introduce a bill in a particular area. To be effective legislators, members must make tradeoffs about where they will devote their resources. The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF), an organization that

provides training and support to members of Congress, advises members to engage in strategic planning to manage time constraints effectively (2004). According to the CMF, the member's personal goals and interests should be foremost when developing a strategic plan. A strategic plan is important for members so they resist spending their career responding to the exigencies of the political moment and instead focus on the things they want to accomplish while in Congress. CMF advises that before taking on a new initiative, members and staff must consider the tradeoffs by asking the following two questions:

> 1. Is this initiative sufficiently attractive that it warrants supplanting another strategic goal or action item in our plan?
>
> 2. If so, which goal or actions will we sacrifice to make room for working on this new initiative? (2004; 170).

According to CMF, "Whether you are a freshman Representative or a third-term Senator, your effectiveness will be greatly enhanced by your ability to set clear goals that reflect your district/state interests and your personal interests, and balance these goals with the national policy and political environment in which you operate" (2004: 176).

Finally, there are *political costs* associated with bill sponsorship (Schiller, 2000). The bill could generate opposition among constituents, interest groups, other members or even become ammunition for a potential campaign opponent. One member discussed that as his party's campaign leader, he had to be careful about the effects of his legislative activities on campaign contributions.

> I actually wear two hats now legislatively, representing my district but also representing the NRCC and the Republican leadership. I have to be aware sometimes that my being on a bill or not can have ramifications on this Committee's ability to raise money and elect Republican candidates. On my tobacco regulation bill, we had committees (PACs) that would not give to us just to protest. On the Tauzin-Dingell bill to regulate the long distance data that relieved the Bells of that right, the Bells quit giving to the Committee because of that issue for a while. They tried to play hardball. So, I have to understand that in doing this Committee sometimes, while it certainly doesn't affect my vote, it may affect my degree of involvement in an issue. That's the price you pay when you're in leadership. (Member Interview, 9/12/02).

To minimize the costs associated with bill introduction, members typically try to work within their opportunity structure, such as ensuring the bill is referred to the committee on which they serve (Schiller 1995). One member described the importance of utilizing such opportunities to achieve legislative goals in this way:

> You can do anything if you take advantage of the opportunities that come your way. You can change things. So what you do is, you have to pick apart pieces of it, none of us are big enough to really change a whole heck of a lot, but you can change parts of it by just getting involved. (Member Interview, 9/24/02).

Another said that the constraints of committee jurisdiction limits his selection of issues to champion:

> One of my biggest problems here is a huge appetite in lots of things I want to do and it's very hard to do something unless you have jurisdiction over it. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

Another member, part of the Republican leadership, discussed the benefits of serving in leadership so that he could have the opportunity to have a seat at the policymaking table on issues of importance to him.

> You probably are finding more frustration than I have had, among Members who know they know a lot about something but never can quite seem to be in the right place to be part of that. One of my great opportunities in the Congress has been that, at the leadership level, there is almost always an occasion you can walk up and say, "I know a lot about elections, why don't I take responsibility for that?" or when at the table you are the first person you don't even have to say it, somebody says "Didn't you used to…? Why don't you see that this all works out well." There are lots of members who bring lots of skills to Washington that never get to fully utilize all of those skills. I have been fortunate, not that I have gotten to use all of my skills, but I have been fortunate. I have a pretty good entree to the kinds of things that I want to be involved in and don't mind being involved in a little bit of everything. The quintessential criteria for a Member of Congress is to be willing to be a generalist and not be frustrated by knowing a little about everything and everything about almost nothing. (Member Interview, 10/7/02).

As these examples illustrate, the cost of bill sponsorship is higher for those who do not serve on the committee of jurisdiction or do not have a party leadership position. Rank-and-file members have to work harder than their counterparts in leadership to

have their ideas considered. In the end, no matter what their rank, sponsoring a bill is hard work:

> You have to be a seasoned legislator who knows how to move bills through subcommittee and committee and understand the politics of the interest groups and putting together coalitions of Members of Congress to get them through. You have to be persuasive. You have to have credibility. You have to have respect. And you have to know how to "finish the stroke," which means get it all the way through the Senate and signed into law. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

In addition, members must be mindful that their other legislative activities might hinder their ability to move bills through the process. According to one member, because some members develop reputations as partisans, they have a very difficult time moving legislation:

> I probably spend 20 percent of the time the average Member of Congress does speaking on the floor. I don't go there and speak on the floor unless I really have to. I will not run over there and make a 9/11 speech. I will not go over there and make a speech every time it is a big bill because I don't see that as contributing anything. Maybe my constituents say, "Oh, I saw you on C-SPAN." Somebody says that to me and I say, "What was I talking about?" They say, "Oh, I don't know." So, I think there are some Members who spend a lot of time flapping their gums on the floor of the House and alienating—they are partisans, so they alienate – Democrats, which means they will never get a bill passed because they don't know how to be bipartisan. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

In summary, the costs incurred when sponsoring a bill cause members to use this legislative option sparingly. The bills that members do choose to introduce are those in which the benefits of sponsorship outweigh the costs.

Alternatives to Bill Sponsorship

Members must weigh the effectiveness of all legislative tools available to them when determining the best way to accomplish their policy goals. Sometimes bill introduction is not the most advantageous strategy to address a particular policy problem and may even undermine efforts by mobilizing early opposition against the proposal.

Because of the cost differences among various legislative strategies, Members are strategic in making decisions to champion an issue through the introduction of legislation since there are other means of achieving policy goals. Roll call voting requires perhaps the least effort in terms of time and legislative resources. For example, there were 998 such opportunities to take a position on issues during 107th Congress (Legislative Information System of the U.S. Congress website). While political science scholars have spent much time assessing roll call voting patterns, this legislative activity is not necessarily an optimal way to measure a member's interest in an issue. As one member explained his views of the bills being considered on the floor the day he was interviewed:

> Generally speaking, if it's something like today, where we've got 30 suspensions, I just vote for them all. They must be about something that's important to somebody, but they are not important to me. None

> of them are important enough to make any difference in the world. (Member Interview, 9/24/02).

Obviously, this member's votes on the measures being considered will not help us understand his legislative priorities and interests.

This is not to say that members do not vote based on personal experience. For example, one member described his experience as a lawyer representing victims of medical malpractice when he explained why he would be voting against his party leadership on a medical malpractice reform bill:

> When we are talking about victims of malpractice, I represented them. I know their life stories and you learn about how life changing it can be when you have a child that is born with severe birth defects because of a doctor's incompetence. That is a life-changing experience representing them and this is one of the few times where I really feel like I can be an effective voice for some of these folks because I know their issues in such depth. (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

Bill cosponsorship allows members to express interest in or take a position on certain issues without expending their own precious legislative resources (Schiller 2000; Swers 2002; Wilson and Young 1997; Kessler and Krehbiel 1996; Krehbiel 1995). There are thousands of bills introduced each session, and members are often able to find a bill that has already been introduced that matches their own policy preferences. According to Swers (2002), "cosponsorship can be described as loud voting because legislators are not forced to take a position as they are with a roll-call vote but they can choose to register their views on an issue by signing their names as

cosponsors." Through cosponsorship, members can advertise their position on issues to constituents and interested parties with relatively little cost.

Members use cosponsorship opportunities as a low-cost way to pursue their legislative agenda and their cosponsorship activities can relate to those areas they care about because of their personal experiences. A Hispanic member from a predominately Hispanic district explains his choice to cosponsor legislation, to indicate a higher level of activity in the legislative process on key issues of importance to him than mere roll call voting:

> I'm a product of the 60's and we used to have this old saying "you are what you eat" and basically, you are the sum of all parts of your experience, socially and otherwise. So in Congress, I gravitate to matters involving the Hispanic community and the lack of opportunity, economic opportunity. So I look at policy matters and what it means to minorities. Education, business opportunities and of course, health care, all the areas we've always lacked and are behind. That's just a general proposition so if it's actually a piece of legislation that actually impacts any of those areas, I'm usually going to be a co-sponsor. Obviously I'll be there at the end of the day when we vote but I also take a more active role. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

Another member described his decision to cosponsor legislation in the following way:

> If I don't have a leadership role on it I seldom cosponsor it. I will do some just because I have been [a cosponsor in the past]. I use my name on some of the right-to-life bills, some of the movement bills, the balanced budget bills and tax limitation bills. I am conservative and I try to be a part of some of the broader philosophical bills. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

Signing a congressional delegation letter to the executive branch or congressional leadership regarding a particular issue is also a low cost way for members to take a position on, and demonstrate involvement with, an issue of concern to them. Because there is no formal way to track the letters circulated, as there is with bills sponsored and cosponsored, members can control the dissemination of this information. Delegation letters offer members numerous opportunities to demonstrate to their constituents that they are actively involved in an issue, whereas roll call voting or bill cosponsorship often only suggests passive support.

Joining a Congressional Caucus is another effective legislative tool, which entails a higher cost than roll call voting, cosponsoring legislation, or even signing delegation letters, depending on how active the member chooses to be with the caucus. Caucus membership can help a member demonstrate interest in an issue and affect the congressional agenda with less effort than bill sponsorship. Caucuses are formed so that members with common interests join together to pursue legislative objectives. They allow members to communicate involvement in an issue, especially in cases where the committees on which they serve do not have jurisdiction over such issues. There are more than 300 caucuses in the House (CRS), addressing regional, industry, group, or policy-specific concerns (Hammond, Mulhollan, and Stevens 1985). In an article in CQ Weekly, Ota (2003) describes the range of issues caucuses can cover:

> Caucus names can be so broad as to be seemingly without controversy (the Building a Better America Caucus; the Results Caucus), or amusingly narrow (the Horse Caucus). Caucuses sometimes represent

> regions or institutions (the Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition; the Air Force Caucus). They can speak for foreign countries (Albanian Issues Caucus), embattled industries, agricultural products (Potato Caucus), diseases (Congressional Diabetes Caucus), road projects and even hobbies (Philatelic Caucus).

Even more than caucus membership, committee membership provides members the opportunity to participate in hearings, investigations, and policymaking across a range of issues. The cost depends on how active a member chooses to be on any given issue. According to Hall (1996: 24), most members do not participate in all committee activities:

> Congressmen in committees simply have too much to do legislatively and too little time, energy, and other legislative resources to do it. They cannot take on every issue; they must choose.

While they might not be present at all committee meetings, their mere membership allows them to take credit for any activity the committee undertakes. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, committee membership is often the prerequisite for involvement in policy formulation. One member interviewed was interested in energy issues but did not sit on a committee with jurisdiction over them. As a result, his ability to have a seat at the table was limited:

> I'm extremely interested in energy issues but almost totally frustrated -- very few people in this country understand energy in this broad sense and understand the implications of our energy use. I spent a fair amount of time on energy issues but I can't claim legislative accomplishment -- I'm not on the right committee for it. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

In summary, there are a variety of legislative tools available to members to effectively participate and take positions on the range of issues facing the nation. Because of the difference in costs, an issue must achieve a critical threshold of importance to the member in order for bill introduction to become the legislative tool of choice.

Bill Sponsorship as an Indicator of Personal Interest

When a member chooses to become the lead sponsor on a bill, it means that the issue has risen in importance for that member to being one of the approximately 20 that is worth the cost. As such, bill sponsorship can indicate a high level of commitment to an issue by a member. Learning those areas in which members choose to spend this scarce legislative capital can help us understand the influence of personal experiences on a member's legislative agenda.

As varied as the reasons for deciding to introduce a bill are, so too are the sources of ideas for addressing a particular issue. In addition to members and staff, recommendations for federal legislative intervention may come from a number of sources including constituents, interest groups, executive branch agencies, state and local officials, or even the press. Members must decide from which source they will take their cues when deciding to sponsor legislation. This chapter examines the extent to which members rely upon their own experiences when deciding to introduce legislation. Specifically, do members choose to take on the steep opportunity costs of bill sponsorship in order to pursue policy solutions that address issues of concern to them based on personal interest?

Previous research has begun to question whether members' backgrounds influence their legislative agendas and they use bill sponsorship to answer this question for the reasons discussed above (Swers 2002; 2004; Jeydel and Taylor 2003; Bratton and Haynie 1999; Friedman and Witko 2005). Much of the research in this area has focused on the impact of race and gender, ignoring the other possible sources of interest for bill sponsorship (Jeydel and Taylor 2003; Swers 2002; Bratton and Haynie 1997). Swers (2004) finds greater differences between men and women's legislative activity in bill sponsorship than in cosponsorship. According to Swers, "the impact of descriptive representation is most significant in those areas that require the greatest expenditures of time and resources and incur larger opportunity costs for participation." Friedman and Witko (2005) move past the impact of minorities to examine the impact of a business background on bill sponsorship.

Previous studies make the determination about whether members from particular backgrounds introduce certain bills related to this background by identifying the subject matter of interest to the group being analyzed and then measuring whether the target group introduces more bills related to this subject. For example, Swers (2002) assesses the impact of a member's sex on their bill sponsorship by categorizing legislation as women's issues bills and then determining how many male and female members sponsor them. She identifies women's issues bills by consulting the legislative reports of conservative and liberal women's groups to determine the subject areas that are considered important to women. Friedman and Witko (2005) determine which members have a business background and then assess

whether these members introduce more business-focused legislation, which they define as legislation "primarily targeted at business" (18).

While these studies provide an important first step in assessing the affects of backgrounds on bill sponsorships, the methodology that they apply, where the authors decide which issues are related to group identity or prior career experience, limits our understanding of the true impact of members' backgrounds. Only by asking members personally about their motivations are we able to gain a clear picture of the extent to which personal interests influence members' legislative activities. Through interviews with 60 members of Congress, this chapter matches member motivations with their bill sponsorship activities to gain a more accurate understanding of the impact of personal policy interests on bill sponsorship.

Assessing Personal Interests in Bill Sponsorship—Data and Methodology

To assess how personal interests are related to the bills members choose to sponsor, I gathered bill sponsorship information for the 107th Congress for the 60 members interviewed. In the 107th Congress, these members sponsored an average of 18.25 bills. The number of bills introduced by members interviewed ranged from one to 107 bills. An average of 39.07 percent of the bills members sponsored were referred to committees on which they served.

Bill information was compiled using the online Legislative Information System of the U.S. Congress, which provides summaries for each introduced bill. If the bill summary did not give enough information for a clear understanding of the purpose of the bill, the Congressional Record was searched to find introductory

remarks from the bill sponsor. The Congressional Research Service website, Congressional Quarterly Online (CQ.com), and Google Online Search Engine (google.com) were used to locate background information, interest group summaries, or news articles that could help me gain an understanding of what the bill was intended to accomplish.

No bill was coded prior to having a clear understanding of its purpose. For example, one member introduced a bill about the supply of pancreatic islet cells for research and better coordination of federal efforts and information on islet cell transplantation. This member was a former lawyer and congressional aide who served on the Appropriations and Science Committees. A Google search revealed that pancreatic islets are related to diabetes. During his interview, this member discussed his work in the House on legislation related to diabetes because of his twenty-two year old daughter who has been diabetic since she was six years old. "It's been personal on the diabetes," he said (Member Interview, 11/19/02). The pancreatic islet cell bill was coded as sponsored for reasons of personal interest and further coded as a personal experience[1].

To determine members' motivations for introducing legislation, the interview transcripts and written notes from interviews were utilized, as well as background information about the members from Congressional Quarterly's online *Member Profiles* at CQ.com and in *Politics in America 2002, the 107th Congress*. If those sources did not provide enough information to make a clear decision on the

[1] When a bill is introduced for personal reasons, it is further coded as either due to occupational experience, personal experience, or group identification.

motivation behind an introduced bill, the biographies and press releases from a member's website were also searched.[2]

Using this information, each sponsored bill was counted if it reflected either district concerns or personal concerns. If personal, the following subsets were also used to reveal the source of the interest: occupation, experience, and group identification. The number of bills in each category was tabulated and then divided by the total number of bills the member sponsored in the 107th Congress. This was done to allow for comparison across members. Because the number of bills members introduce vary, merely counting the bills they introduce for personal reasons could overstate the influence of personal interest. This is because one member could have more of a proclivity toward issues related to background and thus introduce many of the bills counted as personal interest. To ensure we understand the true impact of personal interest on bill introductions, I consider the proportion of a member's bill sponsorship agenda that is devoted to personal interest.

The final dependent variables include: (1) percentage of bills introduced for district; (2) percentage of bills introduced for personal reasons (occupation, experience, group identification); (3) percentage of bills introduced because of occupation; (4) percentage of bills introduced because of personal experience; (5) percentage of bills introduced because of group identification.

An example of the coding procedure can help illustrate the decision process. One member interviewed was a former research physicist and college professor. He

[2] If a decision could not be reached, the reason for introducing the bill was simply not counted.

introduced nine science bills in the 107th Congress, such as providing for the establishment of the position of Deputy Administrator for Science and Technology at the Environmental Protection Agency, amending the Metric Conversion Act of 1975 to require federal agencies to impose certain requirements on recipients of awards for scientific and engineering research, and amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to establish and expand programs relating to science. The entire theme of his interview and his CQ profile is about bringing his perspective as a scientist to Congress. Clearly, his previous occupation has influenced his legislative agenda. These bills were easily coded as bills sponsored for reasons of personal interest and as introduced as a result of interest from previous occupation.

Only those bills for which a clear determination of the source of the member's interest could be made were coded positively. For example, one Energy and Commerce Committee member introduced a bill to promote research to identify and evaluate the health effects of breast implants. This member holds a Master's Degree in health policy. During his interview, he spoke about his interest in health care.

> A lot of the health care things that we have done, I have been involved in. I was a university president for four years. I have a Master's Degree in Health Policy.
>
> In terms of the Medicare --call them whatever you want to, I think we have been calling them Medicare give backs -- in terms of all of those, I have been pretty involved in working with the hospitals, the doctors, therapists, nurses, and all of the affiliated people that rent medical equipment. I think a lot of that is because of my background. (Member Interview, 10/7/02).

The breast implant safety bill was the only health-related bill offered by this member during the 107th Congress. This is a very narrow subject in the world of health policy, for instance compared to Medicare reform which was raised during the interview. No specific mention of breast implantation was made during the interview and no reference to it was found on his website or in his CQ profile. It might be expected that there was either a personal motivation behind the introduction of this legislation or that a constituent brought the issue to his attention. It could also be assumed that something in his previous occupation caused him to be more attuned to the health consequences of breast implants. However, because I was unable to find a meaningful connection to either his previous occupation or a personal experience, this bill was not coded as being introduced due to a personal interest.

Simple frequency distributions are used to explore the role of personal backgrounds in members' bill sponsorship decisions. In addition, I utilize difference of means tests to explore the relationships between members' background experiences and bill sponsorships.

The Role of Personal Policy Interests in Bill Sponsorship

The results of the analysis indicate that even as members focus on their districts by introducing legislation on behalf of their constituents, they also introduce bills based on their own personal interests. Specifically, members devote an average of 33 percent of their bill sponsorship agenda to their districts and 25 percent to legislation they care about for personal reasons. This indicates that personal interests closely resemble district interest when it comes to the proportion of a member's bill

sponsorship activity. For some members, personal interests actually surpass the district in motivating the bills they sponsor. For example, more than half of the bill sponsorship agenda of thirteen percent of the members interviewed was related to their personal interests. One member interviewed actually devoted her entire legislative portfolio to issues she cared about because of personal interests.

-- Table 3.1 About Here --

The introduction of legislation based on personal interests is not limited to only a few members. Rather, most of the members interviewed (80 percent) sponsored at least one bill due to a personal interest. This finding demonstrates how widespread the pursuit of personal policy interests really is in Congress. While most of the members interviewed devote their scarce legislative resources to an issue they care about because of something in their own background, this does not mean that district interests are unimportant. Rather, members' legislative activities reflect both their district and personal interests. More than ninety percent of the members interviewed introduced at least one bill that was related to the district. Given the unique needs of each district and that members are elected to bring these issues before Congress, it is not surprising that this number is so high. Some might even argue it should be higher. However, what has been overlooked by political scientists is that alongside the legislation that members sponsor on behalf of their districts are bills they introduce that are directly related to the personal experiences they have had in their own lives.

-- Table 3.2 About Here --

Institutional or Electoral Constraints

While the results make clear that personal interest is the motivation behind about 25 percent of a member's bill introductions and that most members introduce bills due to personal interests, there is variation among members in the proportion of their overall bill sponsorship agenda that is related to such interests.[3] Institutional constraints, such as party loyalty, tenure in office, or committee position, or restrictions due to a competitive electoral environment might help to explain these differences in the amount of sponsorships that a member devotes to personal interest legislation. To gauge the extent to which institutional or electoral factors impact members in their ability to introduce legislation based on their personal interest, I performed an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis, where the dependent variable was the proportion of a members' bill sponsorship agenda that is based on personal interests. Independent variables were party, party unity score, terms in office, committee leadership position, and electoral competitiveness.

-- Table 3.3 About Here --

Since parties are the organizing influences in Congress, members' legislative activities can be constrained or enhanced by their party leadership (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991). Party leaders control committee assignments and leadership positions, the bills that will be considered, the rules of floor debate, and the content of legislation. Using these powers, they can influence members' legislative activities. According to Binder et al, (1999: 815,

[3] Standard Deviation = 22.29

816), "majority party leaders can exert an independent effect on the behavior of their caucus members. . [they] possess procedural and financial resources attractive to their party members." Loyalty to the leadership pays off for members. In the individual sense, Cox and McCubbins (1993) find that it helps members' chances of receiving plum committee assignments and other perks. At the collective level, party unity results in a coherent, cohesive party message on the floor, which can aid in reelection (Abramowitz, 2001). A member interviewed for this study discussed the influence of parties in Congress:

> Parties are an important fact. Nobody wants to vote for somebody who just votes the party line. Voters don't like that. But if you didn't have parties you would never get a bill through here because everybody sits here and they are a free agent. It is a balance. (Member Interview, 9/12/02).

To achieve legislative success, parties influence the behavior of individual members by providing incentives for loyalty. Therefore, the extent to which a member's legislative behavior conforms to the wishes of party leaders could affect his or her discretion in legislative activity (Parker, 1992). To test whether this holds true for the introduction of personal interest legislation, I included each member's party and party unity score in the model. However, the party's impact on member behavior is not apparent at the bill introduction phase of the process. Results of the OLS regression analysis reveal that party affiliation and party unity scores do not influence the number of personal interest bills members introduce.[4] Clearly, members are

[4] Tested party unity and party to ensure collinearity did not exist between these variables.

largely free from party influence to devote their legislative agenda to the issues that are important to them because of personal interests. Rather than at the bill introduction phase, how far these bills or the ideas contained in them make their way through the process is likely where parties exert their control over members.

While parties might not constrain a member's discretion regarding bill introductions, it would be expected that members who hold vulnerable seats would not be as likely to introduce legislation based on their personal interests as those in safe seats (Schiller 1995). To secure their reelection, these members would likely choose to spend their time and legislative resources on issues related to their districts. Indeed, one member interviewed explained that he was able to focus on things other than district-specific issues because he felt his seat was safe:

> I am lucky to come from a congressional district where I don't have to spend every waking hour running for reelection and raising money, which allows me to be more of a statesman and independent. (Member Interview, 10/2/02).

To determine the effect of electoral competitiveness on a member's ability to introduce legislation based on a personal interest, I considered whether a member received 55 percent or less of the vote in the 2000 general election. Findings indicate that a member's electoral security is statistically significant in explaining the proportion of a members' legislative portfolio that is dedicated to personal interest issues. Therefore, while most members do introduce legislation based on a personal interest, the amount of bills they introduce on personal matters is carefully balanced with others that will help secure their reelection.

It would also be expected that the number of terms a member has served in Congress would affect the number of bills they introduce based on personal interest. The longer members serve, they are more able to be involved in a variety of issue areas because of increased staff resources, issue expertise, etc. (Fenno 1978; Hibbing 1991; Parker 1992; Schiller 1995). In fact, members interviewed explained the increased latitude that comes with seniority:

> When you are a freshman, you are seen and not heard. When you are a sophomore, you are seen and heard but ignored. I think it is when you get past the first four years here, that people fear, "I think we are going to have to deal with this guy." (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

> Do I have more independence than in the first couple of terms? Absolutely. But I am not going to do anything stupid to estrange myself from my district. (Member Interview, 9/12/02).

Surprisingly, this analysis indicates that tenure in office is not a statistically significant factor affecting the members interviewed in the number of bills they introduce based on their personal interests.

Members in committee leadership positions have more staff resources to pursue legislation across a range of issues. In addition, their control of the committee agenda means they can consider legislation they believe is important (Shepsle and Weingast 1987; Krehbiel 1991; Hall 1996). However, the regression analysis indicates that committee leadership position does not significantly affect the amount of legislation a member introduces due to personal policy interests.

In summary, while electoral considerations make a difference, there is no statistical evidence to suggest that institutional constraints affect members' decisions to sponsor legislation based on their personal interests. Rather, members seem to champion bills related to their personal interests despite their party affiliation, party unity, tenure in office, or committee leadership position.

Understanding Personal Interests

It is important to learn more about those personal interests to which members feel free to devote a quarter of their bill sponsorships to without being constrained by institutional factors. Hall (1996) suggests that members derive their personal interests from their professional backgrounds, identification with a minority group, based on sex, race, religion, or sexual orientation, or other personal experiences. Hall's typology can be utilized with the bill sponsorship data to understand the basis of those personal interests that motivate the introduction of legislation. Specifically, data about members' personal interest in the bills they sponsored were further coded as occupational interest, group identification, or personal experience. Sixty percent of members (36) introduced at least one bill due to interest derived from their previous occupation, 27 percent (16) introduced legislation because of their identification with a minority group, and 35 percent (21) due to a personal experience.

Occupational Experience

Much of a member's personal interest that is intense enough to translate into bill introduction can be attributed to occupational experience. When members introduce bills based on their personal experiences, interest resulting from their

previous occupation accounts for 55.91 percent of this agenda. For sixteen members (26.7 percent of those interviewed), every bill they introduced due to personal experience can be attributed to their occupation. For half of the members interviewed, 50 percent or more of the bills they introduced due to personal interest were related to their previous occupation. Overall, 15.55 percent of members' bill sponsorship agenda can be attributed to their previous careers.

-- Table 3.4 About Here --

Some previous occupations have more of an influence on members' bill sponsorship than others. For business/bankers, educators, and health professionals, almost 70 percent of the bills they introduce for personal reasons are related to their occupational backgrounds. For those in the real estate industry, almost all of their personal interest agenda (90 percent) is related to their previous career experience. In contrast, lawyers only devote 40.97 percent of their personal interest bills to issues they are interested in because of their previous occupation.

Law

According to the results of this analysis, lawyers do not introduce as much legislation motivated by something that occurred in their lives before Congress as the non-lawyers. While more than half of the lawyers interviewed introduced bills because of something they were interested in personally (66.7 percent), this is significantly less than other members (87.2 percent of non-lawyers).[5] In addition, when considering the proportion of their bill sponsorship agenda dedicated to bills

[5] See Table 3.2. T-Test, $p \leq .10$.

they care about for personal reasons, lawyers introduce slightly fewer personal interest bills than their counterparts from other professions.[6] Therefore, although personal interest is still influential when lawyers decide how to allocate their bill sponsorship resources, it is less of a factor for them as it is for members coming from other professions.

Even though lawyers only spend a small amount of their time in Congress introducing legislation resulting from experiences they had in their previous careers, when they do sponsor bills because of personal interest, their experiences as lawyers influence the areas in which they become active legislatively. Lawyers do not use their prior career experience as a reference point from which to introduce legislation as much as members from other professions. In fact, a significant difference exists between lawyers and non-lawyers when it comes to the proportion of their legislative agenda they devote to issues relating to their previous occupation.[7] Of the bills lawyers introduce for personal reasons, 40.97 percent are motivated by their occupational experiences. In contrast, 62.06 percent of non-lawyers' personal interest agenda are related to prior career experiences.

As the results indicate, there are cases when a career in law is directly related to a member's legislative activity in Congress. One member interviewed was motivated by his previous career experience as a lawyer and a judge to introduce legislation to address mandatory arbitration clauses contained in home purchase

[6] See Table 3.1.
[7] See Table 3.4. T-Test, $p \leq .10$.

agreements. According to the biography on his website, as a judge he was "instrumental in further streamlining the dockets by utilizing mediation as an alternative to costly litigation." During his interview, he explained:

> There is a piece of legislation that is definitely born from my experience as a lawyer and judge. I have something out there right now that would affect the purchases of homes and mandatory arbitration clauses. Right now, people can't buy homes nor have homes built without having hoisted on them a mandatory arbitration agreement, which does not allow them access to the courts. There are a lot of things about that that is unfair -- the disparity of the bargaining position between the purchaser and the seller. The home buyer is at a tremendous disadvantage. There's no choice involved. And there is a lack of adequate remedies when they take you outside of what is available in the judicial system. It's not a very healthy situation. I'm very proud of the bill. Will it go anywhere? You know, a lot of people would be opposed to it because they lose advantage in a bargaining environment (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

Another member, who was a former estate planner for farmers, credits his interest and activity on agriculture policy not only to meeting the needs of his congressional district but also to his previous occupation. He introduced two bills about agriculture policy, using knowledge from his previous career to address the needs of farmers in his district. The bills addressed agriculture policy from a legal perspective. They were both regarding agroterrorism: amending the federal criminal code to enhance penalties and civil remedies for animal enterprise terrorism and establishing penalties and civil remedies for plant enterprise terrorism. He said:

> My priorities, legislatively, have been forged by what happened before I got here. . . I used to do a lot of the estate planning for farmers so I have some interest in agriculture, therefore I am going to push it (Member Interview, 11/19/02).

Another member interviewed, who started his legal career as a narcotics crime prosecutor, sponsored legislation to end the disqualification of students who are convicted of drug offenses from receiving college financial aid (Member Interview, 10/8/02). Yet another introduced a bill to amend the Federal Rules of Evidence to establish a parent-child privilege and a bill to provide higher compensation for individuals serving as federal jurors (Member Interview, 9/11/02).

Clearly, members who come to Congress with a background in law will introduce legislation related to their previous careers. While the extent of activity motivated by their occupational experiences might not be as great as in other professions, lawyers do not lose their perspective as lawyers when they are sworn into Congress.

There are also interesting differences between lawyers and non-lawyers when it comes to their personal interest bill sponsorship. For example, while 29.40 percent of lawyers' personal interest agenda are bills they sponsor because of their identification with a minority group, only 12.92 percent of the non-lawyers' bills relating to personal interest are motivated by group identification. This indicates that lawyers' interests when they come to Congress are derived from much more than their career experiences. In fact, lawyers were the only occupational background where personal interest bills introduced because of identification with a minority

group or because of a personal experience exceeds the bills introduced due to occupation.

In summary, lawyers devote a smaller proportion of their bill sponsorship agenda to personal interest than non-lawyers. In addition, the distribution of lawyers' personal policy interests are different from those who come from other fields. Lawyers appear to be greater advocates of minority group interests and issues arising from other personal experiences, while members from other fields more often champion issues motivated by their occupational interests. When lawyers do introduce legislation based on their previous career experience, they tend to focus on similar legal subjects as those they worked on in their careers.

Business/Banking

All but one of the members interviewed with an occupational background in business or banking introduced a bill related to their personal interest. This proportion of members from the business and banking profession that introduce legislation related to their personal interests is higher than for members from other careers.[8] While they focus on issues they care about because of their own life experiences, those from the business or banking profession do not introduce personal interest legislation in place of meeting the needs of their district. The same members who introduced a bill because of a personal interest also introduced at least one bill to meet the specific needs of the district. This balance of district and personal interests by members who had previous careers in business and banking in their bill

[8] 90.9 percent of members with a background in business/banking compared to 77.6 percent of other members. See Table 3.2.

sponsorship activity is significantly different from members with other professional backgrounds.[9]

An examination of the levels of bill sponsorship activity reveals that members with a background in business or banking devote about the same proportion of their legislative agendas to personal interest issues as members from other careers (25.74 and 24.84 respectively).[10] However, how they allocate their personal interest varies from other occupations. Members with a business/banking background introduce more bills related to their occupational experience than other members. In fact, of the members interviewed whose previous career was in business or banking, 67 percent of the bills they introduced for personal reasons were related to their occupation. This is higher than the members who did not have a background in business or banking, where 52.99 percent of the personal interest bills they sponsored were related to their occupation. While 72.72 percent of the members interviewed who had a background in business or banking introduced a bill relating to their occupation, only 59.18 percent of members from other occupations did.

Those with a business or banking background tend to introduce legislation related to taxes and government regulation. One member, who owned a small business, talked about the need to reduce the tax burden on small businesses and legislation he sponsored to eliminate the IRS:

> I was involved in a business in Dallas after I got out of the service. You could see how taxes were killing the small businesses. Our

[9] See Table 3.2. T-Test, $p<.10$.
[10] See Table 3.1. T-Test, $p\leq.10$.

> efforts were to try and change it to make it better for all America. Under Clinton, taxes were as high as they ever were, even during World War II. Tax relief has been great and now we need to just work to get them permanent. Even under Clinton, it was my bill on the Social Security earnings limit that got passed, and even now we have been working on tax relief of all forms. I've got a bill out there that will eliminate the IRS. I think that our goal in the next Congress is to rewrite the whole tax code if we can. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

For another former small business owner, the focus is on eliminating excessive regulations on small businesses. She introduced seven bills to address issues such as the reduction of federal paperwork demands on small businesses and the analysis of the impact of proposed federal regulations on small businesses. She explained her interest in small business issues by saying:

> I've been active in business. I've owned three small businesses. I've had a lot of initiatives related to this -- you can download a list. What I do, in general, relates to my personal interests. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

Another small business owner discussed his focus on government regulation of businesses. In discussing his legislative interests, he said:

> I founded a company. It's got 250 employees. I founded it in 1957 with a mortgage on my home. And it's now about 250 employees and about $40 million dollars in sales and so forth. I might really be the only entrepreneurial Congressman in Washington. But it gives me what you might call a fairly conservative approach to government regulations. (Member Interview, 9/24/02).

This member introduced bills on wage issues, such as overtime compensation and pay requirements under the Davis-Bacon Act. Another member explained how his previous occupational experience with the Department of Labor prompted him to champion legislation allowing for compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay:

> I've been in business all my life. Every time the Labor Department monkeys with you or every time one of its agents messes with you as a private citizen in business, you don't appreciate it.
>
> Twenty years ago, I was fined ten thousand dollars by the Labor Department. We had a staff of twelve, for which everyone was a very happy camper because every other week we got a three-day weekend. We worked forty-four hours one week and then thirty-six hours the next week. And everybody got two Fridays off a month. Then comes the Labor Department who says, "you owe ten thousand dollars because you haven't been paying time and a half for the week you worked forty-four hours." Yet, we were paying for forty hours for the week that we worked thirty-six. This gave me ten thousand reasons to try to promote comp time. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

Another business owner introduced legislation to allow employers to provide pension investment advice services to their employees. He explained that his interest in workforce issues went back to his experiences as a plastics company executive, where he visited a lot of companies and saw the impact of government over-regulation:

> I used to own a company – we were manufacturers' representatives and brokers of plastics. We represented companies that made plastics and we sold their products to large consumers, companies like Procter

> and Gamble, SC Johnson, etc. I was always in a lot of plants and always talking to a lot of people in a lot of different companies. Many times you just see the overreaching arm of the government causing the companies to do things that cost an awful lot of money that had very little to no benefit. It was getting to the point that we were regulating people to death. We were choking the goose that was laying the golden egg. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

In summary, more members with a career in business or banking introduce legislation related to personal interest than members from other occupations. However, those business members/bankers that include personal interest bills in their legislative agenda also introduce bills related to their districts. The proportion of the legislative portfolio that members with backgrounds in business and banking devote to personal interest bills is similar to other members. However, they focus these efforts on their career backgrounds more than other members, concentrating on themes about tax reduction and the elimination of burdensome government regulations. Unlike other occupations, where members concentrate on the specific issue area that they worked on previously, members with a background in business and banking do not seem to introduce legislation specific to they type of business they worked in. Rather, no matter the type of business, these members pursue a more universal theme of alleviating the burden of government regulations.

Real Estate

Every member who was interviewed that had a career in real estate prior to coming to Congress introduced legislation associated with a personal interest.[11] What's more, they all sponsored at least one bill related to their previous occupation. The proportion of personal interest legislation members from the real estate industry introduced is slightly less than the rest of the members interviewed, 22.83 percent compared to 25.20 percent.[12] However, ninety percent of the personal interest agenda of members with a real estate background is from interest generated from their previous career experience. This is a higher proportion than any other profession and a significant difference from those without a real estate background, who devote 51.94 percent of their personal interest agenda to issues arising from their occupational experience.[13]

Unlike business/bankers who have more general concerns about taxes and government regulations, members with real estate backgrounds introduce bills about housing. One member introduced legislation to reform the regulation of the housing-related Government-Sponsored Enterprises. His experience as a real estate broker caused him to have an interest in this issue, which he explained was a unique viewpoint compared to other members of Congress:

> I have longstanding and continuing concerns about the risk taken, particularly by Fannie Mae but to some extent Freddie Mac, in

[11] There is a statistically significant difference in the number of members with a real estate background who introduced at least one bill due to a personal interest compared to the rest of the members interviewed. See Table 3.2. T-Test, $p \leq .001$.
[12] See Table 3.1.
[13] See Table 3.4. T-Test, $p \leq .025$.

> managing their specially granted governmental charter, which enables them to acquire home mortgages and provide a valuable service of providing liquidity to the housing market. Prior to their arrival in the 1930's and 40's, you couldn't get a home loan for longer than 5, 6, or 7 years. Well, most families could never own a home. And they provided a financial mechanism to create the 30-year mortgage and enable literally millions of people to have the opportunity to own their home. In consideration for that business opportunity, they were to meet certain social obligations that were imposed by Congress and it is my view -- and generally only my view, very few people agree -- that Fannie Mae has utilized their charter position to enhance shareholder profitability while failing to meet their social obligations under their charter. At the moment they are having some financial reversals that make this even a more perfect time to be talking about it. (Member Interview, 9/25/02).

Another member, who was a former home builder and real estate developer, introduced bills about housing, including recognizing the importance of homeownership, recognizing the construction and home building industries and their importance to economic stability, and facilitating the Department of Housing and Urban Development's cleanup and economic redevelopment of Brownfields sites. During his interview he said,

> The government tends to look at housing with a band-aid approach. Too many members think that the federal government can resolve the housing issues and they are not realizing that the federal government is causing those housing issues. They have created them. I think we are going to have to look at what we have done -- whether it be through the Endangered Species Act or other regulations we have placed on the

> private sector -- and how much that has impacted housing affordability. (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

In summary, members with a background in real estate focus slightly less of their bill sponsorship agenda on items of personal interest. However, there is a statistically significant difference between those with a real estate background and those with other professional backgrounds when it comes to the focus on issues related to their prior career experience. Of those bills members with a real estate background devote to their personal interest agenda, 90 percent are issues related to their previous career in housing. This concentration of the personal interest agenda on issues arising from occupational interest is universal among the members with a real estate background and much higher than the other members interviewed.

Education

Seven of nine of the educators interviewed (77.78 percent) introduced at least one bill related to their previous career.[14] These members devote slightly more of their legislative agenda to issues arising from personal interest than members from other occupational backgrounds (28.26 percent and 24.23 percent, respectively).[15] They also focus more of this personal interest agenda on previous career experiences than their counterparts from other professions (67.41 percent and 53.61 percent, respectively).[16] Educators tend to either introduce legislation to improve the public

[14] See Table 3.2.
[15] See Table 3.1.
[16] See Table 3.4.

education system or use their specialty to help inform congressional deliberations across a range of subjects.

A former teacher attributed her introduction of legislation to train teachers in utilizing technology in the classroom to interest from her previous occupation as an educator (Member Interview, 11/15/02). Another teacher combined his experience as a teacher and as a parent when searching for legislative opportunities:

> When I first got here, I looked at where there might be an opportunity to play a role with regard to education or special education. The first bill I introduced in Congress was the full funding of IDEA. We were thrilled to have 75 cosponsors, just about evenly split between Republicans and Democrats. Some of them are conservative and some of them are liberal. It is something that can help unite a lot of different people from across the spectrum to do something that is good for kids and good for schools and good for families. While it hasn't become law yet, we are going to work our way to get to the full funding. The President has supported an increase in funding. He isn't exactly where I am. In setting priorities for our country, I think helping the neediest of our kids has to be one of those priorities. (Member Interview, 9/19/02).

Another member was a college coach with a doctorate in educational psychology before coming to Congress. His legislative agenda in the 107th Congress included bills regarding mentoring programs for children in need. According to his CQ Profile:

> [His] interest in improving education led him to sponsor a youth mentoring program, called TeamMates. The program initially started

> with some of his school's football players mentoring 22 young people and developed into a statewide program that matches local middle-school students who are at risk with adult mentors in their communities. [He] says that TeamMates is grounded in his belief that government spends too much money on prisons, halfway houses and other programs and not enough money to help young people avoid getting involved in crime.

Educators with a background in a specific field also use their academic expertise to inform Congress across a range of subjects. The two physicists in Congress, for example, are advocates for issues related to science, mathematics, and technology. Ten of the 12 bills one of these members introduced were related to his knowledge as a scientist and six of the 25 bills the other introduced were related to his science background. According to one's CQ Profile,

> [He] says his scientific training sometimes enables him to look at issues on a larger scale and in the context of a longer time frame than is typical in Congress. But he rejects the notion that he is more intelligent than most of his colleagues. "Some people may think that a scientist is smarter than other members . . . I just have a different background, different training."

In the interview, this member discussed how his science background translates into legislative activity:

> Almost every important piece of legislation has a scientific component. . . On things such as climate change or fuel efficiency, I often see myself looking at a fifty year or hundred year horizon on issues like that. This is because of my science training. (Member Interview, 10/2/02).

The other physicist's CQ Profile describes him as the one who leaders turn to when they need scientific expertise:

> Regarded by colleagues as one of the smartest lawmakers, [he] is often called on by GOP leaders to employ his scientific expertise in the policy arena.

During his interview, he explained his involvement in issues relating to his previous career as a physicist.

> I have been extremely active on scientific and technical issues -- because a lot of people have come to me on those issues. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

In addition to providing science expertise across issues, these members are also known to actively promote math and science education. He went on to explain:

> I have spent enormous amounts of time trying to improve math and science education. That's where the future is in terms of jobs. Right now we're importing foreigners to fill these jobs because we don't have enough Americans who understand science or math. So, I really push math and science education. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

The other physicist agreed:

> My niche has become science education, particularly teacher training. A number of times, I have been able to inject science and math into whatever else was going on in education -- whether Title I looks at just reading and math or also at science; whether teacher professional development is preserved. (Member Interview, 10/2/02).

Another former college professor, a statistician, used his expertise to introduce legislation regarding the Bureau of the Census. According to his CQ Profile,

> [He] was the point man for congressional Republicans in the debate with Democrats over whether the Census Bureau could use statistical sampling techniques to augment the traditional head count in the 2000 census. Republicans adamantly opposed sampling, arguing that Democrats running the Commerce Department would bend the results to their advantage. In [him], they found an expert to bring a scientific rationale to the debate.
>
> A statistician, [he] knows how to take a sample from a small group and extrapolate the findings over a larger group. Mathematicians view sampling as a legitimate tool, but [he] says that is only "when you do not have enough time or money." He argued that the Constitution mandates an enumeration of the population, and he warned that sampling could be conducted and manipulated for political purposes. "You can prove anything with statistics," he says.
>
> The former college professor thrust himself into the sampling debate in September 1997 in a House floor speech during which he brandished a book he once used in his classes, "How to Lie With Statistics." GOP leaders latched on to [him], creating a Census Subcommittee a few weeks later and naming him chairman. There, he led the Republican charge against sampling and served as the principal Republican watchdog throughout the preparation and execution of the 2000 census, engaging in a series of partisan battles and winning points with the Republican leadership.

This case demonstrates that members do not become champions of an issue until their leaders learn of their expertise. The member discussed above said that the leadership

was not aware that he had a statistics background until he made statement on the House floor about sampling. After that, they asked him to take the lead on the issue for them:

> I spoke on the floor one time we were having an amendment or something. Newt was actually controlling the time. I got up and spoke. I don't think he realized it, but I used to teach it. So, they asked me to chair a committee about the Census. (Member Interview, 11/13/02).

In summary, former educators champion general education policy and they also lend expertise in Congress on issues in their field of specialty. They devote more of their personal interest agenda to bills that are related to their previous careers as educators than do members from other professions.

Health Care

Unlike members from other professions, every member with a background in health care introduced legislation reflecting the needs of their districts.[17] Despite this focus on district concerns, all but one still included at least one bill associated with their personal interests in their bill sponsorship portfolio. Members with a background in health care dedicated about the same amount of their legislative agenda to issues related to their personal interest as other members (24.39 percent compared to 25.06 percent).[18] For all of the health care professionals interviewed that included bills related to their personal interests in their legislative agenda, at least one bill was related to an interest they developed as a result of their occupational

[17] See Table 3.2. T-Test, $p \leq .025$.
[18] See Table 3.1.

experiences. In fact, those with a health care background devote 71.14 percent of their personal interest agenda to issues they care about because of their previous career.[19] Like the educators, health care professionals focus on issues specifically related to health policy or use their career perspective to inform their analysis of other issues.

A former social worker explained the relationship between his legislative agenda and his background as a social worker:

> A lot of what I get involved in is health care stuff. I think my orientation as a social worker is a reflection of this. Health is about people and their well-being. I am more inclined to gravitate toward something like that than, for instance, taxes or the budget. I find all of that stuff fairly bloodless. I am drawn to things that directly affect people and their well being. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

This member's focus on health issues related to his work with children when he was a social worker. For example, he introduced legislation to improve the safety and efficacy of pharmaceuticals for children, to improve childhood immunization rates through expanded distribution of vaccines, and to provide quality prevention programs relating to juvenile delinquency.

Both nurses interviewed introduced legislation to address the nursing shortage. One also focused her efforts on reforming the health care system to level the playing field between patients and health insurance companies. She introduced legislation to require the prompt payment of claims by Health Maintenance

[19] See Table 3.4.

Organizations and to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to place low-income veterans in a higher health care priority category. She explained:

> I spent over thirty-two years as a nurse. I know the health care system pretty well. I have my own distinct views of our health care system. The job here in Washington is really no different than all my years as a nurse. It's just that my nursing duties were a little bit different. I started seeing not just legislative accomplishments but how we help people back home. To be able to work with a young man who was denied a liver transplant and fight with the HMO's for him to get it. For two years now he has been traveling and he's healthy and he's enjoying life. Helping our veterans get the care that they need. Those things are so important. The good thing down here is they trust nurses. They don't think we have a hidden agenda. They look at us as nurses, not as "politicians." (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

The dentist interviewed also played an active role in the health insurance reform debate, sponsoring legislation referred to as the Patients' Bill of Rights. According to his CQ Profile:

> His professional and business experience has led him to take a pivotal role in the debate over how the federal government should regulate the rights of patients whose health care is provided by HMOs.

During his interview, he explained:

> That was not on my priority list of things I wanted to do once I got to Washington D.C. -- reforming managed care. I sort of fell into that, partly because I spent the previous twenty-five years watching them at work. I saw very clearly how detrimental it was to the patients and the providers of care. It is a faulty system to start with and one that

> doesn't do what it proclaims. What it does do has totally changed the health care system in America, because Congress supported it. So we took an obscure bill, we got forty co-sponsors, we took a subject for which most members of Congress weren't aware of unless they had treated patients or been sick and we drove it down to the one yard line. Against a fair amount of odds. We're not through. It's not done and I'm not going to be quiet until it's done. But I'm proud of what we have done thus far. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

In addition to introducing bills on health issues, a background in health care also gives these members a unique perspective as they analyze other subjects. For example, one nurse interviewed said she used her experience in the nursing profession as a model to improve teacher preparedness. She explained,

> We had a committee hearing and there were four or five very young school teachers that taught in grade schools. Their frustration was, when they got into the classroom they felt totally alone and inadequately prepared to teach. I'm sitting there thinking, when I graduated from nursing school -- and it still goes on to this day -- when you graduate you are assigned, we call them big sisters, but they are mentors. And they sit with you until you are comfortable. It's like whatever your assignment is, your big sister stays with you. Why can't we do that with teaching? I put that program to the committee and it was accepted. We find that these teachers are dedicated, they want to do a great job and it's just another tool to be used, to help them through this. We found that teaching and nursing almost run the same. A lot of people that go into teaching and nursing almost have the same drop out rate within five years. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

Members from health professions approach issues from a different perspective than their counterparts. One member explained that the characteristics of nurses make them effective members of Congress:

> I talk to nurses a lot about becoming active politically and I tell them that they are credible and it is because of the way that we were educated. We are taught to withhold judgment, to listen carefully, to work as a team, and to be able to problem solve, roll up our sleeves and get in and not come at it from an ideology as much as with the goal of an outcome that is going to be better health and quality of life or whatever. I didn't realize until I got here that I was continuing in a tradition and so I tell that to nurses. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

In summary, while members with a background in health care universally introduce legislation to address the needs of their districts, they also devote legislative resources to championing issues related to their professional experiences. Not only do health care professionals focus on issues directly associated with their specialty, they also strive to reform the health care system. In addition, their career backgrounds are used to help inform other issues confronting Congress.

Group Identification

In addition to occupational experiences, members' personal identities cause them to devote time and resources to personal interest legislation. Factors such as their own sex, race, religion, or sexual orientation can motivate them to introduce legislation based on their desire to address issues related to these groups. When members introduce bills due to their personal interests, their identification with a

particular group accounts for 17.73 percent of this agenda.[20] While the influence of group identification is not as great as occupational or personal experiences, its existence is important. Indeed, it is paramount for some members in their personal interest agenda. For six members interviewed, all of the bills they introduced based on a personal interest can be attributed to their identification with a particular group. Sixteen of the members interviewed, 26.67 percent, introduced legislation due to their identification with a group.

Sex

> As I look back as a mom, I have a different perspective from being on the front line, being a mom every day. I find it very hard to be a woman in Congress. It's very lonely. I do believe that you need every perspective at the table. That you need women, men, white, black, old, young, rich, poor or it is not a democracy. It's not like you can tell the men what it feels like and then they can be at the table. Women have to be there. I do believe it's important that women are at the table. But, it's very isolating. (Member Interview 11/14/02).

Twenty percent (12) of the members interviewed for this study were women. During the 107th Congress 13.6 percent of the members of the U.S. House of Representatives were women (Ornstein, Mann, Malbin 2002). Although there are a greater proportion of women in the study than women in the House, the findings are still relevant in our understanding about the differences between how the personal interest of men and women influence their legislative activity.

[20] See Table3.4.

The results of this analysis indicate that women spend more of their scarce legislative resources advocating for issues they care about and are aware of based on their personal backgrounds and experiences. In fact, while three quarters of the men sponsored at least one bill because of a personal interest, all of the women interviewed did.[21] More than 80 percent of the women interviewed sponsored at least one bill relating to their experiences as mothers, wives, sisters, or as a woman in a male-dominated profession.

The difference between men and women regarding the amount of their bill sponsorship agenda that is devoted to issues of personal interest is statistically significant (21 percent compared to 41 percent).[22] When considering the sources of this personal interest, the results reveal that men spend more of their personal interest agenda on issues related to their previous occupation (63.02 percent compared to 34.58 percent), while women devote more of their personal interest agenda to experience (27.16 compared to 26.10) and group identification (38.10 compared to 14.25). The difference between how much of their personal interest agenda men and women devote to occupation and group identification is statistically significant.[23]

While the personal interest agendas of women are statistically different than men, some female members interviewed were hesitant to attribute their legislative interests to gender. One member explained:

> Being a woman probably does affect my perspective to some extent, but I am not a girl's girl anyway. I mean, I have always worked in

[21] See Table 3.2. T-Test, $p \leq .001$
[22] See Table 3.1. T-Test, $p < .025$.
[23] See Table 3.4.

> industries that are male-dominated. Fortunately, I had the unique perspective or the unique opportunity that when I worked in the private sector and worked with members of Congress they took me seriously because I was talking substance and issues and legislation. It kind of carried over. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

However, this member, a mother (or stepmother) of eight, introduced two bills regarding the issue of abortion. Also a widow, she introduced a bill to allow penalty-free distributions from qualified retirement plans after the death or disability of the participant's spouse. While these bills only account for 13.6 percent of her total legislative agenda, her identification with women as a mother and spouse is evident in her bill sponsorship activity. She later confirmed:

> I have the perspective of being a mom and losing a spouse and I think that those experiences play into my sensitivity perhaps more than anything else. (Member Interview 10/8/02).

Another member argued that all of the issues Congress considers are important to women. However, she admitted that some issues could be classified as specifically related to women.

> We're always involved in women's issues. That's just a term someone dreamed up. Women now work in the workforce just about every place that you'd find a man. They're members of unions, they're driving cranes. They are out there not only teaching our children and being nurses in hospitals, they are also running big businesses, they are playing the stock market, and they are good at it. You'll find women doing everything. It's very unfair to say that certain things are women's issues. There are a couple of things that I define as women's

> issues. Women do not get parity on pensions, and women don't make as much money as men. I think we're up to about seventy cents on the dollar. That's wrong. Just because we wear a skirt, doesn't mean we should not be paid as much. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

She introduced two bills about breast cancer, to require group health plans to provide reconstructive surgery following mastectomies and to provide for more breast cancer research. She attributed her interest in this issue to her sister's experience with a radical mastectomy. While this could also be considered a familial experience, her explanation was more geared to the procedure's impact on women's lives:

> I wrote and carried a bill that allowed people that had radical mastectomies to get reconstructive surgery immediately following their breast re-section. Two days after I was sworn into office my sister, who had found a lump just prior to my run for office, went in and had a radical mastectomy. She didn't find that cancer until it was in her armpit. The doctors missed it. She talked to me about women who lose basically an eighth of their body if they have a radical mastectomy. It just takes a huge chunk of their body, and it's very disfiguring. For women who get up in the morning with kids and they are walking around in their night gown making the kids oat meal, and putting it in their bowl, while the kids are getting ready for school, and mom's kind of concave on one side, even the kids don't want to look at it, let alone her husband. Women need that kind of support. It didn't help my sister, but it certainly has helped a lot of women since. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

One female member interviewed explained that while she believed all issues are women's issues, certain things affecting women would be overlooked by a Congress with no women:

> One of my favorite stories from the beginning were reporters that always asked me -- in those days, very few women ran -- and the first question they would ask me is, "Where do you stand on the women's issues?" And my answer always was "What do you mean, where do I stand on the women's issues? All issues are women's issues!" Then, I stressed that the economy, jobs, along with family values was important, but certainly how we were dealing with taxes and the economy and savings and investment and I stressed that from the very beginning when I first came to Congress. But after I got in Congress, then I learned. Yes, these are women's issues but if the women in Congress didn't take an issue, the issues would fall from the agenda because the men weren't paying attention. Not because they were opposed, but because they weren't sensitive to those issues. That's how I got involved in these so-called women's issues (Member Interview, 11/15/02).

Interestingly, none of the legislation this member sponsored during the 107th Congress could be attributed to her identification with women.

In the end, while some female members may try to separate themselves from what scholars or interest groups have characterized as women's issues, they admit that their experiences as mothers, wives, sisters, and women in male-dominated professions has affected their legislative activity in Congress.

Other members are not afraid to admit that their experiences as wives and mothers influence their legislative agenda. One member explained that when she was elected to Congress, "I was transformed from an ordinary housewife to an ordinary housewife who could make a difference" (Member Interview 9/10/02). She introduced legislation commemorating International Women's Day, to establish a consumer product safety standard for durable infant and toddler products, to prohibit the use of arsenic-treated lumber on playground equipment and children's products, and to provide protections and housing assistance to domestic violence victims. Indeed, 47 percent of the personal interest bills she introduced were related to her experience as a mother and housewife. Another member, who introduced two bills about quality child care services argued that members with children bring a unique perspective with them to Congress related to the challenges they face as parents. She said:

> I think it is important that there are Members of Congress who worry about whether their kids have ear infections or not, or who are at the school and seeing what goes on there, and whether their kids qualify for the Spanish program because the federal rules are what they are. I think the Congress would be a very different place. I think we bring a different perspective to work than people whose families grew up in the sixties. The question for us as a country is, what kind of Congress do we want to have? Who will represent us? I would hope it is not just middle-aged regular white guys. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

One member's experiences losing a husband and a daughter activated her on health issues that need to be addressed at the federal level. She became the champion

of issues to combat heart disease after her husband's death and cancer after her daughter's death. Related to her husband, who died of a heart attack, she sponsored legislation to provide for CPR training in schools and to support public-access defibrillation demonstration projects. She said:

> I am co-chair of the Heart and Stroke Caucus. My husband died of cardiac arrest. We have defibrillators now at a lot of places. I amended the Education Bill to include CPR instruction in the schools. I think everywhere we look in our lives we pay attention. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

Related to her daughter, who died of cancer, she introduced comprehensive cancer prevention and treatment legislation.

> I am now offering a bill that will be a major cancer bill, the National Cancer Act. We want to really make it strong. My daughter died two years ago and it means so much to me to be able to work in this arena. I have a real passion about it, particularly oncology nursing. Oncology nurses are not even funded. It is such a new specialty and they deliver almost all the treatment and they are totally dependent on the doctors in the clinic. We are just way behind in the way we deal with Medicare and Medicaid in this arena. I am going to keep working on issues like this. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

In addition to familial experiences, members bring their perspectives as women in the world to the table when setting their legislative agenda. One member interviewed found that her previous career in a male dominated profession helped her understand the importance of representing the needs of working women:

> Forget Congress -- try being a democratic Jewish woman representing Las Vegas, Nevada. Men are big shot executives and women are show girls. I cut my teeth on non-traditional roles of women. I was a utility attorney, and then I was the only woman gaming executive. I think what you do when you are in those positions is to reach out to other women (Member Interview 10/16/02).

Her legislative initiatives are related to issues working mothers worry about, including regarding the reduction of violent child deaths, the reduction of juvenile crime and the risk that youth will become victims of crime, and school drop-out prevention programs.

Another member, who was in the third class of an integrated Air Force Academy, where allegations of sexual assault and the lack of institutional response at the academy have been the focus of congressional oversight, introduced legislation supporting the goals and ideas of National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. She said:

> I started out and built much of my professional life in an environment dominated by men. I had a one way ticket in 1978 to the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. You would come up and get dropped off and the senior class at that time was still all-male. You would march up that ramp and in big, big letters up above in cast aluminum it said, "Bring Me Men."
>
> I am very proud of being an Air Force Academy graduate and a former Air Force officer. I am the only woman veteran in the House of Representatives and actually the only woman veteran in American history to serve in the Congress. That causes me to get involved in

> issues that come to me when they might not otherwise. I am the natural one that women in the military come to. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

In summary, even when they are hesitant to admit that they are involved in women's issues legislation, female members use their experiences as mothers, wives, sisters, and workers in male-dominated professions to identify issues to champion through bill sponsorship. More than 80 percent of the female members interviewed introduced at least one bill related to their identity as a woman and group identification accounted for 38.26 percent of their personal interest agenda.

Race

In addition to gender, affiliation with a racial minority also influences members' bill sponsorship agenda. The sample includes seven black members (11.6 percent) and one Hispanic member (1.7 percent). During the 107th Congress, 8.5 percent of members were black and 4.4 percent were Hispanic (Ornstein, Mann, Malbin 2002). As such, the sample does not perfectly reflect the distribution of black and Hispanic members serving in the House at the time interviews were conducted, but it is close enough to learn about the differences between racial minorities and white members in their bill sponsorship activity.

While white and non-white members of Congress devote approximately the same proportion of their bill sponsorship agenda to personal interest issues (25.10 percent and 24.40 percent respectively),[24] the reasons behind the introduction of those bills varies. White members devote a majority (60.57 percent) of their personal

[24] See Table 3.1.

interest agenda to issues they care about because of their occupational backgrounds. This is a statistically significant difference from their non-white colleagues, where only 28.57 percent of their personal interest agenda is connected to their prior career experiences.[25] In contrast, non-white members devote more of their agenda to group identification (38.10 percent compared to 14.25 percent) and this difference is statistically significant.[26] Two of the eight non-white members devoted their entire personal interest agenda to issues they have identified as important due to their race. Three quarters of the non-white members interviewed introduced at least one bill due to their group identification. Bills introduced due to identification with a racial minority can be categorized as either related to the promotion of equality or to international issues.

Members who identified with a racial group introduced legislation to level the playing field for underrepresented minorities. For example, one black member introduced bills to prohibit discrimination with respect to surety bond transactions, to prohibit racial profiling in the enforcement of state laws regulating the use of federal-aid highways, and to prohibit wage discrimination on the basis of sex, race, or national origin. She said that her interest in such issues of equality were rooted in her work as the first woman to chair the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):

> There are many people of color and women who look to me because of the work I did on the EEOC. I wrote the sexual harassment guidelines

[25] See Table 3.4. T-Test, $p \leq .05$.
[26] See Table 3.4. T-Test, $p \leq .10$

> and affirmative action guidelines, so I think people of color and women look to me for leadership here, because of my history on working on their issues. (Member Interview, 11/22/02).

Another black member introduced legislation to provide for a small and disadvantaged business ombudsman for procurement in the Small Business Administration. He argued that the best way to provide economic opportunities for the poor are to create jobs and that this legislation would do just that in minority communities:

> About fifty percent of the Gross Domestic Product is generated from small business. Therefore, if we can expand opportunities for small businesses, particularly minority-owned businesses and women-owned businesses and businesses owned by members of various ethnic communities, it would create more jobs. The way to help poor people is to create jobs in their community and the way to create jobs is to help the small, local businesses expand. As a member of a minority group, I do have certain perspectives relative to the situation of minorities in this country. So, I view myself as an advocate for economic power and honestly the bankers and the Wall Street crowd have the power. I'm more of an advocate for the middle class, and the working class. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

Bills against racial discrimination are not limited to black or Hispanic members of Congress. Rather, members who identify with a particular racial background use their personal interest agenda to combat any perceived inequality for that group. For example, one Italian-American member introduced legislation to express the sense of

the Congress that the entertainment industry should stop the negative and unfair stereotyping of Italian-Americans. She said:

> The Sopranos are not a typical Italian-American family. I decided this had gotten to be so discriminatory and stereotypical of Italian-Americans as mobsters, and denigrating women and families, that I thought I have to speak out. The fact of the matter is that Italian-Americans are hardworking, taxpaying members of society. Italian-American heritage has contributed greatly to our history and culture. (Member Interview, 11/15/02).

In addition to promoting equality in the domestic agenda, members who identify with a certain racial group also introduce legislation related to international issues. One black member introduced a bill about the civil unrest in Jamaica. He explained:

> I grew up in metropolitan New York City, which is a mini United Nations. There are people from all over the world there. From this, I have always had an interest in international affairs. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

Another black member introduced three bills regarding the human rights situation in Sudan. According to his Congressional Quarterly Profile,

> [His] career has been marked by an unwavering commitment to addressing the problems of Africa. . . . In recent years, he has made a special effort to win new sanctions against the government of Sudan. In 2001, he chained himself to the gates of the Sudanese embassy to protest that country's brutal civil war (CQ Profile).

The Hispanic member interviewed introduced legislation to improve the North American Free Trade Agreement's Border Environmental Cooperation Commission. A freshman, he parted from his predecessor in joining the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and supporting NAFTA. He was quoted in a local newspaper in his district saying, "I believe NAFTA was necessary for the stability of Mexico." During his interview he said:

> In Congress, I gravitate to matters involving the Hispanic community and the lack of opportunity, economic opportunity. So I look at policy matters and what it means to minorities. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

In summary, non-white members devote almost 40 percent of their personal interest agenda to legislation related to their identification with the issues confronting their racial group. These issues tend to focus on promoting equality and combating discrimination in America and on supporting the human rights of members of their race in developing countries.

Religion

In addition to gender and race, members also introduce legislation based on issues they have identified as in need of congressional intervention due to their religious affiliations. Like race, issues championed as a result of identification with a religion seem to deal with questions of equality.

One Jewish member introduced legislation to urge the return of portraits painted by Dina Babbit during her internment at Auschwitz that are now in the possession of the Auscwitz-Birkenai State Museum. While her religion does not

dominate her personal interest agenda (20 percent is related to religion and 80 percent related to occupation), she said she is mindful of issues that are important to the Jewish community and explained:

> Obviously coming from a Jewish family, the survival of the state of Israel was synonymous with the survival of the Jewish people. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

Another member, who is a devout Christian, dedicated his entire personal interest agenda to bills to protect school prayer and to ensure religious leaders can preach about political topics and campaign for political candidates without fear of the church losing tax-exempt status. He became interested in the issue of churches' political activity when it was called to his attention by several ministers. He says:

> I've spent the last year on this bill, which is to return the freedom of speech to our churches and synagogues. The churches and synagogues always had the freedom to talk about issues, whether they be political or non-political issues. Lyndon Johnson, with an amendment in 1954, took that right away from them. I'm offended that our spiritual leaders would have any type of speech restriction on them. I believe sincerely that the First Amendment guarantees freedom of speech no matter who you are or where you are. If it had not been for Johnson's amendment, I would not have had to put the bill in -- there would have been no speech restriction.
>
> This year, this has been the bill I feel so strongly about. If the leaders of this nation don't have the freedom to speak about issues – moral, political, non-moral, non-political – then what's the future of this country? We have a multitude of legislative issues we're dealing with, but obviously this one is the one that has taken the forefront this year.

> I don't know, I just have very strong values. I believe this country's greatness is based on the fact that we have been blessed by God. And I would never try to force my beliefs on anyone, but I am a strong believer in the Bible and the Constitution. (Member Interview, 9/25/02).

In summary, members' religious affiliations may cause them to introduce legislation to address issues of concern to their religion, particularly when an inequity is perceived.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation can also influence a member's personal interest agenda. One of the members interviewed was openly gay. He introduced legislation to eliminate any federal policy on the definition of marriage and to provide benefits to the domestic partners of federal employees. He said:

> I'm gay. I have a function of representing other gay people because there are so few gay people in Congress. (Member Interview, 9/17/02).

These bills make up one quarter of his personal interest agenda. His remaining personal interest agenda consists of bills introduced due to occupational background. In summary, while other issues may be of personal interest, sexual orientation can cause a member to introduce legislation on issues important to the homosexual community.

Personal Experiences

While professional backgrounds and group identity influence the bills members sponsor, members also champion issues through bill sponsorship due to

other personal experiences in their lives. Personal experiences can be first-hand, or derived from secondary sources, such as experiences of family members or friends. They can relate to members' hobbies, problems they experience with government or in the marketplace, or childhood or family experiences. Such personal experiences account for 26.37 percent of members' personal interest agendas and 5.31 percent of their total legislative agendas.[27] Approximately one-third of the members interviewed (21 members) introduced at least one bill related to a previous experience that was not related to their prior occupation or group identification.

Some members introduce bills to champion issues they care about because of personal *hobbies*. One member, who is an avid coin collector, introduced a bill to clarify the sources of silver for bullion coins. He said:

> This is from a point of personal satisfaction. It is just one of those things you work on from the time you are a little kid-- having been a very active coin collector from the time I was 10 years old until I got to college and didn't have the resources to channel it anymore. I focus on a range of things, from overall national policy, to particular regional issues, to doing something I would have been thrilled about as a little boy -- a broad range there. (Member Interview 9/12/02).

Another member, who is a hunter, introduced legislation recognizing the vital importance of hunting as a legitimate tool of wildlife resource management (Member Interview, 9/5/02). Another member who is a pilot said, "I have been particularly active on aviation bills. I used to be a pilot." (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

[27] See Table 3.4.

Members also introduce bills based on negative *personal experiences they have had with government or in the marketplace*. One member introduced a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a single 1-800 telephone number for access by the pubic to benefits counselors. He said his experience calling the Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of his father-in-law caused him to understand the need for this legislation:

> My father-in-law is a World War II veteran in the Army and I have concerns about the way in which Veteran Services interacts with veterans. Probably the procedure is relatively minor, but I thought it was pretty neat. I was tired of calling the agency and having constant referrals and being handed off to people. We are now in the final stages of a 1-800 number that no matter where you are or when you call you get a human being, not an answering machine, and then you are directed to a particular service location that is responsive to your request. It is not operational yet, but we have a pilot program going and that has been underway now. The effort to get this done is about a three-year effort and the pilot is winding up and we hope to see that implemented next year. (Member Interview, 9/25/02).

Another member became a champion of legislation to combat internet spam after receiving unsolicited pornographic emails. She explained:

> I continue to work to allow people to opt out of junk e-mail, to say "Take me off your list." I started getting pornographic spam. The first one was shortly after I was elected and the subject was -- I didn't recognize who it came from but I figured it was a constituent or something – what the federal government doesn't want you to know. I

figured it must be the $200 toilet seat for DOD or something. I clicked on the link and it took me to a pornographic website.

Since that happened almost five years ago, the problem has grown exponentially, and now people's mailboxes are more junk mail than they are regular mail. You have a right to tell someone not to send you regular mail. You can actually put your name down on a list at the post office. You can tell the people who call you at supper time to put you on their do- not-call list. Federal law bans junk faxes. But for e-mail, you have no rights at all.

You have no rights to protect your children from it either if they are online. If your child signs on and gets an e-mail that says look at the newest toys, that can be something that you probably don't want them to see. I think that parents and adults and just people should have the right --there is a right of free speech but there is also a right to say I don't want to listen.

So, I started taking that on -- I have introduced a bill. We passed it in the House in the last Congress. In this Congress, you get bogged down and opposed by all of the people in the financial services industry. Probably, I think, for the wrong reasons, but there are a lot of industry people who want to keep selling you those credit cards and mortgage reductions, and debt repayment schemes, and it is the cheapest way to advertise. So, we are going to come back at it in a slightly different direction. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

Another member introduced legislation to protect consumers from the adverse consequences of inaccurate consumer credit reports. He became interested in the issue

when his own credit report contained mistakes, which were only revealed when he tried to obtain a loan.

> I had a personal experience with one of the credit reporting agencies. Something was on my credit report that was not mine -- several things were not mine -- and it took me months to have it removed. Fortunately my relationship with my financial institution at home, once I was able to demonstrate to them that these were mistakes, they treated me as if those inaccuracies were not on the report and I was able to borrow the money at terms that I should have been able to borrow from at the beginning.
>
> I think we need to change the laws about how they report and what they report and when they report things. I think that every consumer deserves a free credit report, two a year. I think that every consumer deserves to know what activities or behavior will have negative consequences on their report versus what has positive consequences and what to do when mistakes are made in their credit report. It is basic and elementary in its detail. (Member Interview, 10/3/02).

Childhood experiences also impact members' personal interest agendas. One member, who was raised by a teenage single mother, introduced a bill to promote greater involvement of fathers in their children's lives and another to provide grants to states to encourage media campaigns promoting responsible fatherhood skills. She attributed her interest in children and fatherhood to her personal experience and explained:

> I have a proven interest in children because children today, they are going to be you and me tomorrow. The way that society has operated historically, like breaking up welfare families, the father couldn't be in

> the home for the family to get assistance. Of course that has been addressed and readdressed. Then the kind of environment in which kids grow, we blame not the policy that we had but the way that their parents have been able to accommodate their children's needs and we say that if a child goes out and becomes a violent behavior problems, the mother didn't raise him right. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

Another member, whose father was a civil engineer, spent much of his childhood traveling around the world. He says this experience caused him to develop strong views about limiting government power to preserve freedom. He explained:

> I grew up overseas for a lot of my childhood-- living in foreign countries. This gave me a perspective on the freedoms that we have here in this country, which is born not only of being an American and being familiar with the freedom that we have here but also living in foreign countries in which, while from time to time you may get in a situation you have great security, you don't have freedom in the sense that we do here. So, that gave me a perspective on constantly wanting to make sure that in striking that balance between security and freedom, we never go so far in seeking security that we give up freedom. I've been in societies where you have that and although you may feel secure, and may in fact be somewhat secure, you're not free and there's a difference. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

During the 107th Congress, this member sponsored legislation to require federal agencies to consider the impact of their proposed rules on privacy rights. Another member taught English in Iran when he was in his early twenties. He had to leave before the country's revolution broke out. In the 107th Congress, he introduced

legislation concerning freedom and human rights within Iran (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

Members introduce legislation on issues they learn about through the *experiences of their family members*. One member has made gun control legislation a priority due to his famous family's experience in losing two of his uncles to gun violence. During floor debate on the semi-automatic assault weapons ban in 1996 he said:

> Families like mine know all too well what the damage of weapons can do. You will never know what it's like because you don't have someone in your family killed. It's not the person who's killed, it's the whole family that's affected (CQ Profile, 2005).

In the 107th Congress, he sponsored gun control legislation related to community gun buy back programs and the regulation of the sale of firearms and ammunition. He explained his interest in these issues in this way:

> Having watched my cousins grow up without a father and seeing the impact it had on friends of mine whose parents were killed by guns. Of course, I don't know how you would have it that I would also have friends that were impacted by gun violence, but you know that has had an enormous impact. That is why I was one of the primary sponsors and authors of legislation on the seven-day waiting period. I have sponsored legislation to close the gun show loophole and to ensure the consumer products safety agency oversees the regulations for guns the way they would any other product (Member Interview, 10/3/02).

In addition, he is a leading advocate of legislation regarding emotional and social development of children and the provision of mental health and substance abuse

services. He attributes these interests to his personal life experiences with these issues:

> I am interested from personal experience, both from suffering from depression myself and from seeing the ravishes of mental illness in my family and the impact it has had and from a long hailed family commitment to mental illness and mental retardation that was born from the foundation that was established by my grandfather dedicated to that sole purpose of addressing the science of the brain and cures for mental illnesses and mental retardation (Member Interview, 10/3/02).

Another member became an advocate for mental health issues because she saw from her husband's career as a psychiatrist that there were federal access issues that needed to be addressed. She championed legislation to provide for coverage parity in mental health treatment benefits for both insurance plans and Medicare.

> My interest in mental health goes back so many years because of my husband's career. I worked his way through medical school. I did -- I really did work his way through medical school. He got a student loan from a private organization that had established a loan program for the medical students. He didn't come from a family with a lot of money; he had to borrow the money. But then we got married and I worked his way through medical school. Ever since then, he has accused me of practicing medicine without a license. And I say, so be it! I've worked on the parity issue all these years. I am very familiar with it, both from a patient's point of view as well as from a medical point of view.
>
> I'm going to have to continue working with my former colleges and do what I can through the patients' groups as well as the American

> Psychiatric Association and NIMH to assure that the discrimination against mental health patients by HMOs and insurance companies is ended. (Member Interview, 11/15/02).

Another member devoted his personal interest agenda to diabetes research and treatment because his daughter suffers from diabetes. He introduced legislation to provide for diabetes self-management training programs under Medicare, to provide coverage for pancreas transplantation procedures under Medicare, and to increase the supply of pancreatic islet cells for research. He explained:

> My wife and I have been married for twenty-five years. We have a daughter who is twenty-two who is a diabetic and has had diabetes since she was age six. Sixteen million people have it and it costs about eighty billion a year, in cost to the country, productivity loss and otherwise in medical cost. So, it was a natural for me. I want my daughter to have a long life, and other children who are faced with this disease, and adults to have long lives as well. I was involved with diabetes as a younger guy, when our daughter contracted it. My wife and I got engaged in advocating for diabetes research money. I have been at it since she was six. But only officially in Congress did I get engaged when I got elected in 1994. There was no Diabetes Caucus. I was one of the two members who formed the Diabetes Caucus in the House. It's now the largest caucus so we now have about three hundred members. It focuses on more money, technology and research to cure diabetes. It's been personal on the diabetes. (Member Interview, 11/19/02).

In summary, first-hand and secondary experiences account for 26.37 percent of the bills that members introduce for personal reasons. These experiences are

related to hobbies, problems members experience with government agencies or in the marketplace, and childhood and family experiences.

Conclusion and Implications

This chapter has revealed that members introduce legislation based on personal policy interests related to their occupational experiences, identification with a group, and other personal experiences. This extends our understanding of the motivations behind members' allocation of legislative resources. While they do not shirk their responsibilities as district representatives, members are able to fulfill this role and still devote scarce resources to issues they care about because of experiences they have had in their personal lives.

The majority of members have successfully insulated themselves from district scrutiny of their day-to-day Washington activities so that they are able to involve themselves in issues that they are interested in for reasons other than district representation. The evidence presented in this chapter indicates that members are not shy about utilizing this discretion. Rather, they freely draw upon personal lenses in their prioritization of legislative initiatives in the name of "enacting good policy."[28]

Members of Congress must operate in an environment where many cross-pressures influence their activities and decisions on issues. During the interviews, a member described these competing influences in an axiom, which he called the 3 C's: constituency, country, conscience. For each member of Congress, each "C" carries different weights, the formula often depending upon how safe their seat is or how

[28] Fenno, 1978.

long they have served (Member Interview, 9/11/02). In a subsequent interview, one Member suggested a fourth "C"— campaign contributions (Member Interview, 10/10/02). Evidence from the interviews suggests that the constituency variable is much more complex than originally conceived. Constituency does not necessarily refer to those within the geographical boundaries of a member's district. Instead, members of the modern Congress have extended their representational reach to encompass occupational, group, and personal interest constituencies in a substantial amount of their policy formulation activities.

One member argued that "Congress is a slice of America" (Member Interview, 10/9/02). According to the evidence presented here, this is a truism for legislative activity; members champion a variety of causes for a variety of groups not at all confined to their geographical constituencies.

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Table 3.1: Proportion of Bill Sponsorship Agenda Dedicated to District and Personal Interests

	District	Personal Interest
All Members (N=60)	33.01%	25.00%
Law (n=21)	31.17%	20.30%
Other (n=39)	34.00%	27.54%
Business or Banking (n=11)	28.94%	25.74%†
Other (n=49)	33.92%	24.84%
Education (n=9)	43.15%	28.26%
Other (n=51)	31.22%	24.43%
Real Estate (n=5)	36.31%	22.83%
Other (n=55)	32.71%	25.20%
Health (n=5)	22.75%	24.39%
Other (n=55)	33.94%	25.06%
Sex		
Male (n=48)	32.89%	21.00%**
Female (n=12)	33.50%	41.00%
Race		
White (n=52)	31.39%	25.10%
Non-White (n=8)	43.56%	24.40%

†$p \leq .10$
*$p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .025$

Table 3.2: Members Introducing Bills Related to District and Personal Interests

	District Interest %	Personal Interest %	Both %	District Only %	Personal Only %	Neither %
All Members (N=60)	**91.7**	**80.0**	**73.3**	**18.3**	**6.7**	**1.7**
Law (n=21)	95.2	66.7†	61.9	33.3†	4.8	0.0
Other (n=39)	89.7	87.2	79.5	10.0	7.7	2.6
Business or Banking (n=11)	90.9	90.9	90.9†	0***	0*	9.1
Other (n=49)	91.8	77.6	69.4	22.4	8.2	2.0
Education (n=9)	88.9	88.9	77.8	11.1	11.1	0.0
Other (n=51)	92.2	78.4	72.5	19.6	5.9	1.9
Real Estate (n=5)	80.0	100.0***	80.0	0***	20.0	0.0
Other (n=55)	92.7	78.1	72.7	20.0	5.4	1.8
Health (n=5)	100.0**	80.0	80.0	20.0	0.0*	0.0
Other (n=55)	90.9	80.0	72.7	18.2	7.3	1.8
Sex						
Male (n=48)	91.7	75.0***	68.8*	22.9***	6.3	2.1
Female (n=12)	91.7	100.0	91.7	0.0	8.3	0.0
Race						
White (n=52)	92.3	78.8	73.1	19.2	5.8	1.9
Non-White (n=8)	87.5	87.5	75.0	12.5	12.5	0.0

†$p \leq .10$
*$p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .025$
***$p \leq .001$

Table 3.3: Ordinary Least Squares Regression – Institutional Factors Affecting Proportion of Personal Interest Bills Introduced

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable Proportion of Personal Interest Bills Introduced (B)
Intercept	.061 (.285)
Party Affiliation	-.026 (.070)
Party Unity Score	.259 (.297)
Marginal Seat (55 Percent or Less of Vote)	.251* (.100)
Tenure (Three or More Terms in Office)	-.060 (.085)
Committee Leadership Position	.001 (.023)

Adjusted R^2 : .074
SE of regression: .22287
N = 60
Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
***p < .05.**

Table 3.4: Proportion of Personal Interest Agenda Dedicated to Occupation, Experience, Group Identification Interests[29]

	Occupation	Experience	Group Identification
Members with Personal Interest Agenda (N=48)	55.91	26.37	17.73
Law (n=14)	40.97†	29.63	29.40
Other (n=34)	62.06	25.03	12.92
Business/Banking (n=10)	67.00	31.67	1.33***
Other (n=38)	52.99	24.97	22.04
Education (n=8)	67.41	18.30	14.29
Other (n=40)	53.61	27.98	18.41
Real Estate (n=5)	90.00**	10.00	0.00***
Other (n=43)	51.94	28.27	19.79
Health (n=4)	71.14	26.59	2.27**
Other (n=44)	54.52	26.35	19.13
Sex			
Male (n=36)	63.02*	26.10	10.88*
Female (n=12)	34.58	27.16	38.26
Race			
White (n=41)	60.57*	25.18	14.25†
Non-White (n=7)	28.57	33.33	38.10

†p≤.10
* p≤.05
** p≤.025
***p≤.001

[29] Selected only members that introduced a bill due to personal interest.

Chapter 4: The Role of Personal Policy Interests in Members' Legislative Agendas

Introduction

Representative Bob Barr of Georgia is best known for being outspoken on controversial issues, such as gun control, and for being the first to introduce legislation to impeach then-president Clinton on campaign finance violations long before the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Barr was one of the House managers of the Clinton impeachment trial in the Senate, and this quickly made his a household name. In fact, according to his CQ Profile, "[h]is unending attacks made Barr a target for cartoonists and comedians, as well as pornographer Larry Flynt, who sought to 'out' Barr as a hypocrite. . . .[but] he has attained something approaching hero status among conservatives, particularly in the South."

While his role in the Clinton impeachment process offered him the most national exposure compared to his other initiatives, his efforts during the impeachment were only part of a larger legislative agenda to reign in government power and to combat what he saw as abuses of that power. Barr's national profile ultimately caused him to lose his bid for reelection in August of 2002, when he was redistricted into a primary contest with fellow Republican John Linder. Voters in the northern Atlanta suburbs preferred Linder's soft-spoken style to Barr's fiery rhetoric and frequent television appearances. According to Thomas Mann of the Brookings Institution, "when voters got to choose between him and a conservative who is well-behaved and restrained and a serious part of the leadership, there was no contest" (Martinez 2002.) In the end, Bob Barr's high profile, combative style that brought

him to national prominence among conservative Republicans caused him to lose his seat in Congress, when pitted against a fellow incumbent with a similar ideology.

In reflecting on his four terms in Congress, Barr views his role in curbing government power and protecting individual rights as his most important work. He said:

> I think probably the most significant legislative accomplishment for myself would come in the area of ensuring that various pieces of legislation, either those that passed or that we stopped from getting passed, did not provide too much power to government. There are two bills in particular that I would point to, both the anti-terrorism bill in 1996 as well as the anti-terrorism bill that was passed last year. The two bills were very similar in that they were responses to acts of terrorism. But from my standpoint -- and that is from the standpoint of somebody that seeks not to give more power to the government but to actually try to shrink government power -- we were able to, in the first instance keep a number of provisions out of the anti-terrorism bill of 1996 that would have gone too far on the government power side of the scales, and in the case of the anti-terrorism bill last year, we were able to a more limited, but still significant extent, keep out some provisions that would also have gone too far in providing too much power to government that was not necessary. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

The anti-terrorism bill of 1996 that Barr mentions above was brought about in response to the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995. The president called upon Congress to pass legislation to give federal law enforcement more authority in combating terrorism. Barr, a freshman member of the Judiciary Committee at the

time, worked with Judiciary Chairman Hyde to draft the anti-terrorism bill, which at one point was even referred to as the Hyde-Barr bill. However, Barr was dissatisfied with the final product and offered an amendment during floor consideration to strike provisions in the bill that he felt gave the federal government too much power. During floor debate, he argued:

> [What] we must keep in mind, Mr. Chairman, throughout this and other debates that we will have in this great body, is . . . how do we pass laws that minimize the chance for terrorist acts and other criminal acts being committed, balanced against the very important, fundamentally important civil liberties that all of us here in this country enjoy enshrined in that great document, our Constitution. Indeed, Mr. Chairman, the balancing of these concerns is fundamental to the very makeup, the very structure of our Government; the balance between individual freedom and government power, and another balance that is important to keep in mind, Mr. Chairman, the balance between government accountability and absolute government power. (Congressional Record, 3/13/96).

Despite strong objections by Chairman Hyde, Barr's amendment passed by a vote of 246-171. During conference negotiations, an effort was made to add back many of the provisions deleted by Barr's amendment. According to his CQ Profile, "Barr would not budge. 'I am not willing to sacrifice constitutional protections in order to give federal law enforcement officials more power they don't need,' he said." (CQ Member Profiles, 1996). In the end, the anti-terrorism bill that the president signed in April gave federal law enforcement much less power than he requested.

A few months after the bill was signed, Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta was the site of a bombing that wounded more than 100 people, one mortally. This brought the anti-terrorism debate closer to home for Barr, a representative of Atlanta's northwestern suburbs. While the president once again called for more powers for federal law enforcement officers to combat terrorism, Barr's position remained unchanged. He said "a knee-jerk legislative reaction to a criminal act, even a heinous one like the killing of civilians in Atlanta . . . is not the kind of sound basis from which important crime legislation, with important effects on civil liberties, should come." (CQ Member Profiles, 1996). Despite the new salience of the anti-terrorism issue to his Georgia constituents, Barr stood firm and still easily won his next two reelections by slightly more than 55 percent.

Barr attributed his unwavering commitment to limiting the government's power to his youth, where he spent much of his childhood traveling around the world because his father worked overseas as a civil engineer. According to Barr, this experience caused him to develop strong views about government power and of the importance of balancing security and freedom; he said his travels showed him what it was like to have great security at the expense of freedom. Barr's libertarian ideology was refined in college and later solidified during his work at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and as a U.S. Attorney. He said:

> It goes back initially to college -- my philosophy of government and philosophy of society, rooted in writing such as Ayn Rand. Also later on in life, I served both at the CIA, as well as the U.S. Attorney in Atlanta. As a result of serving in both of those capacities, I obtained a

> very healthy regard, a very first-hand regard and understanding of exactly how powerful government already is, how much power it already possesses. And therefore, I bring that perspective of government -- beginning from the perspective that the government already has an awful lot of power and our sphere of personal power and personal privacy is shrinking.
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> There is a direct correlation in every instance between the power the government gets and the power the people have. Our government derives all its power from the people. You can't have a situation where the government gets power without a corresponding situation that the people lose power. So, as that phenomenon keeps progressing, government keeps getting more and more powerful and the people become less and less powerful vis a vis government. I have a very healthy skepticism, I think, for any bill no matter how nice it sounds on the surface that seeks to give the government more power because I know that government in almost every instance already has plenty of power and doesn't need more power to do its job and sooner or later, people are going to realize that we've given up something here we probably shouldn't have, but by then it's too late. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

In Congress, Barr's legislative activities were focused on pursuing his government restraint agenda. His committee service gave him venues to protect individual privacy and curb the powers of an overreaching government. On the Judiciary Committee, he championed legislation to require agencies to consider the effect their proposed rules would have on individual privacy and to take steps to minimize any such impact. The bill was passed by the committee by a voice vote.

On the Financial Services Committee, his focus was also on individual privacy rights, especially as banking regulators tried to implement policies to combat terrorist financing. He said he wanted to:

> . . . make sure that we don't go too far in having banks become an instrument for government intrusion into the private lives of citizens, in this case, banking customers through the filing of reports. One thing that banks do is file what are called Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) and I want to make sure that this is not a tool that is used to improperly intrude into the private lives of banking customers. There was a move several years ago by the FDIC to institute a program called "Know Your Customer" that would have required banks to notify law enforcement if any of their customers engaged in any transaction that was out of character. The customer, of course, would not know that their name and this information was being relayed to law enforcement simply because some teller or other person at the bank saw something that was out of character. So, I've been very sensitive to those kinds of initiatives and trying to make sure that we don't allow government to intrude. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

The Government Reform Committee gave Barr the opportunity to participate in congressional investigations regarding allegations of abuse of government powers, including regarding the Clinton administration.

In addition to his committee service, most of the bills Barr sponsored were related to his occupational experiences and personal agenda to curb the powers of government. In the 107th Congress, the majority of bills Barr championed were referred to the Judiciary Committee, on which he served, and focused on terrorism,

law enforcement, firearms, and government powers. Only one bill he introduced had a direct relevance to his district. This bill was to name a post office in Rome, Georgia after Martha Berry, the founder of Berry College, which is located adjacent to Rome.

Bob Barr's congressional career was dominated by what political science scholars would consider the pursuit of "good pubic policy," which was formulated from his personal experiences and beliefs about the dangers of an overreaching government (Fenno 1973; Hall 1996; Deering and Smith 1997). His personal interests and ambitions in Congress did not seem to be restrained by his constituents until he was pitted against a fellow conservative in a primary. This does not mean that Bob Barr ignored the needs of his constituents. Rather, he said he never felt a dilemma between his views about what is best for the country and what is best for his district. His views of his role as a representative demonstrated that he felt he had latitude in his legislative activity in Congress:

> My first allegiance is to the people of the 7th District of Georgia, but I also am a Representative in the United States House of Representatives and I believe that each one of us has an obligation also to keep in mind the country as a whole in terms of the legislation that we champion and the legislation of course, that we vote on. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

When Barr left Congress, the House lost a passionate libertarian perspective at the policymaking table at a time when issues about the appropriate government authority to combat terrorism were at the forefront of the national agenda. Now that Bob Barr is no longer in Congress, it remains to be seen whether another member will

feel so fervently about the negative consequences of an overreaching government, that they will use their limited legislative resources to participate in the crafting of future bills to combat terrorism. Whether his constituents knew it or not, Barr's representation of the 7th district of Georgia also brought to Congress someone who would represent all of those who are concerned about individual privacy, civil liberties, and government power. His personal interest and dedication to these issues changed the shape of important legislation passed by the Congress. While other members may share his views, these opinions may not be as passionate as they were for Barr. As a result, other members might not fight for such issues as vigorously as he did, like when he challenged the chairman of the Judiciary Committee in his first term in office.

In the previous chapters, I found that personal interests are present in members' committee selection choices and their decisions to sponsor legislation. Members do, in fact, bring their perspectives derived from personal experiences to the policymaking table. What they do once they are at the table and how much political capital they are willing to expend to pursue a personal policy interest is the focus of this chapter. To gauge the true impact of personal interests, it is critical to understand the extent to which members advocate for these interests once they are on the committee or once they have introduced legislation.

This chapter attempts to offer insights into where personal interests are on members' legislative agendas. In other words, are personal interests the issues that members will fight for? The best way to find this out is to ask members to name their

important accomplishments and most pressing objectives. By querying members directly about what they consider their most significant accomplishments and priorities, it is possible to know the policy objectives they want to accomplish by serving in the Congress, and whether personal policy interests are part of this agenda.

The Impact of Personal Interest on Legislative Activities

This study has set out to discover whether members' personal interests affect their legislative activities. Service in Congress offers a range of opportunities for members to get involved with policies that are not directly related to their districts. As we have seen, members gravitate toward issues that they care about personally and act to represent groups they feel affiliated with, descriptively, occupationally, or experientially. However, the importance that members assign to these interests relative to other priorities is not yet clear. In the previous chapters, I find that as members choose committee assignments and introduce bills, they not only focus on issues based on the needs of their districts but also on experiences they have had in their prior careers and in their personal lives. While this evidence demonstrates that personal interest considerations are present in legislative activity, in this chapter I attempt learn about how active members are in pursuing these personal objectives.

There is a difference in effort between a member merely demonstrating a particular preference about an issue and actually becoming actively engaged on the issue (Hall, 1996). To clearly understand the impact of personal interests on legislative activity, we must move past position-taking to learn how engaged members are on issues they care about because of their own personal interests. Hall's

(1996) study of participation in Congress offers insight into the varying degrees of involvement by members in policy formulation, and how some activities require the mere expression of a policy position while others entail greater legislative effort. For example, voting allows members to express a policy preference with limited participation in the actual policy formulation process (Hall, 1996). While he uses it as a measure of minimal participation during committee consideration, Hall does not even count voting as participation in his assessment of floor activity. Instead, Hall creates a scale of participation that includes such activities as sponsoring, speaking, or amending the legislation being considered. Hall teaches us that there are varying levels of involvement a member can have on any given issue, from voting to introducing and shaping legislation to championing an issue through the process.

In terms of the degree of legislative involvement members have on personal issues, committee selection decisions are important because committee service brings members to the venue where many policy decisions about topics they care about will be made. Membership on a committee demonstrates a higher level of interest in the issues under the committee's jurisdiction than merely casting votes on the House floor. While they may have made a committee selection based on personal interest, though, Hall (1996) demonstrates that committee service alone does not indicate the extent to which members will pursue such an interest legislatively. If the first step to influencing a particular policy area is to serve on the appropriate committee of jurisdiction, the second step is to actually attend committee meetings that are related to the area of interest. According to Hall (1996:34), "the official rates of absenteeism

range from 20 to 30 percent in full committee, 25 to 35 percent in subcommittee." Due to such dismal attendance rates, Hall argues that just "showing up" to committee meetings can be considered a minimal degree of participation. Clearly, knowing why members choose to serve on committees is only a preliminary step in exploring the role of personal policy interests in legislative activity. Once members are on these committees, it is important to understand the extent to which they devote their committee service to issues they care about due to personal interests.

Beyond committee membership and attendance, serious legislative engagement actually requires involvement in policy formulation. Such heightened participation ranges from speaking about a bill during public consideration (i.e. hearings, markups, and floor debate) to shaping a policy output through sponsorship, amendment, or behind-the-scenes negotiations (Hall, 1996). These activities require familiarity with the issue at hand, including an in-depth knowledge about the policy problem to be addressed, a firm grasp of the public policy alternative the member feels would help solve it, and the ability to communicate these opinions in a well-crafted message. Undertaking such an endeavor, when there are numerous other pressing public policy problems also requiring the same in-depth analyses, reveals a strong interest and commitment to an issue.

We saw in the previous chapter that members devote an average of 25 percent of their bill sponsorships to issues they care about due to a personal interest. However, we do not know from this assessment the extent to which members will work to have these issues make their way through the legislative process. While it is

rare for an individual bill to become law, members have various opportunities to ensure the idea contained within a bill is included in a larger legislative vehicle. What we have learned from the analysis of bill sponsorship is the extent to which members use bill sponsorship to propose policies to address problems they have identified in their personal lives. However, the introduction of a bill does not necessarily indicate how actively the member will pursue enactment of the policy initiative contained within it.

Prioritizing Legislative Activities

Ideally, members would be able to influence every policy they were interested in. Unfortunately, due to the sheer volume of important issues facing Congress, members are limited in what policies they are able to pursue. Members constantly face time, resource, informational, and institutional constraints as they decide where to become active legislatively. Therefore, those issues members do champion must achieve a threshold of importance to them where they are willing and able to overcome such constraints. According to Hall (1996: 86),

> Two members may be equally interested in an issue (for similar or different reasons), but the intensity that they reveal through their legislative involvement is a function not only of interest, but of the size and quality of their staff-support system, the positions they hold, and the procedural prerogatives that provide more or less easy entry into particular legislative games.

Because of the resource and institutional obstacles they face, members must be strategic in deciding how to devote their efforts. They are forced to make tradeoffs

about where they will allocate their limited resources, since activity in one area decreases their ability to be involved in another.

In order to effectively champion a proposal through the process, members must devote time and energy to the project. Bill sponsorship is just one aspect of a legislative initiative. That activity alone involves the resources of a member and his or her staff, as they meet with groups and conduct research to define the problem and develop legislative language to address it. There is much more to moving a policy proposal through Congress than introducing a bill, though. In his guide, "Hitting the Ground Running," former Majority Leader Dick Armey provides freshmen advice about how to manage legislative projects. According to Armey (1998: 37),

> A major legislative project requires a comprehensive plan to research the issue, generate press attention, enlist the help of outside interest groups and think tanks, and coordinate with other Members, particularly committee chairmen and Members of leadership. Too often, a good idea goes nowhere because a Member and his staff failed to adequately research a problem, seek out potential allies, or coordinate with the committee chairmen with jurisdiction over their legislation.

In fact, Armey's guide provides a checklist for members as they set out to accomplish a legislative goal, including considerations under such categories as legislative strategy, coalitions strategy, communications strategy, and analysis of political opportunities.

All of the activities described by Armey that lead to the success of an initiative require the dedication and resources of a member and his or her staff. These

resources are scarce commodities for members, and time spent championing one project will likely take away from others. The ability of the member's staff is instrumental in helping to successfully pursue their legislative projects. According to Hall (1996: 93), "the capacity and experience of the staff is crucial to a member's ability to acquire, assimilate, and deploy the issue-specific information needed to participate. . . ." Members must take the ability of their team and the importance of the issue relative to other legislative goals into account when considering the time and resources that would be required to pursue a new project.

There are, however, ways to minimize the resource constraints associated with pursuing an initiative. While more than enough information is readily available to all members on most issues, members have familiarity with certain policy areas and are therefore better able to access and understand the information about them. This will reduce the amount of time and effort required to research the problem, attract coalitions, or develop a communications or messaging strategy. Members typically do not choose to become active on issues that they do not feel they have knowledge about. As one member interviewed put it,

> To be an effective member of Congress, you need to deal with the issues in a way that shows you have a mastery of the subject. Knowledge is really three-quarters of the game around here. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

As a result, busy members tend to gravitate to the issues they know, which are usually issues they confronted long before their service in Congress. In an environment where 535 individuals are competing to come up with the preferred policy alternative

on any given issue, personal experiences help members find a policy niche for themselves. By focusing on issues members are already familiar with, they can minimize the amount of time a particular initiative will take to pursue and find instant credibility among their colleagues by being able to effectively communicate the policy problem and potential solution to them.

Members are able to overcome institutional constraints by serving on the appropriate committee or subcommittee that has jurisdiction over the policy issue. Hall (1996: 91) calls such institutional constraints transaction costs, which are the "costs of communicating and negotiating with other players (or potential players) regarding the matter at hand." These costs are minimized through committee service because committee members know the vehicles that are moving to which a proposal can be attached, have a pre-established relationship with committee members and relevant interest groups that will help them sell and negotiate their proposal, and have the right to participate in public and behind-the-scenes committee meetings.

Whether a member is on the committee of jurisdiction or not, one factor that can universally help overcome constraints is the depth of the member's passion for an issue. Members tend to be more sensitive to the importance of some issues because of their experience with them. As we can see from the literature about women and minorities in Congress, the level of members' interest in something often comes from personal experience with the issue (Swers 2002; Jeydel and Taylor 2003; Bratton and Haynie 1999; Hall and Heflin 1995). Hall (1996) calls efforts to champion legislation on a given issue "revealed intensities." According to Hall,

> Members who wish to affect specific outcomes have much more to invest than their votes. Their legislative time and energy, staff effort, and political capital, borrowed or accrued, can be variously invested or conserved in the legislative competition over the issues that come before the chamber. Members with relatively strong interests in a given issue expect greater benefits from such investments; they are thus more inclined to participate and when participating, to pursue their positions more vigorously.

The intensity of interest a member has in an issue can be measured by how a member spends time, or prioritizes his or her agenda. Hall's extensive study of member participation, where he used publicly accessible information to explain who participates in policymaking activities, helped to demonstrate that members' expenditure of effort reveals the importance of an issue to them. According to Hall (1996: 130), "we can conclude that the greater the personal policy interest that members bring to an issue, the more active they will be." Legislators differ in the extent of their commitment to an issue, and those that are most passionate will devote the resources necessary to ensure such personal interests become law.

The exploration of committee selection and bill sponsorship in the previous chapters has revealed that members are interested in certain issues as a result of their background experiences. Now that we know that members will devote more time to issues they care about due to personal interests, we must turn to how members themselves prioritize these issues in their legislative agenda. This chapter will assess where personal interests rank for members in their legislative agenda. According to Hall (1996: 7), "one needs to think not only about what members want legislatively,

but also their willingness and ability to pay what it takes to get it." Asking members to tell about what they view as their greatest accomplishments and top priorities will reveal the true intensity of their personal interest. This inquiry will help us understand the extent that members are willing to expend their legislative resources to those issues they care about because of their personal interests.

Assessing Personal Interests in Legislative Agendas -- Data and Methodology

The best way to learn the extent to which members pursue policies they care about personally is to ask members themselves about those issues they have advocated for or plan to champion in Congress and the reasons for such prioritization. Other forms of data gathering are likely unable to uncover members' top priorities or the reasons for becoming involved in an issue. For example, relying on publicly available information has the potential of only revealing those activities that members want to advertise. The message in most public documents and settings is closely controlled due to political scrutiny by potential challengers, so it might be difficult to learn from these venues the true prioritization of issues or the motivations for involvement. Similarly, the reliability of staff interviews in capturing a member's reasons for becoming involved on certain issues is questionable because there is no systematic way of ensuring the staffer being interviewed is privy to such information.

While publicly accessible information might be able to shed light on members' agendas, it is difficult to discern the reasons behind such actions through this impersonal form of data gathering. For example, a member's website contains information about legislative accomplishments and priorities. However, websites are

created to cater to a particular audience, namely constituents. Certain pursuits are highlighted and other activities are not even mentioned. Therefore, websites might not provide an accurate report of legislative accomplishments and priorities, especially if members are pursuing other interests not related to their districts.

The same can be true for other modes of position taking and credit claiming that can be easily accessed through public sources, including roll call votes, prepared statements, press releases, and committee transcripts. All of the aforementioned activities are important and further a member's goals. However, there is no way to determine if such public activities are an accurate reflection of a member's most important priorities during his or her legislative tenure or the reasons behind such activities.

Similarly, interviews with staff can offer a skewed perspective about those issues a member cares about the most and why. Members, through their staff, manage an "enterprise," where many goals can be pursued at once. As Salisbury and Shepsle (1981:564) argue:

> When the individual member is engaged in floor debate, he cannot also be doing casework, negotiating with the "other body," and soliciting campaign funds. But the member's enterprise can indeed do all those things and more and, with shifting emphasis and variable efficiency, does.

Members have employed staff members to extend their involvement in various policy discussions. Staffers represent their bosses by researching and drafting bills and

amendments, attending committee meetings, preparing background materials and issue briefs, meeting with interested stakeholders, and engaging in negotiations during policy formulation. In this way, members' enterprises enable them to be involved in far more legislative activity than would be physically possible for one person to engage in.

While the work of staff is a vital component of a member's legislative activities, it is unwise to rely on staffers for a true depiction of a member's goals and priorities. Staff responses to questions about members' main policy concerns can be distorted to reflect those issue areas that the member has tasked the staffer being interviewed with engaging in legislatively. Every legislative staff member views their own work as highly important, and competes for the member's time and attention to the issues the staffer is responsible for. While this results in an effective legislative operation, where each staff member is fully engaged in the issues under their portfolio on behalf of the member, it makes it difficult for the researcher to learn about a member's true priorities. Oftentimes, the areas the staffer is tasked with pursuing are issues the member's enterprise must accomplish for the district but those that might not be interesting or exciting enough to peak the member's interest in personally engaging legislatively. According to Salisbury and Shepsle (1981),

> [S]taffers do enormously expand the scope and range of each member's policy-relevant activity. Much of it may have promotional effects, of course – a bill designed for election purposes with no real intention of pushing it through to enactment, an amendment intended

> to benefit a district interest, or a floor speech to be distributed under the frank throughout the state.

Therefore, interviews with staffers regarding a member's legislative accomplishments and priorities can yield similar shortcomings in findings as a search of a member's website, press releases, or public statements, where the message is skewed toward a specific audience with a particular goal in mind. In addition, while the interviewer might find a staff member who is well versed in and able to respond to questions of priority and accomplishment for the current session, the staffer might not have been employed by the member for his or her entire tenure in Congress, causing the staffer's frame of reference regarding accomplishments and priorities to be focused on the time the staffer was serving the member.

In the cases where the interviewer finds the right staffer to interview, even when an accurate account of a member's priorities are offered, there is no way to know if the staff member is merely speculating about the reason that a member might be interested in a given subject. Staff members might not be aware of how their boss gained interest in an issue. It is virtually impossible in any systematic way to ensure that the staffer being questioned is privy to a member's motivations because staff titles can not be relied upon to indicate any level of closeness to the member or length of service in the office.

This study avoids the shortcomings of publicly accessible information and staff interviews by focusing on the members themselves to learn about the reasons for their involvement in the issues they prioritized. Interviews queried members about

what they felt were their greatest accomplishments, their most pressing objectives, and what generated their interest in these issues. Asking members to discuss their accomplishments and priorities helps to gauge how strongly members feel about issues of personal interest to them, across the range of legislative activity.

All members were asked to discuss their top legislative accomplishments and the source of their interest in these issues. The 54 non-retiring members were then asked to discuss their legislative priorities. This was asked to tap those issues that were at the top of the agenda but had not yet become a legislative victory. Only the members who were not retiring were questioned about their priorities due to the time frame of the interviews, which were conducted at the end of the 107th Congress. At the time of the interview, there was not time left for a retiring member to translate a priority into an accomplishment prior to adjournment. Again, for each issue mentioned as a priority, I asked the member to discuss the source of his or her interest.

Because the sample size for this study precludes sophisticated statistical analysis of members' responses, simple frequency distributions and Chi-Square tests are used to demonstrate the role personal backgrounds play in a member's legislative activities. In order to generate this information, I was able to organize interview responses about the motivations behind the issues members champion into five categories: district[1], partisan/ideology[2], personal interests[3], lobby influence[4], and

[1] An extensive body of research exists that indicates district interests influence Members' legislative activities (Mayhew 1974, Fenno 1978, Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987, Kingdon 1989, Hall 1996).
[2] Ideology has been found to significantly explain member's roll call voting (Jackson and Kingdon 1992; Poole and Rosenthal 1991).

committee service[5]. This framework allowed for a determination of the reasons members are interested in the issues that they choose to champion during their service in Congress.

Because each member discussed differing numbers of accomplishments and priorities, ranging from one to five of each, a uniform coding system was used to capture their explanations about the source of their interest. In order to ensure all answers were included, responses were coded as one, indicating they offered the specified reason for their accomplishments and priorities and zero if they did not. These responses were coded one time for accomplishments and one time for priorities. Therefore, if a member named two accomplishments related to a personal interest and one priority related to the district needs, the member would receive a score of one for the personal interest variable for accomplishments and a one for the district interest variable for priorities. All other accomplishment and priority variables (i.e. accomplishment-district, accomplishment-partisan ideology, accomplishment-lobby influence, accomplishment-committee service; priority–personal interest, priority–partisan ideology, priority–lobby influence, priority–committee service) would be coded as zero. This method of coding allows for

[3] Fenno (1978), Krehbiel (1991), Hall (1996), Deering and Smith (1997) mention personal policy interests as affecting legislative activity.
[4] Hall and Wayman (1990) find that campaign contributions cause members to be more active in championing issues in Congress that are important to an interest group, including engaging at committee and in behind-the-scenes negotiations.
[5] To manage the large and complex workload confronting Congress, informational theorists argue that the institution is organized into committees so that labor is divided among lawmakers who have become issue specialists (Cooper 1970; Krehbiel 1991; Sinclair 1996).

comparison across members to learn whether issues members care about because of personal interests are among those a member will actively champion.

Personal Policy Interests in Legislative Accomplishments and Priorities

The results of this analysis indicate that while district service remains important in members' prioritization of initiatives, members freely gravitate toward issues they care about for reasons other than acting for their constituents. More than three-quarters of the members interviewed named accomplishments that were related to their personal interests and 81.5 percent had pressing priorities that were related to personal interests. Clearly, most members give preference to issues they care about because of a personal interest when prioritizing their legislative activities. The majority of members also mentioned their districts when discussing their accomplishments (68.3 percent) and priorities (74.1 percent), but these numbers were lower than for personal interest. In other words, more members named issues related to a personal interest than issues related to the district when discussing their legislative accomplishments and priorities. These findings confirm the observation made by one member interviewed who said:

> I think that members' life experiences are sometimes more important or as important as party and constituency demographics. (Member Interview, 9/12/02).

--Table 4.1 About Here--

The finding that personal interests rank highest in motivating members' legislative activity does not diminish the importance of representing the needs of the

district. Half of the members interviewed mentioned both district and personal interest issues when discussing their accomplishments and almost 60 percent did when telling about their priorities. Still, more than a quarter of the members interviewed reported accomplishments solely on issues they were involved in because of a personal interest, and 22.2 percent only discussed personal interests when discussing priorities. On the other hand, just 18.3 percent responded with only district-related accomplishments and 14.8 percent of members reported solely district-related priorities.

Clearly, most members assign importance to those issues which they know first-hand from their background experiences. These findings that personal interest ranks higher than district interest when it comes to a member's legislative agenda, support those who argue for a broadened conception of legislative activities as motivated by more than just reelection. While members might work to serve their districts, they find legislative opportunities to also pursue their own policy agendas. The results here make clear that members do more in Congress than single-mindedly seek reelection.

Understanding Personal Interests

What are the sources of the personal interests that cause members to make an issue one of the top things they advocate for in Congress? Based upon members' responses to questions about what motivated them, their personal policy interests can be divided into three categories: previous occupation, personal experience, and group

identification.[6] Of those who said personal interests were the reason behind their accomplishments and priorities, more than three-quarters named accomplishments and priorities related to their occupational experiences. Forty percent of those who discussed accomplishments and priorities derived from personal interests said that personal experiences caused them to champion the issue. While only 19.1 percent related their personal interests to their identification with a group, almost 30 percent had priorities they were pursuing due to their group identification. This suggests that members' priorities have not yet translated into accomplishments when it comes to acting for a group they can identify with socially. In sum, the personal interests that motivate members to champion legislative issues are related to their previous occupations, personal experiences, and group identification, in that order.

--Table 4.2 About Here--

Occupational Experience

Occupational experience accounts for the majority of a member's personal interest that is intense enough to translate itself into a top accomplishment or priority. When members come to Congress, they arrive having been influenced by their previous careers. As discussed above, almost 80 percent of members who had a personal interest that motivated their legislative accomplishments or priorities attribute that interest to their prior career experience.

Some previous occupations have more of an influence on members' activities than others. When considering occupational interest across professional categories,

[6] Hall (1996:70) similarly suggests that members derive personal interests from professional background, personal experiences, and group identification.

every educator and health professional interviewed prioritized their time in Congress by focusing on issues that directly related to their previous careers while less than half of the lawyers and public servant/politicians had accomplishments or priorities related to their previous careers. Indeed there is a statistically significant difference between members' prior careers and whether their accomplishments and priorities are due to occupational interests.[7]

Law

As was the case for committee selection and bill sponsorships, a slightly lower percentage of lawyers say that their top accomplishments are issues they care about due to personal interests compared to the rest of the members interviewed (71 percent compared to 82 percent). Similarly, while 70 percent of lawyers say that their most pressing priorities are issues related to a personal interest, 88 percent of the non-lawyers mentioned priorities related to personal interests.

--Tables 4.3 and 4.4 About Here--

Even though lawyers set their priorities and discussed legislative accomplishments based on personal interest, most also named accomplishments and priorities related to their districts. More than half (52.4 percent) of the lawyers in the sample discussed both personal and district accomplishments and almost 70 percent told of both personal and district priorities. Lawyers did not focus on solely on personal interests when discussing their legislative agenda. In fact, none of them mentioned only priorities related to a personal interest.

[7] Accomplishments: Chi-Square, p=.009; Priorities: Chi-Square, p=.074.

Unlike members from other professions, the personal interest lawyers refer to when discussing their accomplishments and priorities is not necessarily related to their prior occupations. When asked about the accomplishments they were most proud of, little more than half of those lawyers who attributed a top accomplishment to personal interest said this interest was related to their previous career experiences. In discussing their most pressing priorities, a slightly higher percentage (64.3 percent) of the lawyers who had personal interest priorities were referring to a legislative initiative they were interested in as a result of their prior careers. Therefore, while lawyers pursue legislative initiatives due to their personal interests, these are less often related to their prior careers than members from other professions.

When lawyers do call a job-related issue a top accomplishment or priority, these tend to reflect the type of law they practiced, rather than having a common judicial theme. For example, a freshman member of the Energy and Commerce Committee reported that he was the only member of his party voting against a medical malpractice reform bill because his "life before Congress was representing people who were the victims in medical malpractice lawsuits" and based on his previous career experience, he felt the legislation was fundamentally flawed (Member Interview, 9/18/02). Similarly, arguably the most vocal advocate for small businesses in the House is a small town lawyer who represented small business owners before coming to Congress. He said one of his top priorities was to ensure government purchases goods from American companies.

> Our goal is to make sure that every bill in every department be mandated to using American products with U.S. taxpayer dollars. The least we can do is to buy our own stuff. Somebody ought to set the example. This isn't a matter of protectionism, this is a matter of basic common sense, in trying to keep our own manufacturing flowing. As a lawyer, I represented a lot of small business people. (Member Interview, 10/2/02).

Another member said that both his top accomplishment and priority was related to his prior career as a lawyer specializing in technology and government procurement. He said his top accomplishment was legislation he shepherded through the 106th Congress to prevent Year 2000 (Y2K) computer failures and to create a dispute resolution regime to resolve conflicts when Y2K computer failures occur. When asked about his proudest accomplishment he said:

> The Y2K Act, which basically was a tort reform act for Y2K compliance. I'm a techie. My employment outside of government was in the technology industry and this was a way that we could try to get the Y2K problem fixed and get people offering their services without having to fear retribution from trial lawyers. (Member Interview, 9/12/02).

He said his top priority in Congress was on issues relating to government contracting and procurement, which he related to his prior career experience but also acknowledged as important to his constituents:

> How does the government buy goods? What are the vehicles they have? How do you get the best value for the taxpayer dollar? What do you contract out—what are you doing now? I was a procurement

> attorney—general counsel for a billion dollar government contractor. It is also important in my district. (Member Interview, 9/12/02).

When asked about his legislative initiatives, one lawyer said that the "major thrust of my legislative work are judiciary-related issues." He explained that he was "pro-family in the area of crime." His proudest accomplishment was passage of "two-strikes" legislation in the House, which would impose life prison terms on second-time child sex offenders. He said his top priority was to move this legislation through the Senate (Member Interview, 9/5/02).

Members with a law enforcement background tend to use their expertise to inform other members about subjects related to their experience. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Bob Barr's work as an analyst at the CIA contributed to his involvement with anti-terrorism legislation to ensure the government does not gain too much power at the expense of civil liberties. Similarly, a former FBI special agent said that his involvement with the drafting of legislation to enhance law enforcement surveillance authority post-9/11 was one of his top accomplishments.

> I asked to be involved with the USA PATRIOT Act because of my background as an FBI agent. I went through it paragraph by paragraph. I was a credible person because of my experience. I had a decisive role in passage of the bill. (Member Interview, 9/4/02).

According to his CQ Politics in America Profile (2005):

> The Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks . . . put a premium on his background as a former FBI special agent. . . . Because he has firsthand experience in wiretapping, [he] was asked for his input as the

> Justice Department developed its anti-terrorism package, including proposals to broaden wiretap authority. As the plan moved toward enactment, his colleagues also sought [him] out for guidance.

One member, who was elected to the state legislature when he was 26 years old, said that his law enforcement priorities were related to his first political position:

> I have been extremely active in law enforcement issues . . . I started my political life as safety director in charge of the city police department. I was 24. I had safety, fire and police. I am also very active with firefighter issues. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

In summary, while those with a law background name accomplishments and priorities associated with their personal interests slightly less than members from other professions, they do not rely upon their career experiences as often as other members. When they do base their interest on their prior career experiences, lawyers tend to focus on issues specifically related to the type of law they practiced rather than sharing a thematic set of issues about the legal system with other lawyers.

Business/Banking

All of the members with a background in business or banking mentioned an issue related to a personal interest when discussing their top priorities and 81.8 percent did so when discussing their proudest accomplishments. This is slightly higher for members with business and banking backgrounds than for those from other professions, where 78 percent said that personal policy interests motivated their top accomplishments and priorities.

Members with backgrounds in business and banking do not necessarily equally balance their district priorities with their personal interests when it comes to their top accomplishments and priorities. While more than half only mention accomplishments that are related to personal interests, less than a third (27.3 percent) named both district and personal accomplishments. The situation is similar when priorities are considered. Half of the members with business or banking backgrounds only mentioned legislative priorities that were motivated by personal interests and half referred to both district and personal priorities. No member with a background in business or banking mentioned only district-related priorities.

Unlike lawyers, most of the personal experience the business/bankers are referring to is related to their prior occupational experiences. Members with a background in business or banking are influenced by their prior careers when discussing the accomplishments they are most proud of and naming their top priorities. All but one of those members interviewed who had a business or banking background and said an accomplishment was due to a personal interest related this issue to their prior occupation. Three quarters of those who said they had personal interest priorities associated these with their prior careers. Indeed, one member with a business background interviewed described his role in Congress as representing both his constituents and the small business community:

> Aside from the constituency, I'm a representative of what I think is the basis of the economy of the United States, and that's basically small business. The government itself is an adversary. Labor unions are adversaries. The laws are adversaries. So in spite of it all, we have a

> fabulous economy because we have some very smart people running small businesses that even follow the government's regulations and succeed or go around the government's regulations and succeed. Those people have almost no representation up here. (Member Interview, 9/24/02).

Members who came from a small business perspective recounted a common theme of excessive government regulations on Main Street America. One member articulated the problem by discussing how his experience as an owner of a company caused him to realize that, government regulation was "choking" small businesses. He said:

> Many times you just see the overreaching arm of the government causing the companies to do things that cost an awful lot of money that had very little to no benefit. It was getting to the point that we were regulating people to death. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

His top legislative priority was moving a pension reform bill through the process, but he said he had also spent substantial time on workforce issues, such as employer-provided health care, pensions, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and OSHA regulation. He said, "all of the workplace issues are a natural for me." Another member said his proudest accomplishments and top priorities were related to his work to reform OSHA, the Fair Labor Standards Act, and the National Labor Relations Board. He said his interest in these issues came from his experience as a business owner (Member Interview, 9/24/02).

Taxes on small businesses are also an area of concern for members with an occupational background in business or banking. One member, who serves on the powerful Ways and Means Committee, said that through his own company, he watched how the tax code was killing small businesses. Now that he is in Congress, he takes every opportunity to provide tax relief for small businesses (Member Interview, 10/1/02). Another former small business owner recounted his own experience trying to make his business successful, which caused him to prioritize tax relief for businesses:

> I started with an old truck that needed oil and gas and about $200 in a bank account and I built a company from that. I watched over the years, as my company grew and I became more successful, how much the government took. I probably went through three or four recessions. And you realize how much the government takes when you are doing well and how little you have to work with when things are bad and you get nothing back. The government just tells you: well, if you earn more money in the future we'll let you deduct some of what you lost now in the future. It is a one way road—some try to think it is a partnership between the private sector and the government. It is not. It is a one way venture. The government takes and the private section loses. . . we need to deal with these issues, such as taxes and business regulations, and how they impact the private sector (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

In addition to government regulation and taxes, other members with a business or banking background used their occupational experience to focus on helping the government get its finances in order. One member said that his proudest

accomplishment was his work to balance the budget. He said "I am a businessman and deficit spending is immoral" (Member Interview, 11/13/02). Similarly, in explaining his focus in Congress, a former investment banker said that he was "drawn to fiscal and economic policy issues." The second sentence in his biography on his website discussed how his occupational background translated into legislative activity: "A former investment banker specializing in municipal and housing finance, [his] priorities since his election to Congress in 1994 have included federal budget, health care, financial, and economic policy." One of his proudest accomplishments was his involvement with the 1997 Balanced Budget Amendments. He said,

> We need to get a handle on fiscal policy. . . . in the next Congress we will see high deficits if Congress does not figure out a way to get a handle on deficit numbers. (Member Interview, 9/10/02).

Another of his top accomplishments was his work on foreign trade issues. He said he worked to include worker protection provisions in the rewrite of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act and also helped pass Fast Track Authority.

> I have an economic view of free trade. I look at how to balance competing interests – open markets versus labor groups. . . I convened a conference with members who were on the fence about Fast Track. I pushed the issue because it is a logical way to pass trade deals. (Member Interview, 9/10/02).

He attributed his interest in this and other foreign trade issues to both his personal interests and the needs of his district.

The difference between lawyers and those with a business or banking background in stating their top accomplishments and setting their priorities is particularly important given the narrowing of the gap in these two most prevalent professions in the House. A decade ago, law was the leading occupation in the House, surpassing the second most frequent occupation, business and banking by 14 percentage points (see Table 4.5). Today, previous careers in business and banking are as frequent as careers in law, a shift that occurred in the 104th Congress with the Republican takeover of the House. One member with a background in business described the differences between Republicans and Democrats in terms of taking a business or government approach to policies:

> I think the basic concept is that Republicans believe in less government, free enterprise, home rule, that is to say states rights acts, and less taxes. The Democrats, on the other hand, believe just the opposite on all those issues, more government control, higher taxes more government spending. It's the difference between a business approach and a government approach. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

It is almost possible to replace the words "Republicans" and "Democrats" in this quote with the words "businessmen" and "lawyers" to understand this member's feelings about the differences between members with laws and business backgrounds. Members with business backgrounds have a distinct view about the role of government, which has influenced their legislative activities.

In summary, members with a background in business and banking attribute slightly more of their legislative accomplishments and priorities to personal interest

than the rest of the members interviewed. Most of this personal interest is related to issues of interest to them because of their occupational experiences. While their counterparts balance their personal interests with district interests, many members with a background in business and banking are willing to focus solely on issues related to their occupational interests. Such occupational interests related to common themes regarding government regulation of business, tax reduction, and government spending. The increase in the number of members with a background in business and banking compared to lawyers could have an impact on policy outputs because businessmen tend to rely on their career experiences when legislating to a larger extent than the lawyers.

Real Estate

Members with a background in real estate are not as likely to name accomplishments and priorities related to personal interest as members from other career backgrounds. While sixty percent of the members interviewed with a real estate background had accomplishments and priorities they cared about because of a personal interest, 80 percent of members with a different previous career discussed accomplishments related to a personal interest and 84 percent named priorities connected to a personal interest. Of those with a real estate background who had accomplishments and priorities relating to a personal interest, all of them attributed such interest to their prior career experiences.

While those whose prior career was in the real estate industry focus their personal interest activities on issues they care about due to their prior occupational

experiences, this is not necessarily at the expense of their constituents. Rather, 40 percent named accomplishments and priorities they championed for their districts and 20 percent named both district and personal interests.

When their accomplishments and priorities are related to their prior occupations, members with backgrounds in real estate focus on housing and development issues generally. For example, a former homebuilder and real estate developer said that issues related to housing were his top priority. He said that he had an aggressive housing agenda to resolve the housing crisis in America, including by eliminating the regulatory barriers that artificially inflate housing prices.

> I have a real passion on housing issues. I got involved basically at the city council/mayoral levels and then to the state legislature and then to Congress. I started in business for myself when I was in my early twenties, in the building industry, and I witnessed how government regulations impacted the housing industry. I had the desire to get into politics to try to change all of that. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

Another real estate developer said that his most pressing legislative priority was economic development, particularly in rural communities. He said this would "help families stay together and provide rural America with economic opportunity." (Member Interview, 9/10/02).

In addition to general issues relating to housing and development, members also focus on reforming specific government policies or programs. For example, one member said that one of his most pressing legislative priorities was to reform the regulation of the housing-related Government Sponsored Enterprises, Freddie Mac

and Fannie Mae. He said he was interested in this issue due to his prior career in real estate. (Member Interview, 9/25/02). Another said his top accomplishment was eliminating the Resolution of Trust Corporation because of its negative impact on the building industry. He said:

> When I first got up here I helped get rid of the RTC, the Resolution of Trust Corporation, because I was a builder at home and the RTC was, frankly, screwing up everything they touched and did. Our economy took a downturn at that time because of the RTC. It was a government deal. It bought stuff at a higher price than it was worth and then sold it off at a very low price. A lot of people suffered under that, and went to jail during that time and a lot of people made good deals by buying property that they had confiscated off the RTC and put it back into development. The RTC was a government unit that should have never existed. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

Another member with a real estate background said that her top legislative accomplishment was eliminating the federal capital gains tax on the sale of a primary residence.

> One of the very first things I did was help pound through a bill which took away the federal capital gains tax on the sale of primary places of residence. Within certain parameters, people don't have to pay federal capital gains tax when they sell their homes. It put more money back in people's pockets, it took away a tax that wasn't necessary and wasn't generating a great deal of income for the federal government. Anyway it was wrong, people shouldn't be taxed; they were already taxed when they bought the house. They paid the tax, then they tackled taxes to sell the house, it didn't make any sense at all.

When asked why this was her top accomplishment she said:

> I was in the real estate business. . . I just know the business. It bothered me a great deal to see people hamstrung, it put a chill factor, the way the people were treated. . . We just said "no" you don't have to hold your house a certain number of years, if you lived in that residence for two out of five years. It did put a residency requirement on it, but basically in a non-complicated way. It is working and it helped the housing industry and it helped people because people were able to buy and sell houses without this federal capital gains tax. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

In summary, while members with backgrounds in real estate are less likely to mention accomplishments and priorities related to their personal interests, when they do these interests are regarding their prior career experiences. Members with a background in real estate tend to focus their interests on housing and development issues or on government policies that negatively impact the real estate industry.

Education

Members who come to Congress with a background in education seem to be unified in their mission to address education issues. Every member who had a previous career in education told of accomplishments and priorities related to their personal interests. This is more than the rest of the members interviewed where 75 percent named an accomplishment and 79 percent named a priority associated with a personal interest. Furthermore, when educators attribute accomplishments and priorities to personal interests, they are referring to occupational experiences 100 percent of the time.

While educators pursue accomplishments and priorities based on their personal interests, they do not do so at the expense of meeting the needs of their districts. In fact, all of the members with an education background named both personal and district priorities and only one did not name accomplishments based on both district and personal interests.

Members with a background in elementary and secondary education tended to focus on improving our country's K-12 education system. One member, who had served as a high school teacher, principal, and school board member, responded that his most pressing legislative objective was to get a good teacher in every classroom. (Member Interview, 10/7/02). Another former teacher said his top accomplishment was his work on funding for special education.

> I feel most passionately about the work I have done for special education. I was a teacher. I taught high school, I taught college, and of course I have kids of my own. . . That, coupled with my experience of being in the classroom, really animated me on the special education issue. . . I consider it an accomplishment although we haven't succeeded in making it law yet. Because we have raised so many people's awareness, we have made a lot of progress, we have moved the ball forward substantially. (Member Interview, 9/19/02).

The accomplishments and priorities of college professors that were related to K-12 education were focused on their respective fields of specialty. For one member, who was previously a physics professor, the improvement of math and science education at the K-12 level was one of his top priorities.

> In education a number of times I've been able to interject science and math into whatever else was going on. Whether Title I looks at just reading and math or also science, whether teacher professional development is preserved. I didn't particularly like what happened when they did away with the Eisenhower program. But at least we got the science and math partnership in its place. And it authorized even more money than the Eisenhower program was spending. As you know, even the appropriations have not kept up with that at all. It's authorized at four hundred and fifty million and it's appropriated twelve and a half million, so I was not successful in the appropriations part but at least I was able to get science and math teachers' training protected in the education bill. (Member Interview, 10/2/02).

Similarly, a college coach said that his top accomplishment was the inclusion of his youth mentoring language in the No Child Left Behind education reform bill. He said:

> While the idea was to have no more new programs, I got it authorized and funded. . . I have been coaching for 36 years; coaching is mentoring. The reason I thought this was important is that I have been very concerned about our young people having dysfunctional families. They get involved with drugs and alcohol and promiscuity. Mentoring is one alternative that seems to be somewhat beneficial. It cuts down absenteeism from school and drop out rates. (Member Interview, 9/11/02).

This member's top priorities were "to protect youth in the athletic arena." He discussed legislation he had championed to regulate sports agents. He said that during his coaching career he had seen abuses of student athletes by sports agents.

Another priority was to ban steroid precursors because he saw how athletes were being misled and getting hurt. He said his coaching career led him to be interested in these issues.

Other college professors use their expertise to inform the debate on non-education policy issues that are related to their field of specialty. For example, a college professor and statistician said that one of his proudest accomplishments was his work to defeat a proposal to use statistical sampling for the census (Member Interview, 11/13/02). An economics professor said that one of his top accomplishments was changing the way that tax policy is scored.

> I got my Ph.D. in economics from Oklahoma in 1969. So, obviously my priorities are in economics and fiscal policy. . . It gets a little esoteric, but the work that I did in scoring has been fruitful, although it is not seen as a legislative victory. I think we are now changing the way tax policy is scored. We're not there, but at least when I came here in 1985, I was talking about dynamic scoring and everyone had just blank stares. Now it is at least a constant part of the debate. (Member Interview, 10/18/02)

This member also relied upon his perspective as an economist to propose savings through a military base closure plan, the passage of which he said is one of his proudest accomplishments.

> Generally speaking everybody will say the greatest thing I did in Congress, in terms of the enormity of the task and national consequences is base closing. . . . it's been fairly acclaimed.
>
> I was on the Budget Committee. I had become convinced that we focused too much on the appropriators in trying to cut spending. I

> decided the authorizers needed to participate. I wanted to make an example of how authorizers could do so. I wanted it to be in an area that I was known generally to be supportive of. Nobody could accuse me of being anti-defense. I basically looked through defense spending and said, where can we save money and make the organization more efficient? I narrowed it down to three propositions: base closures, contracting out, or procurement reform. At the time, base closing was considered impossible. But, of those three things I saw that as the only one that was doable. So, I saw the impossible as doable. I always intended to show authorizers they could participate in cutting spending and make the agencies under their jurisdiction more effective. That was what it was intended it to be -- an example. But you know, it stood so much on its own legs that nobody ever got the why and wherefore of it. (Member Interview, 10/18/02).

A physicist said that one of his top priorities was in the area of energy policy, but that he was discouraged by a lack of understanding about energy.

> I'm extremely interested in energy issues but almost totally frustrated -- very few people in this country understand energy in this broad sense and understand the implications of our energy use. I spent a fair amount of time on energy issues, relating to energy efficiency, alternative sources of energy. It's been probably my biggest frustration in my legislative career. I have to put it right down to the fact that the public and their leaders do not understand energy -- they do not understand its nature -- so it is very hard to make progress. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

In summary, members who have a prior career in education bring to Congress an interest in addressing the policy issues they identified in their previous

occupations. Elementary and secondary teachers tended to focus on improving K-12 education overall. College professors advocated K-12 reforms related to their fields and also focused on non-education related policies where they could utilize their expertise to inform the debate.

Health Care

Like educators, health care professionals come to Congress with a personal interest agenda. In fact, all of the members with a health care background named accomplishments and priorities that were based on their personal interests. This is higher than the rest of the sample, where 76 percent of members had an accomplishment and 80 percent had a priority related to personal interest. Again, like educators, all named personal interests related to prior career experiences.

Forty percent of the members with a health care background divided their top accomplishments and most pressing priorities between their personal and district interests. The other 60 percent only discussed issues of personal interest to them. No member with a health care background named only district interests when discussing their accomplishments and priorities.

When they discussed accomplishments and priorities related to their job experience, members with health care backgrounds involved themselves in issues specifically related to their fields. For example, both nurses discussed the passage of the Nurse Reinvestment Act as one of their proudest accomplishments. One said that it was not only an accomplishment, but seeing it properly implemented is her top priority.

> The Nurse Reinvestment Act was a big success for me. It is timely because we have a crisis in the number of nurses. We are very short of nurses. It is new money. . . . I got it passed and signed into law about a month ago. Now, I am hard at work—have over 200 members signed on a letter to the Appropriations Committee requesting that it be seriously funded so that we can make a difference in the situation. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

The other nurse discussed a specific provision of the Nurse Reinvestment Act that she had championed:

> A big accomplishment I had this year was the Nurse Reinvestment Act, which was signed by the President on August 1st. That had a large portion of my legislation that had to do with what they call magnet hospitals. We found out that magnet hospitals are able to retain nurses, but more importantly nurses have a say in administration, they have a say on their scheduling which takes out a large crisis. What the nurses were feeling was they had no input on the care that they were giving and everything else. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

She said that attracting students to the field of nursing would be a top priority, which she could focus on during her committee's work on higher education issues.

> Through my committee, I'll be working on the nursing shortage related to higher education to see if we can have more funding to encourage people to come into nursing; obviously retaining them, and having more student loans forgiven, especially if they work in high cost areas. (Member Interview, 10/6/02).

In addition to addressing the nursing shortage, one nurse discussed her interest in domestic violence issues, which she related to her work as a school nurse.

> Domestic violence is one that came out of my school nurse background. I worked with teen parents and teen parenting programs intensely for about five years. That sort of places me in a certain arena and it all comes through the Health Subcommittee. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

The former social worker discussed his efforts to protect the newborns of substance-addicted mothers as one of his top priorities.

> I've got language that I got into a House bill that I am trying to move through the Senate right now to make sure that when children come to the hospital and they have fetal alcohol syndrome or they are a drug baby, that what happens now is that these kids come from obviously dysfunctional mothers and usually families—fathers are dysfunctional, mothers are dysfunctional. You can see them in the hospital—you know when they come into the hospital that something terribly wrong is going on here because the mother is addicted. But there is no law about what we do about this. We spend a lot of money on ICUs and so forth and send them home and the next thing they come back all battered and bruised at best -- sometimes they get killed. This language requires that when these children are presented in the hospital that the Children Youth Agency has to intervene and create a safe plan of care. That is a direct result of my social work experience. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

In addition to specific issues related to their previous fields, members with health care backgrounds also concentrated their efforts on reforming the health

insurance system in general. For example, a former dentist reported his greatest accomplishment was the House passage of the Patient's Bill of Rights (PBOR), an issue he became involved in after he spent years watching the Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO) operate. He recounted that PBOR was an obscure concept when he first championed it and that most members were unaware of the issue unless they had personally experienced a problem with their HMO. He said his top priority was health care reform.

> Health care in general in this country should be the top priority for us all. A perfect storm is developing in my little simple mind about that. It's going to blow this system all to pieces if we're not very careful. And we're going to do in health care exactly what we've done in education -- we're going to dumb down the system, if we're not careful. So everybody gets a band aid, but no one gets their arm set. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

Another member who had been a state health program manager discussed reforming health care as one of his top priorities:

> I am involved, not offering a piece of legislation, but involved with health care. Specifically, I have tried to do my best to get the private sector health care reformed. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

In this case, while the member did not introduce legislation to reform health care, he said he was very active in the legislative arena on this issue. Both nurses also discussed their efforts to reform the health care system and said that their job experience gave them the expertise to find the best ways to change the system.

In summary, members with a background in health care champion issues related to their previous job experiences. In discussing their top accomplishments and priorities, the majority do not mention district initiatives but rather focus on issues of personal interest to them due to their occupational experiences. They focus on both specific health issues related to their job experience and reform of the health insurance system in general.

Other Occupations

Members who come to Congress having worked in occupations not included in the categories above also rely on their previous occupational experiences when advocating for policies in Congress. A farmer said that his top accomplishment was the passage of the 2002 Farm Bill. He said:

> That reflects passage of a comprehensive document that is good, not only for production-agriculture but for all those consumers and citizens out there, both in the U.S. and around the world, who depend on us to make sure they have food and fiber. . . I am a farmer by trade. I have a degree in Agricultural Economics. . . I greatly enjoyed my farm policy classes. I have been active in politics all my life. So, the farm bill process is the ultimate culmination of my political background and experiences and my formal academic training as an agricultural-economist. (Member Interview, 9/12/02).

A member with a background in the military and also in children's issues discussed the intersection of the perspectives she gained through these experiences in explaining why she was the champion of a bio-terrorism bill in Congress. She said:

> I have a unique national security perspective among members of Congress. In addition to that, I have worked in Child Welfare and Public Health as a cabinet secretary for children. I have this split personality, I guess, to any issues that I work on in things like protecting the homeland and bio-terrorism as this tends to be a blend of both my national security experience and my focus on family and children.

Clearly, this analysis indicates that members, across a range of occupations, champion issues related to experiences they had in their prior careers.

Group Identification

If members identify themselves with a minority group, based on race, gender, or sexual orientation, this can impact the issues they choose to champion. However, the percentage of respondents naming group identification as the source of interest on an accomplishment or priority was the lowest of the three personal experience variables. Nevertheless, group identification is present in members' ordering of legislative accomplishments and priorities, accounting for 19.1 percent of their personal interest in accomplishments and 27.3 percent of their personal interest in priorities.[8]

Sex

There is not much of a difference between men and women when it comes to the relationship between their proudest accomplishments and personal interests. While 75 percent of women name accomplishments related to their personal interests,

[8] See Table 4.2.

almost 80 percent of men do. However, the source for such personal interest is different. When discussing the reasons they championed their proudest accomplishments, men cite personal interest related to their occupational experiences more than women do (82 percent compared to 67 percent). However, this difference is not statistically significant.

There is a difference between men and women when it comes to personal interests related to their identification with a minority group. While 44 percent of women name top accomplishments related to their identification with other women, only 13 percent of men discussed accomplishments due to their identification with a group.[9] The difference between men and women is even greater when it comes to championing issues based on other previous experiences. Women members tout the issues related to personal experiences in their lives when recounting their proudest accomplishments more than men (67 percent for women compared to 34 percent for men).[10]

With respect to the issues members prioritize, men and women similarly name priorities based on their personal interests (81 percent for men compared to 82 percent for women). However, the types of personal interests that drive their priorities are different. More women base their priorities on their identification with a group (50 percent compared to 15 percent)[11] or other personal experiences (75 percent compared to 26 percent)[12] than men. The number of men and women

[9] Pearson Chi-Square, p=.032.
[10] Pearson Chi-Square, p=.074.
[11] Pearson Chi-Square, p=.029.
[12] Pearson Chi-Square, p=.010.

members who prioritize issues based on their previous occupation are similar, however; 76 percent of men and 75 percent of women name priorities they are interested in due to prior career experiences.

For both accomplishments and priorities, female members' perspectives as women are more often revealed through their personal experiences rather than through a direct motivation to further the interests of the group. Women members justify interest in an issue based on their personal experiences as mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters rather than simple identification with all women in the nation. Indeed, a member who is the mother of six children argued that she "brings the mom side of her to policies" (Member Interview, 11/14/02). Another female member, who did not mention group identification as the motivation behind any of her accomplishments or priorities, named her proudest accomplishment as the passage of legislation to allow women to receive reconstructive surgery after radical mastectomies. She became interested in this problem after her sister underwent the disfiguring procedure (Member Interview, 10/1/02). Another respondent became the chair of the Heart and Stroke caucus after her husband suffered from a heart attack (Member Interview, 9/26/02). Yet another named her proudest accomplishment as the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act, which she championed because of her own experience caring for her son who ultimately lost the battle with leukemia (Member Interview, 11/15/02).

One member said that her experiences as a mother influenced the issues she focused on in Congress. She said,

> I think women have brought to the legislative process a much greater consciousness of the hopes and fears of people and how the partnership between government and people supports the development of society, where hopes can be realized and fears can be delayed.
>
> You really need for each member to bring to the table both their intuitive life experiences and practical life experiences. And since each one of us, male or female, come to the table with a very different set of experiences, we all bring values to the process of legislating.
>
> Probably, the most essential life experience I had was raising my children and really understanding that terribly important balance between freedom and discipline. Both raising children and running a household and providing leadership in the volunteer community, to start new programs and affect lives, were very important experiences and ones that have provided the pattern by which I legislate. (Member Interview 10/10/02).

This member said one of her top priorities included the reform of Medicare and Social Security because her children were going to have to pay most of their income in taxes and would still not receive the benefits of these programs when they retired if the programs were not reformed. Her proudest accomplishment was enactment of a bill she championed to provide health insurance to children whose parents could not afford it but also did not qualify for Medicaid.

Still, almost half of those female members interviewed who named accomplishments and priorities related to a personal interest were motivated by their identification with other women. A female member described her role as a champion for women in the country in this way:

> In my early campaigns, reporters constantly asked me what I would do about "women's issues." My response was that "all issues are women's issues." But when I got to Washington, I found that some of the so-called "women's issues" weren't being addressed by the men in power. Some of those issues included child support enforcement, women's health issues and family issues. It wasn't that the men were opposed to these issues — they just were not sufficiently aware of them. I realized that if the women in Congress don't act on these issues, no one else will. (Member Interview 11/15/02).

In summary, a similar number of men and women interviewed offered occupational experience as the reason behind issues they championed. However, there is a statistically significant difference between the number of men and women who base the issues they champion on other personal experiences and group identification. Women rely on their own experiences as women most when setting their legislative agendas.

Race

Only half of the minority members interviewed named accomplishments related to their personal interests. Of those, 75 percent named accomplishments they were proud of due to their own racial or ethnic background. This is a significantly significant difference from the white members interviewed who discussed accomplishments related to personal interests.[13] For the majority of white members,

[13] Pearson Chi-Square, p=.003.

instead of group identification their personal interest came from previous job experience (84 percent compared to 25 percent).[14]

Three quarters of members who were racial minorities justified interest in a priority because of their race. As was the case for accomplishments, this was significantly different from white members, whose priorities focused on their prior job experiences.[15] One member explained that in addition to his constituents, he viewed himself as "a representative of African Americans throughout Missouri. They tend to gravitate to me and we have a lot in common." (Member Interview, 9/18/02). A black female member counted the passage of a resolution honoring Rosa Parks as her greatest accomplishment (10/1/02). Another black member said that his work on poverty issues was related to his chairmanship of the Congressional Black Caucus as well as his experience growing up in a poor neighborhood.

> During 1995, when the Newt Gingrich group took over, there was a big push to cut back on a number of programs like low income heating assistance, senior citizens programs, like meals on wheels-type programs. At that time, I was chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus and we fought the repeal of those kinds of programs that served the truly needy. That was one of my biggest contributions -- leading the fight against the rollback of essential programs. It was a major role as chairman, but having grown up in poverty -- I once lived in a three-room cold water flat, with a bathroom on the back porch. Having to live in a house in New Jersey with no heat in the winter, you

[14] Pearson Chi-Square, p=.006.
[15] Sixteen percent of white members' personal interest priorities were related to group identification, compared to 75 percent of non-white members. Pearson Chi-Square, p=.006. Eighty-two percent of white members' personal interest priorities were related to occupation, compared to 25 percent of non-white members. Pearson Chi-Square, p=.012.

> remember it. Just seeing how poverty can be painful. Growing up in the new millennium, there are some basic things kids should have. (Member Interview, 10/17/02).

While only half of the minority members interviewed named a major accomplishment related to a personal interest, all of them had personal interest priorities. The difference suggests that while these members do not necessarily feel they have yet succeeded in moving their group's agenda through the Congress, these issues remain at the top of their priority list. For example, the member quoted above also discussed an ambitious agenda to combat poverty.

> My overall objectives are trying to have programs to eliminate poverty. I'd like to see the minimum wage increased for example, and see an increase in Pell grants. I'd like to see more student incentive loans, college loans with low interest. I would like to see more Section 8 housing vouchers, where people pay thirty percent of their income for housing and the government pays the rest and I'd like to see an increase in Section 8 housing funding. (Member Interview, 10/17/02).

The long list of items this member named in need of improvement could consume the focus of an entire congressional career. As such, it makes sense that more members named priorities based on group identification than accomplishments.

Another non-white member also related his congressional interests back to his circumstances growing up. He said his interests included improving public transportation in urban metropolitan areas, securing funding for the AIDS crisis in Africa because of its potential impact on urban America, and education reform to

prepare children to be competitive in the technologically rich world that awaits them. According to this member, his interest in these issues are not only related to his metropolitan district but also his first-hand experience growing up in poverty. He said,

> I was raised in public housing and therefore have a keen interest on the means to economically redevelop communities. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

In summary, non-white members interviewed were distinctly different than their white counterparts in those issues they considered their top accomplishments and most pressing priorities. While white members mainly focused on interests derived from their previous job experiences, most minority members were focused on issues they cared about due to their identification with disadvantaged groups in society.

Sexual Orientation

In addition to gender and race, sexual orientation can also result in a member standing up for those in society he or she can identify with. One member named his success in repealing an immigration law he felt was unfair for homosexuals as one of his top accomplishments. He said,

> When I got here there was a federal law saying if you were gay you couldn't be an immigrant in America—we got that one repealed. That was one where I took some legislative initiative. (Member Interview, 9/17/02).

When queried for the reason he became involved in the issue he replied, "Well, that's easy—I'm gay." In addition to his constituents, this member views himself as a representative of "other gay people because no other members of Congress champion causes for them."

Personal Experience

As touched on above, while prior occupational experiences and identifications with groups influence the issues members champion, members also tend toward issues which they have identified through personal experiences as in need of congressional attention. Indeed, 40.4 percent of members named accomplishments and 38.6 percent priorities that were attributed to a personal interest which originated from a background experience. In addition to first-hand experiences, motivations to champion legislation based on personal experience are also derived from secondary sources, such as the experiences of family members or friends.

Members identify areas in need of federal intervention as they live their lives and experience the world around them. They use their position in Congress to correct the problems they identify as they live their lives. One of the best examples of how an experience in one's background can translate into an aggressive legislative agenda is the case of one member whose husband was killed and her son injured when a gunman randomly shot into a rush hour commuter train. In Congress, this member's top accomplishments and priorities are aimed at reducing gun violence and increasing gun safety (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

Another member talked about issues influenced by his prior experience as an Air Force pilot and POW during the Vietnam War when discussing his proudest accomplishments. He said that he has worked to ensure today's soldiers have the resources they need when they are deployed, something he saw as lacking when he was in the military:

> I fought in two wars, Korea and Vietnam. As you know I was a POW too, for seven years almost. That kind of experience is transferable I think. . . Even though I am not on the Armed Services Committee, because of my background they look to me for advice. I was instrumental in helping get the B-2 program fully funded and getting the F-22, and V-22 going. I've flown the V-22. We didn't have weapons over there in the Vietnam War because Lyndon Johnson wasn't funding the military. He was trying to run a full scale war and have a totally non-war economy here in the United States. You can't do that. He let the military deteriorate . . .as POWs, we talked about what we would do and decided we ought to quit griping about government and get involved and see if we couldn't make a difference, and that's what we did. (Member Interview 10/1/02).

He also discussed his involvement in memorials and exhibits about prior wars to ensure they conveyed a fair account of the event from the soldiers' perspective:

> I stopped the Enola Gay exhibit in the Smithsonian Institute from being totally Japanese-oriented. As a result, I was appointed to the Smithsonian Board of Regents and have been on it ever since.

Some personal experiences are based on barriers members had to overcome as youth. For example, one member interviewed attributed his interest in student aid

issues to his own experience as the first in his family to go to college and then to law school.

> My father didn't graduate high school. I would never have been able to go to school but for student loans. (Member Interview, 9/11/02).

Another member said his "most satisfying" accomplishment was the passage of legislation to expand the membership of credit unions, the Credit Union Membership Act. He said he was interested in this issue because:

> I have been a credit union member since I started working. This is an issue of fairness. (Member Interview, 9/24/02).

In addition, members react to difficulties they face in their everyday dealings with service providers. One became active on privacy issues after his credit card company sold his information to other vendors (Member Interview, 10/9/02). After experiencing difficulty removing erroneous information from his credit report, another member made reforming the Fair Credit Reporting act a top priority (Member Interview, 10/3/02).

The aforementioned examples are cases where first-hand experiences impact legislative activity in Congress. In addition to these direct experiences, members also become advocates as a result of the experiences of others they know, particularly family members and friends. This is especially prevalent when it comes to health issues. When someone in a members' personal life suffers from a particular disease, the member naturally becomes an advocate for more research on that illness. For example, because the father of one member suffered from diabetes, an efficient FDA

approval process for the approval of devices to check blood sugar ranked a top priority. In addition, because his son suffered from asthma, he became the founder of Asthma Awareness Day (Member Interview, 10/9/02). Another member became involved in hemophilia treatment and research because his son was a hemophiliac (Member Interview, 11/13/02). Another member discussed the impact his grandson's brain tumor had on him legislatively:

> I was badly affected when my only grandson at the age of 16 was stricken with a brain tumor, inoperable and cancerous. With MD Anderson and a lot of prayer we still have him, but I saw so many that didn't come away from the hospital. That there wetted my appetite on getting the bioreactor in space where they can continue to look for cures for cancer. . . . It is a dreadful disease that you inherit. There ought to be a way of wiping that out. We have now a bioreactor in space. They are working on it. At any time we can have our television program interrupted. We interrupt this program to make a major announcement and that would be an announcement that we found a cure for some of those dreaded diseases. That is what we need out of space, not more ticker tape parades and more vast expenditures of money, we need a product. And that is one thing that has kept me in and I continue to look for that and push for that. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

In summary, personal experiences impact the policy areas where members will become active legislatively. These experiences can be first-hand, as the problems they confront in their lives help members identify issues in need of federal

intervention. They can also be secondary, and have a particularly strong impact when a family member suffers from an illness.

Conclusion and Implications

This chapter has set out to explore the impact of members' personal interests on their legislative activities relative to other priorities. By asking members directly about the reasons they have championed their proudest accomplishments and top priorities, we gain a greater understanding about the motivations behind members' allocation of legislative resources. Results indicate that members' personal interests are prominent in the legislative activities in which they engage. While some might have expected that personal interest activity occurs on Capitol Hill, but members do not discuss it, this assumption does not appear to be valid. Rather, through interviews with members, the personal interest reasons behind their legislative activities were openly revealed. The results of the interviews make clear that members actively pursue issues that are triggered by experiences they have in their own lives.

While we know from the previous chapters about committee selection and bill sponsorship that personal interests are present in decisions members make, just because members are interested does not necessarily mean they will be able to actively pursue that issue in Congress. There is not enough time for members to effectively advocate on all that they are interested in. This chapter analyzes the extent to which members champion issues of personal interest when devoting their scarce legislative resources to a finite number of issues and reveals that personal

interest is foremost on the minds of members when it comes to the prioritization of their legislative initiatives.

While previous literature on congressional behavior makes the assumption that members are most active on those issues that impact their districts, this analysis does not provide support for such a conclusion. Rather, in addition to pursuing policies on behalf of their districts, the majority of members also promote issues that are of personal interest to them. Personal interests are prominent in the issues members' consider their proudest accomplishments and top priorities. In fact, more members discussed accomplishments and priorities related to personal interests than issues related to their districts. This does not mean that members did not promote the needs of their districts through their legislative service. Rather, the ability to pursue interests on subjects unrelated to the district is likely due to the structure of a member's office as an enterprise (Salisbury and Shepsle, 1981). With the assistance of staff resources, members can successfully advocate for those issues that are important to the district as well as those issues they truly care about due to a personal interest.

What makes the difference in members' decisions about how they will prioritize their agenda is the level of passion a member has for an issue. The member must weigh how important a given problem is to him or her compared to the other issues out there in need of a champion. Moving a proposal through the process requires a member who fervently believes a federal intervention is required to solve a policy problem. According to Hall (1996: 215),

> An item's chances for moving up on an agenda are enhanced considerably by the presence of a skillful entrepreneur, and dampened considerably if no entrepreneur takes on the cause and pushes it.

While there are many issues in need of intervention, what makes the difference, according to the quote above, is that someone in Congress is willing to pursue the issue through the legislative process. This study has revealed that personal interests are one of the major reasons that members choose to become legislative entrepreneurs.

In his study of agenda setting, where certain issues are given attention in the policymaking spheres over others, Kingdon (2003) argues that Congress is an important locale for both setting the agenda and formulating policies. According to Kingdon, members:

> . . . are among the few actors in the political system who have marked impacts on both the agenda and the alternatives that are seriously considered (35).

Because of their prominent role in the process, members are uniquely able to influence the problems that are addressed by Congress and the way in which they are addressed. Members' personal experiences with an issue can greatly impact this process, as their perspectives are given added credence and attention during policy deliberations since they have the right to sit at the policymaking table. One member interviewed questioned how personal interests of members impact the fairness of policy outputs, since members might have a skewed perspective about the issue based on their, perhaps narrow, experience with it.

> If you look at the physicians that are members, they all take leadership roles in any stuff that has anything to do with healthcare. Maybe it is comfort zones; we are what we are before we get here. Is there a downside to it? Yeah, because maybe our horizons aren't as broad as they should be. But given the limitations of time and energy, the truth is most people laugh at you, knowing your main focus already. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

This member views the pursuit of personal policy interests as a fact of congressional life. Due to the time constraints members are faced with, they will gravitate to issues they are familiar with due to their backgrounds. The question becomes how does this impact policy outputs if certain groups' views are more vociferously advocated for because they have a member in Congress who can identify with them personally?

According to Kingdon (2003:72), the important policy question to consider is not where policy ideas come from, but those factors that help a policy alternative make its way through the policy process.

> Nobody has a monopoly on ideas. They come from a plethora of different sources. Thus the key to understanding policy change is not where the idea came from but what made it take hold and grow. (72)

This study reveals that members seek to influence the legislative process on issues they care about due to their personal policy interests. It is not just that the members are interested in a particular idea, so this causes them to vote a certain way. Rather, members actively champion those issues they care about because of personal experiences in their lives. They seek to alter the policy outputs of Congress to address the issues they have identified through their personal lives. As a result,

interested, passionate members are instrumental in helping an idea "take hold and grow" in Congress.

What are the implications of such personal policy interest advocacy by members on representation? Personal interests cause members to become champions for groups outside of their districts. This finding impacts our conception of constituency, where members are to represent those who live within the geographic boundaries of the congressional district they were elected to serve. In addition to the geographic constituency, members' life experiences make them a representative for groups outside of the bounds of a member's congressional district. It appears that members advocate on behalf of both constituencies as they prioritize their agenda in Congress. However, the extent to which the focus on issues for the personal interest constituency causes members to not be as actively involved in issues on behalf of their geographic constituency is unclear.

Another aspect of representation that is impacted by members' pursuit of their personal policy interests is the extent to which policy deliberations provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to have their views considered. Members' personal experiences bring the interests of certain groups to the table, as members advocate for the group's position because they can identify with its membership personally. Other equally important stakeholders might not have an advocate for their position. Does this mean that every stakeholder needs an advocate who personally experienced the issue under discussion in order to be appropriately represented during legislative deliberations? The answer to this question is, not necessarily. Interest groups can

convince members of the importance of their perspective by making their case to them or inviting the involvement of concerned constituents. However, there is no question that due to the number of issues being considered in Congress that members can champion, it certainly helps to have a member personally care about a policy enough to champion it through the process.

In summary, this study has revealed that personal interests are prominent in the legislative activities in which members engage. Members involve themselves in issues they care about because of their prior occupation, personal experiences, or identification with a minority group. One member said that members would become involved in issues they care about due to personal interest, but argued this was merely the way the system is supposed to work.

> There are always issues going on, so many, that members tend to get involved in issues they have some personal interest in.

> This place is nothing more than a slice of America…a pretty close slice…exactly what the founders envisioned.

The founders envisioned a system where interests would compete in the policymaking process, so that the representative government would consider the views of all stakeholders and produce good public policies. The question, then, becomes whether a process where certain interests enjoy the benefits of having a champion in Congress because of a shared identification due to personal experiences produces the kinds of representative outputs the founders hoped for.

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Table 4.1: Source of Interest for Members' Accomplishments and Priorities

	District % (n)	Personal Interest % (n)	Ideology % (n)	Lobby Influence % (n)	Committee Membership % (n)
Accomplishments (N=60)	**68.3 (41)**	**78.3 (47)**	**11.7 (7)**	**1.7 (1)**	**26.7 (16)**
Priorities (N=54)	**74.1 (40)**	**81.5 (44)**	**9.3 (5)**	**1.9 (1)**	**37.0 (20)**

***Most members reported more than one accomplishment or priority.**

Table 4.2: Types of Personal Interests

	Occupational Interest % (n)	Personal Experience % (n)	Group Identification % (n)
Accomplishments (N=47)	**78.7 (37)**	**40.4 (19)**	**19.1 (9)**
Priorities (N=44)	**79.5 (35)**	**38.6 (17)**	**27.3 (12)**

Table 4.3: Members' Accomplishments Related to District and Personal Interests

Accomplishments	District % (n)	Personal Interest % (n)	Both % (n)	District Only % (n)	Personal Interest Only % (n)	Neither % (n)
All Members N=60	**68.3 (41)**	**78.3 (47)**	**50.0 (30)**	**18.3 (11)**	**28.3 (17)**	**3.3 (2)**
Occupation						
Law N=21	71.4 (15)	71.4 (15)	52,4 (11)	19.0 (4)	19.0 (4)	9.5 (2)
Business N=11	45.5 (5)	81.8 (9)	27.3 (3)	18.2 (2)	54.5 (6)	0.0 (0)
Education N=9	88.9 (8)	100.0 (9)	88.9 (8)	0.0 (0)	11.1 (1)	0.0 (0)
Real Estate N=5	60.0 (3)	60.0 (3)	20.0 (1)	40.0 (2)	40.0 (2)	0.0 (0)
Health N=5	40.0 (2)	100.0 (5)	40.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	60.0 (3)	0.0 (0)
Public Service/Politics N=7	85.7 (6)	57.1 (4)	42.9 (3)	42.9 (3)	14.3 (1)	0.0 (0)
Military N=1	100.0 (1)	100.0 (1)	100.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
Agriculture N=1	100.0 (1)	100.0 (1)	100.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
Sex						
Male N=48	68.8 (33)	79.2 (38)	52.1 (25)	16.7 (8)	27.1 (13)	4.2 (2)
Female N=12	66.7 (8)	75.0 (9)	41.7 (5)	25.0 (3)	33.3 (4)	0.0 (0)
Race						
White N=52	69.2 (36)	82.7 (43)	53.8 (28)	15.4 (8)	28.8 (15)	1.9 (1)
Non-White N=8	62.5 (5)	50.0 (4)	25.0 (2)	37.5 (3)	25.0 (2)	12.5 (1)

Table 4.4: Members' Priorities Related to District and Personal Interests

Priorities	District % (n)	Personal Interest % (n)	Both % (n)	District Only % (n)	Personal Interest Only % (n)	Neither % (n)
All Members N=54	**74.1 (40)**	**81.5 (44)**	**59.3 (32)**	**14.8 (8)**	**22.2 (12)**	**3.7 (2)**
Occupation						
Law N=20	90.0 (18)	70.0 (14)	70.0 (14)	20.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	10.0 (2)
Business N=8	50.0 (4)	100.0 (8)	50.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	50.0 (4)	0.0 (0)
Education N=7	100.0 (7)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (7)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
Real Estate N=5	60.0 (3)	60.0 (3)	20.0 (1)	40.0 (2)	40.0 (2)	0.0 (0)
Health N=5	40.0 (2)	100.0 (5)	40.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	60.0 (3)	0.0 (0)
Public Service/Politics N=7	57.1 (4)	71.4 (5)	28.6 (2)	28.6 (2)	42.9 (3)	0.0 (0)
Military N=1	100.0 (1)	100.0 (1)	100.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
Agriculture N=1	100.0 (1)	100.0 (1)	100.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
Sex						
Male N=43	76.7 (33)	81.4 (35)	62.8 (27)	14.0 (6)	18.6 (8)	4.7 (2)
Female N=11	63.6 (7)	81.8 (9)	45.5 (5)	18.2 (2)	36.4 (4)	0.0 (0)
Race						
White N=46	73.9 (34)	78.3 (36)	56.5 (26)	17.4 (8)	21.7 (10)	4.3 (2)
Non-White N=8	75.0 (6)	100.0 (8)	75.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	25.0 (2)	0.0 (0)

Table 4.5: Prior Occupations of Representatives, 98th - 107th Congresses

Congress	Law % (#)	Business/ Banking % (#)	Education % (#)	Public Service/ Politics % (#)	Real Estate % (#)	Health % (#)
98th Congress 1983	46 (200)	32 (138)	10 (43)			1.4 (6)
99th Congress 1985	44 (190)	34 (147)	9 (37)			1.1 (5)
100th Congress 1987	42 (184)	33 (142)	9 (38)	22 (94)		.69 (3)
101st Congress 1989	42 (184)	32 (138)	10 (42)	22 (94)		.91 (4)
102nd Congress 1991	42 (183)	36 (157)	13 (57)	14 (61)		1.1 (5)
103rd Congress 1993	42 (181)	30 (131)	15 (66)	20 (87)		1.4 (6)
104th Congress 1995	39 (171)	37 (162)	17 (75)	23 (102)		2.3 (10)
105th Congress 1997	40 (172)	42 (181)	17 (74)	23 (100)		2.8 (12)
106th Congress 1999	37 (163)	37 (159)	19 (84)	24 (106)	5 (20)	3.4 (15)
107th Congress 2001	36 (156)	37 (159)	21 (92)	29 (126)	6 (24)	3.2 (14)
Interview Subjects[16]	35.0 (21)	18.3 (11)	15.0 (9)	13.3 (8)	8.3 (5)	6.7 (4)

SOURCE: Ornstein, Norman J., Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin. 2002. *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2001-2002*. Washington, DC: AEI Press.

*Empty cells are a result of information not compiled for those occupations by CQ in those years.

[16] In addition, one interview subject reported a prior career in the military and one interview subject reported a previous career in agriculture.

Chapter 5: When Politics is Personal: Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

Congresswoman Marge Roukema's career in Congress was defined by her ability to overcome gender and ideological barriers to achieve legislative success on the issues she cared about due to her life experiences. When she retired in 2002, Roukema was the longest serving woman in the U.S. House of Representatives. She was sworn in with 21 other women in 1981 and by the time she retired, there were just 58 women in the House. In the beginning, Roukema said she felt hindered in the male-dominated institution, where less than five percent of her colleagues were women.

> It was very isolating. I don't feel that way now, but when I was first elected and for the first decade or so I was treated like the token woman. We weren't taken seriously. That's no longer true. Women are beginning to have a voice in leadership and in the last ten years we have been considered much more than token women. We have a real voice in the development of policy both within the committees as well as in the Congress at large. (Member Interview, 11/15/02).

Even though her ability to influence policy outputs might have been difficult at first due to her gender, Roukema did not alter her style or waver from her policy beliefs to fit in with her male colleagues or the party leadership. Instead, she built a reputation as a tenacious moderate who was willing to fight for the issues she believed in and go against her own party when she disagreed with them. According to her CQ Member Profile (2002), "Roukema's unapologetic cultivation of her independent streak had

used up much of her political capital within the GOP, whose leadership she has rarely been reluctant to criticize." While she admitted that her policy positions and determination affected her relationship with leadership, for her, policy always came before politics:

> Probably if I had put more stress on working closely and reaching out to the leadership, I might be chairwoman of the Financial Services Committee, but I always deal with the substance of issues. (Member Interview, 11/15/02).

The issues that Roukema found herself at odds with her own party leadership over were often those that she cared about because of her own life experiences. For instance, the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a prominent example of Roukema's independence and also what she calls her proudest legislative achievement. FMLA allows workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a newborn child or seriously ill family member. Roukema overcame significant opposition, including two presidential vetoes, to see this measure become law. She expanded the original concept of leave for the birth of a child to include serious illness. Roukema attributes her interest in the issue to her own experience caring for her dying teenage son.

> I had been interested because of my own son's illness. Our dear son, Todd, years before I came into Congress, died of leukemia. I dropped out of law school in order to take care of Todd because he needed care. So, I became aware of the needs of families and the need to be able to love and care for terminally ill members of your family, particularly a child. Todd did die of leukemia. I said, "My goodness, I didn't need a

> job, but what about families who not only had to bear the unbearable loss of a family member or a child, but at the same time had to lose their job and lose their income?" I became absolutely determined that this was going to be one of my top priorities. (Member Interview, 11/15/02).

Her experience as a mother with a terminally ill son also caused Roukema to focus on health insurance reform in Congress. According to Roukema, the wife of a doctor, "the problems lie in the nation's health insurance system, not its health care system" (Member Interview, 11/15/02). Despite opposition in her own party, she led efforts to enhance patient protection by ensuring decisions over medical care were with patients and their doctors, rather than insurance companies. The mother of three, Roukema was also a key sponsor of legislation giving women the right to a minimum of 48 hours of hospitalization after giving birth.

Roukema's personal experience informing her work in Congress was not limited to her role as a mother. Her marriage to a practicing psychiatrist led her to champion legislation related to mental illness. She was the founding chairman of the House Mental Health Working Group, which she says she established to "eliminate the ignorance and stigma surrounding mental illness." (Member Interview, 11/15/02). She shepherded a bill through Congress to block insurers from setting lower spending caps for mental illnesses than physical ailments. Her efforts to expand the scope of that law were not successful before her retirement, but she had managed to win the support of almost 60 percent of House members for her legislation. In explaining her

interest in mental health issues, of which she calls the enactment of parity one of her proudest accomplishments, she said:

> My husband is a psychiatrist. My interest in mental health goes back so many years because of my husband's career. I always tell people that when we got married, I worked his way through medical school. Ever since then, he's been accusing me of practicing medicine without a license. And I say "Well, then, so be it!" Just as he has been living with Congress in the last few decades, I have been living with his work as well. I have the benefit of a psychiatrist's perspective when it comes to health related issues. (Member Interview, 11/15/02).

In addition to her experiences as a wife and a mother, Roukema's work in Congress was also influenced by her first job as a high school government teacher. She took the interest she developed regarding education to the local school board and eventually to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. During her tenure, Roukema was intimately involved in reforms of federal education funding laws, championing teacher training initiatives, school counseling programs, and legislation to provide guaranteed student loans for middle-income students. Indeed, the Majority Leader lamented Roukema's effectiveness in the education realm, where she helped block one of his top priorities:

> I have had school choice as a high priority but with very few victories, mostly because I could never get Marge to vote with me. I don't want to be unkind to Marge. I know there were times when Marge supported us well, but there were lots of other times. . . . Marge and I, we love each other. But we were rarely on the same side, bless her heart (laughter). I told her one time, I said, "Marge you're so

> misguided that you think I am misguided" (laughter). But she's always been a great sport. I have never had a beef on Marge. But, oh boy! (Member Interview, 10/18/02).

Roukema's personal experiences as a mother, wife, and school teacher led her to speak out for constituencies that extended beyond the geographic boundaries of her district. These life experiences gave her a unique perspective on the policy questions confronting Congress and also made her so passionate about certain issues that she was willing to champion causes even when this meant advocating for a position in opposition to her own party leadership. According to the biography on her website explaining her involvement in issues involving families and children,

> Marge Roukema knows about the needs of children. She raised three of her own and now has five grandchildren. Before that, she was a teacher in New Jersey's public schools, helping to educate our youngsters on history, government and geography.

Roukema brought the knowledge she gained from her own life experiences with her to the policymaking table, using it to inform her legislative activities during her tenure in Congress.

While Roukema advanced issues relating to her personal experiences, this does not mean that she neglected the needs of her congressional district. Rather, in addition to her work on personal interest issues, she also focused on policies of importance to her geographic constituency. Roukema represented an affluent community in northern New Jersey, where at least three-fifths of her constituents commuted to jobs in New York City, mainly on Wall Street. Ties to the financial

services sector were critical in the 5th District, so to address the interests of her constituents, she served on the Banking Committee. According to Roukema, "the Banking Committee directly related to my constituents' intense interest and concerns, because of their professions" (Member Interview, 11/15/02).

Roukema rose to the powerful chairmanship of the Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit Subcommittee, which had jurisdiction over the Federal Reserve, the FDIC, and other banking regulators. In other words, Roukema became the first woman to chair the subcommittee that had oversight over all banking activities in the United States. Under her leadership, a compromise was reached to enact financial services modernization legislation, where affiliations were permitted between banks, insurance and securities firms. According to Roukema, her years of work on the committee, coupled with her perspective as a representative from northern New Jersey, helped her to successfully broker a compromise on what she calls "landmark legislation."

> Representing a district that had both community banks, major banks, a relationship to Wall Street (many of my constituents work on Wall Street) and major insurance companies, I had special sensitivity and understanding of the need. That understanding went along with my many years serving on the Banking Committee. I think not only my years on the Banking Committee, but also the fact that I represented a district that had an inter-relationship between banks of all sizes and Wall Street and the insurance industry, gave me special insight into the issues involved. (Member Interview, 11/15/02).

Roukema spent her 22-year congressional career fighting for not only the issues of importance to her district, but also working to enact policies she cared about because of the experiences she gained in her life as a mother, wife, and school teacher. On the policies which she championed, both district needs and personal experiences were the factors that caused her to move past position-taking to become an ardent advocate.

It is not on what some might consider traditional "male issues" that Roukema was out of step with her party. She was well-known as one of the most fiscally conservative Republicans. Her success on financial issues led her to become the first woman to lead a powerful banking subcommittee. What put her at odds with her party was her firm and outspoken stance on social issues. It was in this area that Roukema gained her reputation as unwavering in her positions. According to her CQ Member Profile (1998),

> Roukema remains best-known as a frank voice of moderation within the Republican Party. . . . In Washington, the GOP leadership rarely tries to press her into line. They learned long ago that she's not likely to change her mind.

Roukema was informed by her experiences in life as a woman, mother, wife, and teacher in arriving at her policy positions on the issues where she challenged her party leadership. No matter the cost, she was willing to fight for what she believed was good public policy based on the experiences in her life, even if that meant going against the positions of her own party leadership

Like Roukema, members of Congress are informed by the world around them as they decide which issues need to be addressed by the federal government. Rather than merely allowing their districts to define their legislative activities, these members come to the Congress with policy goals of their own, influenced by experiences in their lives before Congress. As this study demonstrates, members spend time and effort pursuing their personal agendas in Congress. They seek committee assignments that are of interest to them for personal reasons and they introduce legislation that they have identified as necessary through their own experiences. Most importantly, members actively champion these personal interest issues and work to move them through the process. This is not to say that they ignore the needs of their districts. Rather, members have found that they are able to both pursue issues of importance to their districts and address other national problems that they care about due to personal interest.

While members advocate for issues as a result of things they have experienced in their own lives, scholars of congressional behavior have not spent much effort learning more about these pursuits or the extent that such personal interests affect legislative activities. Instead, the focus has been on the impact of constituency and interest groups (i.e. the goal of reelection) on members' initiatives. By only concentrating on district and interest group influence, scholars have missed an important motivating factor for members' activities. This leaves an important way that interests are brought to the policymaking table largely unexplored. While district interests remain a primary goal, members also endeavor to accomplish other policy

objectives in Congress. This study reveals that the extra-district goals that members pursue are often related to their own life experiences. Members of Congress do not live in a vacuum and their experiences as they go about their lives travels with them to Capitol Hill, affecting their perspectives and actions as legislators. The findings of this study indicate that personal experiences are present, and sometimes even paramount, in the legislative activities in which members engage.

Empirical Findings

This study has set out to discover whether there are certain personal interests that have enough of an impact to alter members' endeavors in Congress. To account for how experiences in members' own lives can affect their legislative activities, three stages of the process were considered: committee selection, bill sponsorship, and agenda setting. For each of these activities, the majority of members were motivated by personal interests. Life experiences influenced members the most in their selection of committees. Here, 93.3 percent of the members interviewed attributed their selection of at least one committee to a personal interest. This suggests that most members want to be sure they have a seat at the policymaking table where issues of personal interest will be deliberated. Approximately 80 percent of members had bill sponsorships, accomplishments, and priorities that were important to them due to personal interest.

-- Table 5.1 About Here --

Members Pursue Both District and Personal Interests

Although members devote legislative resources to issues they care about because of something from their own life experiences, most also focus on the needs of their districts in their legislative activities. One member explained his work on issues affecting the district and on other issues that have a broader policy impact:

> My first allegiance is to the people of my district, but I also am a Representative in the United States House of Representatives. I believe that each one of us also has an obligation to keep in mind the country as a whole in terms of the legislation that we champion and the legislation, of course, that we vote on. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

Interestingly, this study finds that members' concentration on district issues is not the same across legislative activities. While 91.7 percent of members sponsored bills on issues of importance to their districts, less than 70 percent named district-oriented issues when they discussed their proudest accomplishments. This does not mean that members have not been successful in accomplishing goals for their districts. Rather, while addressing the needs of the district are an inevitable part of legislative activities, these efforts are not always the ones by which a member defines his or her legislative career. This suggests that when members have the discretion to set their legislative agendas without public scrutiny, they are personally motivated to pursue both issues related to their districts and others that are not. When it comes to publicly available information, most members ensure that issues they are pursuing on behalf of the district are prominent. This would explain the difference between the

number of members who introduced bills related to their districts and the number who selected committees, named accomplishments, and prioritized their agendas because of the needs of their districts. One member interviewed explained the delicate balance that members must reach between being seen as tending to the needs of their districts and also ensuring issues of national importance are addressed:

> It is a balancing act because your constituents expect you to be very provincial and represent the people of the congressional district, in particular, them personally. And of course you need to do that because they are the people who elect you. And you need to focus very much on local, community issues. I try very hard to do that and I am very active on the local things: like when the creeks flood and when the neighborhoods have drug problems and the seniors can't get healthcare. So, I have a very good team of constituent service people and I do what I call a "codel" to one municipality after another– then that will translate into the appropriations process.
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> I do think that as you build seniority around here, as you build expertise on particular issues, you have to realize that the people in the district are going to suffer if someone from Saudi Arabia decides to fly an airplane into a building where their kid works. I consider myself as someone who tries to deal with global issues, whether it is terrorism, nuclear proliferation, or global climate changes. One has to be careful about how you do that because some people will say, "Gosh, our congressman was over in Johannesburg at the World Summit of Sustainable Development. Isn't that great? What a guy-- he's thinking about the whole world. He gets it." Somebody else is thinking, "That jerk—I have a pothole in my street and he's over there mucking around with the muckety-mucks." So it is a bit of an art to

> make sure that you are seen to be totally committed locally and also involved globally and reminding people in your district that the world is shrinking and that what happens in China can actually affect the air that goes into their own nostrils. (Member Interview, 9/13/02).

Clearly, members are strategic in how they advocate for issues that are not directly related to the needs of their districts.

For three of the four legislative activities analyzed, more members based their actions on personal interests than on district interests. Therefore, legislators' motivations expand beyond the reelection goal to encompass issues that are important to certain populations not bound by the geographic constituency. For all but the most public legislative activity considered, namely bill sponsorship, more members named personal interest reasons for their activities than district interests. This provides evidence that our current conception of members as primarily motivated by reelection is too narrowly conceived. These findings reveal that while members do take their jobs as representatives of their constituents seriously, meeting district needs are not the only, or even always the primary, impetus behind their legislative activities. One member interviewed explained that while members have a responsibility to represent their districts on parochial issues, there is also an opportunity to become involved in issues that impact more than the geographic constituency.

> You have a role to represent your district on casework issues and individual issues. If you have something that is really a local issue, a water issue or a highway issue, you have a responsibility to represent your region or your area. But the more seniority you get, you get leadership responsibilities. You never go away from being a district

> representative, but you do become U.S. representative. Some of the things I am doing are much more national, in some cases international. Everybody starts out as district representative, but the longer you are here, the broader your portfolio becomes because you do represent the United States of America. (Member Interview, 10/9/02).

As this member explains, service in Congress means more to members than just representing their districts. Members also see it as their role to act as national legislators, confirming that members perceive the dual nature of Congress as both a lawmaking institution and a representative assemblage (Davidson and Oleszek, 1996). The findings of this study reveal that members operate within their function as national lawmakers to pursue issues of personal interest, while at the same time ensuring their districts are represented.

The only area where district interests exceed personal interests is with regard to bill sponsorship activities. As previously discussed, bill sponsorship is an area that is visible to constituents. Unlike decisions members make behind the scenes about which committees they would prefer to serve on or calculations made by members about their legislative agendas, the public can easily access the list of bills members introduce. While most members still introduce bills based on personal interests (80 percent), more members introduce bills based on district interests (91.7 percent).

Although bill sponsorship is a public display of interest in an issue, the fact that a member introduced a bill does not provide any indication about whether he or she will pursue the policy proposal in Congress. Members have to be willing to devote scarce legislative resources and actively advocate for an issue to see it move

through the process. Interviews revealed the areas that members prioritized on their agenda for legislative action. For both accomplishments and priorities, members discussing personal interests as a reason for the issues they championed exceeded those discussing district interests. In fact, there is approximately a ten percent difference in the number of members who named accomplishments and priorities based on personal experiences and those who named accomplishments and priorities based on district interests.

The largest difference between the pursuit of district and personal interests is revealed during committee selection. For this mode of legislative activity, more members interviewed selected committees based on their own personal interests than based on the needs of their districts. Specifically, while 93.3 percent of members choose committees because of their personal interests, 70 percent of members made a committee selection based on district interests. In their day-to-day policymaking activities in Congress, this finding reveals that members want to sit on committees that they find of interest not only because of their districts, but more often as a result of things they care about because of who they were before they came to Congress. Because constituents are not aware of the process for members receiving their committee assignments, members are free from voter scrutiny to select committees with jurisdictions over things they care about for personal reasons.

Defining Personal Interests - Occupation, Group Identification, and Personal Experience

When the types of personal interests that cause members to devote their scarce legislative efforts to addressing issues in these areas are explored, findings reveal that occupational backgrounds, social identities, and personal experiences can all affect members enough to impact their legislative activities. If members come to Congress having been influenced by their prior occupation, identification with an underrepresented group, or personal experiences, they seek ways to champion such causes during their congressional careers. Across modes of legislative activity, most members discussed personal interests related to their prior occupations. The second most-cited personal interest explanation across legislative activities was personal experiences. This type of interest, based on things that a member experienced in his or her own life, was most prevalent for decisions regarding committee selection.

-- Table 5.2 About Here --

While not the dominant explanation across members for legislative activities related to personal interests, women and minority members were motivated by their identification and shared experiences with other women and minority members. This reveals that women and minority members act to represent the interest of groups in which they share common characteristics. Most activity on behalf of an underrepresented group or minority was revealed in bill introductions and agenda prioritization. Group identification was not offered as a reason for members' selection of committees. While members try to advocate for issues of importance to a

group they identify with, the way that committees are organized in Congress does not lend itself to the selection of committees based on group identification since committee jurisdictions are broad and there is not one committee that deals with "women's issues" or "Hispanic issues" or "black issues." Finally, findings reveal that group identification was not the reason for many of members' legislative accomplishments. This is likely because such priorities, based on overcoming past inequities for the group, are difficult and long-term tasks that have not yet translated into victories.

Occupational Experience

As stated above, members' prior occupations have the strongest influence on their personal interest activities. However, there is a difference by occupation in the extent to which members develop an interest intense enough to translate into legislative action due to their previous careers.

-- Tables 5.3 and 5.4 About Here --

Law

For the legislative activities considered in this study, lawyers consistently rank the lowest in terms of being motivated by their prior occupations to champion an issue. While their previous careers do not influence what they do in Congress as much as other occupations, the majority of lawyers interviewed became active on at least one issue because of their backgrounds as lawyers. Most of the lawyers interviewed made committee selection decisions (68 percent), introduced bills (64 percent), and prioritized their agendas (64 percent) based on prior career experiences.

In speaking of their legislative accomplishments, 53 percent named successes on issues related to their previous occupations.

When lawyers advocate for issues because of their prior occupations, they tend to focus on the field of law they practiced. There is not a thematic set of judicial issues pursued by all members with a law background. Instead, former lawyers advocate for specific legislative issues related to problems they identified when they were prosecutors, tax attorneys, small town lawyers, judges, estate planners, personal injury attorneys, or procurement lawyers.

Business/Banking

Members with a background in business and banking share a common view of the role of government. Rather than focus on addressing specific issues related to the type of business they were in, their interests revolve around a more universal theme. Basically, their goals are to eliminate unnecessary government regulations and reduce taxes. This abstract set of principles is revealed most through their committee selection decisions and the legislative successes they are proud of.

Approximately 90 percent of members with a background in business and banking chose committees and named legislative accomplishments related to their prior careers. When it comes to specific legislation, however, the influence of their occupation in business is slightly lower. Fewer members with a background in business introduced bills on subjects they were interested in because of their previous occupation (80 percent) and even less prioritized issues to address based on their

occupational experiences (75 percent). While these numbers are slightly lower for the less abstract legislative activities, they are nevertheless high.

Real Estate

Every member interviewed who had a previous career in real estate considered their previous occupations when making committee selection decisions, introducing legislation, and setting their agendas. The types of issues they championed in their legislative activities related to their prior careers were regarding housing, economic development, and the construction industry.

Health Care

Like members with a background in real estate, members from the health profession are highly motivated by their professions when engaging in legislative actions in Congress. For all but committee selection, every member with a health care background sponsored bills, and named legislative accomplishments and priorities that were motivated by issues they cared about due to their prior experience in the health profession. Not only did members focus on the specific field of health policy where they had worked, but they also shared an interest in reforming the health care system. In addition, they utilized the perspective gained from their health career to influence the content of other issues pending before Congress. For example, one member's experience as a nurse caused her to view her role in Congress as representing those who need a voice.

> I feel like government needs to look out for those who need a helping hand. I guess I would be a champion for those who do need the government, the safety net population -- Children who don't vote, who

> don't have a special interest group, especially underprivileged children with barriers or a certain kind of handicap. I am a big champion of fully funding IDEA in education. I am a big champion of an adequate minimum wage. I am going to come down on the side of workers within that range of things and allowing workers to organize and make their will known. That is where I am going to be. Ergonomics standards, I am going to support the workers. (Member Interview, 9/26/02).

Education

All of the educators interviewed named accomplishments and priorities based on their careers, and close to 90 percent of them sponsored bills and selected committees based on their experience in the education field. Teachers, principals, and college professors focused on improving the education system. Professors worked to influence elementary and secondary education reforms related to their field. They also used their field of specialty to help inform congressional deliberations across a range of relevant subjects. When discussing his perspective in Congress, one educator said that in addition to considering the views of his district, he also keeps in mind those in the education system because of his prior occupational experience.

> You see what is in your own heart and what is on the minds of the people that you are representing. I think of schools. I think of teachers and school board members and the parents -- moms and dads. (Member Interview, 9/19/02).

Group Identification

The extent to which members share experiences with underrepresented groups, based on factors such as sex, race, religion, and sexual orientation affects legislative activities. One-third of members interviewed introduced legislation that was motivated by their identification with an underrepresented group. Bill sponsorship was the mode of activity most used to advocate for policies on behalf of underrepresented groups. The second most common mode of activity for group identification was prioritization of issues (27.3 percent).[1] It appears that while members seek to influence the content of policy outputs based on their shared experiences with a particular group, they are still working to see these issues are considered at the policymaking table. As such, only 19.1 percent of members who had personal interests named accomplishments due to their identification with an underrepresented group.

Sex

Men and women in Congress focus their legislative activities in different ways. While more male members select committees, introduce bills, and set their agendas based on their occupational experiences, more women than men engage in these activities because of their group identification or personal experiences. For 83 percent of women, bill sponsorship provides an opportunity to propose a policy on an issue of importance to other women. More than half of the women interviewed (56 percent) discussed priorities they set as a result of their identification with women. However, only 44 percent named accomplishments they were proud of that were

[1] See Table 5.2.

related to their experiences as women. This means that while female members are working to enact legislation on behalf of women in society, they have not enjoyed as many victories as they might like. Most issues that female members are championing because of their group identification are still a work in progress.

-- Tables 5.5 and 5.6 About Here --

Women members tend to get involved in policy issues where they feel they can make a difference for women in a male-dominated world. In addition, their experiences as mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, or women in the workforce (in male-dominated profession), cause them to become advocates for certain issues. For example, the following member's goals for what she would like to accomplish during her tenure in Congress is related not only to the disadvantaged in society, which women as caregivers are concerned about, but also to the plight of mothers:

> I'd like to leave a legacy that I made the world a little bit better for people who have medical problems. A little bit better for people who have housing problems, and a little bit safer, so there's less fear. Women are afraid always, always, always, always, because we're smaller physically. No matter whether we know judo or karate, we still have a disadvantage in a men's world. In a world with men, they are bigger and much stronger than we are. We need to make the world safe, so that women can go out walking at night in their neighborhoods and they can push a baby carriage, so that if the baby can't sleep they can put the baby in a stroller and come out of their projects or their homes and walk down the street without fear. We need a safer world, and I'd like to be able to be a part of that. (Member Interview, 10/1/02).

Again, relating to the caregiving role of women, another female member discussed her interest in issues that affect children and seniors.

> I have a proven interest in children. Because children today, they are going to be you and me tomorrow. Naturally, I am going to be very concerned about what happens to old people. We see that old people in the prime of their life, they felt like they would be okay, secure in their homes and everything. But with the cost of living, the cost of medical support, it's going beyond their reach. And so they begin to lose out, lose out on assets, their homes, their savings accounts. (Member Interview 10/1/02).

Another woman spoke of her interest in the issues in Congress relating to women and children,

> Let's face it. A lot of the issues that I care about are issues that affect women the most and families, so I tend to go into those areas. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

In summary, women's experiences as caregivers, mothers, wives, and women in a male-dominated world lead them to identify and champion policies related to these experiences in Congress.

Race

There is a difference in the types of personal interests white and non-white members pursue in Congress. Across legislative activities, most white members who pursue policies based on their personal interests focus on prior occupational experiences. Almost 90 percent of white members prioritize issues based on their previous careers, and approximately 80 percent use their occupational experience as a

guide as they select committees, sponsor legislation, and reflect on their proudest legislative accomplishments. In stark contrast, just half of non-white members consider their previous careers when selecting the committees on which they serve, 43 percent introduce bills related to their occupational experiences, 25 percent name accomplishments and 38 percent prioritize issues based on their careers before Congress.

-- Tables 5.7 and 5.8 About Here --

Non-white members champion issues based on their identification with the needs of racial minorities. Almost 60 percent of them sponsor bills on issues related to their group identification and 75 percent discuss accomplishments they are proud of because of their success in speaking on behalf of a minority group with which they can identify. Non-white members focus their legislative efforts on community revitalization, which some relate to their childhood experiences growing up in poverty. They work to level the playing field for underrepresented minorities and to combat societal inequalities facing the group. As one non-white member explained:

> The voiceless citizens need to be represented -- children and minorities. (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

Minority members also advocate for international relations issues generally and also some specifically related to supporting the human rights of members of their race in developing countries, such as Africa and Mexico. Clearly, members' shared experiences as members of groups that are underrepresented in Congress cause them to champion policies to address the issues that are important to these groups.

Personal Experience

In addition to their occupations and group identification defining legislative activities, members' experiences living their lives cause them to advocate for certain issues in Congress. As one member explained,

> Where people really champion one particular issue, there is some personal experience in their life. (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

Personal experiences can be those that members have in their own lives or those members witness experienced by someone close to them. Personal experiences often relate to a health problem either a member or someone they care about is experiencing, childhood experiences or hobbies, and negative experiences with government or in the marketplace.

It is common for members to become actively involved on issues that arise in Congress that are related to their experiences. One member explained that it only makes sense that if a member had a particular experience relating to an issue at hand, they would contribute their knowledge of the subject to legislative deliberations.

> Generally, all of us rely on experiences in the past and our knowledge. Naturally, if you lived in Albania for ten years, and something on Albania comes up, as a member of Congress you're going to be more knowledgeable than those of us that didn't live there and you're going to be more involved in that kind of thing. (Member Interview, 10/16/02).

More than just informing the debate when issues that members care about due to personal experience arise, though, members actually champion policies in Congress

because of their personal experiences. Results reveal that personal experiences drive legislative interests. As one member explained,

> Basically we are all accumulation of life experiences. Your attitude on certain things is shaped by your family, your hometown. Whatever you are involved in. We are all a product of that. That is what Members of Congress are. Their interests reflect their life experiences. (Member Interview, 10/7/02).

When legislative activities are considered, 61 percent of members interviewed who said that they selected a committee because of a personal interest discussed a personal experience that was influential enough that they chose to serve on a committee that would allow them to address the issue they identified as in need of federal intervention due to that experience. Approximately forty percent of the personal interest that members cite when discussing their accomplishments and priorities is related to a personal experience and 43.8 percent of bills they introduce are based on efforts to correct a problem the member identified because of a personal experience.

When Politics is Personal

This study has revealed that members devote their scarce legislative resources to advocating for issues they care about due to their personal interests. It is not just that members' interests cause them to vote a certain way. Rather, members actively champion those issues they care about because of personal experiences. They seek to alter the policy outputs of Congress to address the issues they have identified through their personal lives. Members have policy agendas that are influenced by their personal interests, they try to change content of legislative vehicles because of

personal interests, and they think about issues confronting Congress in a way that is distinct from other members based on their life experiences. As one member explained,

> Every single Member of Congress is a human being. They are different from one another. They not only have different views of the world and ideology but views of leadership and views of what our role is or what our roles are. (Member Interview, 9/19/02).

Representatives are real people, and this study demonstrates that who members are and the experiences they have in life affects the issues they actively pursue in Congress.

Theoretical Conclusions

Beyond Reelection Motivations

Results reveal that members spend less time on reelection-oriented activities in Washington than might be suggested by the literature. In addition to striving to address constituent needs, members also pursue interests of their own in Congress. However, existing theories of legislative behavior do not adequately address the role of members' personal policy interests on legislative activities. Most members have successfully insulated themselves from constituent scrutiny of their day-to-day efforts in Washington, so they are able to involve themselves in issues they are interested in for reasons other than district representation. While we know that members work to build the trust of their constituents in order to have more discretion in Congress (Parker 1992, Fenno, 1978), not much effort has been made to learn about the policies members advocate for with this earned flexibility.

Fenno's (1973) discussion of member goals provides the theoretical framework for further exploration into the reasons for members' legislative activities beyond meeting the needs of their districts. In addition to the reelection goal, he suggests that members also pursue the enactment of whatever they consider is "good public policy." While this should have spurred further exploration into the sources of members' policy goals, the focus of the literature has remained fixated on reelection as members' main motivator. As such, research considering the influence of constituency and interest groups (i.e. reelection) on members' legislative activities dominates inquiries into what members do with their time in Congress (Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977; Berry 1997; Hrebenar 1997; Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Wright 1985).

This study, which shows that personal interests are important motivators for legislative activities, indicates that mainstream literature on congressional behavior must move beyond its concentration on reelection as members' main focus and explore the other reasons for the activities in which members engage. With the range of issues facing Congress that members can become involved with, they often devote their attention to those issues they care about due to their own life experiences. Rather than only being influenced in their policy activities by the need to attract favors from interest groups or the goodwill of constituents, members pursue goals that they personally care about for purely policy-related reasons. Recognizing that members do more in Congress than advocate on behalf of their districts or campaign

contributors should hopefully help the literature to progress to a more comprehensive understanding about the determinants of congressional behavior.

Beyond the Geographic Constituency

While district considerations are crucial for members as they allocate their legislative resources, there are times members identify with voters who do not reside within their districts. Instead, in addition to their constituents, members speak for and act on behalf of those they can identify with because of occupational, descriptive, or experiential commonalities. This finding impacts our conception of constituency, where members are thought to represent those who live within the geographic boundaries of the district they are elected to serve. In reality, in addition to the geographic constituency, members' life experiences make them a representative for groups that extend far beyond their congressional district. Our current conceptions of legislative behavior, which assume members' representation only reaches to the geographic boundaries of their district, must be expanded to include those extra-district groups that members advocate for due to shared life experiences.

Fenno (1973: 9) conceived the goal of enacting "good public policy" as members pursuing topics that they find "'interesting,' 'exciting,' 'controversial,' and 'important.'" While his definition of members' policy interests suggests a randomness to the motivations that cause members to become engaged legislatively, in reality there is a much more systematic and personal explanation for the initiatives that members use their scarce legislative resources to pursue in Congress. This study shows that members decide where to devote their legislative efforts in formal,

demographic ways that can be traced to their background experiences. Many of the issues confronting Congress are interesting, exciting, controversial, and important. However, time, resource, and institutional constraints do not allow members to become active on even a fraction of the issues being considered. Members must order their priorities and be strategic in deciding how to devote their efforts. Rather than a disconnected, impersonal calculation about what topics are interesting, members' personal connections to the policies being considered influence where they will become active.

This study finds that experiences in members' personal lives inform their perspectives when analyzing issues and cause them to choose certain issues to champion over others in Congress. Mansbridge's (1998) concept of surrogate representation, where members act to represent the interests of a group in which they share common characteristics, can be extended beyond demographic characteristics of sex and race to include other social identities as well. Just as women and minority members bring a unique perspective to their legislative work because of their experiences with issues that other members do not have, businesspersons, nurses, teachers, and members with other life experiences also advocate for issues because of their life experiences. Members use such personal experiences to bring distinct policy goals and perspectives by which they analyze issues to the legislative process. Often, this is a unique viewpoint that would otherwise not be represented during policy deliberations. According to Walsh (2002: 373) in her study of female legislators, members' experiences can affect legislative deliberations:

> When a legislator speaks as a member of a group that holds relatively less political power in society, this is an act of increasing the range of views represented. . . . Any legislator can talk about the effect of welfare reform on mothers, but only a woman who has herself been a mother on welfare can represent that point of view directly.

By advocating for issues they care about due to their previous personal experiences, members are able to bring perspectives to policy deliberations which would not be necessarily included otherwise. Their interests give them a special insight into the effect that a policy will have on the group they can identify with. In this way, they are advocates for groups that did not necessarily have a voice at the table previously, not because others did not care about this perspective, but because no one else knew to raise these concerns. This allows for different voices to be heard during policy deliberations.

In addition to bringing a unique viewpoint to policy deliberations, though, this study finds that members actually seek to influence the agenda based on their personal interests. Members are more passionate about certain issues because of their experience with them and they actively work to enact policies that they care about as a result of such personal experiences. This reveals an important way that subjects appear on Congress' agenda. While there are many issues in need of consideration, the fact that a member had a personal experience and has called attention to it in the legislative process often means the difference between valuable ideas that never become law and those that successfully make their way through the process.

Impact on the Representativeness of Policy Outputs

In addition to speaking for their districts and campaign contributors, members actively advocate for those they feel affiliated with due to their own personal experiences. This study shows that personal interests can and do affect legislative activity, which has implications for representation as certain groups are provided a closer proximity to the policymaking table because they are fortunate enough to have a member in Congress to advocate for them.

This study adds the personal interests of members to our conception of how interests are represented in Congress. Rather than formal interest group preferences, this new approach allows us to consider a new way that interests are heard during policy deliberations and represented in legislative activities. Members' own backgrounds help to provide access to certain groups to the policymaking table, causing members to advocate for interests and speak for groups that might not otherwise have a voice there. While the needs of many different groups are brought to the Congress through a well-structured lobbying regime, there are other equally important perspectives and needs that might not be as visible. In these cases, members' personal experiences help to add diversity to the voices that are considered when Congress makes policy. According to one member interviewed,

> Everyone brings a different experience here. We are a reflection of the country, especially the People's House. There are very diverse views, probably 435 different viewpoints. Every situation is different. All members bring a different perspective to this job. (Member Interview, 9/18/02).

Members bringing personal interests to policy deliberations can have one of two results. First, members may advocate for an interest that was previously underrepresented in policy deliberations. Second, when interest groups find a member who shares the experiences of the group's membership, they will likely enjoy easier access and have a representative to advocate their viewpoint during legislative deliberations and champion their policy proposals. Either way, the interest the member shares with the group will more likely be taken into consideration because the member has a seat at the table.

Does this result in an inequitable sway on policymakers by certain interests? Because members are influenced by their personal experiences in legislative activities, this is likely to impact policy outcomes, affecting how representative outputs of the institution will be. Biases can be introduced when a member shares the perspective of a certain group rather than serving as an unbiased analyst of policy alternatives. Namely, members who have intense feelings about an issue might not consider or listen to competing perspectives to the group they identify with personally. One member discussed the challenge facing members as they consider policy problems they are interested in:

> You have to be a damn good listener. And that is not an easy thing to do since you have the privilege of the job. I always try to check myself to allow a lot of time to listen. It is not always easy. If you're passionate, it is pretty difficult to let anyone have a word in edgewise. (Member Interview 10/2/02).

In addition to members' personal perspectives influencing the debate on an issue, members might advocate for the enactment of a policy item that might not be the most pressing if compared objectively with other issues that are awaiting placement on the agenda.

The question becomes whether the existence of personal interests in the policymaking process means that the interests of all stakeholders are captured or that some views are stifled and others are magnified. By bringing their personal interests to Congress, members are helping certain groups to have better access than others. This will either level the playing field for those groups who have been traditionally underrepresented by Congress, or it will add to the skewed nature of interest representation in policy outputs.

Since members' personal experiences are basically haphazard, their activities on behalf of such interests does not necessarily result in a neutral outcome. If there are more members of Congress who have family members with a certain illness than another, they might be able to secure more federal research funding for that particular disease even if the incidence in America is less than the other. It is the disease of the members' family member that gets the attention. If there are more realtors in Congress, they are able to pursue the interests of their group and ensure their perspective is represented when other professions might have equally pressing federal needs without a member to advocate for them. This creates a potential for a form of bias in our system of representative democracy that has not previously been considered.

The interests of groups with a member in Congress to represent them will more likely be pursued than the interests of other groups. This potential for bias is exacerbated by the propensity for certain professions and social identities to be represented in Congress over others. For example, there are clearly certain occupational backgrounds that are prevalent in Congress. Many members have backgrounds in law, business and banking. As such, legislative initiatives relating to the occupational interests of members with law, business, and banking backgrounds are likely. The number of educators has almost doubled in the last decade and the number of health professionals has almost tripled. As the numbers of members with these experiences increases, the interests of these groups will be even more likely to be placed on the agenda. Members from the real estate profession were non-existent until the 106th Congress. Now that the real estate profession has more than 20 members with a background in the field, their interests should be better represented in Congress.

-- Table 5.9 About Here --

The problem is that not all occupations are fortunate enough to have a member in Congress that can identify with them based on their prior career experiences. While sanitation workers, pawnbrokers, or truck drivers might have serious issues in need of federal consideration, the lack of an advocate in Congress to champion their cause might make their efforts to have their issues placed on the agenda very difficult. Before they can convince members that their issue is pressing and should be resolved by Congress, they have the added challenge of educating

members about their profession. In contrast, if a member in Congress worked in that field, they would likely already understand what was being requested and know the importance of the request. While many members could learn about the issue, the question is with all of the pressing issues that need to be addressed, would a member without a personal connection to it take the cause on as his or her own and champion it through the process? Lobbyists often seek to make this decision easier through information, grassroots efforts, and even campaign contributions (DeGregorio, 1990). However, this study suggests that these efforts for members to care about and champion an issue may not be as valuable as a firsthand experience with it. As a result, the prevalence of certain occupations over others creates the potential for bias in the process because certain groups can rely on one of their own to bring voice to their issues and concerns. The same can be said for social identities, where certain racial and ethnic groups might have more voice than others because they have members to speak on their behalf in Congress.

In the end, the policies members pursue in Congress are often related to their life experiences. Members' passion for these issues help them to effectively influence policies, and legislative outputs are different because of the presence of a passionate advocate of a particular perspective. The content of policies and the bills that move in Congress would be different if members with these personal experiences had not been present. According to one member interviewed,

> I have found some amazing people who bring different perspectives to our own party and to the Congress. I think a lot of people brought life

> experiences and helped to kind of mix the bag up here. (Member Interview, 10/8/02).

By "mixing up the bag," members' personal experiences help certain interests find a voice in an institution where elite and moneyed interests are dominant. If, as Mansbridge (1998) argues, surrogate representation is the most intense when interests are underrepresented in policy deliberations, the extent of personal interest advocacy for shared occupational, experiential, and social identities that was found in this study could mean that the presence of personal experiences is more likely to level the playing field and provide for more representative policy outcomes.

Implications

This study has found that personal interests drive members' legislative activities much more than the literature on congressional behavior up to this point would seem to suggest. Rather than merely focusing on reelection considerations, members move beyond their geographic constituencies to represent groups in Congress that they can identify with because of shared experiences. While members who have not personally experienced an issue may still be receptive to it, this might not offer them the intensity of interest to become the champion for the issue in Congress. In this way, the importance of personal, lived experiences on legislative activities should no longer be ignored due to the profound impact such experiences can have on the policy process.

While interviews with members allow for an in-depth exploration into the reasons behind legislative activities, the advantages such a limited study provides in

terms of depth of understanding is also its shortcoming in terms of generalizability. Because only 60 members out of 435 were interviewed for this study, it is fair to say that the results cannot be generalized to the entire membership of the House. The argument cannot be made that the proportions of personal interest that were found here will be the same should an identical study be conducted and 60 different members interviewed. However, this work discovers an important phenomenon in Congress that has gone virtually undetected in previous studies of congressional behavior. The purpose here was to find out whether personal interests are present in legislative activities. For the 60 members interviewed here, the answer is a resounding yes.

Even if the sample is biased, this does not take away from the revelation that some members engage in legislative activities due to experiences in their personal lives. The goal here was not to be able to generalize the findings to the entire membership of the House. Rather, the aim was to develop our understanding of this phenomenon that is previously unrecognized in the literature. How widespread the pursuit of personal interests truly is among members of Congress would require a different methodology and should be the subject of future research to expand our current understanding of member motivations. This is an important line of inquiry and one that should continue to be developed because of the implications it has on our understanding of institutional structure, the characteristics of members, and the representativeness of the institution.

Methods to examine the relationship between members' personal interests and their legislative activities could be refined to determine whether such a phenomenon has increased or remained constant over time. Such a longitudinal analysis would help indicate how the nature of the institution facilitates or hinders members' pursuit of personal policy interests. Rather than only considering the impact of the reelection goal on institutional change (Downs 1957, Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977, Weingast, Shepsle, and Johansen 1981; Weingast and Marshall 1988), the field would also be informed by an examination of the impact of the policy goal on institutional structure. Parker (1992), for example, has argued that the institution itself has changed over time to help members maximize their discretion. Perhaps these changes have facilitated members' pursuits of personal policy interests. As Walsh (2002: 389) argues,

> When the people composing a legislature represent a diversity of life experiences as well as a diversity of policy preferences, students of the policy process have good reason to investigate representation in ways that extend beyond measuring congruence between members' and constituents' issue positions.

We have learned in this study that legislative activities are not bound by the interests expressed by geographic constituencies. Students of legislative behavior should analyze the impact of occupational, experiential, and social identities on legislative structure and policy outputs rather than remaining fixated on the reelection goal as the primary explanation of legislative outputs and institutional organization.

An analysis of members' legislative pursuit of personal policy interests over a period of time will also shed light on the way that the personal experiences represented in Congress remain constant or change over time. According to Fenno (1975),

> It is the Members who run Congress. And we get pretty much the kind of Congress they want. And we shall get a different kind of Congress when we elect different kinds of congressmen. . . .

Perhaps the backgrounds of members who are coming to Congress today are different than in the past. The members of today may be more willing to champion issues based on personal experiences than their predecessors. For example, we have seen that members coming from different occupations pursue personal interests in different ways in the policymaking process. As the makeup of the institution changes, in terms of the backgrounds of members who are elected to serve, members will come to Congress with different goals and a different mindset about what their service is intended to accomplish. For instance, while a businessman comes to Congress with the goal of reducing the role of the federal government, a health professional or woman comes to Congress with the goal of ensuring those most vulnerable in society are cared for. The question is whether these competing views of the role of government moderate each other over time, and whether the long term picture of policy outputs provides balance to the unique interests that are represented. If the life experiences that members bring to the table are naturally altered through attrition,

perhaps the institution is representative over time, in terms of the interests that are brought to the table.

In addition to the changed nature of the institution and changes in membership over time, a longitudinal analysis would also provide insight into the impact that the changing nature of politics has had on the willingness of members to advocate for issues they care about due to their previous experiences. Perhaps issues that were once not brought to the legislature are now considered fair game for policy intervention. For example, the women's movement can be credited for changing the norms about what it is appropriate to legislate about in the political arena. Once the political sphere was opened up to issues that were traditionally reserved for the personal sphere, issues that were not traditionally considered in Congress became part of the agenda. According to Kedrowski and Sarow (2002: 246),

> One of the contributions of the feminist movement has been the political empowerment of women to change the agenda and elevate "private" issues into the realm of political discourse. Health is an issue more likely to be discussed when women are elected officials and is cited as an important public issue by women in public opinion polls.

Members might have become more willing over time to rely on their perspectives gained from their personal experiences because this has become more acceptable in the legislative arena. What is allowable on the agenda in today's Congress could be different, so this may have allowed members to extend their representational reaches beyond their geographic constituencies to those they care about due to a shared experience.

It is also important to consider the relationship between interest groups and members who share experiences with the groups' membership. This is because the choices members make about where to actively engage can affect the interest groups they interact with. Are interest groups more successful when members of Congress share similar background experiences with them? It only makes sense that interest groups would have the most success with those members who have similar personal experiences and perspectives as the groups' constituencies. This line of inquiry will help us to understand the impact of members' personal experiences on the differing levels of interest group access in Congress.

Whether it is because of the expanded discretion provided to members due to the structure of the institution, the changing nature of the makeup of Congress leading members to be more willing to bring up personal issues, or the evolution of our political environment where personal experiences have made their way to the political sphere, this study has revealed that members' legislative activities in the modern Congress are often consumed with things they care about because of their own life experiences. This impacts the interests that are represented during policy formulation, as members bring interests to Congress with them and provide a closer proximity to the policymaking table and a louder voice for certain groups in society. Rather than only pursuing the interests of those they represent geographically, this study has revealed an extra-district constituency that members advocate for in Congress because of shared experiences. In this important way, politics becomes personal for legislative policymaking in Congress.

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Table 5.1: Members' Legislative Activity Related to District and Personal Interests

Percentage of All Members	Personal Interests %	District Interests %	Difference %
Committee Selection	**93.3**	70.0	23.3
Bill Sponsorship	80.0	**91.7**	-11.7
Accomplishments	**78.3**	68.3	10.0
Priorities	**81.5**	74.1	7.4

Table 5.2: Types of Personal Interests by Legislative Activity

Percentage of Members With Personal Interest	Occupation %	Personal Experience %	Group Identification %
Committee Selection	76.8	60.7	0.0
Bill Sponsorship	75.0	43.8	33.3
Accomplishments	78.7	40.4	19.1
Priorities	79.5	38.6	27.3

Table 5.3: Types of Personal Interests by Legislative Activity and Occupation

Percentage of Members With Personal Interest by Occupation		Occupation %	Personal Experience %	Group Identification %
Committee Selection	**Law**	68	63	0
	Business	91	55	0
	Education	89	67	0
	Real Estate	100	60	0
	Health	80	20	0
Bill Sponsorship	**Law**	64	43	50
	Business	80	40	10
	Education	88	38	25
	Real Estate	100	20	0
	Health	100	75	25
Accomplishments	**Law**	53	33	33
	Business	89	33	11
	Education	100	44	11
	Real Estate	100	33	0
	Health	100	40	0
Priorities	**Law**	64	21	43
	Business	75	50	13
	Education	100	43	14
	Real Estate	100	0	33
	Health	100	80	0

Table 5.4: Types of Personal Interests by Occupation and Legislative Activity

Percentage of Members with Personal Interest by Occupation		Occupation %	Personal Experience %	Group Identification %
Law	**Committee Selection**	68	63	0
	Bill Sponsorship	64	43	50
	Accomplishments	53	33	33
	Priorities	64	21	43
Business	**Committee Selection**	91	55	0
	Bill Sponsorship	80	40	10
	Accomplishments	89	33	11
	Priorities	75	50	13
Education	**Committee Selection**	89	67	0
	Bill Sponsorship	88	38	25
	Accomplishments	100	44	11
	Priorities	100	43	14
Real Estate	**Committee Selection**	100	60	0
	Bill Sponsorship	100	20	0
	Accomplishments	100	33	0
	Priorities	100	0	33
Health	**Committee Selection**	80	20	0
	Bill Sponsorship	100	75	25
	Accomplishments	100	40	0
	Priorities	100	80	0

Table 5.5 Types of Personal Interests by Legislative Activity and Sex

Percentage of Members With Personal Interest by Sex		Occupation %	Personal Experience %	Group Identification %
Committee Selection	**Male**	78	58	0
	Female	73	73	0
Bill Sponsorship	**Male**	81	42	17
	Female	58	50	83
Accomplishments	**Male**	82	34	13
	Female	67	67	44
Priorities	**Male**	80	31	20
	Female	78	67	56

Table 5.6 Types of Personal Interests by Sex and Legislative Activity

Percentage of Members with Personal Interest by Sex		Occupation %	Personal Experience %	Group Identification %
Male	**Committee Selection**	78	58	0
	Bill Sponsorship	81	42	17
	Accomplishments	82	34	13
	Priorities	80	31	20
Female	**Committee Selection**	73	73	0
	Bill Sponsorship	58	50	83
	Accomplishments	67	67	44
	Priorities	78	67	56

Table 5.7: Types of Personal Interests by Legislative Activity and Race

Percentage of Members With Personal Interest by Race		Occupation %	Personal Experience %	Group Identification %
Committee Selection	**White**	81	58	0
	Non-White	50	75	0
Bill Sponsorship	**White**	80	44	29
	Non-White	43	43	57
Accomplishments	**White**	84	42	14
	Non-White	25	25	75
Priorities	**White**	89	39	17
	Non-White	38	38	15

Table 5.8: Types of Personal Experience by Race and Legislative Activity

Percentage of Members with Personal Interest by Race		Occupation %	Personal Experience %	Group Identification %
White	**Committee Selection**	81	58	0
	Bill Sponsorship	80	44	29
	Accomplishments	84	42	14
	Priorities	89	39	17
Non-White	**Committee Selection**	50	75	0
	Bill Sponsorship	43	43	57
	Accomplishments	25	25	75
	Priorities	38	38	15

Table 5.9: Prior Occupations of Representatives, 98th - 107th Congresses

Congress	Law % (#)	Business/ Banking % (#)	Education % (#)	Public Service/ Politics % (#)	Real Estate % (#)	Health % (#)
98th Congress 1983	46 (200)	32 (138)	10 (43)			1.4 (6)
99th Congress 1985	44 (190)	34 (147)	9 (37)			1.1 (5)
100th Congress 1987	42 (184)	33 (142)	9 (38)	22 (94)		.69 (3)
101st Congress 1989	42 (184)	32 (138)	10 (42)	22 (94)		.91 (4)
102nd Congress 1991	42 (183)	36 (157)	13 (57)	14 (61)		1.1 (5)
103rd Congress 1993	42 (181)	30 (131)	15 (66)	20 (87)		1.4 (6)
104th Congress 1995	39 (171)	37 (162)	17 (75)	23 (102)		2.3 (10)
105th Congress 1997	40 (172)	42 (181)	17 (74)	23 (100)		2.8 (12)
106th Congress 1999	37 (163)	37 (159)	19 (84)	24 (106)	5 (20)	3.4 (15)
107th Congress 2001	36 (156)	37 (159)	21 (92)	29 (126)	6 (24)	3.2 (14)
Interview Subjects[2]	35.0 (21)	18.3 (11)	15.0 (9)	13.3 (8)	8.3 (5)	6.7 (4)

SOURCE: Ornstein, Norman J., Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin. 2002. *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2001-2002*. Washington, DC: AEI Press.

*Empty cells are a result of information not compiled for those occupations by CQ in those years.

[2] In addition, one interview subject reported a prior career in the military and one interview subject reported a previous career in agriculture.

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Appendix A: Sample of Interview Request Letter Sent to Members

The Honorable XXXX
XXXX House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear XXXX:

I am writing with a special request. I hope you can help.

My Legislative Director, Lesli McCollum, is pursuing a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Carl Albert Center for Congressional Research and Studies at the University of Oklahoma. After my retirement, Lesli will be returning to the Carl Albert Center to complete her dissertation, entitled, "Policymaking in the U.S. Congress." The impressive research project will analyze how Members of Congress choose and advance their policy priorities. Data for this comprehensive study has been collected from committee hearing and markup transcripts, the Congressional Record, and member legislative profiles, to name just a few sources.

But the most valuable source of such information is us - the members of the House. Therefore, I would deeply appreciate it if you would agree to sit down with Lesli, for just 15 or 20 minutes, to discuss your own legislative priorities and accomplishments. She's very familiar with my experience in this institution. But your insights would be extremely helpful to this very worthwhile study. I hope you are able to give her the benefit of your experience and expertise. Your staff can contact Lesli at (202) 225-4465 to schedule an interview.

I know there are many demands on your time, but I would deeply appreciate it if you could spend a few minutes with Lesli. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marge Roukema
Member of Congress

Appendix B: Sample of Interview Follow-Up Letter

The Honorable XXXX
XXXX House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative XXXX,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research project I am conducting under the supervision of Dr. Gary Copeland, Professor of Political Science at the Carl Albert Center for Congressional Research and Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

I am currently the Legislative Director for Representative Marge Roukema, from the Fifth District of New Jersey. After Mrs. Roukema's retirement at the end of this Congress, I will be returning to the Carl Albert Center to complete my dissertation to earn a Ph.D. in Political Science. The dissertation, entitled, "Policymaking in the U.S. Congress," will analyze how Members of Congress advance their policy priorities. Data for this study is being collected from committee hearing and markup transcripts, the Congressional Record, and member legislative profiles.

I look forward to sitting down with you for 15-20 minutes to discuss your legislative priorities and accomplishments. Your insights will be a tremendous asset to this worthwhile study. With your permission, I will audio tape the interview.

In conforming with the policies of the University of Oklahoma, I am required to inform you that acceptance of this interview request indicates that you understand that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please call the University of Oklahoma's Office of Research Administration at (405) 325-4757.

Thank you again for lending your expertise to this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Lesli McCollum
Ph.D. Candidate

Appendix C: Interview Template

General Legislative Activity
What legislative accomplishments are you the most proud of?

For each accomplishment discussed:
What generated your interest in this issue?

What are your most pressing legislative priorities or objectives?

For each priority discussed:
What generated your interest in this issue?

Committee Activity
(These questions were asked for each committee on which the member served).
Why did you choose to serve on the _____ Committee?

Do you plan to continue to serve on this Committee in future Congresses or is there a different Committee you would switch to if given the opportunity?

What initiatives have you pursued in this Committee?

What was the source of your interest in the initiative?

Legislative Activity Generated By Prior Life Experiences
Have you had a particular life experience that has caused you to become a champion for a certain issue (i.e. bill sponsorship, Committee activity, etc.?) Please discuss.

Representation
In addition to constituents of your district, who do you see yourself as representing (if anyone)? Why?

How would you describe an effective Member of Congress?

What are your future plans?

Closing Thoughts---Is there anything else you think I should know about how Congress works?