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COMMITTEES, SUBCOMMITTEES, AND INFORMATION – POLICYMAKING IN CONGRESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Abstract

Congressional policymaking occurs in an information-rich environment, among a vast and complex set of institutional and representational demands. In this dissertation, I examine how congressional institutions interact with the broader political and policymaking environment in order to successfully manipulate the policy process. My theory of information management in Congress argues that committees and subcommittees provide the Congress with the management tools necessary to adaptively respond to demands in the policy environment by structuring the flow of information in policy debates and facilitate policymaking success, primarily through the use of congressional hearings. Using expectations produced by my theory of information management in Congress, I address four primary research questions: 1) When and why do committees publicly manage information? 2) When and why do committees delegate the management of information to subcommittees? 3) Which subcommittees are most likely to conduct information management activities and why? 4) How do committees utilize subcommittees in the management of information to generate policy success?

Utilizing my theory of information management in Congress, I derive empirically testable hypothesis regarding the influences on and impact of committee and subcommittee hearing activity in the U.S. Congress. I assemble original datasets of committee and subcommittee characteristics and hearing activity in both the House and Senate via a variety of primary and secondary sources. I supplement my theoretical developments and quantitative analyses of committee and subcommittee activity and success with qualitative data collected via semi-structured interviews with House and

Senate committee staff, and participant observations made by the author while working for the House Committee on Education and Labor during the first session of the 111th Congress.

Statistical analyses and illustrative anecdotes provide consistent empirical evidence supporting my expectations for committee and subcommittee activity and influence. I find that Congress' committee system is able to respond to simultaneous and competing demands facing the national policy making process. Through adaptively managing the flow of information in the policy debate, committees and subcommittees provide Congress with the tools required to navigate the complex policy environment to achieve policy success. Additionally I find that while House and Senate committees appear to serve a common purpose and generate similar influence in the policy process, despite variation in the details of how certain factors in the policy environment influence committee and subcommittee activity and success across chambers. By presenting and examining a generalizable explanation of legislative organization in both the House and Senate, as well as revealing the influential role of subcommittees in the policy process, this dissertation makes unique contributions to the study policymaking in congressional institutions.

COMMITTEES, SUBCOMMITTEES, AND INFORMATION – POLICYMAKING IN CONGRESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Chapter 1: Introducing a Theory of Information Management in Congress

Introduction

Congressional scholarship traditionally focuses on the examination of how institutional procedures and individual action within the institution relate to and achieve the goals of individual members of the institution. This common rational-behavioral approach leaves open questions regarding how congressional institutions interact with the surrounding policy environment by focusing questions on how the goals and actions of congressional members relate to and cause institutional action and output. In this dissertation, I seek to examine questions of how interactions between congressional institutions and the surrounding policy environment influence congressional activity and the law-making process. Specifically, I argue and empirically confirm that congressional committees manage information flow within the surrounding policy environment through committee and subcommittee hearings in order to respond to the abundance of competing demands in the policy environment, and ultimately facilitate success in the policymaking (law-making) process.

To build this argument, I develop an original "theory of information management in Congress" by building off of theories of legislative organization, a theory of policy change, and theories of public management dealing with organizational success. While the literature on legislative organization points to expectations for committee activity based on the accepted goal structure of members and parties, the question of how committees and subcommittees respond to the surrounding policy

environment and act in response to that environment to pursue public policy is left unanswered. Theories of policy change demonstrate that institutional attention to specific information regarding policy issues (and the choice to ignore other perspectives) relates to policy stasis as well as change, yet the specifics of how environmental factors influence and are influenced by institutional action remains unclear. Finally, by consistently viewing committee organization and behavior through the lens of individual member goals scholarship fails to describe or explain the necessary action committees and subcommittees take in order to systematically adapt and respond to the policy environment in order to successfully navigate the policy process. I argue that committees adapt and respond to the surrounding policy environment by utilizing committee and subcommittee hearings to manage and structure the flow of information in the policy debate to promote the legislative goals of the committee.

In the following chapters, I present and test my "theory of information management in Congress" in order to address three primary research questions ignored by the current literature: Which committees are most active in the management of information and which committees are more likely to utilize subcommittees for this task? Which subcommittees are most likely to be active in managing information? And, how do committees utilize subcommittees in this complex environment to achieve policy success? I utilize committee and subcommittee data from the 104th – 108th Congresses, along with interviews of congressional staff to empirically examine these questions in the chapters to follow (See Appendix: Staff Interviews for details regarding the interview procedure and respondent demographics).

The remainder of this chapter will accomplish three tasks. First, I discuss why committees and subcommittees are the appropriate institutional level to examine how congressional institutions interact with the surrounding policy environment in the policy process. Second, I discuss the role and definition of information in the policy process as evidenced by existing institutional research of the congressional policy process. Thirdly, I will present an original "theory of information management in Congress" by applying the implications of theories in public management to our knowledge of legislative organization and the policy process. Lastly, I provide a broad summary of the dissertation.

Committees in Congress

With one of the most recognizable quotes in studies of American government, Woodrow Wilson once noted that members of Congress in the committee room epitomize the notion of "Congress at work" (Wilson 1981). This classic observation first painted the factual picture that remains true to this day, Congress' system of committees and subcommittees serves as the primary workhorses of the legislative process. Due to this fact, it seems appropriate that any examination of how congressional institutions interact with the surrounding policy environment in the legislative process focus on the committee and subcommittee system of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. A vast body of scholarship on legislative organization in Congress provides implications regarding what factors in the policy environment committees must respond to in the policy making process, although this literature fails to develop a generalizable perspective on committee activity. The following discussion examines the existing scholarship on legislative organization for

implications regarding factors in the policy environment which committees and their subcommittees should be expected to interact with in the policy making process. Research examining legislative organization in Congress consists for four primary and competing perspectives: the distributive (Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Adler and Lapinsky 1997), the informational (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987, 1989, 1990; Krehbiel 1991), and the partisan (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005), and the conditional (Hall and Groffman 1990; Maltzman 1998; Young and Heitshusen 2003). Grounded in the long-standing, and widely accepted tripartite goal structure of congressional members: re-election, good public policy, and prestige (Fenno 1973; Mayhew 1974), each of these theories of institutional structure and purpose draw on rational-behavioral explanations of individual behavior.

Centralized on the re-election goal of congressional members, the distributive perspective relies on the notion that members developed and maintain the existing organization of the committee system to facilitate legislative coalitions through "gains from trade" and provide distributive benefits that a member can take home to his or her district in policy domains of need, unique to different groups of like congressional districts (Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Adler and Lapinsky 1997; Hurowitz, Noiles and Rohde 2001; Martin 2003; Evans 2004). The informational (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987, 1989, 1990; Krehbiel 1991) and partisan (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005) perspectives link with the other two goals of congressional members: good public policy and prestige. Under the information explanation of legislative organization, the committee system provides the Congress a means to subdivide into like units, creating policy gains due to trustworthy specialization within

the vast array of policy domains, on which Congress legislates (Krehbiel 1991). The partisan perspective argues that the committee system is organized in a majoritarian fashion to facilitate policy gains through procedural advantages and legislative agenda control (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). Each of these theories implies that members achieve policy and prestige goals through the control of jurisdictionally separated units of the policy process. Unlike the distributive perspective, the strongest evidence for these perspectives comes from formal theoretic derivations (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987, 1989, 1990; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005) and what should be considered at best, indirect empirical evidence (Hall and Groffman 1990; Krehbiel 1991; Rohde 1994; Gilligan and Krehbiel 1997; Hurowitz, Noiles and Rohde 2001) that fails to clearly distinguish concepts such as partisanship and information. Although each of these theories has considerable merit, and clearly supplies some explanation for the design of legislative organization, each can only explain actual committee organization in conditional terms (Maltzman 1998), often ignoring organized committee activity. In the long run this led to many scholars choosing to argue that each is correct, for different committees under different conditions (Hall and Groffman 1990; Maltzman 1998; Young and Heitshusen 2003). In other words, some demands are more strongly related to specific types of policy issues and thus the point of focus for committees primarily concerned with satisfying a single specific demand, such as constituent benefits, or good policy, or providing prestige. While the resulting tripartite typology of committees fails to address how the committees system interacts with the policy environment, this body of work goes suggests factors in the policy environment with which committee and subcommittee should be influenced by and respond to.

While the competing perspectives of legislative organization are developed by looking at the individual concerns of congressional members, such individual demands suggest, in the aggregate, demands that also populate the broader policy environment. Although the when's, how's, and why's regarding how these aggregated demands in the broader environment influence committee and subcommittee activity, they provide implications for factors that must be considered in a generalizable examination of committee and subcommittee activity and purpose in the policy process. The distributive perspective suggests that committees and their subcommittees must interact with and respond to the demand of organized constituencies. The partisan perspective suggests that intra-institutional and intra-committee party dynamics may create demands that committees and subcommittees must be concerned with. Finally, the informational perspective suggests that committees and subcommittees would be concerned with developing specialized expertise in order to create a trustworthy, informational advantage for producing public policy within committees as opposed to the chamber at large. Interestingly, the informational model of legislative organization appears to present the most reasonably generalizable approach to committee activity in the congressional law-making process, yet seems to be conceptually inconsistent and empirical investigations only provide indirect evidence to support the theory as conceived by Krehbiel (1991).

The informational theory of legislative organization suggests that the committee and subcommittees system represents a purposeful creation of a "division of labor" to manage the need of creating policy solutions for public problems across an immense array of policy issues (Krehbiel 1991). While this seems to be factually correct and

representative of institutional needs (Deering and Smith 1997), the theory has not been tested regarding how the analysis of information surrounding policy issues by committees influences the legislative process or relates to the conditions of the surrounding policy environment. Empirical evidence presented to support the theory focuses on committees being ideologically representative of the chamber median voter, and the relationship between ideological representativeness and the ability for committees to acquire procedural advantages, such as a closed rule, for legislation (Krehbiel 1991). Considering that committee assignments are determined primarily by the individual parties (Frish and Kelly 2006) that procedural decision are controlled by the majority party (Cox and McCubbins 2005), the informational theory of legislative organization is rich in implications regarding the nature of committees activity in the policy process, but its current explanatory and predictive power is week. However, this body of work does raise questions regarding how committees collect and manage information in the policy environment, and the impact of committee activity on congressional lawmaking.

While the generally accepted theories of legislative organization in Congress, discussed above, provide a solid background regarding the how the needs facing members could drive institutional design, they fail to provide a practical explanation regarding how institutional activity meets the competing demands members face from the broad policy environment and influences the legislative process. Public policy scholarship does a much more effective job at addressing the question of how and why committees do what they do and its influence in the policy process as well as more effectively defining the notion of "information" in the policy process. The following

section explores existing public policy scholarship in order to further perspective on how the committee system interacts with the surrounding policy environment along with the role and definition of information in the policy environment.

Information, Committee Activity, and the Policy Process

More so than institutional studies of legislative organization, public policy scholars have both theoretically and empirically defined the notion of information within the policy environment and demonstrated the importance and influence of the committee activity (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Via the examination of institutional information processing and attention shifts in Congress, a vast body of theoretic and empirical research demonstrates that the collection and display of information through, committee activity, is a key dynamic of national policymaking. When and how Congress manages information, and what information it deems relevant can determine outputs and outcomes of the policymaking process by influencing attention shifts related to problem definition, policy learning, and subsystem breakdowns (Bosso 1987; Hansen 1991; Sabatier-Jenkins Smith 1993; Jones, Baumgartner and Talbert 1993; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Talbert, Jones and Baumgartner 1995; Baumgartner, Jones and MacLeod 2000; Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Worsham 2006), all of which are consequential to the end game of the policy process. The following discussion explores the definition of information as presented by this body of work as well as the impact of that information on the policy process in order to gleen the implications of this work on a generalizable theory of committee interaction with the policy environment, especially regarding the management of

information by congressional committees and the impact of this activity on the legislative process.

Drawing on both institutional studies of congressional committees and institutional theories policymaking, information is defined somewhat ambiguously but its impact on policymaking is widely recognized. Some have defined information simply as "policy expertise" and other knowledge that is "policy relevant." Jones and Baumgartner (2005) further specify the definition of information as two specific components needed by decision makers: "an understanding of the problem and knowledge of the possible solutions." However, information is not limited to some sort of prospective or reflective truth. Information can be scientific evidence, qualified opinion, or even "propaganda masquerading as science" (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). In abundance, such policy information is available to individual congressional members, Congress' policymaking institutions, and congressional staff. It is supplied by issue advocates, interest groups, private and public sector experts, academics, citizens, as well as other members, institutional units, staff and leadership among other sources (Bosso 1987; Hansen 1991; Hall 1996; Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Hall and Deardorff 2006). Although it is clear that individual committees and subcommittees of jurisdiction may have the most intimate knowledge of particular policy issues, relative to other committees and subcommittees or the congressional chambers at large, when, how, and why the committees system interacts with this vast array of information in the policy process remain open questions. Yet the impact that attention to specific pieces of information can have has been thoroughly established through examination of the policymaking process.

Policy scholarship demonstrates that the flow of information in a policy debate impacts the policy process by influencing the makeup, power, and beliefs of policy subsystems (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Baumgartner and Jones 1993), empirically supported theories of the policy process demonstrate a direct relationship between the display of policy information and changes in the policy making arena. Shifts in attention to particular information regarding particular policy issues by the right people at the right time can influence how public problems are defined, what policy makers and advocates learn about particular policies and issues, and breakdown policy subsystems allowing for new actors access to the law-making process (Bosso 1987; Hansen 1991; Sabatier-Jenkins Smith 1993; Jones, Baumgartner and Talbert 1993; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Talbert, Jones and Baumgartner 1995; Baumgartner, Jones and MacLeod 2000; Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Worsham 2006). In a practical sense, evidence suggests that ebbs and flows in attention to information within specific policy domains is linked to changes in policy outcomes such as changes in law or changes in federal budget allocations (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones and Baumgartner 2005; True, Jones and Baumgartner 2007) or even shift a policy issues such as pesticides from being a topic dominated by farming interests to a topic where the related policy became dominate by health concerns (Hansen 1991). Clearly, information effects policymaking, and theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that the committee system is where "information processing" occurs in Congress (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones and Baumgartner 2005).

Institutional theories of the policy process emphasize the role of macro-institutional information processing as a primary purpose for congressional activity.

The work of Bryan Jones and Frank Baumgartner (2005; Baumgartner and Jones 1993) portrays the congressional committee system as a "parallel information processing" system, whereby different committees and their subcommittees collect and distribute information on different policy topics simultaneously. According to this literature, "serial shifts" in attention to particular topics can facilitate policy changes due to increased attention to the topic by the Congress as a whole by creating competition for power over a policy topic and typically facilitates policy change (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; King 1994, 1997; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). This highlights the importance of information flow in the battle over policy problem definitions and potential policy solutions (Heclo 1978; Bosso 1987; Hansen 1991; Jenkins-Smith, St. Clair and Woods 1991; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Wood 2006; Worsham 2006), but it does not address a need to understand what factors in the policy environment may systematically influence committee activity. Additionally, this only explains policy changes, or lawmaking, that occurs during a serial attention shift to a particular policy issue, ignoring more traditional policymaking that occurs in the normal order of the Congress. While serial shifts in attention to information revolving around a particular policy topic may be a sign of change, the information processing that occurs in parallel during periods of stability does not simply occur in a vacuum. Much like the traditional institutional examinations of legislative organization, scholarship focused on policymaking leaves a gap regarding the explanation of the interaction of congressional institutions with the surrounding actors in the policy environment and the general impact of committee activity on the policy process.

Institutional studies of legislative organization detail the motivations individual congressional members hold that promote the maintenance of the committee and subcommittee system. Studies of policymaking focus on the importance of attention to specific information in facilitating policy changes leaves. Between these two bodies of research, remains an intellectual gap that is critical to understanding when, how, and why congressional institutions interact with the surrounding policy environment. Existing scholarship implicitly suggests factors that may be influential in this process. Still, we have failed to theorize regarding when, how, and why institutional subunits are active in the information processing dynamics of Congress. I propose a theory of information management in congressional policymaking that bridges the gap between studies of legislative organization and public policy change, leading to a theoretically and empirically practical explanation of when, how, and why the committees and subcommittees seek to manage and control information flow in the vast and complex policy environment, at the center of which is the United States Congress. In order to develop such theory and explanation, one must consider a variety of issues directly: 1) What factors make up the policy environment facing the Congress and how should those factors influence when and why some committees and their subcommittees are more active in the processing of information in the policy process? 2) Why and how are committees and their subcommittees able and active institutional location for processing the flow of information in the policy environment? 3) How and why does activity by congressional committees and subcommittees actually serve to process information circulating throughout the policy environment? The following presentation of "a theory of information management in Congress" seeks to address these issues directly.

A Theory of Information Management in Congress

At the national level of policymaking, a complex and information-rich environment surrounds a central actor, Congress, intending to influence the policymaking process. Through the committee and subcommittee system, Congress is able to avoid being overwhelmed by competing demands within this complex and information-rich environment through managing the information flow via the infrastructure of legislative organization, i.e. committees and subcommittees. In the following sections, I develop this theory in three steps. First, I providing evidence for the abundance of information emanating from the complex policy environment surrounding Congress. Second, I explain how legislative organization provides the management infrastructure to balance the competing demands of the information environment. Finally, I argue that the congressional hearing process serves as the empirical tool for information management.

Information in a Complex Environment

In the arena of national policymaking, Congress is at the center of the storm. Congress is the bulls-eye, where competing demands seek access, attention, and policies for a countless number of issues. Countless "asks" bombard the Capitol and the halls of congressional office buildings constantly, all representing different kinds of information. Face-to-face verbal communication, written pamphlets, policy research, drafts of legislation, phone calls, emails, voicemails, media coverage, and any other form of communication imaginable invade members' personal and committee offices on an almost constant basis. These messages are sent and delivered by constituents, PACs, advocacy groups, special interest groups, executive departments, state governments, local governments, not to mention the endogenous demands of members, committees,

their staff, and party leadership. The influence on, and activity in, national politics of these various types of actors has been well documented in political science.

Political scientists traditionally examine the influence of these demands in terms of the individual representation members of Congress provide their constituency (Mayhew 1974; Eulau and Karps 1977; Fenno 1978; Evans 2004), and occasionally in terms of macro-representational issues facing the institution (Erikson, Mackuen and Stimson 2002; Adler and Lapinski 2006). Micro-level studies demonstrate that members are clearly influenced by these demands and respond in a variety of ways found throughout the legislative process such as votes (Miller and Stokes 1963), bill sponsorship (Swers 2002), and case work (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1984). Meanwhile, macro institutional studies tend to focus on policy outputs (Hartley and Russett 1992; Stimson, Mackuen and Erikson 1995), neglecting the totality of how the institution can and does respond to these demands throughout the legislative process.

In terms of the policy process more generally, these various sources of influence listed above are seeking access in order to promote desired end goals of policy outputs and outcomes (Arnold 1990). I argue that in the decision-making process that is policymaking. Congress serves as an "adaptive system" that:

> is capable of attaining goals in a range of environmental conditions. It consists of an inner system, an outer environment, and an interface between the inner and outer systems. Information acts as input for adaptive systems, and action in response to this information is output to the environment. (Jones 2001).

For actors in the policy environment external to the Congress, *access and influence comes in the form of having "your" information deemed relevant to the policymaking process*. PACs, interest groups, and "constituents" invest money in campaigns and provide policy support in pursuit of influential access to the process (Hall and Wayman

1990; Grier and Munger 1991; Leyden 1995; Heitshusen 2000). Individual constituents seek policy makers who produce policies matching their opinions (Hojnacki and Kimball 2001; Chin, Bond and Geva 2000), even if those opinions are often endogenously produced by members of Congress through public communications (Gerber and Jackson 1993). This access and influence is often provided as some form of information. While constituents provide opinions, groups provide other types of information such as policy research, polling to capture constituency opinions, policy assistance, or even policy expertise (Hall and Deardorff 2006). The demands facing Congress are not only targeted benefits requested by narrow demanders, such demands also make up general expectations about the democratic process or broad policies that have truly regional or national constituencies. Although in political media and the coverage it may be stylish or common to emphasize earmarks or pork barrel policymaking as the way Congress satisfies demanders, the issue runs much deeper than that. Such demands permeate the policy process at all levels. Members of Congress desire good public policy (Mayhew 1974). However, there is severe uncertainty in the policymaking environment where "surprise and the prospect of embarrassment lurk beneath any policy choice" (Krehbiel 1991).

This uncertainty, along with constant rhetoric demanding at least a specific appearance of how the process of attaining policies should occur, where the expectation to solicit opinions and information from all sides of a policy debate or political conflict exists, members and the institution at large must go to great lengths to navigate the policy environment in a way that allows for the avoidance of blame when things go wrong but room to claim credit when problems are solved (Arnold 1990). Yet for the

most part, no single member has the ability to achieve or stop a policy output or individual portions of the policy process without at least some coalition of support within the institution.[1] This fact is missed by tradition congressional scholarship that centers all expectation of the micro-level needs of individual members. Examining the simultaneous and competing demands that Congress faces can result in conclusions about the institutions of Congress that may be accurate, but not necessarily precise. If such a plethora of demands faces every member uniquely, the institution must find ways to manage the multitude of information produced by these demands. Think of this situation as analogous to a family buying a car, but with one key difference. A family will seek input from each of its individual members about what the needs and desires regarding this major decision are. The family will then seek out as much expert advice, opinion, and research possible to completely inform the decision. The Congress has similar consideration in policymaking. However exogenous and endogenous sources constantly bombard the Capitol with more information about how to define policy problems and solutions than it would be possible to completely consider. Unlike the family seeking information, Congress must find institutional ways to manage the various sources of information coming from exogenous and endogenous demanders.

The committee and subcommittee system provides Congress with an information management infrastructure to manage the exhausting information environment, allowing only certain bits and pieces entry into the public forum. While committees were initially installed to provide the institution at large with the

[1] It is often noted that the Senate conventionally operates through unanimous consent motions or cloture, emphasizing the negative policy power of individuals. However, unanimous consent is not a requirement of the Senate and for a filibuster to succeed a coalition of sixty opposing members must not exist. In the truest sense, individual members may have more power in the Senate due to the consent, respect, or deference of a coalition of members.

infrastructure to handle specialized policy demands, but committees also provide the only infrastructure to collect and respond to the informational demands presented in the complex policy environment. Committees serve the administrative purpose of managing such information flow. Intuitively, we may believe that the environment surrounding policy decisions, or the problem space, is objective and easy to define yet the problem space "may be transformed by a decision maker in trying to solve the problem at hand in a way not expected by the objective observer (Jones 2001)."

Committees and subcommittees have the ability to define the problem space in the policy environment. Managing the abundance of information in the policy environment to shape a problem space that focuses on informational features that are deemed relevant to the policy problem and solution, and omitting the irrelevant features (Jones 2001). I argue that committees and subcommittees, more than individual members, serve as the most capable institutional structure to manage the vast amount of information circulating in the policy environment that seeks to influence problem definitions and solutions. The following section seeks to draw out this argument by examining the institutional characteristics making the committee and subcommittee system Congress' infrastructure for information management.

Committees as Management Infrastructure

Congress, like many public and private organizations, contains a structural hierarchy that serves to more efficiently meet the institution's diverse needs and achieve its goals (O'Toole and Meier 1999, 2003; Meier and O'Toole Jr. 2002). Congress' committee system of legislative organization serves this purpose (Fenno 1973; Mayhew 1974; Deering and Smith 1997; Schneider 2007a, 2007b). Unlike other organizations,

there are two primary macro-level institutional forces which the committee/subcommittee system serves simultaneously: the demands of the chamber (Fenno 1973; Krehbiel 1991) and the demands of the two major parties (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). While the committees as a whole provide management capacity to the needs of the chamber (Deering and Smith 1997; Schneider 2007a, 2007b), the individual party coalitions within committees and subcommittees also serve the needs of the party caucus (Hurwitz, Noiles, and Rohde 2001). Once again it is clear that the competing demands facing Congress should not be easily compartmentalized as some suggest (Maltzman 1998), but must be simultaneously responded to in many situations. The committee system provides Congress with the infrastructure to manage the vast amount of competing information in the policy environment in order to define problem spaces for policy issues accomplish the goals of Congress by through interaction with the exceptionally broad and complex policy environment.

Currently accepted explanations of legislative organization may be appealing in terms of individual member and party goals, but these perspectives miss a true "inside the beltway" perspective on congressional activity and the committee system. Just like the factors and demands of the policy environment are dynamic, the needs of members and political parties are not static, and the committee system serves as the adaptive information processing system that must keep up with and manage the information flow in the policy debate. Additionally, the existing argument that most embraces the idea of institutional needs relating to policymaking (Krehbiel 1991) neglects and openly rejects

the traditional demand side factors presented by other perspectives (Weingast and Marshall 1988; Cox and McCubbins 1993).

The informational perspective of committees in Congress suggests that crafting good public policy means not responding to distributive demands and that party concerns are incidental to the policy process and simply included in the notion of member's needs (Krehbiel 1991; Krehbiel 1993). In interviews, committee staff and staff of individual members often identified purposeful roles for committees and committee activity in the policy process. One such role seems to be collecting information about the policy environment surrounding issues on the congressional agenda. When asked about the purpose of committees, one committee policy staff member summed it up nicely, saying that one purpose of committee activity is to "manage the process of finding out how groups and parties are approaching a policy topic," a view expressed by minority and majority staff in both personal and committee offices (Staff Interviews 2009). Thus it seems clear that all committees and their subcommittees are dealing with "informational," "distributive," and "partisan" factors simultaneously as they are presented by the policy environment. Thus, the now commonly accepted notion that committees can be broadly placed into different typologies allowing them to conditionally meet different demands at different times with specific benefits or services (Maltzman 1998; Young and Heitshusen 2003) still leaves much nuance to be desired in terms of a truly general and practical explanation of the committee system. General explanations claiming that specific committees serve purposes unique to the others may provide some simplicity but fundamentally throw the baby out with the bath water. Across different policy issue jurisdictions, committees

and their subcommittees all provide Congress an institutional tool to manage the abundance of information in the policy environment. Managing the flow of information amongst actors and institutions in the policy environment allows committees and therefore the Congress to *successfully* structure the policy process. This becomes especially clear when one compares the structure and activity of congressional committees with the role of structural hierarchies in facilitating success in public organizations as described by theories of public management within the public administration literature.

Congressional policy outputs must consider and satisfy, to some degree, the particularistic needs of demanders such as organized constituencies or interest groups while also clear the institutional hurdles of generating winning coalitions within the major parties and the House and Senate chambers. Theories of public management suggest that the use of structural hierarchies, especially when such hierarchies can create stability, is key to generating success for the organization (O'Toole and Meier 1999, 2003; Meier and O'Toole Jr. 2002). The congressional system of legislative organization serves this exact purpose in the policy process through two levels of structural hierarchy. Congressional committees were initiated and are maintained as tools for the chamber to manage the congressional workload by delegating policymaking responsibility for specific (although often broad) issue jurisdictions in order to more efficiently and effectively achieve institutional policymaking goals (Fenno 1973; Mayhew 1974; Krehbiel 1991; Deering and Smith 1997; Schneider 2007a, 2007b). Subcommittees exist to serve the individual full committees with the same purpose of responsibility delegation that committees provide the chamber

(Deering 1982; Deering and Smith 1997; Schneider 2007a, 2007b). As is established by theories of the policy process, being in controlling how the "problem space" is defined can ultimately determine whose agenda will succeed (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones 2001; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). In adapting to the challenges posed by the complex nature of the policy environment, committees and subcommittees must accomplish tasks identified by scholars of public management that are key to organizational success. Committees and subcommittees must "buffer" Congress "from environmental influences" and also "exploit opportunities in the" policymaking "environment" (O'Toole and Meier 1999). Research on decision making suggests that an adaptive system, which I argue the Congress is, must process information effectively to organize and identify the information that is to be relevant to the problem space and the attributes that will receive attention (Jones 2001). When committees do this, it can create winnable situation in the complex and multidimensional policy environment. When asked to describe the role of committees and subcommittees, one majority staff member emphatically noted that "we [committees] determine what goes in and what comes out of the process. We decide what gets voted on by the [chamber]" (Staff Interviews 2009). This quote is representative of a clear consensus among interview respondents that legislation only moves with the consent of the relevant committees, otherwise legislative proposals are nothing more than political fodder (Staff Interviews 2009).

I argue that the committee system serves to manage the competing demands that bombard Capitol Hill from the encroaching information environment to maintain order in, and control over, the policy process. As attacks from the information environment

encroach on Congress, the committee system provides Congress a large scale set of receptor sites than can not only absorb this information, but also can send information signals or feedback into the information environment, relieving pressure and increasing management and control capabilities within the national policy realm. If this is managed effectively, the institution will react appropriately and assertively to achieve institutional goals. In sense, if the committee system manages the information environment appropriately it should be able to take advantage of, or even create "policy windows" in the essence of Kingdon's (1984) work.

Within Congress, the committee system can filter the information environment, signaling to the internal environment and the external environment not only what issues are on the agenda, but also what perspectives will be deemed relevant for the policy discussion and which perspectives will be left out. Thereby buffering the institution from the endogenous and exogenous demands of the policy environment and taking advantage of opportunities provided by the environment to achieve institutional goals.

This is illustrated in Figure One. In Figure One, Congress sits at the center of informational demands within a complex and active policymaking environment facing exogenous and endogenous demands which encroach on the Capitol as information in various forms (as discussed above). The committee system is able to serve as a buffer or filter, keeping some encroaching demands out and allowing other into the policymaking process. As seen in Figure One, congressional committees provide the opportunity to receive, filter, and give feedback to the surrounding information environment. As the barrage of information from the various competing demands bear down, committees and their offices serve as resources for mitigating and controlling the

onslaught – well beyond what individual member offices or the floor could handle. This is why they were created (Deering and Smith 1997), to serve as policy shops beyond the capacity of the institution otherwise. An example of this is seen when not only the personal staffers of not only committee and subcommittee chairman but rank and file members direct groups or other agents seeking policy influence on a particular issue to committee staffers for meetings or communication (Staff Interviews 2009). During my time on the Hill as a committee staffer this was common practice. Personal staffs would filter groups and constituents in our direction when they had policy concerns specific to our jurisdiction. This tendency is not only a factor of policy capacity of course, but also the priorities of individual rank and file members. Research demonstrates that individual member offices tend to prioritize access and attention to constituency requests above interest and advocacy groups (Hall and Wayman 1990; Chin, Bond and Geva 2000), however committee staffs respond frequently to group requests on behalf of personal offices (Staff Interviews 2009), ultimately filtering policy information flowing in from the surrounding environment. Policy advisors, of which committee offices are filled, say they consider organized constituencies such as interest groups and/or advocacy research organizations as a source of the most trust-worthy and high quality information (Hall and Deardorff 2006; Staff Interviews 2009). Thus this practice seems to fit into the theoretical mold I am proposing. Additionally, personal staff would consult with our committee when their member wanted to introduce legislation under its jurisdiction, especially when they were truly seeking to move legislation as opposed to simply introducing it for messaging or credit claiming purposes, as members are known to do (Mayhew 1974).

Although I propose a common theoretical purpose for committees; each committee will face different levels of demands from the information environment at different times. Thus the amount of activity spent by committees managing the information environment should vary systematically based on factors that theoretical and empirical research have demonstrated regarding demands on and influence in Congress. The amount of time committees and subcommittees spend processing information from the policy environment will also depend on the goals being pursued. Is the purpose to fulfill committee goals, or goals of the institution, or both? How controversial is the problem and the proposed solution? How complex is the policy environment regarding the issue at hand? In other words, the goals of the organization and the nature of the environment it is facing will influence the when, where, and how much management activity takes place. Yet much committee activity takes place behind the scenes, such as staff meetings and other office tasks and that are not empirically accessible. Markups are also difficult to track as committees have different individual rules about recording votes, posting votes, and the accessibility of transcripts. Empirical data on congressional hearings however, is publicly available and constitutes the largest portion of on the record committee activity.

Hearings as an Information Management Tool

Hearings serve as the most public form of policy work. Unlike markups or behind-closed-doors meetings involving members or staff, the record and transcript of committee and subcommittee hearings are easily available to the public (Heitshusen 2007; Davis 2008). Additionally, hearings are one of the few occasions where members of Congress are together in a room, listening to and/or participating in the discussion

regarding certain details of a policy issue for more than fifteen minutes at a time. Although the amount of attention received from, and influence a hearing may have, on individual members of Congress will certainly vary, hearings can certainly influence the public debate over an issue (Gandy 1982; Gerber and Jackson 1993). Hearings are purposeful events, preceded by extensive time and preparation by committee and personal staff that can dominate staff working time (Staff Interviews 2009). When asked about how the perspectives that will be displayed in hearings are determined, committee staff discussed the extensive time spent of background research and the exploration of competing perspectives being displayed by interest groups, congressional members, and other policy experts (Staff Interviews 2009).

I would argue that seen from the view of staff and members in totality, hearings are the essence of committee work as they provide a public presentation of extensive background research on policy issues. Multiple perspectives can be explored, questioned, and debated for hours, and sometimes days at a time. Hearings can reinforce, change, and create anew the policy positions of members. Hearings serve as an effective tool for the management of information in the complex environment of competing informational demands for two primary reasons: they allow committees and subcommittees to visibly collect information, and they allow committees and subcommittees to signal to the exogenous and endogenous environments what issues and information are relevant or important.

Political scientists often consider congressional hearings to be "dog and pony shows" because they are to some extent pre-planned and scripted (Baumgartner, Jones and MacLeod 2000; Davidson and Oleszek 2004). This however, is an inaccurate

perspective. It is true that committee staff hand select witnesses with some expectation of the policy perspective they hold, and that witness testimonies must be submitted in advance, typically at least 24 hours before the hearing (Davis 2007a; Staff Interviews 2009). But, the questions members will ask witnesses and the corresponding witness responses are not scripted (Davis 2007b, 2007c, 2008; Palmer 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Staff Interviews 2009). Additionally, the extent to which members and staff read the material distributed prior to a hearing is inconsistent at best. Hearings are informative for members, their staffs, and the chamber, whether directly as staffers of members who are not on the host committee often attend hearings, or indirectly as many members view committee members as the expert cues for their policy decisions (Davis 2007b, 2007c, 2008; Palmer 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Staff Interviews 2009). I argue that the planned nature of hearings does not make them "dog and pony shows," but is instead the characteristic of hearings that makes them a way for Congress to use committees to manage and control the information flow within the complex policy environment by signaling what issues and what perspectives are important and deserving of Congress' attention, while filtering out the others.

Any decision to take action, especially in the realm of public policy, carries with it an implicit or explicit value judgment: that this topic and/or perspective is worthy of consideration by formal government institutions (Heclo 1978; Bosso 1987; Baumgartner 1989; Hansen 1991; Jenkins-Smith, St. Clair and Woods 1991; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Wood 2006; Worsham 2006). This is indeed the case for congressional hearings. A past communications study found that 85% of all media coverage of Congress, excluding campaigns, involves

hearings (Gandy 1982). In my work and discussions with congressional this seemed to be expected, as hearings seem to be often intended to mobilize support through press coverage and attention for certain issues and perspectives by filtering those that are not displayed. When asked specifically about the purpose of hearings, many staff members noted the signaling power committees have in the political environment. One majority committee staff member noted that "some advocacy groups will not consider congressional attention to a policy issue or perspective to be serious until the *right* committee or subcommittee holds a hearing on the issue. Hearings held by *others* are considered exploration, but not taken as a serious sign legislative action" (Staff Interviews 2009). A minority staff member expressed a similar perspective claiming that "we [the minority] won't take issues seriously unless the right people [majority chairmen] are moving" (Staff Interviews 2009). Thus, hearings not only inform the Congress, but signal to the exogenous actors in the policy environment which pieces of information have been deemed relevant and what policy issues and perspectives will be or are being considered.

Longitudinal trends also provide evidence that hearings function as a way for committees to publicly manage information flow. Both anecdotally and systematically, scholars accept that the congressional workload has increased (Hall 1996), and that policy issues have grown increasingly complex over time (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Kingdon 1984; Hardin 1998, 2002; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). As seen in Figure Two, the use of hearings has become increasingly common within Congress. Additionally, the use of subcommittees for hosting congressional hearings has increased as well (See Figure Three). Just a quick look at these graphs shows the extensive

amount of time Congress spends on hearings. Looking at Figure Two, the House tends to hold upwards of 1500 hearings in a given Congress, while the Senate tends to hold around 1000 hearings. Assuming Congress spent an average of four days a week in session over 104 weeks (two years, the length of a Congress) that comes to an easy average of at least 2 hearings a day in each chamber of Congress.[2] Considering the extensive time members spend on the floor and in caucus, hearings clearly make up an exceptional amount of congressional activity. According to Figure Three, nearly seventy percent of this time is spent in subcommittee, while around forty percent of that time is spent in subcommittee in the Senate. Even though there appears to be a slight drop-off in hearing activity during recent Congresses, especially in the Senate, this still represents an immense amount of time in hearings and an extensive use of subcommittees for hearings, especially considering the extensive time constraints facing members and staff (Hall 1996).

(Insert Figure Two About Here)

(Insert Figure Three About Here)

Hearings appear to not only be a theoretically sound place of action regarding the management of information by congressional committees, but also an empirically viable source for analysis of theoretical expectations regarding how, when and why committees manage information within the complex environment surrounding Congress. Hearings are on the record policy activity. Opinion, problem definitions, evidence, and solutions are discussed on the congressional record and often in front of television cameras. When discussing the purpose of hearings, staff members frequently

[2] Four days a week, across 52 weeks a year, for two years would add up to 416 working days per Congress. This is a generous overestimation considering the Congress takes multiple month long recesses and often only works a 3 day week in Chamber.

noted the purposeful nature of expressing specific policy positions and solutions on the record, noting particularly the importance of anything on the policy agenda that is discussed on the record. As one majority staff member stated, "hearings are an 'on the record' policy discussion in an 'off the record city.' Anything we [congressional actors] are willing to put on the record is significant" (Staff Interviews 2009).

Managing the flow of information within the policy debate through hearings allows successful committees to filter the complex policy environment in order to best pursue and achieve the goals of committees and the Congress. Committee and subcommittees provide Congress the management infrastructure needed to perform such a large task. The following section provides a concise overview of the theory developed above.

Theory Overview

The United States Congress must contend with a vast and complex policymaking environment that presents a variety of informational demands that can threaten the cohesiveness of the process. The committees system provides the only available infrastructure for Congress to manage the information flow. I argue that through the strategic use of hearings, committees can successfully manage information flow in the complex policy environment. Through this process committees are able to respond to competing demands simultaneously, all while pursuing the institutional goals of the committee and/or the Congress within the national policy debate.

This theory of information management in Congress suggests that committees manage the wealth of information flow within and around the congressional policymaking environment through information signaling via congressional hearings.

The endogenous and exogenous demands converging on Congress are vast and complex, requiring the Congress to manage the information flow in order to avoid having the process be overwhelmed, especially if the Congress has a preferred solution that represents "good public policy." The abundance of information must be managed in order to avoid losing credibility within the policymaking process for appearing not to incorporate competing opinions in a representational democracy, and to keep the debate on Congress' desired terms to avoid a hijacking of the process. Because both exogenous and endogenous sources of information represent the various competing demands facing the institution, Congress must systematically respond to these factors to achieve success. The committee system, delegated the responsibility of expertise and jurisdiction over "individual" policy issues and management of the legislative process, serves as the entities able to respond to these demands first.

As the entity that most fully deals with policy issues on a constant basis, unlike personal offices, committees must maintain control over the policy environment in order to achieve policy goals. Constantly aware, or made aware, of information circulating around the policy environment regarding policy's issues of jurisdiction, committees must read and react to demands strategically in order to conduct work on its own terms. Hearings provided committees the opportunity to publicly demonstrate that it is on top of an issue receiving robust attention or even break an issue receiving scant attention. In a hearing, committees publicly display carefully chosen pieces of information. Minority views are always incorporated, although less prominently, and the opinions and information displayed are diverse. The diversity however, never represents all possible positions by demanders in the environment. Hearings therefore,

signal to the exogenous and endogenous demanders what policy issues are on the agenda and what perspectives will be entertained for problem definition and solution. Additionally, this necessarily signals which perspectives and issues are excluded. This behavior should be predictable based on existing congressional research identifying a variety of ways demands facing Congress, its members, and thus its committees increase and decrease.

As information in the policy environment reveals the multitude, or lack of, competing demands a committee faces, it must necessarily increase, or decrease, its activity in managing the information. Such demands can mostly fit under the broad categories of institutional, more macro-level, and representational, more micro-level, demands. As such demands accumulate the complexity of the policy environment increases. Thus, committees will become more active in the managing of information. A more complex environment with more demands requires increased responses to maintain structure and control. The committee system provides the infrastructure to respond, negotiating the policy environment on Congress' terms.

My theory of information management in Congress provides testable hypotheses regarding institutional behavior when applied to committee activity. This dissertation utilizes the theoretical framework presented above to examine when and why committees and subcommittees become most active in managing the information flow of the policy environment. Through hearings, committees have the opportunity to manage the policy conversation to navigate the murky waters that are national policymaking. The following section provides a broad overview of this dissertation.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation explores how the House and Senate committee systems, committees and subcommittees, respond to competing institutional and representational demands facing the institution and its members through managing information flow with four empirical tests of my theory presented above across three chapters. Chapter 2 examines when and why do committees publicly manage information, along with when and why do committees delegate the management of information to subcommittees. Chapter 3 explores which subcommittees are most likely to conduct information management activities and why. Chapter 4 looks at how the information management activity of committees and subcommittees facilitate policy success. Finally, the concluding chapter discusses the implications of findings regarding the broad themes that manifest throughout this project.

Chapter 2 examines the argument that committees will systematically respond to the surrounding environment when specific demands increase. In analyzing committee hearing data from the 104th-108th Congresses, I find that both increasing institutional and representational demands predict higher levels of information management by committees. Additionally, these same demands also increase the likelihood that a committee will utilize its subcommittees more often in this process. Notably, it is within subcommittee activity where interesting differences between the House and Senate begin to appear and will be discusses throughout each analysis. The findings demonstrate that committees act to simultaneously address challenges and demands encroaching from a variety sources such as organized constituencies, partisan concerns and institutional needs. This is distinct from the common approach to legislative organization arguing that committee activity serves distinct distributive, informative, or

partisan needs at different times, in different committees. The examination of subcommittee activity yields similar findings.

Using subcommittee level analysis, Chapter 3 examines when subcommittees are most likely to be active in the information management process. The findings suggest that subcommittees respond to the same institutional and representational demands as their parent committees. This demonstrates that subcommittees truly represent a structural hierarchy under committees to assist in the management of information and the structuring of the policy process. Subcommittee influence seems more predictable than the small amount of existing research suggests.

Moving deeper into explaining the effects of information management on policymaking and legislative success, the final empirical chapter examines how information management activity by subcommittees influences committee policy outcomes. Based on theories in public management, committees provide Congress, and subcommittees provide committees, the resources necessary to facilitate policy success. Through the examination of committee jurisdictions, bill passage, and lawmaking Chapter 4 provides support for the expectation developed by my theory of information management in Congress. Based on these findings, it appears that information management through structural hierarchies does in fact promote policy success for committees. Along with empirical findings presented in Chapters 2 and 3, there appears to be consistent support for my theory of information management in Congress.

In concluding the dissertation I discuss two broader themes: the committee system's ability to respond to competing demands simultaneously and the policy relevance of committee, and especially subcommittee, activity that is ignored by more

traditional studies of legislative organization. Regarding these issues, I argue that most committees must respond to a bevy of institutional and representational demands throughout the policy process to maintain control over the policy agenda in a hostile environment. Additionally, I argue that subcommittees play a key role in the policymaking process by providing management resources that can structure and stabilize information flow, allowing committees to maintain control of the policy agenda and achieve desired outcomes.

Figure 1. Information Flow in the Complex Policy Environment

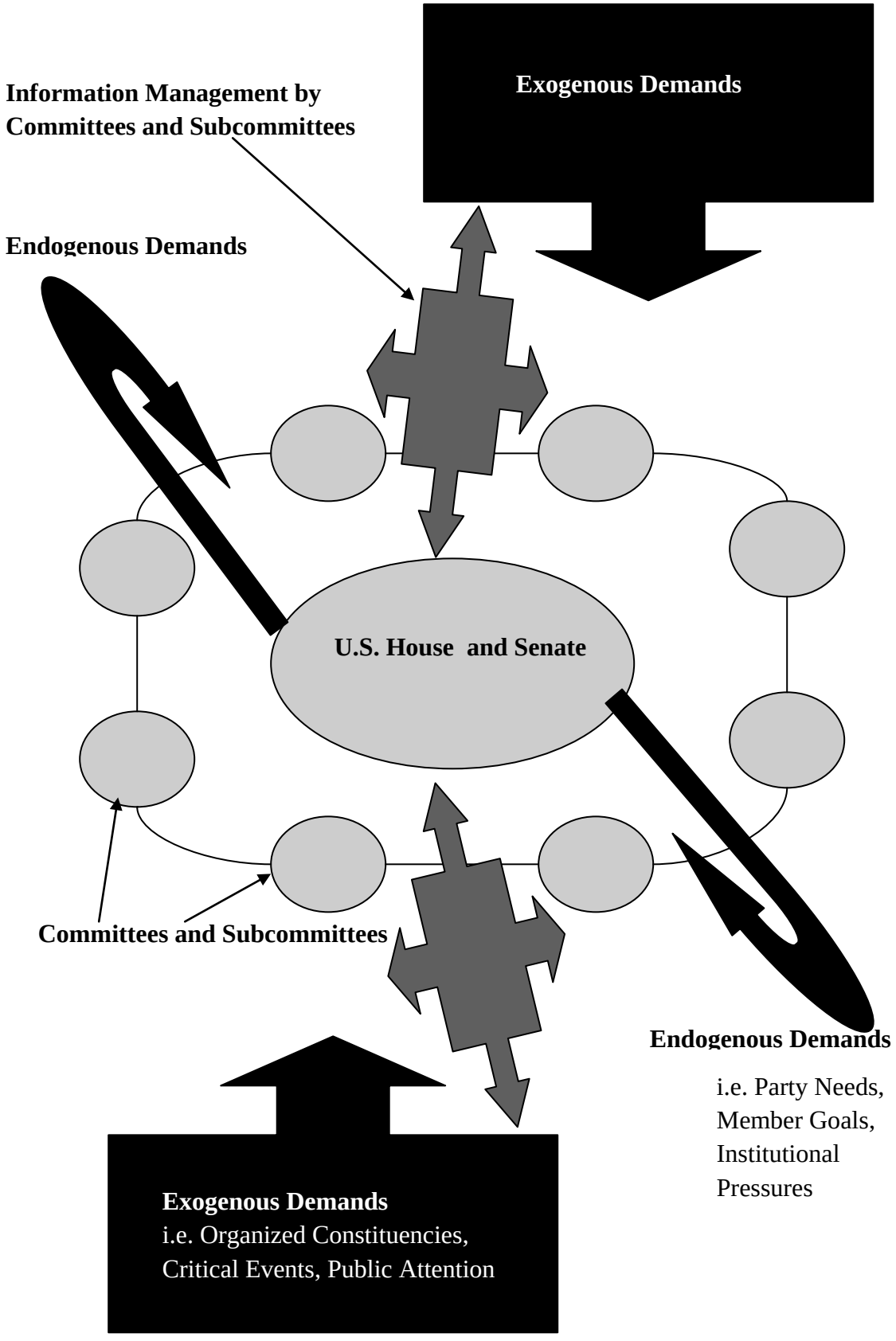


Figure 2. Total Hearings in the House and Senate, 79th-108th Congresses (1945-2004)

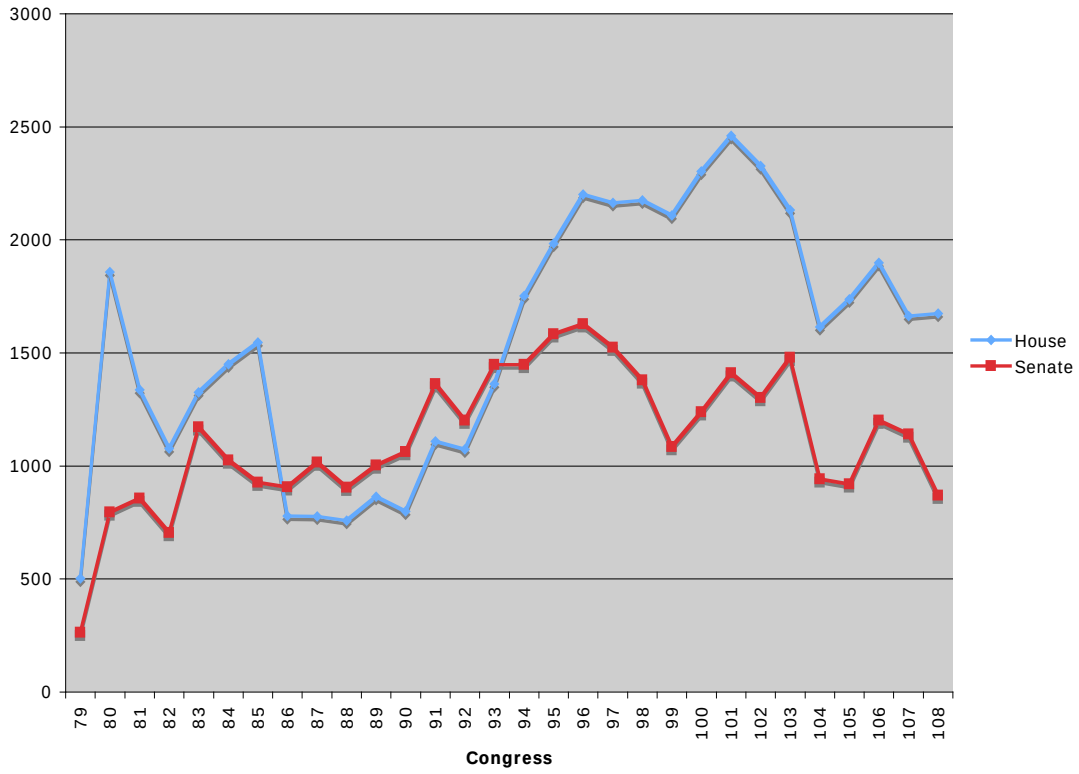
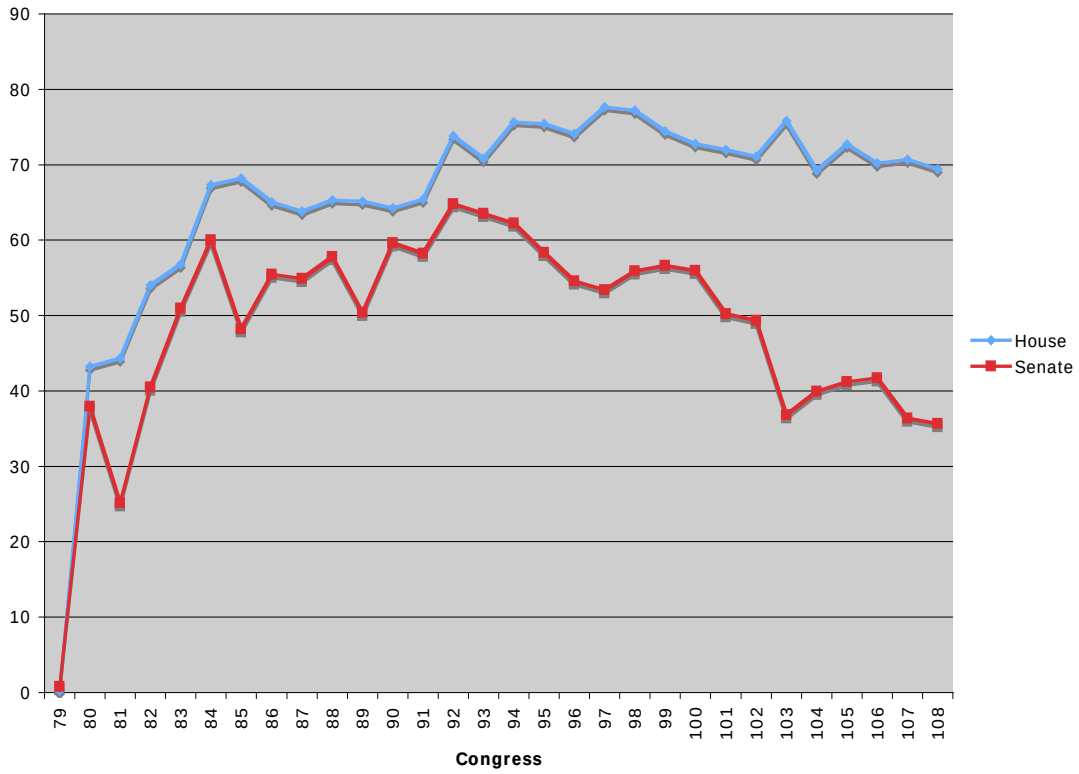


Figure 3. Percentage of Hearings Held by Subcommittees, 79th-108th Congresses (1945-2004)



Chapter 2: Committee Information Management Activity

In order to empirically examine and test the proposed theory of information management in congressional policymaking proposed in the preceding chapter, one must trace and test the theory throughout the long story that is the policy process. From the background-planning and mobilization, stages to the implementation and evaluation of policy, the policymaking process is an arduous empirical reality. To fully understand and examine how the committee system provides Congress with an infrastructure to manage information in order to make public policy we must test the theory at different points. Two questions must first be asked. What factors relate to increases in information management activity by congressional committees? And when are full committees more likely to delegate information management activity to its' structural hierarchy of subcommittees? Addressing these questions first will help to understand what environmental factors make information management activity more likely, and paint a picture of when and why a committee is willing to yield this responsibility to its hierarchical subunits, subcommittees. This chapter addresses these research questions.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Congress developed its committee system in order to cope with the various simultaneous and competing demands it faces as the home of national policymaking (Deering and Smith 1997; Schneider 2007a, 2007b). My theory of information management suggests that as Congress is bombarded with various forms of information, the committee system provides Congress the resources to manage information flow and centralize the policymaking debate, when successful. Committees are able to condense the demands facing the respective 435 individual members of the House and 100 members of the Senate, and the institution at large, into a manageable

institutional process. Through the infrastructure to manage information that committees provide, these competing demands are juggled simultaneously to bring order and structure to a process that may otherwise dissolve chaotically under diverse pressures.

As Figure One illustrated; the information management provided by committees serves a filtering and signaling purpose. Such activity sorts the information in the surrounding policy environment and sends signals back to the surrounding environment, as well as those inside the institution, regarding what policy topics are on the policy agenda and what perspectives on policy action related to those topics will be deemed a relevant part of the policymaking process. In general, if my theory of information management in Congressional policymaking holds, there should be systematic variation in the ups and downs of information management activity by committees directly related to the demands individual committees face. The following section discusses the factors known to influence the policy process and generates hypotheses regarding how these factors influence which committees are more likely to publicly manage information via congressional hearings.

Managing Simultaneous, Competing Informational Demands

Often discussed in terms of electoral concerns for individual members, parties, and occasionally goals of the institution as a whole; Congress faces a variety of competing demands. As disaggregated subunits of the individual chambers and specialized aggregations of individual members; committees face these same demands in different combinations and weights. Existing scholarship in the subfields of both congressional institutions and representation provide many expectations regarding how such demands influence member decision making. Because hearings can provide a

unique mechanism for responding to various demands at the same time, one should expect this activity to systematically vary along with the level of demand generated by different sources. Generally such demands facing Congress and its members can be placed in two categories: Representational and Institutional.

Representational Demands

The representational demands facing members, and thereby the institution, concern the democratic-representational relationship between a member's electoral constituency, or in the case of the institution, the nation as a whole. A foundational question in representational scholarship focuses on defining what exactly constitutes a member's "constituency" and in turn which "constituency" political representatives are beholden to (Pennock 1952). Perspectives have ranged from the notion that political representatives should make decision based on what they think is best (Burke 1774; Eulau et al. 1959), to decisions that fall in line with the immediate electoral constituency's preferences (Pitkin 1967; Wahlke 1971), or should fall in line with what the overall country's preferences (Burke 1774; Weissberg 1978). In terms of congressional representation, micro level studies focus on member responsiveness and provision for electoral constituencies, while macro-institutional perspectives focus on overall policy change and national policy preference (Mackuen, Erikson and Stimson 2002). Committees exist to address the needs of the institution at large to respond to national demands, yet as aggregates of individual members, committees must deal with micro- and macro-level demands.

Possibly the largest portion of literature on legislative organization argues that committees serve as a tool for individual members to satisfy particular electoral

constituencies with policies that provide substantive benefits to these "demand side" actors (Mayhew 1974; Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Adler and Lapinski 1997). Empirical evidence suggests that in some cases members seek to obtain membership on committees with jurisdictions over an issue of particular importance to their geographic constituency (Adler and Lapinski 1997), acquire earmarks for their constituents (Evans 2004), and "vote their district" (Ansolabehere, Brady and Fiorina 1992) in order increase electoral security. However, little work explores how committees deal with aggregations of these demands.

In reality, although "pork barrel" politics, earmark distribution, and "log-rolling" for votes could occur within the committee system, arguing that this is the purpose of committees appears to be an over-simplification of the system's purpose. Obviously not all members can or will receive the particularistic benefits they want or at all times; not to mention members (such as Senator Coburn, Oklahoma) who are infamous for their unwillingness to pursue particularistic benefits. Of course members seek to be active in policymaking that earns them kudos from their constituency (Mayhew 1974; Adler and Lapinski 1999), but committee activity provides members another way to log-roll or credit claim or demonstrate democratic responsibility in policymaking. By displaying perspectives or asking questions from, or that are representative of, their constituency's view point on the record, members can point to earnest representation of their constituency (Krehbiel 1991; Esterling 2007). Committees use hearings to manage such informational demands.

Interest groups place comparable demands on members and the institution. In fact, interest groups can be accurately described as organized constituencies (Hardin

2002; Esterling 2007). Advocates, lobbyists, and policy groups all flood the halls of Congress with information promoting various causes, policies, and policy goals (Hall and Deardorff 2006). Often the concerns and wishes of these groups seem to play a role in the process and are even used to subsidize congressional staffs with resources such as policy research or polling (Hall and Deardorff 2006). Such organized constituencies desire that "their issues" make the policy agenda and that their positions regarding problem definition and solution be included in the policy discussion. As committees manage these various influxes of information, they are able to signal to these groups whether they will be accommodated or not. Additionally, through the information management that culminates in hearings; multiple groups are able to be satisfied (or dissatisfied) at one time as opposed to dealing with each organized constituency individually. Therefore, as committees face higher levels of demand by organized constituency interests, one should expect that the level of information activity would naturally increase. This leads to my first hypothesis regarding the two research questions presented above:

Hypothesis 1: *Committees facing higher levels of organized constituency demand will be more active in the management of information than other committees. Additionally, due to the increased demand on limited full committee time, higher levels of organized constituent demand will also relate greater delegation of information management responsibility to subcommittees.*

Particularistic constituencies are not the only concern of members from an institutional perspective. Crafting good public policy that represents the will of the nation is also important from an individual, institutional, and electoral perspective

(Mayhew 1974; Krehbiel 1991; Stimson, Mackuen and Erikson 1995). Certain classic theories of representation suggest that political representatives do not necessarily consider what is best for their geographic constituency but what is best for the constituency of the entire institution (Eulau et al. 1959). In the case of Congress, that constituency would be the United States of America at large. Empirical work suggests that at least from an institutional perspective, this may very well be the case. Macro-level analyses suggest that policy changes and policymaking appear to mirror changes in and the structure of public opinion (Monroe 1979; Stimson, Mackuen and Erikson 1995; Mackuen, Erikson and Stimson 2002). Empirical work also shows that focusing events or general increases in media attention to an issue result in greater amounts of congressional activity on an issue or topic (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). From an informational demand standpoint, this suggests that as the public becomes more interested in an issue or as issues gain national attention, committees dealing with such issues will face a greater need to manage information flow in the policy environment. This leads to a second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: *As issues become increasingly salient, information management activity regarding the issue will increase. Additionally, increasing salience will also relate to higher levels of delegation by full committees to subcommittees due to resource strain.*

Beyond representational demands, committees must also fill the congressional need to cope with an overwhelming workload (Fenno 1973). The bi-cameral institution of 535 members produces an enormous amount of legislation that must either be ignored or considered. Additionally, parties have become an institutionalized influence

in the policy process with unique goals and demands. These factors create a set of institutional demands that committees must also manage.

Institutional Demands

For decades outsiders have become increasingly aware that members of Congress (and their staff) face an exceptionally full schedule with an immense workload (Fenno 1973; Hall 1996). More recent scholarship adds emphasis on the need for parties to influence the policy agenda and outcomes (Cox and McCubbins 2005), which also produces institutional demands. From a policymaking standpoint, the same can be said for the institution. In fact, the diversity and density of the policy demands the Congress faces is a commonly accepted reasoning for why the institution developed the committee system (Fenno 1973; Mayhew 1974; Deering 1982; Krehbiel 1991; Deering and Smith 1997; Schneider 2007a, 2007b). Indeed, there is too much legislation introduced and too many policy issues to address for each member to be well versed on all topics and the institution able to address each proposal (Krehbiel 1991; Krutz 2005). The extensiveness of information demands created by the necessity to deal with nearly countless policy issues and thousands of introduced pieces of legislation must be managed somehow; committees provide the capacity to manage this information.

In terms of policymaking; the committee system is the central working place. All bills are referred to a committee. Committees are home to a wealth of policy expertise and research collection. Committees often dominate bill drafting and management, as well as providing services to member offices regarding legislative language or policy education (Schneider 2007a, 2007b). For example, when asked

about the role and purpose of congressional committees, one high ranking member of leadership staff pointedly stated that "committees do the policy" (Staff Interviews 2009). Thus the legislative process necessitates increases in the information management activity of committees for members and the institution at large. Increases in legislation or policy issues on the agenda create increases in policy activity both inside and outside of Congress, thus increasing the informational demands facing the institution. This suggests that as the legislative demands a committee faces increase, there will be a greater need for the internal and external signaling produced by the information management process; producing a third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: *As the amount of legislation referred to a committee increases, so will its information management activity. Increases in legislative responsibility will also increase the need for full committees to delegate information management to subcommittees as well.*

Sheer legislative demands not only influence the need for committees to manage information, but the diversity of those demands does as well. Not only are committees working to satisfy the needs of the chamber (Fenno 1973; Krehbiel 1991), but individual members who makeup committees have an interest in answering to the demands of the two major parties as well (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). While the committees as a whole provide management capacity to the needs of the chamber (Deering 1982; Deering and Smith 1997; Schneider 2007a, 2007b), the individual party coalitions within committees and subcommittees also work to serve the needs of the party caucus (Rohde 1991; Hurwitz, Noiles and Rohde 2001). These

separate, yet simultaneous institutional demands present distinct challenges for committees.

The foundation of the traditional informational view of legislative organization argues that legislative bodies create trustworthy sub-units to work on specific policy issues in order to reduce policy uncertainty via the creation of expertise (Krehbiel 1991; Battista 2009). Under this model, the institution creates committees that are representative of the parent chamber (Krehbiel 1991; Battista 2009). Thus, as the median voter of a committee or subcommittee is more similar to the median voter of the parent chamber, a committee is more likely to provide legitimate informational benefits to the chamber (Krehbiel 1991; Battista 2009). This provides a fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: *Committees that are more ideologically similar to the parent chamber will be more active in publicly managing information. Similarly, subcommittees which are more ideologically similar to the parent committee will be more active in managing information for committees.*

In terms of party coalitions within committees seeking to respond to party demands, it is unclear how this could influence the management of information. Theories that emphasize the need for parties to maintain discipline and ideological agreement in order to preserve electoral and legislative success (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005) suggest that homogenous party coalitions would be more likely to be active managing information in order to control the agenda and advertise party views. In terms of signaling, homogenous party coalitions would reflect more common views within the committee allowing for greater control over the policy positions entering into the public debate. However, the suggestion that committees and

subcommittees facilitate the incorporation of competing interests and perspectives into the process (Fenno 1962; Jones 1962) generates a different expectation. Under this model, committees with ideological diversity within its membership should be more active managing information flow due to the increased demands of incorporation. This suggests a basic fifth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: *The ideological diversity of party coalitions within committees and subcommittees is related to the amount of information management activity conducted by a committee, and the amount delegated to subcommittees.*

To test these hypotheses, I examine how the hearing activity of committees in both the House and Senate are impacted by competing representational and institutional demands across four Congresses. The following sections describe and present the statistical tests.

Data and Methods

In order to empirically test these hypotheses, I utilize an original dataset consisting of all congressional hearing activity from the 105th through the 108th Congress to conduct two separate statistical analyses for both the House and Senate. The dataset was compiled utilizing a variety of primary and secondary sources to create committee level aggregations in order to operationalize the competing demands described above. The following sections discuss variable inclusion and measurement.

Dependent Variables: Public Information Collection and Display

The dependent variables for the analysis are the amount of committee hearing activity and the amount of subcommittee hearing activity, respectively, for each committee, within each chamber. *Committee hearing activity* is measured as the

percentage of all congressional hearings held under the guise of individual committees for each Congress, including hearings held by full committees and their respective subcommittees. *Subcommittee activity* is measured as the percent of committee hearing activity that takes place at the subcommittee level, during each Congress.[3] As described in the opening chapter, hearings provide committees the opportunity to structure the information incorporated into policymaking debates by strategically choosing what information to display and what to exclude (Staff Interviews 2009).

As seen in Tables One and Two, from the 105th through the 108th Congresses, individual committees, on average during each Congress, conducted slightly more than five-percent of all hearings in both the House and Senate. No House committee accounted for more than eighteen-percent, and no Senate committee accounting for more than fourteen-percent of hearings in an individual Congress. Meanwhile, in the House, subcommittees hosted an average of more than sixty-one percent, and no more than ninety-nine percent of hearings under an individual committee. In the Senate, subcommittees hosted considerably less hearings, averaging only slightly more than twenty-seven percent of hearings under individual committees, with a maximum of ninety-five percent.

(Insert Table One About Here)

(Insert Table Two About Here)

Independent and Control Variables

The independent variables included in this analysis attempt to capture the competing representational and institutional demands that increase the complexity of

[3] The data used here were originally collected by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, with the support of National Science Foundation grant number SBR 9320922, and were distributed through the Center for American Politics and Public Policy at the University of Washington and/or the Department of Political Science at Penn State University. Neither NSF nor the original collectors of the data bear any responsibility for the analysis reported here.

the policymaking environment. Table One and Table Two present the descriptive statistics for the House and Senate models, respectively.

In terms of representational demands, organized constituency influence is captured as the sum total of all *PAC contributions*[4] received by members of each committee during the given two-year election cycle of the corresponding Congress.[5] To ease interpretation, the total is divided by one-thousand. *Hypothesis 1* suggests that increased PAC contributions will relate to increases in hearing activity, and an increase in subcommittee activity.

The second representational demand is the political salience of policy issues addressed by committees. *Issue salience* is measured as the proportion of total hearings, within each chamber, dedicated to individual topics. Issue topics are identified as within the Policy Agendas Project twenty-one category issue codes, assigned to each hearing. To produce an aggregate measure for each committee, I calculate the average issue salience of all hearings held by each committee. *Hypothesis 2* predicts that increases in the salience of issues addressed by committees will relate to increases in committee and subcommittee hearing activity.

Turning to institutional demands, the *legislative workload* of a committee is measured as the number of bills referred to the committee in a given Congress. The number of bill referrals received by each committee was collected through The Library of Congress website, accessible at www.thomas.gov. *Hypothesis 3* predicts that

[4] Data for PAC contributions received by individual members during each election cycle were purchased from the Data Store at OpenSecrets.org.
[5] Committee membership information is acquired from Charles Stewart III and Jonathan Woon. Congressional Committee Assignments, 103rd to 110th Congresses, 1993--2007: House and Senate, July 12, 2005 (http://web.mit.edu/17.251/www/data_page.html#2).

increases in a committee's legislative workload will relate to increases in committee and subcommittee hearing activity.

Hypothesis 4, based on the informational perspective of legislative organization, suggests that committees which are more ideologically similar to the parent chamber, and subcommittees that are more ideologically similar to the parent committee, will hold more hearings. To measure *ideological distance*, I utilize Poole and Rosenthal's (NOMINATE 2008) DW-Nominate[6] scores. For the models of committee hearing activity, I calculate the absolute distance between the chamber median voter and the full-committee median voter. For subcommittee hearing activity models, the absolute distance between the full-committee median voter and the average of all sub-committee median voters is used.[7] The values can range from zero to one, with higher values representing a greater ideological difference between members. Because *Hypothesis 4* predicts increases in hearing activity to corresponding with smaller ideological distance, I expect a negative relationship to the dependent variable.

As the final direct test of a hypothesis discussed above, the ideological diversity of party coalitions within committees is captured as the *ideological heterogeneity* of each party coalition. Ideological heterogeneity is measured as the standard deviation of member DW-nominate scores, which range from extreme liberal (1) to extremely conservative (-1), for each party coalition, within each committee. Higher values signify a more diverse party coalition, while lower values signals a more ideologically homogenous coalition. *Hypothesis 5* predicts a significant relationship for this variable, however without specification to direction.

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[6] Data acquired from www.voteview.com.

[7] Subcommittee membership information is taken from *CQ's Politics in America* for the 105th, 106th, 107th and 108th Congresses (197-2003).

In addition to the independent variables included to directly test the five primary hypotheses presented above, a number of variables are included that may relate to committee hearing activity in order to provide statistical control: the spread of issues addressed by committee hearings, the majority/minority party ratio on the committee, the "type" of committee, the presence of divided government, total number of hearings held by all committees in the chamber, and number of hearings held by individual committees.

The *issue spread* of committee hearing activity is included because committees are not limited by jurisdiction, or any other written rule regarding what issues they may address in a hearing. This measure is calculated using a Herfindahl index capturing the spread of policy issues covered by committee hearings. The Herfindahl index is calculated as the squared sum of the proportion of hearings for each policy topic held by an individual committee. The index captures how spread out or how concentrated a committees hearing activity is, in terms of policy issues, as identified by the Policy Agendas Project. Higher values represent concentration on fewer issues, while lower values represent a greater spread of attention.

Party ratio is a simple measure to control for committees that are "stacked" from a partisan perspective, as this may influence the structure of policy debates. The partisan balance of each individual committee is calculated by dividing the number of minority party members by the number of majority party members, yielding values that may range from zero (representing the presence of zero minority members) to one (representing the presence of one minority party committee member for each majority party member).

Committee type is included to control for the persistence of committee typologies within studies of legislative organization to label committees to match the tripartite goal structure of members within three categories: Constituency, Prestige, and Policy (Fenno 1974; Mayhew 1974). Because there is such a vast acceptance of these committee labels within empirical studies of House committees, I control for this norm. Dummy variables are included in the House analyses for the committees traditionally viewed as prestige committees (Ways and Means; Budget; and Appropriations) and constituency committees (Agriculture; Armed Services; Resources; Public Works and Transportation; and Science).

Due to the lack of Senate studies examining legislative organization, the smaller number of committees, and the greater overlap of committee jurisdiction, no such controls are included in the Senate analyses.

To control for inter-institutional factors, the partisan relationship between the President and Congress is included in the analyses. Because hearings are a commonly accepted part of the agenda setting process in political science (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) and within Congress (Staff Interviews 2009), and empirical evidence suggests a larger agenda during divided government (Shipan 2006), a measure of divided party government between the President and Congress is included. *Divided government* is measure as one when the President and the chamber are of opposing parties, and zero otherwise.

In order to control for possible effects endogenous to the nature of congressional activity, the *total hearings* held by each chamber within an individual Congress is controlled for. As the total number of hearings held by Congressional institutions

increases, the likelihood that committees and subcommittees will host more hearings necessarily increases. This also introduces statistical control for any variance specific to individual Congresses, not accounted for by other measures.

Additionally, due to the time constraints of congressional members (Hall 1996), a greater number of hearings held under one committee may necessarily increase that committees use of its subcommittees. Therefore, the total number of committee hearings is controlled for in the subcommittee hearing activity models.

Method

Due to the continuous nature of the dependent variable used in each analysis, the statistical method utilized is OLS regression. To control for potential heteroskedasticity problems, and ensure conservative estimations, robust standard errors are applied.

Analysis and Results

As noted above, four models were conducted to analyze the relationship between exogenous and endogenous demand factors on the occurrence of committee and subcommittee hearings. For each chamber, the House and Senate, one model was conducted utilizing the percent of all chamber hearings held by each committee as the dependent variable, and the other examining the percentage of committee hearings conducted at the subcommittee level as the dependent variable. This allows for the examination of both levels of delegation within the congressional policymaking process: the chamber to committees and committees to subcommittees. As seen in Table Three each House model was statistically significant with one accounting for fifty-nine percent of all variation (% of all hearings) and the other accounting for sixty-eight percent (% hearings at subcommittee level). In the Senate, the models did not

perform as well, but were still strong, achieving statistical significance and predicting approximately fifty-percent of all variation correctly in both models (See Table Four). The following sections will review the results of the House and Senate models respectively.

(Insert Table Three about here)

(Insert Table Four about here)

Information Management Activity in the House

The analyses of overall committee hearing activity and subcommittee hearing activity produces support my theory of information management in Congress presented in Chapter 1. According to the House analyses, committee and subcommittee hearing activity is related to the representational and institutional demands committees face. However, there appears to be a genuine difference in how such informational demands relate to committee activity overall and subcommittee activity within committees. While both overall committee, and subcommittee activity relate to representational and institutional demands, the nature of those relationships is different.

In terms of overall committee activity, empirical analysis of hearing activity provides support for hypotheses two (issue salience), three (legislative workload), four (ideological distance), and five (party heterogeneity). As expected, committees that handle more politically salient issues, receive more bill referrals, and are more ideologically similar to the chamber conduct more information management activity relative to other committees. The significant relationship between the heterogeneity of ideology within Republican party coalitions (the House majority during the time period observed in the data) confirms and informs hypothesis five. With the expected direction

of the relationship unclear, the positive relationship signals that committee activity allows for the incorporation of different perspectives that may otherwise be silenced as previous work suggests (Fenno 1962; Jones 1962). The implications of this evidence are contrary to more recent work suggesting that committee activity in the House seeks to work on behalf of, and display the unified political views and goals of the majority party (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Baughman 2006).

The data suggests that parties may respond to the institutional needs created by diverse political perspectives by allowing members to display such perspectives on the record in hearings. Based on the existence and enforcement of strong parties in the contemporary House (Rohde 1991), one may not expect parties to allow internal dissention into the public debate. According to Cox and McCubbins (2005), the party institutions desire to maintain the validity and strength of the "party brand." However, others argue that parties exist because of the ideological similarities of individuals and must allow some degree of freedom to those individuals (Krehbiel 1993). Although at first glance, allowing the public display of competing views may seem counter to this goal, if party members have political interests or perspectives different from the party more broadly, it may be in the best interest of the "party brand" to allow members the opportunity to give those issues or interests congressional attention thus preserving the peace within the party. Within committees, subcommittees appear to give committees the ability to respond to demands differently.

The analysis of House subcommittee activity provides support for hypotheses one (organized interest influence) and three (legislative workload). Similar to committee activity overall, subcommittees are more involved in the management of

information when the parent committee receives an increasing number of bill referrals. However, unlike the results examining overall committee activity, there is a significant and positive relationship between total PAC contributions received by committee members and hearing activity at the subcommittee level. Research suggests that organized interests can influence committee activity (Hall and Wayman 1990; Hardin 1998, 2002; Heitshusen 2000; Esterling 2007). This analysis provides support for this perspective. Additionally, interviews with committee staff consistently revealed a view that full committee hearings are utilized for discussion of a higher profile, while subcommittee hearings provide an opportunity to dig into the specifics of problem definition and solutions (Staff Interviews 2009). Because organized interest groups are often more interested in the specifics of policy solutions that simply garnering congressional attention (Hall and Deardorff 2006), it seems appropriate that increasing demand from organized interests within committees would relate to increases in activity at the subcommittee level. Beyond the empirical evidence provided regarding the primary hypotheses, the role of committee type is also worthy of note.

A vast amount of research on legislative organization in Congress describes committees in the House as falling into three primary typologies: constituency, prestige and policy. Constituency committees respond to the electoral needs of members relating to the provision of particularized benefits. Prestige committees respond to the needs of parties to control the policy process and give members prominence through institutional influence. Policy committees serve to provide policy expertise on complex issues. In order to test for differences across committees, dummy variables were included to control for committee type. In the analysis, constituency committees and

prestige committees were no more or less likely to be involved in the management of information than policy committees. This seems to support one of the overall arguments of this project. All committees serve to respond to the variety of representational and institutional demands facing Congress simultaneously, not separately.

Based on this analysis of hearing activity in the House, empirical evidence seems to support my theory of information management in Congress. Empirical analyses of Senate activity provide similar support, however with some differences unique to the upper chamber.

Information Management Activity in the Senate

Similar to the House analyses, the analyses of overall committee and subcommittee activity in the Senate provide general support for my theory of information management in Congress. Also similar to the House analyses, while overall committee and subcommittee activity are related to variations in the representational and institutional demands facing Senate committees, there are differences in how these relationship manifest within the levels of the committee system.

The analysis of overall Senate committee activity provides support for hypotheses two (issue salience), three (legislative workload), and five (party heterogeneity). Regarding subcommittee activity in the Senate, the empirical analysis supports hypothesis one, as in the House, but results regarding hypothesis three and five provide implications unique to the Senate. As in the House, Senate committees handling issues of greater political salience and receiving greater numbers of bill

referrals host greater numbers of congressional hearings. The theory of information management expects such representational and institutional demands to generate increases in information management activity naturally through greater attention to issues from the exogenous and endogenous sources of demand in the complex policy environment. Senate results regarding the heterogeneity of party coalitions provide unique results as compared to the House data.

While the increases in party heterogeneity in the House related to greater levels of hearing activity, increases in the *homogeneity* of majority party coalitions relate to increases in hearing activity in the Senate. Although the influence of strong parties is most commonly attributed to politics in the House, recent scholarship suggests partisanship has gained greater influence in the contemporary Senate as well (Monroe, Roberts and Smith 2008). From the 105th through the 108th Congress, committees with more homogenous majority party coalitions held significantly more hearings than other committees. Based on the traditional view that the Senate plays a more prestigious and influential role in national policy making than the House (Matthews 1960), in this era of partisan dominance, it may be paramount for parties in the Senate to reveal a united front. Because the size of the chamber dictates that Senate membership have less capacity to deal with the same amount of issues and perspectives as the House, it seems important that the majority party in the Senate reveal unified views as it manages information by sending signals inside and outside of the chamber. At the subcommittee level, evidence also appears to support the idea of strong parties in the Senate (Monroe, Roberts and Smith 2008).

Unlike the House, where the ideological diversity of party coalitions within committees seems to bare no relationship to information management activity, Senate committees with more *homogenous* minority party coalitions demonstrate greater amounts of subcommittee activity. This may reveal a continuation of the Senate norm that all Senators be treated equal (Matthews 1960). As opposed to being potentially silenced in the House (Cox and McCubbins 2005), strong Senate minorities may be able to force committees to take up policy issues in a public forum. Although such debates may be relegated to the subcommittee level, any attention would be better than no attention for political actors seeking a mark on the political record. This provides interesting evidence regarding the role of party institutions influencing the management of information in Congress. Beyond the role of parties, there is also an interesting difference in how the legislative workload influences activity at the subcommittee level.

The theory of information management suggests that committees with a greater legislative workload will necessarily delegate more activity to subcommittees as a response to the necessary resource and time constraints of a bounded institution. However, this does not appear to be the case in the Senate as increases in bill referrals received by a committee significantly relates to decreases in subcommittee activity. This may be a result of traditional differences in the legislative process between chambers. According to committee staff, Senate committees do not typically allow subcommittees to markup or manage legislation. This norm, coupled with the smaller membership of the chamber, could cause committees that believe legislative action on an issue to be imminent to keep all discussion at the full committee level. If the full committee will ultimately have to act on legislation, it should be more likely to include

the full membership in discussions that may influence the tenor of the overall policy conversation. Although this finding is contrary to the initial theoretical expectations, considering the differing institutional circumstances between the House and Senate it does not appear contrary to my theory of information management in Congress.

Empirical analyses of both the House and Senate appear to provide broad support for my theory of information management in Congress. Overall in both chambers, committee and subcommittee activity appear to be directly related to the representational and institutional demands facing committees. The following section discusses more broadly the possible conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis and next steps that will be taken to further understand the management of information in Congress.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of House and Senate committee hearing activity across four Congresses, the management of information by committees and subcommittees appears to be directly related to variations in the representational and institutional demands facing the committee system. As expected, committees manage information on the public record in response to changing demands that surface throughout the complex policy environment. While analyses of both the House and Senate provide support for the theory of information management, there appear to be distinct institutional differences in how the chambers behave. Additionally, as my interviews with staff suggested, there seems to be a clear variation in how committees respond to these demands broadly and how committees utilize subcommittees in response the same demands (Staff Interviews 2009). These differences highlight the importance for

congressional research to examine both chambers, and to avoid treating subcommittee behavior generically as committee behavior.

Although representational demands appear to influence the House and Senate similarly, Senate committees appear to respond to institutional demands much differently than House committees. In terms of partisan institutional factors, information management in the House appears to serve to incorporate a diversity of perspectives (Fenno 1962; Jones 1962), yet information management in the Senate appears to work under a strong party model most commonly attributed to the House (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Monroe, Roberts and Smith 2008). Institutional differences in the legislative process also create differences in how subcommittees are utilized in the information management process across chambers. Too often, research examining the congressional committee system proposes overarching explanations while only looking at the House. Differences arising in this analysis highlight the importance for congressional scholars to examine both chambers. A similar point can be made for the need to examine the role of subcommittees within, as opposed to an assumed part of, the committee system.

In both the House and Senate, subcommittees appear to provide committees a way to manage information in the policy process as demands that may be viewed as "under the radar" increase. The natural limits of members and committees (Hall 1996) dictate that if the demands committees face cross a certain threshold, subcommittees will provide the capacity to respond to such demands (Deering and Smith 1997; Schneider 2007a; Schneider 2007b). Based on this analysis, it appears that subcommittees clearly provide the committee system a structural hierarchy (O'Toole

and Meier 1999) to utilize in pursuit of policy goals in a complex environment. The rare, but existing, research on subcommittees in Congress suggests a varying role across committees (Hall and Evans 1990), indeed this appears to be the case. While traditional scholarship on the committee system simply discusses the system at-large, implicitly assuming that subcommittees play no unique role, evidence presented here and the theory of information management more broadly suggest that this is not the case.

The following chapter continues to emphasize these themes. In order to learn more about the role of subcommittee in the management of information, chapter three addresses the question of which subcommittees are more likely to be utilized by the parent committee and why? A theoretical discussion applying my theory of information management in Congress and a subcommittee level analysis of hearing activity are used to address the research question.

Table 1. Summary Statistics – House Committees, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Dependent Variables	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
# Committee Hearings	92.46	69.66	0	301
Percent of All Congressional Hearings	5.13	3.83	0	17.24
# Full Committee Hearings	21.17	18.65	0	98
Percent Committee Hearings Held by Subcommittees	61.26	31.32	0	99.05
Independent Variables				
PAC Contributions	16887.74	8058.97	3331.84	41261.61
Issue Salience	5.19	2.13	0	11.04
Ideological Distance –				
Committee – Floor Med.	0.09	0.07	0.00	0.25
Subcomm-Full Med.	0.08	0.05	0.01	0.24
Party Heterogeneity –				
Democrats	0.15	0.03	0.02	0.21
Republicans	0.15	0.04	0.09	0.26
Workload	399.58	323.61	2	1000
Information Spread	31.59	24.37	0	100
Controls				
Party Ratio	0.80	0.14	0.40	1.10
Divided Government	0.49	0.50	0	1
# Total Hearings, Chamber	1800.35	120.63	1694	1993
Committee Type –				
Policy	0.31	0.46	0	1
Constituency	0.26	0.44	0	1
Prestige	0.15	0.36	0	1
105th Congress	0.24	0.43	0	1
106th Congress	0.24	0.43	0	1
107th Congress	0.25	0.44	0	1
108th Congress	0.25	0.44	0	1

Table 2. Summary Statistics – Senate Committees, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Dependent Variables	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
# Committee Hearings	55.24	40.29	0	164
Percent of All Congressional Hearings	5.18	3.74	0	13.40
# Full Committee Hearings	33.84	23.79	0	82
Percent Committee Hearings Held by Subcommittees	27.53	26.73	0	94.60
Independent Variables				
PAC Contributions	9414.83	3558.43	1875.00	20943.29
Issue Salience	6.52	2.66	0	13.73
Ideological Distance –				
Committee – Floor Med.	0.10	0.08	0	0.30
Subcomm-Full Med.	0.10	0.06	0	0.24
Party Heterogeneity –				
Democrats	0.14	0.05	0.05	0.31
Republicans	0.18	0.04	0.11	0.28
Workload	203.61	224.18	1	1000
Information Spread	30.74	21.81	0	100
Controls				
Party Ratio	0.88	0.12	0.54	1.14
Divided Government	0.50	0.50	0	1
# Total Hearings, Chamber	1064.75	151.03	889	1248
105th Congress	0.25	0.44	0	1
106th Congress	0.25	0.44	0	1
107th Congress	0.25	0.44	0	1
108th Congress	0.25	0.44	0	1

Table 3. Analysis of House Committee Hearings, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Dependent Variable	% of All Hearings	% Committee Hearings at Sub.
Independent Variables		
Representational Demands		
PAC Contributions	**-0.00**	**0.001***
	(0.00)	(0.000)
Issue Salience	**0.64***	**1.41**
	(0.21)	(1.60)
Institutional Demands		
Workload	**0.00***	**0.01***
	(0.00)	(0.01)
Ideological Distance –		
Committee – Floor Med.	**-16.82***	**-**
	(7.75)	-
Subcommittee – Full	**-**	**-54.45**
	-	(48.71)
Party Heterogeneity –		
Democrats	**-9.99**	**-9.26**
	(10.80)	(81.35)
Republicans	**21.10***	**-64.49**
	(10.04)	(57.41)
Controls		
Information Spread	**-0.08***	**-0.30***
	(0.02)	(0.13)
Party Ratio	**0.43**	**36.52**
	(2.33)	(23.01)
Divided Government	**0.35**	**13.65**
	(1.36)	(10.33)
# Total Hearings, Chamber	**0.00**	**-0.03**
	(0.01)	(0.04)
# Full Committee Hearings	**-**	**0.13***
	-	(0.04)
Committee Type –		
Constituency	**0.21**	**5.35**
	(0.81)	(5.09)
Prestige	**1.49**	**3.73**
	(1.29)	(5.73)
Constant	**-0.50**	**55.69**
	(8.57)	(76.82)
N =	***78***	***68***
R-Squared =	***0.59***	***0.68***
F =	***9.56****	***12.74****

Standard Errors in Parentheses
** = p < 0 .05*

Table 4. Analysis of Senate Committee Hearings, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Dependent Variables	% of All Hearings	% Committee Hearings at Sub.
Independent Variables		
Representational Demands		
PAC Contributions	**0.00**	**0.002***
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Issue Salience	**0.61***	**-0.91**
	(0.16)	(1.63)
Institutional Demands		
Workload	**0.01***	**-0.04***
	(0.00)	(0.01)
Ideological Distance –		
Committee – Floor Med.	**-0.93**	**-**
	(4.22)	**-**
Subcommittee – Full		**87.38**
		(53.18)
Party Heterogeneity –		
Democrats	**-3.99**	**-143.50***
	(6.96)	(63.35)
Republicans	**-20.36***	**-36.27**
	(9.14)	(89.66)
Controls		
Information Spread	**-0.04***	**0.02**
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Party Ratio	**0.63**	**-29.82**
	(5.10)	(33.59)
Divided Government	**0.20**	**-1.29**
	(1.45)	(7.96)
# Total Hearings, Chamber	**0.00**	**0.00**
	(0.00)	(0.02)
# Full Committee Hearings	**-**	**0.19***
	-	(0.10)
Constant	**2.89**	**70.86**
	(4.95)	(40.23)
N =	***76***	***48***
R-Squared =	***0.48***	***0.54***
F =	***7.18****	***5.77****

Standard Errors in Parentheses
** = p< 0.05*

Chapter 3: Subcommittee Information Management Activity

The vast body of congressional research on the committee system, the dearth of information available regarding the role of subcommittees is surprising. While the text-book understanding explains that subcommittees exist to help committees manage the congressional workload (Deering and Smith 1997; Schneider 2007a; Schneider 2007b), it does little to explain why some are more active than others, and when they are more likely to be active in the policy process. As shown in the two previous chapters, specific demands influence which committees are prone to be more active at managing information in the policy environment than others. Although text-book explanations of the purpose and need for subcommittees is helpful at a basic level of institutional understanding, it is necessary to go further and explore the variation in activity that exists across individual subcommittees.

The two previous chapters show how individual committee activity varies along with the diversity of demands a committee faces. Because increasing diversity of demands is evidence of the need for committees to become active in managing information flow within the policy environment, such factors increase committee hearing activity. Also shown in Chapter 2, increasing demands systematically influence when committees are more or less prone to delegate information management activity to subcommittees instead of maintaining the activity at the full committee level. This chapter explores the question of when individual subcommittees are more likely to publicly manage information flow in the policy process by moving the unit of analysis down a level, from committee to subcommittee. To address this question, I will first discuss the existing understanding of subcommittees in congressional studies. Next, I

will apply that understanding to my theory of information management in Congress to generate testable expectations regarding individual subcommittee activity. Finally, utilizing a regression analysis of House and Senate subcommittee activity, I explain variations in subcommittee activity within the chambers and compare the differences across chambers.

Subcommittees in Congressional Studies

While institutional studies of Congress remain one of the vastest subfields in political science, subcommittees have received much less attention. Existing work ranges from a text-book perspective (Deering 1982; Deering and Smith 1997; Oleszeck 1997), to explorations seeking to understand variations in purpose and power (Fenno 1962; Jones 1962; Hall 1987; Hall and Evans 1990), as well as changes in purpose and power during dynamic periods in the evolution of congressional institutions (Rohde 1974; Haeberle 1978; Baughman 2006). Considering the existing text-book explanation of subcommittee development, one might consider explanations of committees more generally to be a default, mutual understanding of subcommittees as well. However, subcommittees are genuinely individual institutional units, regardless of the fact that subcommittee positions and work are ultimately subject to the authority of the full committee. Committees are respected as gatekeepers of the legislative process (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005), even though committee work in the House is ultimately subject to the combination of the Rules Committee and the floor in the House, and the individual traditions of committee and floor procedure in the Senate. Hearings however, occur under the autonomy of committees and subcommittees. As Figure Two shows, subcommittees possess a prominent role in the management of information in

the policy process by playing host to a large portion of congressional hearing activity. Although the specific percentage of hearing activity conducted by subcommittees varies over time, subcommittees consistently host a large percentage of congressional hearings. Despite this empirical fact, there exists noted ambiguity regarding variation in the role of subcommittees explored by existing research that begs further explanation.

Some explanations of subcommittees in Congress add depth to the text-book explanation that subcommittees exist to expand the capability of full committees to handle the ever growing congressional workload (Deering and Smith 1997; Schneider 2007a; Schneider 2007b). Since the congressional reforms of the 1970s, the importance of subcommittees and the notion of "subcommittee government" in Congress became prominent (Rohde 1974; Deering 1982; Hall and Evans 1990), yet the existence of empirical evidence and explanation for this is lacking. Hall and Evans (1990) argued that although interview evidence and markup data support the notion of subcommittee influence, they highlight the need for a more nuanced explanation of why subcommittee influence varies across committees and within the legislative process. The statistical analysis presented in Chapter 2 highlights this variation.

Looking at Figure Three, subcommittees played host to approximately seventy percent of all House hearings and approximately forty percent of all Senate hearings from the 105th through the 108th Congress. Yet during this same time period subcommittee hearing activity as a percentage of overall committee activity ranges from zero to more than ninety-nine percent in the House and from zero to more than ninety-four percent in the Senate across individual committees (See Tables One and Two). As Hall and Evans (1990) noted, there is substantial variation in subcommittee activity, and

as a result influence, across committees within the system. Certainly this is partly due to variations in legislative workload, as seen in Tables Three and Four, however I argue that this is also a response to variation in the representational and institutional demands facing committees and subcommittees.

Jones (1962) found that subcommittees also serve to incorporate a wider variety of interests or perspectives thereby mediating conflict in the legislative process. This shows that subcommittees provide an infrastructure to manage and respond to demands surfacing from source both exogenous and endogenous to the Congress. Although this analysis examined a much larger committee system of the pre-reform era, the essence of Jones' (1962) argument seems relevant. As discussed in Chapter 1, Congress and its committees face a cacophony of voices and interests seeking access to the policy process. The countless array of interested voices create an environment loaded with information that has the potential to overwhelm the congressional policy making process. Jones (1962) implies that the expanded infrastructure provided by subcommittees serves to manage the information environment, mediating conflict to stabilize the legislative process. Although the committee system has evolved with the institution during the 1970s reforms and the restructuring of Congress after the Republican takeover of 1994 (Rohde 1974; Baughman 2006), this principal seems transferable to current circumstances.

With the "Republican Revolution," some saw the power of subcommittees established by the "Subcommittee Bill of Rights" (Rohde 1974) to be ending, or at least changing (Baughman 2006). The increasing homogeneity of political parties generated a centralization of party power that began to break down some of the institutions and

traditions of the existing system, such as placing term limits on committee chairman and overthrowing the "seniority rule" in committee and subcommittee chair appointments in favor of party loyalty concerns (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). Thus, some suggest that subcommittees are utilized to enforce negative agenda power in the legislative process on behalf of the majority party, especially in the House. This fits well with the procedural-cartel view of committee activity (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). But it also fits with well with the traditional management activity described by earlier work (Fenno 1962; Deering 1982). The problem with these explanations is they describe the work of subcommittee activity as explicit negative majority power where hearings and markups are used to kill minority proposals. Interviews with congressional staff seem to counter this perspective as committee rules for referring bills to subcommittees are determined by individual committees (Staff Interviews 2009). On multiple occasions, staff members scoffed at the idea that any form of public committee activity would be spent on policies or perspectives that the committee was against (Staff Interviews 2009). As one policy director said sarcastically, "why would we give the air to breathe? If we are against it, it just doesn't go anywhere to begin with" (Staff Interviews 2009). Therefore the death by inaction that most bills meet (Krutz 2005) does not necessarily mean that the committee or party explicitly sought to "kill" the legislation.

Contrary to research arguing that hearings and other subcommittee activity are used to kill minority legislative and policy perspectives, committee staffers regularly mentioned that discrediting or challenging minority party proposals would not be the *primary* purpose of hearing activity (Staff Interviews 2009). Staffers consistently stated that the majority would almost never be willing to give a minority perspective a position

of primacy in public forum of a hearing or a bill the air of a markup, instead committees would work on behalf of policies and issues that the committee, and often the majority party, desire to seek action upon (Staff Interviews 2009). This view was expressed by current majority staffers, minority staffers, and staff members that have been in both positions at during their careers. Although this may be contrary to the most recent work on subcommittees, it fits well with the proposed theory of information management in that committees seek to structure and control the policy process by keeping the flow of information in the policy debate on desired terms. By what committees and subcommittees take action on, and do not take action on, by the perspectives included and not included in hearings, information is filtered to establish a particular public record within the cacophonous off-the-record environment. As one committee staff member put it: "Hearings must be taken seriously by insiders and outsiders. In an *off-the-record-city*, hearings reveal what information members and staff want *on-the-record*" (Staff Interviews 2009). This highlights the strategic efforts of committees to structure the flow of information in the policy debate and reveals the importance of understanding what factors influence which subcommittees are active in this process.

The use, role and power of subcommittees as presented by Jones (1962) as well as Hall and Evans (1990) provides a glimpse into the current use, power and role of subcommittee activity, even as the institutional structure has evolved since the era of subcommittee government (Deering 1982; Baughman 2006). The following section seeks to merge existing knowledge about the role of subcommittees with my theory of information management to generate testable hypotheses exploring a more nuanced

explanation of subcommittee power and use as requested by the work Hall and Evans (1990).

Information Management and Subcommittee Activity

Based on arguments in theories of public management (O'Toole and Meier 1999, 2003; Meier and O'Toole 2002), my theory of information management presented in Chapter 1 highlights the infrastructure that the committee system provides Congress, and the infrastructure that subcommittees provide full committees, to potentially manage the complex and competitive environment surrounding the policy process. With the competing representational and institutional demands facing the House and Senate, as well as their committees and membership, subcommittees provide full committees a structural hierarchy capable of increasing institutional capacity to manage the policy environment to achieve desired policy goals. Subcommittees will increase the ability of full committees to meet chamber and committee goals. However, just as with any hierarchy, subcommittees also have the potential to undermine institutional goals if they take subversive action, intentionally or unintentionally. With the basic understanding of potential subcommittee roles in mind, this section utilizes my theory of information management in Congress to generate testable hypotheses addressing the question of which subcommittees are likely to be most active and why.

While subcommittees play host to a large portion of committee hearing activity in both the House and Senate (a large majority of activity in the House), congressional research has yet to explore when and why committees delegate work to subcommittees, and show which subcommittees are likely to receive delegation. Analyses presented in Chapter 2 shows that all committees do not utilize the structural hierarchy of

subcommittees at uniform rates. Congressional staffers consistently note that variation in subcommittee activity, power, and autonomy across committees and subcommittees individually exists (Staff Interviews 2009). While existing work provides prospective explanations for the role, purpose, and use of subcommittees it also highlights the need for more detailed explanation of variation (Hall and Evans 1990). Drawing on these observations and the empirical evidence generated in Chapter 2, one should be able to generate testable hypotheses regarding why certain subcommittees will be more active in the management of information than others.

At the heart of my theory of information management in Congress is the need for committees and their subcommittees to filter the various demands in the information environment desiring entry and influence. Managing the flow of information allows committees to keep the flow of information in the policy debate on desired terms. As one staffer noted, hearings provide committees the opportunity to get selected information "out there, in the aether" (Staff Interviews 2009). Others noted the need for committees and subcommittees to "manage the policy debate effectively" in order to successfully move on desired policy issues (Staff Interviews 2009). With the variation in subcommittee activity across committees noted above, the question of which subcommittees are most active and why begs exploration. Theories in public management suggest that the use of structural hierarchies may be predictable based on the characteristics of the structural hierarchy and the environmental demands facing an institution.

Theories in public management argue that successful managers facilitate personnel stability and trust within structural hierarchies in order to promote

organizational success (O'Toole and Meier 2002). The congressional environment possesses certain characteristics that may signal the existence of these traits within the committee system. In the committee system, membership is often stable as members seek to solidify careers within policy domains of interest to themselves and/or their constituents (Copeland 1987; Frisch and Kelly 2006). Through networking and experience, members within committees and subcommittees can become increasingly familiar with each other and therefore more likely to work together in the policy process (Williams 2009). Thus one may expect that committees may delegate more hearing activity to subcommittees with membership holding greater trust for, and experience with each other. Assuming that trust and stability increase over time together (Williams 2009) yields a first testable hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *Subcommittees consisting of memberships with more years of committee seniority are more likely to be active in managing information flow.*

The traditional, informational perspective of legislative organization also argues that the Congress is more likely to accept policy and policy expertise presented by committees that are trustworthy (Krehbiel 1991). Based on median voter theory, this perspective argues that institutional subunits that are more ideologically representative of the chamber at-large would be more likely to produce the "expertise" needed to facilitate good public policy (Krehbiel 1991). Although the ideological difference between a subcommittee and the parent committee bore no significant influence in the analyses of subcommittee activity in Chapter 2, it seems reasonable to expect a subcommittee that is more ideologically similar to the floor to be more active in managing information for committees. As discussed in Chapter 1 the ability for

committees to successfully manage information in the policy process can structure the broader policy debate on desired terms (Walker 1977; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Control of the agenda and the policy debate is paramount in "winning" legislative and political battles (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; King 1994). Thus, subcommittees that are viewed as more likely to produce trustworthy policy information may be more active in the hearing process. This yields a second hypothesis to be tested in this chapter:

Hypothesis 2: *Subcommittees that are more ideologically representative of the floor will be increasingly active in managing information flow in the policy environment.*

Along with the ability of management to facilitate and utilize trust and stability within structural hierarchies, theories in public management also emphasize the need for a successful institution to buffer itself from the surrounding environment while also exploiting opportunities within that environment (O'Toole and Meier 1999). My theory of information management in Congress characterizes the endogenous and exogenous environmental pressures facing the policy environment as competing demands emanating from an array of sources. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, these demands can be separated into representational and institutional demands. Similar to the expectations for committees, pressures from such demands should result in an increasing need for individual subcommittees to increase the use of individual subcommittees for information management.

On the representational side of Congress, two prominent competing demands in the policy environment are organized constituencies as well as the given level of public

attention issues receive. Organized constituencies play a substantive and influential role in American politics (Heclo 1978; Caldeira and Wright 1988; Hall and Wayman 1990; Peterson 1992; Wright 1996; Baumgartner and Leetch 1998). Individuals and organizations join together to influence the policy process in a variety of ways, one of which involves the demonstration of a sizable amount of individuals sharing a concern and by strategically making financial contributions individual member's of Congress. PACs serve as an accurate empirical example of this behavior. PACs collect individual monetary contributions under a single umbrella to contribute to individual members of Congress. PACs do not simply give randomly as they target specific members with specific interests and institutional positioning (Grier and Munger 1991, 1993; Hojnacki and Kimball 1998). Additionally, organized interests provide information subsidies to members of Congress through research, polling, legislative drafts and other forms of information (Hall and Deerdorf 2006). Thus as the amount of PAC contributions received by members of a subcommittee increases during a given election cycle, that subcommittee will be more likely to be active (Hardin 2002; Esterling 2007) in managing the information in the policy environment to structure and respond to these demands. This leads to a third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: *As the total amount of PAC contributions received by the membership of a subcommittee increases during an election cycle, the subcommittee will be more active in the management of information during the given Congress.*[8]

[8] I use a gross measure of PAC contributions for two reasons. First, hearing activity is no limited by jurisdiction. Therefore groups can potentially influence committees who are not primarily responsible for an issue to host a hearing on any given topic. Second, according to Esterling (2007), PAC contributions separated by economic sector or industry focused on particular policy issues tend to correlate highly with gross contributions received by members. Based on these points, I chose a gross measure to me most appropriate for this analysis.

Unorganized representational pressures can also increase demands from the information environment on the Congress. As issues become more salient within public opinion and media coverage, demanders begin pressing Congress by pressing information into the policy process from various angles such as mass e-mailings, phone calls, media coverage and the like (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Hall and Deardorff 2006). As this information floods the Capitol promoting different positions, perspectives and solutions it in the best interests of the Congress to manage these pressure to maintain control over the policy environment by demonstrating that it is attending to the prominent policy issues of the day. Because time is limited for members of Congress and their staff (Hall 1990), the increasing salience of issues relevant to individual subcommittees may increase the amount information management activity a subcommittee must conduct. This leads to a fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: *As the political salience of issues relevant to a subcommittee increases, the subcommittee will be increasingly active in the management of information.*

Along with these representational demands, institutional demands also create pressures with the information environment encroaching on congressional policymaking. Institutional demands can arise from a variety of sources: the legislative process, individual members, parties and in the case of subcommittees – parent committees. Similar to the committee level analyses in Chapter 2, I expect these factors to be influential at the subcommittee level.

In terms of the legislative process, one should expect similar factors that influence the prevalence of full committee activity to be transferable to the

subcommittee level. As seen in Chapter 2, subcommittees are more active when the parent committee receives a greater number of bill referrals. Considering the extreme amount of introduced legislation in the Unite States Congress (Krutz 2005), and the time pressures facing members and their offices (Hall 1996), it is not surprising that subcommittees pick up the slack for committees facing the largest workloads. Still, committees adopt individualized committee rules which include referral procedure within committees. This means subcommittee referral is not a uniform practice in its occurrence or structure, therefore comparing activity based on subcommittee referrals would be problematic and therefore is not explored in this chapter. However, similar to the committee analyses in Chapter 2 the demands created by the ideological diversity of party coalitions, and spread of issues relevant to subcommittees is discussed.

In Chapter 2, party heterogeneity was discussed an institutional demand that could generate pressure based on previous work arguing committees and subcommittees allow Congress to incorporate multiple, and competing perspectives in the policy debate (Fenno 1962; Jones 1962). In the House, evidence suggests that committees with increasingly diverse majority coalitions are more likely to be active in the public management of information. Although this is counterintuitive to the contemporary view of parties seeking to present a unified front on policy issues in public discourse (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 2005), it seems reasonable if accommodating a diversity of issues preserves legislative unity through incorporation (Jones 1962). Meanwhile there was no significant relationship between committee party coalitions and subcommittee activity. In the Senate, evidence suggests that homogenous majorities relate to greater overall committee activity, while homogenous minorities are related to increases in

subcommittee activity. The institutional differences that may account for these findings were discussed. However, based on the variety of reasonable expectations, the fifth hypothesis follows:

Hypothesis 5: *The ideological diversity of party coalitions within subcommittees will be significantly related to the amount of information management activity conducted by a subcommittee.*

Finally, the last empirical prediction to be tested in this chapter is based on the findings for a control variable in Chapter 2. In both the House and Senate, the analyses in Chapter 2 demonstrate that committees attending to more political issues are more likely to be active in the hearing process. Additionally, in the House, committees tending to more issues are more likely to delegate information management activity to subcommittees. Similarly, subcommittees that deal with more policy issues should be more likely to hold more hearings. Thus, the sixth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: *Subcommittees pursuing a large number of policy issues will hold significantly more hearings.*

In order to test these empirical expectations regarding the influences predicting when subcommittees are active in the management of information in the policy environment, I statistically analyze subcommittee level hearing and membership data of the House and Senate from the 105th-108th Congresses. Discussion of the Data and Analyses are presented in the following sections.

Data and Methods

In order to empirically examine the question of when individual subcommittees are more likely to be active in the management of information, I test the above

hypotheses utilizing data regarding subcommittee hearing activity from the 105th through 108th Congresses. Identical analyses in terms of variable measurement and inclusion are conducted for the House of Representatives and the Senate separately. The dataset was compiled utilizing a variety of primary and secondary sources to create subcommittee level measurements for each variable. Due to the continuous nature of the Dependent Variable discussed below, OLS regression with robust standard errors is the statistical method of choice for the analyses. The following section details data collection and measurement.

Dependent Variable: Information Management by Subcommittees

As argued in Chapter 1, hearing activity is the primary informational battleground of the congressional policy-making process. To measure *information management by subcommittees*, I calculate the percentage of an individual committee's hearings held by each individual subcommittee. For example, if a committee hosts 10 hearings, and five of those hearings are hosted by different, individual subcommittees, then the value of the Dependent Variable assigned to each of those five subcommittees would be ten percent (i.e. 1 divided by 10, multiplied by 100). Because subcommittees are an institutional subunit of full committees, it is important to measure subcommittee activity relative to other subcommittees of the same committee as opposed to all subcommittees. Capturing subcommittee information management activity as a percentage of the overall information management activity conducted by a committee accomplishes this goal.[9] Higher values of the measure indicate greater use of the

[9] Only subcommittees that were recorded as hosting at least one hearing during each Congress were included in this analysis. On occasion, certain subcommittees that are in the record according to CQ Almanacs during this time period were not noted as holding hearings during this time. Similarly, the *Policy Agendas Project* designated subcommittees that are not listed in the CQ Almanac for those years.

subcommittee by the full committee for information management activity. As seen in Table Five, individual subcommittees hold an average of 13.4% of committee hearings in the House ranging from little more than 1% to more than 42%. In the Senate, individual subcommittees hosted an average of little more than 8% of committee hearings, ranging from a low of less than 1% to a high of more than 44% (See Table 6).

(Insert Table 5 About Here)

(Insert Table 6 About Here)

Independent Variables: Primary Tests and Controls

Theories in public management suggest that organizations can generate success through facilitating network stability and trust within an institutional hierarchy, and responding effectively to threats and opportunities presented by the surrounding environment (O'Toole and Meier 1999, 2002). In applying these expectations to the committee system with a theory of information management, six testable hypotheses, presented above, regarding factors that may predict subcommittee information management behavior are tested utilizing the following variables. Summary statistics for all variables included are included in Tables 5 (House) and 6 (Senate).

To test Hypothesis 1 (network or personnel stability) and 2 (policy trust) I utilize two measures to capture each of the identified organizational characteristics. In order to capture personnel stability, I calculate the average term served (year for the Senate) on the committee of the individual membership for each subcommittee. Data for this measure are taken from Charles Stewart and Jonathon Woon's *Congressional Committee Assignments Data 1993-2007* available at "Charles Stewart's Congressional

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I sought the original data to match the coding of subcommittees with the subcommittees on record, but the data were not available from the *Policy Agendas Project*.

Data Page."[10] This measure captures the essential relationship-networking factor of time (Williams 2009) for members of subcommittees and directly tests the positive relationship predicted by Hypothesis 1. In the On average, House subcommittee members were on more than their third term and Senate subcommittee members were in almost their ninth year.

In order to capture whether or not trust for the structural hierarchy influences subcommittee activity, I measure the ideological distance from the floor median voter (pivot in the Senate) and the subcommittee median voter (Krehbiel 1991, 1998). According to information theories of legislative organization, subunits that are ideologically representative of the floor are more likely to produce trustworthy policy expertise (Krehbiel 1991) which should encourage activity. Smaller values of this measure signal ideological closeness to or representativeness of the chamber. This measure of *policy trust* is utilized to directly test the negative relationship predicted by Hypothesis 2.

Hypotheses three through six provide a test how the representational demands and institutional demands facing subcommittees in the complex policy environment influence information management activity. These variables are measured at the subcommittee level with calculations similar to those measured at the full committee level in Chapter 2. One variable is calculated to test each of the two representational demand hypotheses, and each of the two institutional demand hypotheses listed above. To test the expected positive relationship between increased *organized interest demands* as discussed in Hypothesis 3, I calculate the total PAC contributions received by all

[10] Stewart III, Charles and Jonathan Woon. Congressional Committee Assignments, 103rd-110th Congresses, 1993-2007: House and Senate, June 30, 2008. <http://web.mit.edu/17.251/www/data_page.html>

members of the individual subcommittee during the two year election cycle of each Congress.[11] Also identical to the calculations in for the full committee analysis in Chapter 2, *political salience* of issues dealt with by the subcommittee are calculated at the average proportion of the overall congressional hearing agenda made up for issues addressed by the subcommittee. Issue topics are identified using the twenty-one issue codes assigned to each hearing by the Policy Agendas Project. This measure tests the positive relationship predicted by Hypothesis 4.

Turning to hypotheses concerning institutional demands, one variable is included to examine party demands while the other examines the policy demands facing each subcommittee. To test the relationship predicted by Hypothesis 5, the *ideological heterogeneity* of the Republican and Democratic coalitions of each subcommittee is measured as the standard deviation of the coalition member's DW-NOMINATE scores. Higher values for this measure signal greater ideological diversity among a party's subcommittee members, while lower values signal ideological homogeneity.

In terms of the institutional demands facing subcommittees due to responsibilities in the policy process, the *spread of issues* a subcommittee handled in a given Congress is calculated for each subcommittee using a Herfindahl index capturing the spread of policy issues covered by a subcommittee's hearings. Lower values represent a greater spread of issues tended to, while higher values demonstrate a concentration of attention to fewer issues. This measure directly tests the positive relationship predicted by Hypothesis 6. To increase statistical control for the structured equation, four control variables not relating to specific hypotheses are also included.

[11] The data used for this measure were purchased from the Data Store at OpenSecrets.org .

Control variables included in the analysis serve to capture potential factors specific to individual committees or individual Congresses that may account for variations in hearing activity that do not directly address my primary hypotheses. To control for factors specific to overall committee activity, the number of hearings held by the parent committee and its subunits overall is included. From the 105th through the 108th Congress, House committees held an average of approximately 125 hearings per Congress while Senate committees averaged approximately 79 hearings per Congress.

To control for variation attributable to the context of a specific Congress, a dummy variable is included to designate the 105th, 106th, and 107th Congresses, utilizing the 108th as the baseline Congress. Approximately 25% of all subcommittee hearings included in both the House and Senate models.

Analysis and Results

As noted above two OLS models with robust standard errors, one for the House and one for Senate, were conducted to analyze relationships between characteristics of the structural hierarchy, representational demands, and institutional demands on information management activity by subcommittees. Each statistical analysis achieved overall statistical significance. The following section reviews the statistical results for both the House and Senate models. Tables 7 and 8 present the results for the House and Senate models, respectively.

(Insert Table 7 About Here)

(Insert Table 8 About Here)

Information Management in House and Senate Subcommittees

For the House, the statistical analysis of subcommittee hearing activity provides support for Hypotheses 3 (organized interest influence), 4 (political salience), 5 (party coalition heterogeneity) and 6 (issue spread) while yielding evidence to support the null of Hypotheses 1 (personnel stability) and 2 (political trust). The Senate analysis provides support for Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 while supporting the null of Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. While the models present similar findings, differences regarding the influence of organized interests and party homogeneity deserve discussion. Before addressing chamber differences, I review the basic findings of the models.

Regarding the characteristics of the structural hierarchy, neither the *average committee seniority* of subcommittee members, nor the *ideological distance*[12] between the subcommittee and the chamber bore a significant impact on information management activity by individual subcommittees. While theories of public management identify the need for personnel stability and trust within structural hierarchies in order to promote organizational success (O'Toole and Meier 1999, 2002), these factors do not necessarily predict when information management activity will take place in congressional subcommittees. The hypotheses regarding representational demands however, received at least partial support.

In both the House and Senate, subcommittees handling issues of higher *political salience* conduct more information management activity for the parent committee. This demonstrates that as the institutional need for action on prominent policy issues. Subcommittees serve to assist the committee system in responding to these demands.

[12] Models were conducted including different measures of political trust within the structural hierarchy, to no avail. The ideological distance between full and subcommittee median, full and subcommittee chairs, full committee medians and subcommittee chairs, subcommittee chairs and the floor median were all explored. None of which provided a different result. Because the subunit median as compared to the floor median is convention (Krehbiel 1991), that is the operationalization presented.

This finding is consistent with the analysis of committee activity overall, presented in Chapter 2. Subcommittees appear to be responding to the policy demands presented by handling more issues for the parent committee. As in Chapter 2, the *issue spread* of subcommittee attention is a significant predictor of subcommittee activity in both the House and Senate. Thus subcommittees addressing more issues are also more likely to be active in managing the flow of information. Similar to the results presented in Chapter 2 regarding subcommittee activity are the results regarding the influence of organized interests.

Analysis of House subcommittees found *organized interest influence*, measured as PAC contributions, to be a significant and positive predictor of subcommittee information management activity. This was also a significant predictor of subcommittee activity within committees overall, as discussed in Chapter 2. The difference in this case, is that subcommittees made up of members receiving greater amounts of PAC contributions are relied on by committees for greater levels of information management. As discussed in Chapter 2, interviews with congressional staff consider subcommittee hearings to be more involved in the specifics of problem definition and solution than full committee hearings (Staff Interviews 2009). Subcommittees and committees whose membership seem beholden to organized interest influence due to campaign contributions will face a greater demand for the exchange of information in the policy environment (Leyden 1995; Heitshusen 2000), and thus be more active managing that information in the policy debate. Also similar to the analyses in Chapter 2, this is not the case for Senate subcommittees.

Based on the Chapter 2 models, and the analysis presented here, it seems that PAC contributions do influence the management of information in the Senate to the same extent which they do the House. Research suggests that organized constituencies may target senators differently than they do members of the House. At the margins, the committee assignments of individual senators seems to not impact campaign contributions in the Senate as much as in the House, possibly due to the greater individual power of members of the Senate on the floor and within the chamber more broadly compared to the House (Grier, Munger, Torrent 1990). Such differences could lead to differing empirical relationships in need of deep theoretical exploration and empirical analysis. Further analysis will have to examine this relationship more closely. The role of party demands also appears to play a different role in subcommittees across chambers.

Also similar to the chamber differences presented in Chapter 2, the ideological *heterogeneity of party coalitions* within subcommittees has a different influence across chambers. In both the House and Senate the ideological diversity of the Democrats (the minority party) is a significant predictor of hearing activity, however in different directions. In the House, a more diverse Democratic coalition significantly predicts greater subcommittee activity yet in the Senate a more homogenous Democratic coalitions predict greater levels of subcommittee activity. This may be attributable to the differences in the institutional norms of behavior in each chamber shining through. The House, especially since the Republican revolution, is known as a place where the majority party is strategic and dominant in the policy process (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005; Baughman 2006). In the House, the Republicans (as the

majority during the time frame observed) may have strategically conducted hearings in subcommittees where Democrats may face internal conflict over problem definition and policy solutions in order to demonstrate a stronger "party brand" in the overall policy debate (Cox and McCubbins 1993). Meanwhile in the Senate, known for its respect of individual members and super-majoritarian rules, hearing activity being related to a more homogenous minority may be a sign of a unified minority standing up for its institutional rights and generating enough stir in the policy environment that the majority accommodated them with subcommittee hearings. While this stands as mere speculation, current research is noting a growing role of parties in the Senate (Monroe, Roberts and Smith 2008) that is not necessarily producing the same observable impacts as in the House. Further research need to explore this dynamic.

These results support the basic premise of my theory of information management in Congress, as subcommittees become more active in the management of information in the policy environment as the demands subcommittees face increase. The following section discusses the implications of the analyses and addresses conclusions more broadly.

Conclusion

The limited amount of congressional research examining the role and purpose of subcommittees highlights the need for scholarly explanation of variation of subcommittee role and influence across committees (Hall and Evans 1990). This chapter examined the question of when subcommittees are more likely to be active in the management of information in Congress. Considering the prominent role subcommittees play in the hearing process, addressing this question helps to shed light

on the role of subcommittees within the committee system. Building on empirical evidence from Chapter 2, analyses of congressional hearings at the subcommittee level add additional support to the arguments behind my theory of information management in Congress.

Subcommittees seem to play a role for responding to multiple, competing demands that simultaneously emanate from the complex policy environment. Subcommittees appear to become more active in managing the flow of information coming in and out of the policy environment as representational and institutional demands facing committees (Chapter 2) and individual subcommittees increase. From this analysis we see that individual committees and subcommittees should not be characterized as simply responding to a specific type of representational or institutional demands, as is the tradition, but the committee system actually serves as a management infrastructure that allows committees to respond to and accommodate the multiple demands they face simultaneously.

My theory of information management presented in Chapter 1 predicts that committees and subcommittees will be more active in the hearing process as representational and institutional demands increase. Increase demands signal increasing complexity in the surrounding policy environment, and due to the key role of information in contemporary American politics (Baumgartner and Jones 2005; Hall and Deardorff 2006), it is paramount for committees and subcommittees to manage the flow of information in and out of the Congress as skillfully as possible. Evidence suggests that hearings serve this purpose, while committees and subcommittees fulfill the role of

information managers. The question that now remains is what impact does information management activity have on the legislative process?

Theories in public management predict that successful management increases the likelihood of goal achievement for organizations (O'Toole and Meier 1999, 2003; Meier and O'Toole Jr. 2002). However, explanations of how committees and subcommittees manage this information are scant. Theories of the policy process demonstrate that through attention shifts, evidenced by increases in hearings on a particular topic, policy change occurs (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Yet this reveals little about how and why the Congress and its committees utilize the structural hierarchies within the institution to achieve legislative and policy success. In order to answer that question of how information management activity within the committee system leads to congressional and committee success, one must first do two things. We must define "success" in the policy process for congressional committees and evaluated how committees utilize the management resources available to them to work toward this success. Utilizing my theory of information management in Congress, the following chapter seeks to answer this question and address these issues.

Table 5. Summary Statistics – House Subcommittees, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Dependent Variable	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Percent Committee Hearings Held by Subcommittee	13.43	7.41	1.37	42.31
Independent Variables				
Avg. Committee Seniority	3.74	1.24	1	8.29
Ideological Distance –				
Subcommittee-Floor Med.	0.12	0.09	0.00	0.45
PAC Contributions (10,000)	611.90	413.51	127.97	2518.73
Issue Salience	5.07	2.66	0	11.26
Party Heterogeneity –				
Democrats	0.22	0.52	0	0.34
Republicans	0.26	0.04	0.10	0.43
Issue Spread	44.43	29.42	0	100
Controls				
# Total Hearings, Committee	124.91	64.64	3	301
105th Congress	0.24	0.43	0	1
106th Congress	0.25	0.43	0	1
107th Congress	0.25	0.44	0	1
108th Congress	0.25	0.44	0	1

Table 6. Summary Statistics – Senate Subcommittees, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Dependent Variable	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Percent Committee Hearings Held by Subcommittee	8.33	6.79	0.76	44.44
Independent Variables				
Avg. Committee Seniority	8.83	3.57	1	18.37
Ideological Distance –				
Subcommittee-Pivot	0.41	0.16	0.01	0.87
PAC Contributions (10,000)	538.70	294.12	5.68	1562.76
Issue Salience	5.11	3.34	0	17.72
Party Heterogeneity –				
Democrats	0.23	0.52	0	0.38
Republicans	0.24	0.05	0.11	0.38
Issue Spread	47.54	32.91	0	100
Controls				
# Total Hearings, Committee	78.55	32.92	13	164
105th Congress	0.24	0.43	0	1
106th Congress	0.27	0.44	0	1
107th Congress	0.26	0.44	0	1
108th Congress	0.24	0.43	0	1

Table 7. Analysis of House Subcommittee Hearings, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Dependent Variable	% Committee Hearings Held by Subcommittee
Independent Variables	
Hierarchy Characteristics	
Avg. Committee Seniority	**-0.19**
	(0.34)
Ideological Distance – Subcommittee – Floor Med.	**1.07**
	(5.27)
Representational Demands	
PAC Contributions	**0.0048***
	(0.0012)
Issue Salience	**0.79***
	(0.16)
Institutional Demands	
Party Heterogeneity – Democrats	**20.75***
	(6.94)
Republicans	**-2.90**
	(9.57)
Issue Spread	**-0.06***
	(0.02)
Controls	
Total Hearings, Committee	**-0.32***
	(0.01)
105th Congress	**3.38***
	(1.08)
106th Congress	**2.82***
	(1.10)
107th Congress	**0.00**
	(0.96)
Constant	**9.16***
	(3.00)
N =	***332***
R-Squared =	***0.16***
F =	***6.78****

Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses
** = p < 0 .05*

Table 8. Analysis of Senate Subcommittee Hearings, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Dependent Variable	**% Committee Hearings Held by Subcommittee**
Independent Variables	
Hierarchy Characteristics	
Avg. Committee Seniority	**-0.06**
	(0.14)
Ideological Distance – Subcommittee – Floor Med.	**-2.71**
	(3.46)
Representational Demands	
PAC Contributions	**0.002**
	(0.002)
Issue Salience	**0.83***
	(0.19)
Institutional Demands	
Party Heterogeneity – Democrats	**-20.99***
	(6.84)
Republicans	**3.67**
	(8.05)
Issue Spread	**-0.54***
	(0.02)
Controls	
Total Hearings, Committee	**-0.30***
	(0.02)
105th Congress	**0.12**
	(1.36)
106th Congress	**0.53**
	(1.32)
107th Congress	**-0.84**
	(1.27)
Constant	**13.89***
	(3.02)
N =	***238***
R-Squared =	***0.15***
F =	***4.52****

Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses
** = p < 0 .05*

Chapter 4: Managing Information for Policy Success

Chapters 2 and 3 move beyond traditional analysis of congressional committee formation and membership to describe how factors in the policy environment influence committee and subcommittee activity in the hearing process. The empirical findings that factors emanating from the complex policy environment seem to structure the display, and therefore management, of information in the policy process suggests that committees and their subcommittees respond to demands more fluidly than the three common explanations of committee behavior - distributive, partisan, and informational (Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987, 1989, 1990, 1997; Krehbiel 1991; Adler and Lapinski 1997; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005; Battista 2009) – suggest. While the analyses in Chapters 2 and move toward the creation of expectations regarding the tangible influence of committees and subcommittees on public policy, the chapters only describe the factors within the policy environment that appear to drive the management of policy information by committees and subcommittees. Based on my theory of information management in Congress presented in Chapter 1, committee and subcommittee responses to the policy environment should not only be reactions to multiple demands, but strategic or purposeful actions geared toward achieving policy goals.

Traditional perspectives on congressional committees and subcommittees suggest that the committee system works toward policy goals of congressional actors that are "superior" to the committee. Implicitly and explicitly, prominent research on congressional committees portrays individual committees as agents of individuals and institutions within the legislative process (Mayhew 1974; Cox and McCubbins 1993,

2005; Maltzman 1998; Krehbiel 1991). From an empirical perspective, this creates difficulties testing the accuracy of these perspectives. Often, studies seek to verify the explanations for the purpose and development of these institutions with individual actions such as voting (Hurwitz, Noiles and Rohde 2001), or scholars are forced to make leaps regarding the symbolic nature of institutional actions that may or may not be accurate (Krehbiel 1991). Unfortunately, there is little understanding of how and why committees take action to manage the legislative process where committees are considered the principal actor, not the agent. Although committees in Congress exist as a piece of an institutional hierarchy where responsibilities in the legislative process are delegated, I argue that to understand how committees manage the legislative process for the individual chambers we must examine how committees act to achieve committee goals in the legislative process.

I argue that within the legislative process, committees serve as their own principals and act to manage the legislative process in ways that achieve committee goals. The design of legislative organization in Congress delegates the power to manage specified (or sometimes not so specified) portions of the legislative process to committees (Deering and Smith 1997). Yet, this power is not always well defined and produces an environment where committees compete for legislative power (Jones, Baumgartner and Talbert 1993; King 1994, 1997; Baumgartner, Jones and MacLeod 2000). Therefore, committees have an interest in not only managing the legislative process in ways that achieve institutional goals, but also in ways that sustain, grow, and execute power in the policy process. Successful committees will manage the surrounding environment (Ellis 2009) to achieve committee goals. This paper addresses

the research question of how the management of information flow in the policy environment influences committee success. I argue that successful committees utilize structural hierarchies and internal networks to manage the competitive information environment (Ellis 2009), generating success.

In the following sections, I begin by laying out an argument establishing the premise that committees can be seen not only as agent, but as principal actors in pursuit of policy goals. Next I utilize my theory of information management in Congress presented in Chapter 1, with specific application of theories of public management to the management of information flow in the policy environment, to generate testable hypotheses regarding information management and committee success in the policy environment. In order to empirically examine the primary hypotheses developed, analysis of House and Senate committee data concerning legislative jurisdiction and legislative success is conducted. In conclusion, I argue that subcommittees can serve as a primary tool of management for committees to navigate the complex and competitive policy environment to achieve committee goals in both chambers of the United States Congress.

Committees as Principals

The individual chambers of Congress re-assign, re-structure, and create legislative committees at the beginning of each Congress. The individual membership of each committee is decided by the individual party caucuses and approved by the floor (Deering and Smith 1997). Initiated to help the Congress efficiently manage the dynamic legislative workload through specialization due to limited time and resources (Deering and Smith 1997), the committee system is most often studied and discussed as

agents of their creators – the members, the floor, and the parties (Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987, 1989, 1990, 1997; Krehbiel 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005; Adler and Lapinski 1997; Maltzman 1998). Yet the jurisdictional powers and first mover position given to committees by the chambers have value to the committees and their members through the ability to influence, inform, and drive the policy process. As the first mover in the legislative process, it seems reasonable that committees would develop their own agendas regarding what policy issues and/or pieces of legislation deserve committee, and therefore congressional, attention and action. Legislation referred to committees has no guarantee of moving any further in the legislative process. In fact an overwhelming majority of introduced legislation see no attention beyond referral (Krutz 2005). Because attention can often result in policy actions (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones and Baumgartner 2005), committees and inherently their membership, should value the power that is their policy jurisdiction and legislative powers. Additionally, committees may take an entrepreneurial approach to generating and moving legislation to create or change public policy, much like individual members (Wawro 2001). Thus it would be in the interest of committees to act in their own interest to execute and maintain that power.

Two bodies of research articulate the competitive nature of committees regarding the distribution of power over legislative jurisdictions. One focuses on policy change through the creation and destruction of policy subsystems (Baumgartner and Jones 1993), while the other focuses on informal competitions or "turf wars" (King 1997) between committees over legislative jurisdiction in areas of overlap that create

legislative tension. Although addressed in different fashions, both of these bodies of work are complimentary regarding the role and action of committees in this area of the policymaking process.

Historically, committees have been a primary participant in the creation of "issue monopolies," or "issue networks," that possess the power to dominate particular, issue-centered portions of the policy making process (Heclo 1978; Hansen 1991; Jenkins-Smith, St. Clair and Woods 1991; Jones, Baumgartner and Talbert 1993; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). Committees, along with other actors in the policy process, band together and ultimately make policy change an "insider's game" within particular issue areas. When attention to an issue, and conflict regarding the policy issue arise, issue monopolies can be broken down if the actors are unable to successfully respond to outside challenges and maintain influence (Heclo 1978; Hansen 1991; Jenkins-Smith, St. Clair and Woods 1991; Jones, Baumgartner and Talbert 1993; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). Committees outside of the issue monopoly often play a key role in breaking down the dominant subsystem (Jones, Baumgartner and Talbert 1993).

Such action is often the result of a committee seeking to expand its influence into the jurisdiction of another committee, increasing its own jurisdictional reach as well as defending against the challenges of other committees (King 1994, 1997; Baumgartner, Jones and MacLeod 2000). In this instance, a committee is acting to extend the reach power in the legislative system. Typically, the principal seeking benefit from this action will be the committee itself, and the member's of which it is composed, not necessarily the floor or a party. For example, if a member of the House

seeks to have influence over issues involving higher education, he or she will likely pursue placement on the House Committee on Education and Labor, as it holds primary jurisdiction over the issue.[13] If the Committee on Financial Services began to take action on legislation or hold hearings concerning student lending and aid, it is likely that the Committee on Education and Labor will respond by taking action of its own to signal to the parliamentarian, members, and the other committees that it is not simply going to watch idly by as other legislators pursue action on an issue under its possession (King 1995, 1997; Staff Interviews 2009). In these circumstances, committees are agents of their own principal, and subcommittees may also serve as agents of the full committee.

To survive the competitive legislative environment where this type of behavior is common place,[14] committees must manage the environment properly to achieve success in the policy process. If they do not, committees may lose influence over certain areas of the policy process, or fail to have committee policy initiatives pass the floor of the chamber or become law. The following section discusses the competitive, information-rich, environment congressional committees face and explores the implications of public management theory regarding how committees can be successful in this environment considering their structure and resources (O'Toole Jr. and Meier 1999, 2003; Meier and O'Toole Jr. 2002; Ellis 2009).

Managing for Policy Making Success in Committee

[13] Although self-selection is not necessarily the most prominent factor for committee placement, it is a component of the process (Frisch and Kelly 2004). The example is used for effect.
[14] As a part of committee staff, committees will hire multiple, full time legislative counsels to keep tabs on and manage parliamentary action concerning exactly these types of situations (King 1997; Staff Interviews 2009).

As noted above, committees function in a very competitive policymaking environment. Not only do committees compete for influence over individual policy arenas, other internal and external demanders also battle for influence over the legislative process and attempt to feed information into and around the system. Competing information regarding policy problems, solutions, and definition serve as common weapons in the battle for influence within the legislative process. Hearings serve as the primary launching pad for committees to fire their shots (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Talbert, Jones and Baumgartner 1995; MacLeod 2002; Hardin 2002; Adler 2002; Sheingate 2006; Worsham 2006). Via the hearing process, Congress' committees, which can be described as parallel information processing subunits, compete for influence over particular policy issue areas (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; King 1994, 1997).

At times, competition over legislative jurisdictions between committees occurs due to, or can result in, single issue areas that overlap the jurisdiction of multiple committees which simultaneously creates efficiency problems for the institution (Adler and Wilkerson 2008), and power struggles for policy influence as committees find it difficult to maintain an issue monopoly under these policy conditions (Heclo 1978; Bosso 1987; Baumgartner 1989; Hansen 1991; Jenkins-Smith, St. Clair and Woods 1991; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Wood 2006; Worsham 2006). Scholars note that the most valuable resource a committee posses is its legislative jurisdiction. In an information environment presenting numerous demands and challenges for committees (Ellis 2009), a committee's ability to manage

this environment will be critical to its success at maintaining or gaining influence over policy issues.

While there seems to be a scholarly consensus that information display via the hearing process and other forms of committee action can influence committee jurisdictions, essentially zero research exists concerning the influence of congressional hearings and information on policy formulation and adoption in Congress. In fact, most studies of bill success examine the influence of member and bill level characteristics, but exclude hearing activity, information, as an explanatory variable (Matthews 1960; Frantzich 1979; Moore and Thomas 1990; Hibbing 1991; Jeydel and Taylor 2003; Anderson et al. 2003; Krutz 2005; Hasecke and Mycoff 2007). However, if information contributes to the shape of problem definition and problem solutions (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones and Baumgartner 2005), it seems reasonable to expect information to also influence a committee's ability to have policy proposals adopted by the chamber and/become law.

Research demonstrates that a committee can gain influence and jurisdiction over new policy issues, or policy issues previously outside of its reach, through legislative (King 1997) and non-legislative activity (Baumgartner, Jones and MacLeod 2000). Yet, the question of how committees manage this competitive environment to facilitate committee success in the policy environment remains open. Existing theories of public management can inform what resources and actions are available to committees in the policy-making environment to achieve success. O'Toole Jr. and Meier (1999) demonstrate that successful management leads to organizational success by "1) creating

structure for the organization and thus system stability, 2) buffering the organization from environmental influences and 3) exploiting opportunities in the environment."

The task facing successful committees seems analogous. A successful committee would shield itself from intrusions by other committees into its legislative jurisdiction while exploiting opportunities to gain concentrated influence over new policy areas (Talbert, Jones and Baumgartner 1995). This creates a stable policymaking environment for the committee through concentrated influence over particular issues, and at the same time proves stability to the chamber at large (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Establishing such stability within the complex policy environment may then facilitate greater success for committees' legislative proposals in the policy process. According to theories of public management, the use of structural hierarchies and the existence of network stability are two primary management tools available for help in generating the ultimate success of organizations in competing environments. Two facets of the committees system provide committee such management tools: subcommittees and membership stability.

In terms of a structural hierarchy allowing for the delegation of responsibilities, subcommittees can provide full committees with this potential management resource for the delegation of policy work. Although only minimal scholarly attention to and no consensus regarding the role and influence of subcommittees in the policy making process exists (Jones 1962; Hall and Evans 1990; Baughman 2006), it is empirical fact that subcommittees are very active within the congressional policymaking process. As Figure Three shows, subcommittees host a significant portion of congressional hearings in both chambers.

Because hearings provide Congress a way to manage the vast demands of the complex information environment (Ellis 2009), the prevalence of subcommittee use for this purpose demonstrates that subcommittees serve some role, however unclear, in the policy process. Additionally, although overall use of subcommittees throughout the Congress appears consistent overtime, excluding the recent dip in the Senate between the 102nd and 103rd Congresses (Figure Three), the use of subcommittees across committees varies greatly.[15] From the 105th to 108th Congresses, the range of hearings hosted by subcommittees ranged from 0% to 99% in the House and from 0% to 95% in the Senate.[16] Based on the expectation derived from public management theory and the empirical evidence regarding subcommittee use presented in Chapter 3, I expect that a committee operating in more complex legislative environment will utilize their subcommittees more frequently in order to establish influence over and stability within the flow of information surrounding policy areas of interest. This yields the first primary hypotheses of this chapter:

Hypothesis 1: *Committees working with more highly competitive and disorganized policy jurisdictions will utilize subcommittees more frequently than other committees.*

In addition to helping committees manage information flow within more complex policy jurisdictions, the use of structural hierarchies should also facilitate policy success. Subcommittees provide an extended infrastructure to allow committees

[15] The data used here were originally collected by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, with the support of National Science Foundation grant number SBR 9320922, and were distributed through the Center for American Politics and Public Policy at the University of Washington and/or the Department of Political Science at Penn State University. Neither NSF nor the original collectors of the data bear any responsibility for the analysis reported here.
[16] *Ibid*

to manage the flow of information in the policy environment in pursuit of committee interests in the policy process. If this is the case, committees that utilize their subcommittees more frequently should ultimately find greater levels of success in managing the policy environment than other committees. Therefore, committees that utilize their subcommittees to greater degree should find greater levels of legislative success relative to other committees. This expectation is the basis of a second primary hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: *Increasing levels of subcommittee hearing activity within a committee will be significantly related to higher levels of committee policy success in the legislative process.*

While I expect subcommittees to serve as a primary tool for committees to manage increasingly complex policy environments, the complexity of the policy environment should inherently create difficulties in the legislative arena. As described in theories of public management, the environmental factors can create barriers to success which institutions must manage effectively in order to succeed (O'Toole Jr. and Meier 1999). An increasingly complex policy environment may increase the difficulty of success in the legislative arena for congressional committees. If this is the case, committees with an agenda involving policy issues tied up in more complex, competitive, or disorganized jurisdictional dynamics may encounter failure in the policy process more regularly than committees operating in policy environments that resemble issue monopolies. This notion produces a third primary hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: *Committees dealing with more competitive, complex, and disorganized policy jurisdictions will be significantly less successful in the policy environment relative to other committees.*

Membership stability is another resource that is common for committees, but varies across committees. In public management terms, network or personnel stability is an important factor in achieving and maintaining organization success (O'Toole and Meier 2002). In the committee system, membership is commonly stable as members seek to solidify careers within policy domains of interest to themselves or constituents (Copeland 1987). When committee membership is consistent and members accrue seniority together it seems stability could develop within the network of members and staff as they grow accustomed to working together in the policy process overtime. Based on the expectation derived from public management theory, I expect that committees with higher levels of "network stability" will experience greater levels of success in the policy environment. This yields a fourth primary hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: *Committees composed of more stable membership will be more successful in the policy environment than others.*

In order to empirically test the expectations presented above, the following sections present statistical analyses of committee success in both the House and Senate.

Data and Methods

In order to empirically examine the question of how committees manage the policy environment to generate committee success, I test the above theory and hypotheses utilizing data regarding committee activity and success from the 105th through the 108th Congresses. Identical analyses in terms of variable measurement and

inclusion are conducted for the House of Representatives and the Senate separately. The dataset was compiled utilizing a variety of primary and secondary sources to create committee level measurements for the theoretically relevant phenomena. Due to the continuous nature of the Dependent Variables discussed below, OLS regression is the statistical method of choice for the analyses. The following section presents the variable measurement and inclusion.

Dependent Variable: Measuring Committee Success

In this analysis, I conduct statistical analysis of factors influence three different possible conceptions of committee success: *jurisdictional entropy*, *legislative success in chamber*, and *policy success in government*. The following sections describe summarize the measurement of each individual dependent variable.

Committee Jurisdictional Entropy

I base the chosen measurement of committee success on the rational assumption that government actors seek to control the policy making process (Downs 1957) and hold concentrated power over decision making (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Baumgartner and Jones 1993). I argue that greater levels of concentration of policy issues within a committee's legislative jurisdiction best represents committee success in managing its jurisdiction. The concept of legislative jurisdiction concentration is measured as the *Entropy of policy subtopics within a committee's legislative jurisdiction* (Sheingate 2006; Adler and Wilkerson 2008). Entropy is an increasingly common measure utilized to capture committee jurisdiction in congressional scholarship (Baumgartner, Jones, and MacLeod 2000; Sheingate 2006; Adler and Wilkerson 2008). Entropy statistically captures the two primary concepts expressed within the jurisdiction of a committee: the level of concentration over individual policy

issues possessed by a committee, and the complexity of control over issues in terms of diversity among issues and the number of committees (Sheingate 2006). Increases in committee Entropy therefore represent a greater level of uncertainty in terms of which committees have control over which policy issues.

Mathematically, Entropy is defined as the probability that a legislative hearing on a particular policy subtopic[17] is held by a given committee, divided by the natural log of one divided by the same probability, summed across subtopics for each individual committee and multiplied by 100.[18] Higher values represent greater disorganization of complexity within a committee's legislative jurisdiction, while lower values represent greater organization within the committee's legislative jurisdiction which I argue to represent power and success in terms of policy jurisdiction. From the 105th through the 108th Congress, committee entropy ranged from 0 to 1040.36 in the House, and from 0 to 359.65 in the Senate (See Tables 9 and 10).

(Insert Table 9 About Here)

(Insert Table 10 About Here)

Committee Policy Success in Chamber[19]

In order to measure the policy success of a given congressional committee within its chamber, I calculate the percentage of a committee's legislative agenda that is passed by a floor vote within the chamber. I define the legislative agenda of a committee as any bill reported to the floor by a committee because such bills have received the approval of at least a majority vote of a committee's membership to

[17] Issue subtopics are defined and provided within the *Policy Agendas Project* data utilized for this analysis.

[18] $100 * \sum_{i=1}^{x} \Pr(x) * \ln(\frac{1}{\Pr(x)})$

[19] Data for this measure was collected via the Library of Congress and is publicly available at www.thomas.gov.

proceed within the legislative process. This measure is calculated by dividing the number of bills reported by each individual committee that are passed by the floor of the chamber divided by the total number of bills reported by the given committee, multiplied by 100. The *percentage of reported bills passed* ranges from 37.5 to 100 percent in the House and from 0 to 100% in the Senate from the 105th-108th Congresses.

Committee Lawmaking Success[20]

In order to capture committee policy success in lawmaking I calculate the percentage of bills reported by a committee that ultimately are signed into law. Similarly to the measurement of committee policy success within chamber, *policy success in lawmaking* is measured as the *percentage of reported bills that ultimately become law*. This measure is calculated by dividing the total number of bills signed into law that were reported by a given committee by the total number of bills reported by that committee and passed on the floor of the chamber. From the 105th through the 108th Congress, committee policy success in government ranged from 0 to 90 percent in the House and from 0 to 100 percent in the Senate (See Tables 9 and 10).

The following section describes and summarizes that independent variables included in the analyses of the dependent variables.

Independent Variables: Primary Tests and Controls

In order to test the four primary expectations presented by Hypotheses 1 through 4, three separate analyses were conducted. I create and utilize variables to capture the notions of structural hierarchy usage and network stability for all three analyses, and utilize the dependent variable of *jurisdictional entropy* as an independent variable in two of the three analyses. Other independent variables are included in this analysis to

[20] Ibid

provide control for theoretically relevant phenomena and findings presented in existing research. Below I describe the measurement and expectations for all independent variables. Statistical description is available in Tables 9 and 10.

As stated in Hypothesis 1, I expect that committees dealing with more disorganized policy jurisdictions will utilize structural hierarchies, subcommittees, more frequently relative to other committees. Hypothesis 2 moves on to predict that the same use of structural hierarchies will lead to higher levels of committee policy success. To test these expectations, I operationalize the concept *structural hierarchy use* by calculating the percentage of committee hearings hosted by subcommittees for each full committee. For example if the Armed Services Committee held 10 hearings, and nine of them were hosted by subcommittees of the Armed Services Committee, then the value for this variable for the Armed Services committee observation would equal 90 percent. Again, this measure provides a direct test of the first of two primary hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 is tested in the analysis of *jurisdictional entropy* and Hypothesis 2 is tested in the analysis of *policy success within chamber* and *policy success in lawmaking*.

Hypothesis 3 presents an expectation regarding the influence of *jurisdictional entropy*, the dependent variable of the first analysis, on *committee policy success*. Specifically, Hypothesis 3 predicts that more disorganized committee jurisdictions will relate negatively to the policy success of a given committee relative to other committees. This hypothesis is tested in the analysis of *policy success within chamber* and *policy success in lawmaking* by simply including the measure utilized as the dependent variable capturing *jurisdictional entropy* as an independent variable in these analyses.

The fourth primary hypothesis stated that committees with greater levels of network stability should experience greater levels of success in the policy environment. To empirically capture the management resource of *network stability*, I calculate the average committee seniority for each full committee's membership. Based on existing studies demonstrating the stability of committee assignments over time (Copeland 1987) and the importance of internal networking to legislative activity (Williams 2009), measuring this as the average seniority on a given committee of its membership is appropriate. This variable provides a direct test of the second primary expectation derived from applying new public management concepts to committee success in Congress. The following variables are included to capture other theoretically relevant influences on committee success.

Based on existing knowledge of subsystem and issue monopoly breakdown and jurisdictional turf wars, a statistical model of committee success must account for certain factors within the policy environment surrounding committees. Empirical evidence suggests that one factor leading to the breakdown of issue monopolies and policy subsystems is non-legislative intrusions into a committee's legislative jurisdiction by other committees (Jones, Baumgartner and Talbert 1993; Talbert, Jones and Baumgartner 1995; King 1997; Baumgartner, Jones and MacLeod 2000). Such *environmental attacks* are measured as the percentage of non-legislative hearings held by other committees on issues within a committee's legislative jurisdiction.

Additionally, existing research demonstrates that as issues become more salient in the policy environment and in public discussion, the likelihood of other committees intruding on issues under another's jurisdiction increases (Baumgartner and Jones

1993). *Jurisdiction salience* is calculated as the average proportion of articles published in the New York Times regarding the policy issues under a committee's legislative jurisdiction during the Congress of the observation. I expect that both environmental attacks and jurisdiction salience relate to decreases in committee success. Other variables may also impact committee success in the policy environment.

Both *committee workload* and *interest group influence* may impact a committee's decision to pursue specific issue areas. Because the referral of bills to a committee is one of the primary ways the parliamentarian establishes precedent for legislative jurisdiction (King 1997), the number of bills referred to a committee may influence its ability to generate success. Similarly, the demands and influence of private interests may also effect the decisions and success of a committee (Hall and Wayman 1990; Hardin 1998). This is measured as the amount of PAC contributions received by the two separate major party coalitions within each committee (in $10,000s). Based on existing literature, it seems that increases or decreases in both factors could produce greater concentration or spread of legislative jurisdiction, as seen in the empirical analyses presented in Chapters 2 and 3. Ideological factors may also play a role in committee success.

Committees that are more ideologically similar to the floor, or cohesive within their membership, may see greater levels of success than other committees. For example, informational explanations of committee structure suggest that the *ideological distance* between a committee and the floor will increase the likelihood that the institution at large considers the committee's work to represent trustworthy expertise (Krehbiel 1991; Battista 2009). This is measured as the absolute distance between the

DW-Nominate[21] scores of the committee chairman and the floor median in the House and the distance between the committee chairman and the floor pivot in the Senate. The ideological cohesion of party contingents within a committee's membership may also have similar effects. *Party Homogeneity* within committees may increase the likelihood of success by increasing trust and stability based on similar motivations (Weingast and Marshall 1988). This variable is calculated as the standard deviation of DW-Nominate scores within each party's contingent on each committee.

The following section presents and discusses each of the three House and Senate analyses.

Analysis and Discussion

In this section, the analyses of *committee jurisdictional entropy*, *committee policy success in chamber*, and *committee policy success in lawmaking* for both the House and Senate are presented. The analysis and discussion is presented in three separate sections which include comparison of House and Senate analysis results for each dependent variable.

House and Senate Committee Jurisdictional Entropy

In the analysis of *committee jurisdictional entropy*, as seen in Table 11, hypotheses one and four are tested in terms of factors influencing the complexity and organization of committee policy jurisdictions. The House analysis, in which the OLS model performs particularly well (see Table 11) provides support for Hypothesis 1, but presents findings that are surprisingly contrary to Hypothesis 4. Additionally, the significant relationships of many control variables provide substantive implications for

[21] Data acquired from www.voteview.com .

my theory of information management in Congress presented in Chapter 1. The Senate analysis however yields effectively limited substantive findings although the OLS model as a whole performs well (see Table 11).

(Insert Table 11 About Here)

Regarding Hypothesis 1, evidence from the House analysis suggests that increasing use of the *structural hierarchy* provided to committees by subcommittees is significantly related to committees being burdened with legislative jurisdictions that are more competitive, complex, and disorganized. It seems to support the idea developed form my theory of information management in Congress that suggests subcommittees provide individual committees with an important tool for managing information in the complex policy environment. The control variables for this analysis also support the expectations for information management activity developed within my theory presented in Chapter 1.

Also in the House, there is evidence for the expected increases in *environmental attacks* by other committees within a committee's jurisdiction, increases in *jurisdiction salience* of individual committees, and increases in a committee's legislative *workload* significantly relating to higher levels of disorganization with an individual committee's legislative jurisdiction. Congruent with the theoretical expectations developed in Chapter 1 and empirical findings presented in both Chapters 2 and 3, such environmental factors increase the competitiveness and complexity of the policy environment. Such increases in competition and complexity appear related to the use of information management tools by congressional committees in order to pursue success in such a dynamic environment.

Regarding *interest group influence* on committee jurisdiction, evidence suggests that for committees with higher levels of PAC contributions to the majority party in the House (the Republican Party for the time period analyzed). Cox and McCubbins (2005) suggest that the House committee system and the rules of the House provide the majority party with the opportunity to stack the policy process in its favor. The decrease in disorganization of committee legislative jurisdiction for committees with heavy PAC investment in the majority shows support for this party dominant theory. In order to increase the party's ability to stabilize the policy process and succeed within given issue areas the majority party (which ultimately controls the referral process and therefore potentially jurisdictional issues) may simplify the policy environment surrounding given issues. Considering the time period, this concept may also provide a reasonable explanation for the surprisingly negative and significant relationship between *network stability* and jurisdictional entropy that turned Hypothesis 4 upside down in the House analysis.

During the time period analyzed, lower levels of committee seniority for committee members significantly relate to increases to greater disorganization, or jurisdictional entropy relative to other committees (see Table 11). Due to the Republican takeover of Congress that occurred during the 104th Congress, alterations were made in the norms of behavior of, and membership of the House committee system to favor the new majority party and its leadership (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Baughman 2006). Thus, if committee memberships were altered at the insistence of party leaders in order to pursue party goals more effectively, committees with lower levels of seniority (more new members, new chairs, etc.) may be granted a greater

concentration of authority over policy issues of interest to the majority party, resulting in lower levels of jurisdictional entropy. Overall, analysis of committee jurisdictional entropy in the House appears to provide strong support for my theory of information management in Congress, including the important role of subcommittees in this process. Unfortunately, analysis of Senate committees yielded minimal substantive findings.

With the exception of legislative *workload*, no variable included in the Senate analysis was even significantly related to the jurisdictional entropy of Senate committees. Interestingly, the significant and negative relationship between *workload* and jurisdictional disorganization repeats an interesting difference between House and Senate analyses that also emerged in Chapters 2 and 3. Increasing legislative workloads in the Senate appear to bring decreases in complexity and increases in the organization and stability of the policy environment, while increasing legislative workloads in the House increase complexity within the policy environment. As discussed in earlier chapters, interviews with committee staff in the Senate (as well as with House staff with Senate experience) suggest that this may be a factor of economies of scale. Due to smaller memberships within committees and for the chamber overall, the Senate may be prone to increasing its efficiency when workload is high, because higher workloads may signify genuine needs for Senatorial action (Staff Interviews 2009). Because the nature of Senate terms is different than the "constant campaigns" of House members, increases in workload may not simply be strategic representational maneuvers for senators as some argue they are for representatives in the House. For this reason, an increased workload may come with increasing credibility from a policy perspective in the Senate,

relative to the House. Further research should explore this consistent and interesting dichotomy.

If only in the House, analysis of committee legislative jurisdictions appears to support the role of information management in the policy process, particularly the role of subcommittees as a tool to manage the complex policy environment. The following section presents and discusses the findings for the analysis of committee bill passage within the House and Senate.

House and Senate Committee Policy Success in Chamber

In both the House and Senate analysis of committee policy success in chamber seen in Table 12, the OLS models perform well. Both models also yield substantive support for the theoretical expectations of the theory of information management when applied to the passage of reported bills on the floor of both chambers. These models directly test the second, third, and fourth hypotheses; yielding affirmative support for each (Hypothesis 4 in the House, and Hypotheses 2 and 3 in the Senate).

(Insert Table 12 About Here)

The House analysis (see Table 12) reveals statistically significant relationships between *network stability* and *workload* on committee bill passage on the House floor. The positive relationship for *network stability* demonstrates that committees whose membership possesses more experience working on the given committee are more successful gaining passage for reported legislation on the floor of the chamber. This provides empirical evidence that may confirm the expectation derived from public management theory that more stable institutions will be more successful (O'Toole Jr. and Meier 1999). Krehbiel's (1991) informational theory of committee organization

may also speak in support of this relationship, as Krehbiel argues that congressional chambers will be more likely to trust legislation created by expert members. One clear way to demonstrate expertise or intimacy with a policy issue is by working on the topic for an extended time. Thus, membership stability may in fact be a significant management tool for committees within the policy environment. Other variables included to examine primary hypotheses provided null findings within the House data, however one control variable produced a significant relationship.

The legislative *workload* of House committees is negatively related to the percentage of committee bills that achieve passage on the House floor. This finding may not have substantive implications regarding the policy process in the House beyond issues of capacity and economies of scale. For example, a committee that may be more productive than average simply with a large agenda and due to the limits of time and the majority's legislative agenda the committees may have difficulty gaining floor attention for a large percentage of its reported bills. The Senate analysis also provides substantive findings implicating support for the theory of information management.

In the Senate, empirical evidence supports the expectation that *hierarchy use* and *jurisdictional entropy* should impact a committee's ability to pass legislation on the floor. As expected, Senate committees which utilize subcommittees at greater rates than other committees also find greater success getting reported legislation passed. The positive relationship between *hierarchy use* and *committee bill passage* suggests that subcommittees indeed provide an important management tool for committees navigating the policy process. Even though increasing *jurisdictional entropy* limits the ability for committees to gain passage for reported legislation due to increasing the

complexity of a committee's policy environment, managing information flow seems to allow committees to navigate potential difficulties. Much like front runners in campaigns seeking to flood the information environment with consistent messages to achieve success (Haynes, Flowers and Gurian 2002; Flowers, Haynes and Crespin 2003), committees can utilize subcommittee hearings to do the same in the policy environment. These findings seem to support the expectations of my theory of information management in Congress presented in Chapter 1. Similar to previous Senate analyses, there is also an unexpected finding within the control variables of the analysis.

As seen in Table 12, committees dealing with policy issues of a higher national *salience* are more likely to have reported legislation passed in the Senate relative to other committees. Although increasing salience may generate a more complex political environment for a policy issue, Senate committees appear to get policy goals accomplished at a higher rate under such circumstances. Because the Senate is limited in its time by fewer members needing to address similar numbers of issues, the national salience of a political issue may increase the likelihood that the Senate chamber feels obligated to address the problem. Time and resources are more limited in the Senate than the House simply by definition. Thus increasing urgency and attention to policy issues may create institutions focus in the Senate. Although this explanation seems reasonable, this may be another difference between the House and Senate policymaking environments that is worthy of further consideration in drawing conclusions about my theory of information management in Congress.

The following section presents and discusses the analysis of committee success at having reported legislation not only passed in chamber, but ultimately becomes law.

House and Senate Committee Lawmaking Success

In tandem, analysis of both House and Senate committee lawmaking provide strong support for my theory of information management in Congress, especially regarding the role of subcommittees as predicted in Hypothesis 2. As seen in Table 13, both the House and Senate models perform strongly while presenting slightly different substantive findings.

(Insert Table 13 About Here)

In both chambers, committees that utilize the *structural hierarchy* of subcommittees more frequently, seem to be more successful in ushering committee proposals through the legislative process and ultimately creating law (see Table 13). As discussed above, it seems that subcommittees provide committees with a delegated structure to host hearings and have influence and control over the flow of information in the policy debate in order to gain advantages in the policy environment. I argue that this concept is similar to that imposed by successful political campaigns seeking to manipulate the political messaging through the repeated and consistent release of strategically selected information and positions (Haynes, Flowers and Gurian 2002; Flowers, Haynes and Crespin 2003). Further findings have implications for differences in the role of party between the House and Senate.

Similar to the findings in the House regarding jurisdictional entropy, *network stability* of Senate committees is negatively related to the rate at which committee policy proposals are made law. As discussed earlier, the time period examined in this

analysis directly follows the Republican takeover of Congress during the 104th Congress. Although the effect of this institutional change on the Senate has not been explored in as much depth as the House (Baughman 2006; Monroe, Roberts and Smith 2008), it seems reasonable that committee positions of interest to party leadership were altered in order to achieve policy goals. In both models however, there appears to be support for the idea that more moderate committees from an ideological standpoint may be more successful in the lawmaking process.

As seen in Table 13, House committees whose chairman are more ideologically similar to the House median voter are ultimately successful at a higher rate in the lawmaking process than committees with more ideologically distinct chairman. In Senate, committees with more diverse Republican coalitions (the majority party of the chamber for more than three-quarters of the time period analyzed) convert committee proposals to law at a higher rate than more ideologically homogenous committees, which within the Republican party should mean more ideologically extreme Republican committee coalitions (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Wiseman and Wright 2007). These finding may imply that political moderation is a more successful strategy for lawmaking than fighting policy battles at the extremes of political ideology.

Two other control variables also demonstrated a significant influence on committee lawmaking. In the House, as seen in earlier analyses as well, committees dealing with issues of a higher national salience are less likely to be successful in the lawmaking process. And in the Senate, committees who face higher levels of intrusion by other committees into their policy issues of jurisdiction see committee proposals become law at lower rates. Considering higher levels of *issue salience* and

environmental attacks both characteristic of increasingly complex policy environments it seems to be expected that such factors would limit committee success.

Overall, statistical analysis of House and Senate committee policy success appears to confirm the expectations derived from my theory of information management in Congress presented in Chapter 1. Via the hearing process, subcommittees are utilized by the committee system to manage the policy environment and produce success for the committee's policy agenda. The following section attempts to draw more succinct conclusions by reaching across all three analyses and the initial theoretic expectations to draw conclusions regarding how committees manage the policy environment to generate success.

Conclusion

While there is no dearth of literature discussing the committee system, this body of work often ignores how exactly committees accomplish their goals and tasks of policy making. Rather, scholars have chosen to focus on the motivations for committee formation and the individual actions of members within committees. Attempting to add depth to the substantive understanding of committees, subcommittees and policy making, this chapter addresses the question of how committees manage the complexities of the policy environment to achieve policy success. Similarly to the substantive implications of Chapters 2 and 3, the empirical tests of my theory of information management in Congress appear to provide support for propositions made regarding how committees manage for success within the vast and complex congressional policymaking environment.

In a political atmosphere where individual members, parties, committees and subcommittees, as well as actors and influences exogenous to the Congress jockey for power and control within the policy process, committees must utilize the managerial tools at their disposal in order to successfully execute their policy agenda. Seemingly assumed away due to the accepted view of committees as the de facto workhorse of the legislative system, the particular actions and institutional behavior that separates successful committees from unsuccessful committees is seldom explored. Via the analysis of House and Senate committees across the four Congress between 1996 and 2004, evidence suggests that subcommittees serve as a managerial tool for committees seeking to successfully maneuver the complexities of the vast national policymaking environment.

In today's age of information and around-the-clock news media, it seems more important than ever that political actors seeking to achieve policy goals must be able to lead and structure the flow of information in the policy debate to generate success. Theories of public management suggest that organizations pursuing success in complex and competitive environments must effectively utilize structural hierarchies and facilitate network stability in order to attain goals. Empirical analysis of the policymaking process in the United States Congress suggests that committees must do the same.

The design of the committee system provides committees with the capability to develop effective hierarchies to manage the policy environment and maintain or create stable networks through traditional organization and the power of parties. As revealed in the analysis of committee success presented in this chapter, it appears that the ability

for committees to manage the policy environment via these two key factors is a prominent predictor of a committee's ability to generate policy success. Be it the pursuit of jurisdictional powers or legislative success, committees that utilize the availability of subcommittee hearings to manage the flow of policy information, and committees that can produce a stable policy network, are successful at the highest rates.

While scholars have often taken the position that different "types" of committees will function differently, or that some subcommittees may play a greater role in the policy process than other, this often falls short of acknowledging a systematic way that successful committees do business. However, it appears that when committees utilize subcommittees more often, they are able to succeed in the policy environment. Due to the delegation of expertise that is inherent in the design of legislative organization, this should not be surprising.

Committee reports, which accompany legislation to the floor, present a record of evidence regarding the policy problem being addressed and the solution being advanced. Such records document previous attempts to address the policy problem, move on a give solution, hold hearings to investigate the problem or related legislation, markups of such legislation, and statements of recommended action. Subcommittees provide committees with the infrastructure to build this sort of informational record more quickly and effectively. The data presented in this chapter may suggest that such use of subcommittees is the exact type of managerial activity that can increase policy success for congressional committees.

Additionally, when committees are able to develop stable networks of policymakers, whether through contiguous service together or specific organization

facilitated by partisan influence, developing a consistent record of evidence becomes less challenging. As suggested by theories of public management, stable internal networks allow organizations to effectively achieve goals due to advantages of trust and continuity. It appears that when committees manage the policy environment in similar fashions, success becomes more frequent.

The national policymaking environment presents a variety of challenges for policy makers to overcome in order to advance legislation and generate policy change. When committees are able to manage the policy process in a way that allows them to structure the flow of information in the policy debate to build a record favorable to committee goals, success in the policy arena can be achieved more effectively. Generally, the findings presented in this chapter appear to support the propositions made by my theory of information management in Congress.

Table 9. Summary Statistics – House Committees, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Dependent Variables	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Jurisdictional Entropy	175.35	184.27	0	1040.36
% of Reported Bills Passed	74.11	12.83	37.50	100
% of Passed Bills Made Law	41.23	21.15	0	90
Independent Variables				
Hierarchy Use	63.71	29.37	0	99.05
Network Stability	3.55	0.96	1	5.76
Controls				
Environmental Attacks	84.58	16.94	26.32	100
Issue Salience	5.66	4.78	1.27	23.19
Workload	412.88	322.54	11	1000
PAC Investment *($ in 10,000s*)				
Democrats	756.92	347.95	70.22	1570.23
Republicans	975.05	464.45	250.22	2555.94
Ideological Distance				
Chair-Floor	0.25	0.15	0.01	0.71
Party Homogeneity				
Democrats	0.15	0.03	0.02	0.21
Republicans	0.15	0.04	0.09	0.26

N = 75

Table 10. Summary Statistics – Senate Committees, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Dependent Variables	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Jurisdictional Entropy	67.88	97.49	0	359.65
% of Reported Bills Passed	48.37	25.94	0	100
% of Passed Bills Made Law	36.45	27.18	0	100
Independent Variables				
Hierarchy Use	28.28	26.69	0	94.60
Network Stability	8.54	2.24	3.35	14.72
Controls				
Environmental Attacks	86.21	17.29	6.25	100
Issue Salience	5.49	4.63	0	21.88
Workload	206.96	226.27	1	1000
PAC Investment *($ in 10,000s)*				
Democrats	398.41	225.18	38.73	990.09
Republicans	543.91	249.49	129.24	1285.05
Ideological Distance				
Chair-Pivot	0.61	0.20	0.07	1.13
Party Homogeneity				
Democrats	0.23	0.03	0.16	0.30
Republicans	0.24	0.03	0.17	0.29

N = 74

Table 11. Analysis of Committee Jurisdictional Entropy, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Independent Variables	House	Senate
Hierarchy Use	**2.67***	**0.28**
	(0.76)	(0.53)
Network Stability	**-45.62***	**3.95**
	(18.63)	(5.47)
Controls		
Environmental Attacks	**2.02***	**-0.75**
	(0.66)	(0.81)
Issue Salience	**6.38***	**1.72**
	(3.79)	(2.28)
Workload	**0.32***	**-0.16***
	(0.10)	(0.04)
PAC Investment		
Democrats	**0.02**	**0.09**
	(0.08)	(0.06)
Republicans	**-0.12***	**0.06**
	(0.06)	(0.05)
Ideological Dist.		
Chair-Floor	**47.12**	
	(110.81)	
Chair-Pivot		**-29.52**
		(45.56)
Party Homogeneity		
Democrats	**333.08**	**-487.35**
	(481.44)	(314.00)
Republicans	**-334.93**	**185.29**
	(629.08)	(427.40)
Constant	**-82.20**	**131.05**
	(140.47)	(116.30)
N =	***75***	***74***
R-Squared =	***0.50***	***0.24***
F =	***6.63****	***3.38****

Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses
** = p < 0 .05*

Table 12. Analysis of Committee Bill Passage, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Independent Variables	House	Senate
Jurisdictional Entropy	**0.01**	**-0.29***
	(0.01)	(0.03)
Hierarchy Use	**0.07**	**0.44***
	(0.09)	(0.12)
Network Stability	**3.32***	**0.35**
	(0.96)	(1.40)
Controls		
Environmental Attacks	**-0.07**	**-0.17**
	(0.11)	(0.11)
Issue Salience	**-0.04**	**1.92***
	(0.27)	(0.69)
Workload	**-0.22***	**-0.00**
	(0.01)	(0.01)
PAC Investment		
Democrats	**-0.01**	**-0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Republicans	**0.00**	**-0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Ideological Dist.		
Chair-Floor	**3.49**	
	(9.70)	
Chair-Pivot		**-6.19**
		(11.89)
Party Homogeneity		
Democrats	**-4.05**	**32.69**
	(66.84)	(79.06)
Republicans	**-36.32**	**129.71**
	(629.08)	(101.24)
Constant	**84.65***	**19.44**
	(17.93)	(36.38)
N =	***75***	***74***
R-Squared =	***0.23***	***0.37***
F =	***3.07****	***4.06****

Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses
** = p < 0 .05*

Table 13. Analysis of Committee Lawmaking, 105th-108th Congresses (1997-2004)

Independent Variables	House	Senate
Jurisdictional Entropy	**0.00**	**-0.05**
	(0.01)	(0.03)
Hierarchy Use	**0.27***	**0.41***
	(0.14)	(0.11)
Network Stability	**1.86**	**-3.57***
	(3.68)	(1.08)
Controls		
Environmental Attacks	**-0.05**	**-0.37***
	(0.14)	(0.16)
Issue Salience	**-1.58***	**-0.16**
	(0.52)	(0.65)
Workload	**-0.01**	**0.01**
	(0.01)	(0.01)
PAC Investment		
Democrats	**0.00**	**-0.01**
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Republicans	**-0.01**	**-0.01**
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Ideological Dist.		
Chair-Floor	**-23.17***	
	(12.87)	
Chair-Pivot		**-17.99**
		(14.20)
Party Homogeneity		
Democrats	**97.90**	**-91.30**
	(110.43)	(69.59)
Republicans	**154.34***	**-303.90***
	(79.73)	(98.13)
Constant	**7.46**	**200.73***
	(22.74)	(25.96)
N =	***75***	***74***
R-Squared =	***0.28***	***0.41***
F =	***2.29****	***13.43****

Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

** = p < 0 .05*

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this dissertation I examine the institutional role of committees and subcommittees in managing the flow of information in the congressional policy process. By presenting a theory of information management in Congress, I argue that committees serve to simultaneously manage the competing demands generated by the complex policymaking environment. Committees can maintain structure in the policy environment by controlling the flow of information in the policy debate, primarily through hearings. Subcommittees can provide committees with the structural hierarchy necessary to manage the flow of information in a complex and competitive environment. Through the hearing process and delegation to subcommittees, it appears that committees can structure the flow of information in order to increase policy success. Hearings provide committees with a highly visible and credible forum to filter, address or not address, and reveal or not reveal information within the policy debate. In a resource and time constrained environment like Congress (and organizations more broadly), subcommittees provide increased resources within a structured hierarchy to manage the challenges of the policy environment in pursuit of policy success.

Examinations of the contemporary Congress have a habit of suggesting that the role and influence of committees and subcommittees in the post-reform era, especially in the House since the Republican takeover in 1994, has diminished greatly (Rohde 1991; Evans and Oleszek 1997; Sinclair 1997; Baughman 2006). This body of work suggests that party leaders manipulate the policy process behind the scenes. Tweaking legislation off of the floor in order to make it more passable and making closed door promises while logrolling for votes. Though no one can deny this occurs, to argue that

it has diminished the role of the committee system is quite an overstatement. Analyses presented in this dissertation demonstrate that committees and subcommittees assist in managing the competing demands facing the institution and can facilitate a more manageable policy environment. Interviews with leadership staff confirmed the expectation of a different Congress, but a Congress that still leans heavily on committees. As one high ranking staff member within the House leadership put it, in reference to the textbook Congress, "it was gone after the Republican takeover" (Staff Interviews 2009). Yet this member of leadership staff also noted the power and importance of committees that remains, stating that although there has been a "dramatic shift of control over ultimate decisions" during this heavily partisan era, the "manag[ement] of the process is still left to committees" (Staff Interviews 2009). Heavy lifting is still expected of committees, "large agenda items, the president's agenda, [and] major reauthorizations are still under [the control of] committees…Chairman coordinate with leadership, but are still expected to do the policy[making]…leadership's concern is bill production" and the committee "chairmen know what is expected of them" (Staff Interviews 2009). This interview seemed to confirm my assessment that although the parties are more powerful, and reward success and punish failure heavily, the committees system is still required to do that heavy lifting that is navigating the policy environment to move legislation through the chamber. The question that remained was not one of whether or not committees still mattered. But instead, recognizing that committees are still very important to the policy process, I sought to ask how committees influence the policy making process. I argue that committees manage the policy process by managing the flow of information in the

policy debate in response to a vast policy environment vast with competing demands and perspectives.

In order to address how and why committees and subcommittees manage information in the congressional policy process, this dissertation applied my theory of information management presented in Chapter 1 to generate empirical analyses addressing four primary research questions: 1) Which committees are most active in the management of information management through hearings? 2) Which committees utilize subcommittees more frequently in this process? 3) Which subcommittees are more active in the management of information? And 4) do subcommittees serve to facilitate committee success in the policy process? To test the theoretical explanation applied to these phenomena, I analyzed House and Senate committee and subcommittee data regarding congressional hearings and legislative activity from the 105th through the 108th Congresses.

In each chapter, there appeared to be empirical support for two primary conclusions. First, committees appear to respond to a variety of representational and institutional demands simultaneously. This suggests that committee activity within Congress can be discussed in general terms regarding its role in the policy process across committees, as opposed to the traditional tripartite typology of committee organization. Second, subcommittees appear to serve an important role in managing information in response to specific demands facing Congress that committees serve to manage. However, the effective use of subcommittees by committees appears to not only assist committees in serving the management needs of the Congress but also appears to facilitate success for committees in the policy process. This appears to

support the suggestion presented by my theory of information management in Congress that the management of information within the complex and competitive policy environment can facilitate policy success through the stabilizing and structuring the policy debate.

The following sections seek to more broadly explore the implications of the primary conclusions to this research to Congressional policymaking and the current state of congressional scholarship. Additionally worthy of discussion are the consistent empirical differences between the House and Senate surfacing in the data, across chapters. Not only are these differences worth discussing for understanding how the institutional differences between the chambers manifest in a tangible sense, but this may also provide traction for the exploration of House versus Senate competition in the control of the information agenda and the policy process. Finally, this dissertation finds general support for the idea that subcommittees serve as a structural hierarchy of full committees which serve to assist full committees in more effectively achieving policy goals. However, subcommittees and full committees do not necessarily share the same policy perspective on issues. In fact, there can be conflict between committee and subcommittee leadership that may create tensions or competition between the institutional subunits. The final section discusses the implications for future research in this area.

Managing the Policy Environment

The generally accepted tripartite typology of congressional committees suggests that due to structured differences in the policy jurisdictions and institutional role and structure of committees create a system where different "types" of committees provide

members the benefit of a path to achieve distinct goals (Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Krehbiel 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005; Adler and Lapinsky 1997). In general research that challenges these perspectives, as opposed to seeking to provide evidence for one or the other, argue for a conditional relationship between representational, informational, and partisan factors that determines the specific goal driven purpose a committee pursues (Hall and Groffman 1990; Maltzman 1998; Young and Heitshusen 2003). This can serve as a convenient explanation from a strict rational choice perspective based on the idea that members have specific goals (Mayhew 1974) and the committee system serves to facilitate members' ability to achieve such goals (Krehbiel 1991), therefore committees distinctly pursue distinct goals. However, the division of committees into distinct groups based on the nature of the policy issues under jurisdiction or institutional role of a committee seems to neglect the institutional uniformities of the policy process across committees.

Studies of public policy note that achieving policy change or creation requires a variety of factors to gel in just the right way, as just the right time (Kingdon 1984; Baumgartner and Jones 1993). As discussed in Chapter 1, the national policy making environment consists of numerous influences emerging from a number of interested (and in some cases uninterested) sources. Many of these sources are actors seeking to influence the ultimate outcomes of the policy process, creating an atmosphere of competing demands that any committees must deal with at any given time. Generally, as first movers in the legislative process, committees must deal with these demands in order to achieve policy goals. Studies demonstrating the possibility for any issues to rise or shrink in salience at any given time (Kingdon 1984; Baumgartner and Jones

1993) highlights the possibility that all committees must manage a variety of competing representational and institutional demands simultaneously in order to serve the purpose of moving the legislative agenda and structuring the process. As managers of the legislative process, committees must manage these competing factors to generate success or face losing out on policy goals due to missed timing, negative attention, or a variety of other deal breakers (Kingdon 1984; Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Because the flow of information in a policy debate can often determine the ultimate positioning of, and opportunity created by, the exogenous and endogenous demanders who are active in the policy environment, committees can manage the policy process by managing information flow.

If committees indeed must manage the flow if information in the policy debate in structured response to such competing demands to generate policy success, then one should expect to see empirical trends of committee response to such representational and institutional demands. As discussed in Chapter 1, congressional hearings can serve as a primary response to such demands as they display and create structured information flow around policy issues, often promoting (and therefore at the same time choosing not to promote) certain perspectives prevalent in the complex policy environment. Empirical analyses of full committee and subcommittee hearing activity in Chapters 2 and 3 appears to support the theoretical expectation that committees and subcommittees respond to such demands within policy environment by managing the flow of information in the policy debate. As the representational and institutional demands facing committees increase, so does the display of information through hearings by committees and subcommittees. Thus it appears that committees and subcommittees

become more active managers of information in the policy debate when the policy environment presents the most complexity. The importance of information management is highlighted however by the empirical differences between the factors related to the increase of information management activity and the actual policy success of committees.

The analysis presented in Chapter 4 supports the expectation that information management activity by committees would improve the likelihood of committee policy success. While the same institutional factors and representational factors that increase demands in the policy environment also relate to policy success, committees taking action to manage information flow is also related to policy success. Considering the major body of work emphasizing the importance of attention to issues facilitating policy change (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones and Baumgartner 2005), these findings bring greater detail to the picture of policymaking in Congress and have implications for further paths of inquiry needed to understand the complexity behind what makes successful information management and the importance of the right kind of attention to an issue at the right time for committees to be successful (Kingdon 1984).

Theories of the policy process can be criticized for relying too much on exogenous events or determinants to create attention to topics (Baumgartner and Jones 1993), or seemingly random variation in institutional and political contexts to dictate the chances for policy success (Kingdon 1984), empirical support for a theory of information management in Congress suggests that committees and subcommittees are able to interact with the policy environment, possibly manipulating the structure and content of the policy debate to generate success. In studies of political representation a

similar concept has been introduced regarding the ability of political actors to shape public opinion to that of the elite actors in order to create the desired perception of a prospective policy (Page and Shapiro 1992). This opens the question of how specifically committees utilize management resources to interact with the policy environment to create (or lose) winning scenarios.

Future research in this area should examine the specific nature of the information revealed (and ignored) during committee and subcommittee hearings. Examining how this may impact the flow of information in the process to create (or deteriorate) favorable policy environments for committees goals. This should involve not only examining the type of information and witnesses chosen by committees (Esterling 2007), but also examining committee rules in terms of the allocation or witnesses, the organizational structure of hearings, and committee procedure in arranging hearings. The structure of timing in terms of congressional hearings, bill introduction, and shifts in public attention should also be investigated. Does increasing or decreasing the speed of the process facilitate or hinder committee success? Additionally one could examine bill reports, digging deeper into not only the amount of time a committees spends working a specific policy issue through the process, but exploring the number of hearings and content of those hearings listed within bill reports and how the content and size of the record accompanying public policy may influence its ultimate success or failure in the process.

Not only does evidence supporting the theory of information management have implications for institutional theories and understandings of policymaking and change,

but it also suggests a need for further understandings of the role of subcommittees in the House and Senate, a prominently ignored institution of the United States Congress.

Subcommittees in Congress

Subcommittees are a longstanding part of the United States Congress' system of legislative organization (Polsby 1968; Rohde 1974; Deering and Smith 1993), seeing ebbs and flows in institutional power throughout congressional history (Haeberle 1978; Davidson 1981). However the role of subcommittees is arguably one of the most neglected areas of congressional research. Although it seems appropriate to view subcommittee as agents of full committees from a traditional principal-agent perspective (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Wrighton and Peterson 2003), subcommittee action and influence deserve substantive investigation and understanding considering the vast amount policymaking activity that occurs at the subcommittee level. Yet historically little research has explored the role and influence on subcommittees in the policy making (Jones 1962; Hall and Evans 1990), and research has been exceptionally sparse on the role of subcommittees in the contemporary, heavily partisan Congress since the Republican takeover of 1994 (Baughman 2006). In this dissertation via empirical analysis of the theory of information management, I attempt to build a deeper understanding of the role of subcommittees in the policy process.

Theoretical argument and empirical evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that subcommittees play a critical role in the policy success of committees in Congress. Previous research suggests that the role and influence of subcommittees may not be generalizable across subcommittees as well as committees (Hall and Evans

1990), evidence presented in the empirical analyses of committee and subcommittees activity suggest that subcommittees significantly and systematically contribute to the management of information in response to the demands presented within the complex policy environment. Additionally, the use of subcommittees to manage information in the policy process significantly relates to increases in the policy success of congressional committees. The most interesting part of these findings however, is that the empirical evidence is provided by data from the 105th through 108th Congresses. The scant research conducted on subcommittee suggested that Republican alterations to the institutional norms and order of the Congress, especially the Houses, predicted a decline in the power of subcommittees (Evans and Oleszek 1997; Baughman 2006). Yet even during this time period, well after the years of "subcommittee government" and the demise of the traditional institutions of the Congress was predicted, subcommittee activity still seems to play a key role in the policy success, at least at the committee level, and policy passage and lawmaking more broadly.

While the theory and findings presented in the preceding chapter help to explain the factors related to, and results of subcommittee hearing activity in Congress, the details of some questions remain unanswered. For example, does organization or and information presented by subcommittees differ from that of full committees? When asked in interviews about the difference between full committees and their subcommittees, congressional staff consistently suggested that full committee hearings tend to establish broad themes regarding policy problems, perspectives, and solutions while subcommittees tend to take on the role of private investigator by more deeply investigating particular policy solutions (Staff Interviews 2009). Both majority and

minority staff often noted that full committees seek to bring attention to issues desired to be on the agenda while the true details of policy problems and vetting prospective solutions is left to subcommittee time (Staff Interviews 2009). Empirical investigation of this suggestion would require comparison of committee rules for subcommittee hearings and the guts of full committee and subcommittee hearings, such as the type of information presented by witnesses and the nature of questions asked by congressional members. Additionally, bill and issue level analysis of committee and subcommittee activity over time would also shed light on how exactly information management activity contributes to policy successes in Congress. While this sort of investigation would expose detailed explanations of the full committee – subcommittee relationship from a principal-agent perspective (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991), the question of what happens in the case of full committee and subcommittee conflict remains open.

Staff often noted that some subcommittees of some committees have more influence than others (Staff Interviews 2009). In the House, staff often noted that full committee chairmen would limit the authority and autonomy of subcommittee chairs who have a high potential for "going off the deep end" in terms of maintaining the line for party goals on particular policy issues (Staff Interviews 2009). In the Senate, staff noted the importance of personal trust between of full committee and subcommittee chairs, often relating to the subcommittee chairs level of expertise, or experience on given topics (Staff Interviews 2009). The data examined in this dissertation fail to capture this dynamic of possible conflict between the principal and the agent. Analysis of bills success at the subcommittee level, similar to the committee level analysis

presented in Chapter 4, could shed light on this question as it would detail how specific subcommittee traits impact the legislative process.

While the theory and analysis presented in this dissertation seem to firmly establish the importance of understanding how subcommittees impact the policy process, many questions are left open. In both the House and Senate, subcommittees appear to play a vital role. However, across each empirical model presented in chapters two, three, and four, distinct differences in how the complexities of the policy environment impact House and Senate surface. These differences suggest institutional variation in the role of legislative organization across chambers and potentially shed light on the nature of inter-chamber conflict over final legislation. The following section examines such inter-chamber issues.

House and Senate Differences

Due to the extensive institutional and procedural differences between the House of Representatives and the Senate (Oleszek 2001), scholarship examining the United States Congress most often examines the two chambers individually. Unfortunately, this tradition necessarily creates gaps in our knowledge regarding similarities between the institutions. Also, Senate research does not always seek to ask the same questions addressed in House research, and vice versa. The literature examining legislative organization in Congress is an example of this tendency. Nearly all scholarship on congressional committees and legislative organization has examined the House of Representatives to the exclusion of the Senate. Due to the inherent neglect of the Senate by examination of legislative organization and activity, it is unclear if we should expect the commonly known differences between the chambers to manifest as

differences in committee activity, or if we should assume that the committee systems in each chamber are similar enough to operate in effectively the same fashion. While this produces an intellectual need for current and future scholars to satisfy, it also creates difficulties in hypothesizing about committee activity and its impact. I encountered this problem often as I conducted the empirical analyses presented in the second, third, and fourth chapters of this dissertation. Though I briefly addressed the numerous empirical differences that manifested between the two chambers, I seek to discuss these differences and possible explanations further in this section. For clarity, I discuss these chamber differences across three topics: party and ideology, representation, and institutional organization.

Party and Ideology in House and Senate Policymaking

While the role of party and ideology is commonly viewed as the driving force of policymaking in the contemporary House of Representatives (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 2005), the notion of party influences in the Senate is "something of an oxymoron" (Monroe, Roberts, and Rohde 2008). The traditional neglect of potential partisan influence in the Senate is primarily due to chamber rules that limit direct influence of political parties, especially when compared to the majoritarian nature of the House. Examples of this are many. The filibuster can be utilized to prevent a legislative vote unless 60 percent of Senate members support the termination of debate. There is no Rules Committee in the Senate to allow the majority party to limit the terms of floor debate, as in the House. Not only does this allow for a potentially unlimited number of amendments to legislation on the Senate floor, the Senate lacks a "germaneness" rule for amendments as well. Thus, amendments dealing with

controversial or difficult issues may be made to legislation on the floor regardless of policy issue or jurisdictional origin, naturally limiting the structuring power of committees and often making bill passage politically difficult. Such formal limitations on party power in the Senate are clear, and therefore necessarily limited compared to the House, but understanding the nuanced the role of parties and ideology in the Senate seems important and is growing as a point of scholarship in congressional studies (Monroe, Roberts and Rohde 2008). Based on the empirical analyses presented in the preceding chapters, there is an evident influence of party and ideology in the Senate that manifests differently than in the House.

In terms of legislative organization in the House, two opposing positions have long dominated the debate regarding the role of party and ideology. Krehbiel (1991, 1993, 1998) argues that party effects are nothing more than aggregated similarities in the ideological preferences of congressional members and therefore the formal parties offset each other; therefore policy decisions ultimately come down to congruence in members' preferences, not partisan influence. From this perspective, Krehbiel (1991, 1998) suggests that committees will be more active and successful when they represent the median voter in the House or the "pivotal[22]" voter in the Senate. Partisan theorists disagree with the notion that parties simply are an indirect product of member preferences, but instead view parties as formally powerful institutions, especially in the legislative organization of the House (Rohde 1991, 1994; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). This camp argues that the majority party, especially in the House, can control

[22] As noted above, the filibuster allows Senators the ability to prevent a legislative vote unless 60 percent (60 or the 100 Senators) of the Senate agrees to end debate and vote. In congruence with the median voter in the House, who is the final vote needed to pass legislation with majoritarian rules, the "pivotal" vote in the Senate is the 60th vote needed to stop a filibuster due to the Senate's supermajoritarian rules.

the legislative process through manipulation of bill content through its majority on committees and through procedural control of the legislative agenda. Scholars suggest that committees are agents of the parties, and that increased ideologically homogeneity does not create parties; it empowers them (Rohde 1991, 1994; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). This body of work suggests that committees should be more active and successful when they party makeup is homogenous ideologically. Additionally, partisan theorists imply that the ideological makeup of the minority party should be inconsequential to the legislative process, although the minority party itself may be stronger as its members become more homogenous. With this in mind, it seems we are currently treading in murky waters when it comes to hypothesizing about how party effects may or may not manifest in the Senate.

In terms of Krehbiel's (1991, 1993, 1998) expectations, my analysis of committee hearing activity and committee lawmaking success provide evidence for a median voter effect in the House of Representatives. Meanwhile, there is no evidence of an ideological influence in the Senate in terms of the ideological positioning of committees to that of the key member of the chamber. While this supports the notion that building winning coalitions in the House may require catering to individual member preferences more than party desires, it is important to note that over time, party members in Congress have become increasing homogenous ideologically and therefore the median House voter has moved increasingly close to the median member of the majority party (Wiseman and Wright 2007). Additionally, the median voter in the House will always be the member of the majority party considering the fact that being the majority necessarily requires that party to include fifty-percent-plus-one members of

the chamber. Such institutional dynamics dictate that catering to the desires of a minimum winning coalition means catering to members of the majority party. Thus, it is as easy to argue that this is evidence of policy being impacted by the ideology of the median voter as it is to argue that this is evidence of policy being crafted in the best interest of the majority party. The absence of this effect in the Senate, where political parties are expected to be inherently weak compared to individual members, casts doubt on the true impact of the median or pivotal vote on Senate policy making, as well as Krehbiel's (1993) view of party efffects.

The Senate is the exact place where a relationship between ideological differences between key voters and committees should impact policymaking activity and success. Due to the lack of party empowering rules and the individualized nature of the chamber (Matthews 1960; Monroe, Roberts and Rohde 2008), Krehbiel's (1998) argument seems particularly compelling. However evidence from the empirical analyses presented above call this expectation into question. In the numerous statistical analyses presented in the three preceding chapters, not once did the ideological relationship between a committee and the key member of the chamber ever attain statistical significance. It bore no significant impact on committee hearing activity, committee delegation to subcommittees, subcommittee activity, or any measure of committee policy success. This presents a dubious challenge for Krehbiel's (1993) suggestion that congressional activity and policy making is a consistent result of aggregated preferences. The precise preferences that should matter based on his argument fail to present a significant impact on committee activity and policymaking. Results regarding the role of party homogeneity within committees presented in the

preceding chapters also challenge Krehbiel's (1993) expectation that preferences matter regardless of parties, but also challenge the conventional thinking of party scholars.

In relation to committee and subcommittee activity, as well as committee success in the policymaking arena, there are consistent findings across the statistical analyses presented in the preceding chapters that seem counterintuitive to current expectations related to the influence of parties in the House and in the Senate. As noted above, party scholars suggest that increases in the ideology of party members should increase the power of parties in the legislative process (Rohde 1991, 1994; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005), especially in the House. This suggests that committees will be more active in structuring the policy debate and more successful in moving and passing legislation when they contain more tightly knit majority party caucus in the House. It also implies a similar effect in the Senate; although as I noted above, scholarship examining the role of parties in the Senate is scant. Interestingly, based on my numerous analyses of House and Senate committee activity and policymaking from the 105th-108th Congresses,[23] I find that the ideological *heterogeneity (not homogeneity)* of the majority party collation within the committee actually increases committee hearing activity and the likelihood that committee bills become law in the House. Yet in the Senate, the opposite relationship emerges for the majority party. Instead, increases in ideological *homogeneity (similarity)* of majority party coalitions related to increases in committee activity and policy success. Although these findings seem counterintuitive, they may simply suggest unexpected and differing maintenance needs for parties within the policy process across the two chambers.

[23] During this time period the Republicans held a majority in both the House and Senate with the exception of one congressional session of 2001 where the Democrats held a majority temporarily due to the party switch by Senator James Jeffords.

Previous work on the committee system suggests that hierarchy of authority may allow for the incorporation of various views and political positions in order to discourage political conflict (Fenno 1962). It seems that in the House, the majority party is more active in the policy debate when their committee coalitions are more diverse. This may be a way of keeping the peace through the policy process by allowing more diversity, within the party at least, in terms of the informational perspectives displayed regarding policy issues. Allowing potentially dissenting party voices to go on record in exchange for later political support would not be unheard of (Mayhew 1974), and considering the sheer size of a voting coalition needed in the House to pass legislation, 218 members, such a practice could serve as an easy way to satisfy a dissenting member's needs. With the primary control of hearings in the House falling to the majority party, dissenting members could voice their opinions while the general majority party perspective could still emphasize desired points of information and structure the policy debate appropriately. Ultimately, providing such members the opportunity to voice concerns could then increase the likelihood of party loyalty because members were rewarded when needed, allowing trust to build stability (O'Toole and Meier 1999, 2003; Meier and O'Toole Jr. 2002; Pearson 2005), and facilitate legislative success for those same committees. Additionally, the finding that committees with more diverse party coalitions typically work in more competitive and crowded legislative jurisdictions (Table 11) may also contribute to the idea of why such committees are more active and successful. If the ideological diversity were to cause political problems for the party, choosing to give legislative authority to multiple

committees can also increase the party's ability to influence the process through alternative pathways, creating a win-win situation for the House majority party.

In the Senate, increasing activity and success may demonstrate maintenance from another perspective. Due to the greater level of power for individual senators and fewer mechanisms of formal party power, the majority party may need committees with ideologically *homogenous* coalitions to be more active in putting the majority party's preferred policy perspective into the policy environment. Opposite of the House, where members may be inherently predisposed to tow the party line, the Senate majority may need to be more active in presenting its chosen policy information to create a united front that can produce a winning coalition. Considering the lack of procedural guards against interference with legislation on the floor, creating a united front within the party may be of paramount importance considering the minority party will have unlimited opportunities for dissention on the floor. Assuring that "your own house in order" may be the first step of importance for Senate majority parties. In addition to interesting results regarding the majority party, issues of party and ideology within minority party coalitions play a surprising role in committee and subcommittee activity in terms of managing information.

Analyses presented in chapters 2 and 3 reveal that *heterogeneous* minority party committee collations in the House and *homogenous* minority party coalitions in the Senate relate to increased use of subcommittee by committees, and increases in activity by individual subcommittees. Again I find an intriguing case of opposite, yet significant, findings across chambers. Could the majority party find that it is in its best interests to put committees with diverse and contention positions within the minority

party on display? With the extensive television coverage of congressional hearings it may be good politics to allow the minority to fight amongst itself on the record. Similarly, could it be good politics in the Senate for the majority party to put a hardened opposition on display? Does alienating a unified opposition serve the majority good politically?

These questions present great opportunity to explanation and understanding in more detail how committees and parties manage the flow of information in the policy debate within individual hearings. Future research must examine individual hearing transcripts in order to explore possible trends in the position taking of majority and minority party members and determine if these differences facilitate across chamber policy agreements or conflict. As the analyses presented above, and discussed here once again, demonstrate – party and ideology matter in the Senate. Although party effects may manifest in different ways across chambers (always opposites?), future scholarship should explore through case studies of hearings and bill passage if this is or is not an actual manifestation of increasing partisanship in both chambers or if these findings are a sign of greater institutional differences in the role of party than one may expect.

The following sections move from the discussion of partisan and ideological differences to differences regarding institutional differences in representation and institutional issues of legislative organization.

Representation

While similar concerns and challenges face elected officials in any position simply due to the nature of political representation (Pitkin 1967), these influences may

manifest differently depending on the institution and constraints facing political representatives. Considering the institutional differences between the House and Senate regarding the general prestige, length of term, and size of constituency, one may expect variation across chamber regarding when and how certain representational demands influence behavior in the policymaking process and political decision making. We can expect that such representational differences would not only exist between a member of the House and a member of the Senate, but also in the institutional behaviors of committees and subcommittees across chambers. Based on the analyses presented above, such difference manifested in two primary ways. Total PAC contributions received by a subcommittee related to increases in the hearing activity of individual subcommittees in the House, but not in the Senate. Additionally, in the Senate, committee legislation tended to find greater levels of success with passing legislation in the chamber when the issues within the committee's jurisdiction were of higher public salience.

As was discussed in chapter 3, scholarship examining the role and influence of subcommittees is scant. In order to examine factors influencing the use of subcommittees within the structural hierarchy of the committee system, one factor being the impact of pressure from organized constituencies on individual subcommittees. In the House but *not* in the Senate, subcommittees whose membership received greater amounts of PAC contributions during an election cycle were more likely to hold hearings, and that actively manage information in the policy environment, during the given election cycle. Previous research reveals that groups which give more to specific committees are more likely to access hearings and thus enter its favored policy

information into the debate (Esterling 2007). However unexpected, this difference seems to make sense. House members, who face re-election every two years, are often characterized as facing or participating in a "constant campaign" (Heberling and Larson 2005). In the Senate however, only one-third of the chamber's membership faces re-election every two years as senators serve on staggered, six year terms. Because of this, research suggests that the nature of Senate representation varies during terms (Elling 1982). Senators or typically more responsive to their constituencies immediately following and immediately preceding an election, but may vote their conscious more often in the middle years of their term (Elling 1982). Empirically, senators also see lags in their fundraising from PACs in the first four years of their term in comparison to the significant increases seen during the election cycle preceding a senator's bid for re-election (OpenSecrets.org). Because of this difference in the nature of political competition across the chambers, it may be more urgent for House members to be seen as adequately responsive to organized constituencies. If there were the case, then we would expect subcommittees to be freed for greater participation in the policy process. Because of this, subcommittees facing greater pressure from organized groups would be given a greater opportunity to demonstrate that Congress is listening, or even allow access and influence to particular groups. Considering the fact that not all subcommittees are granted the ability to freely participate in the process (Staff Interviews 2009), this demand could carry increased weight in the House where all members are up for re-election during every Congress and seek to curry favor with influential constituencies. Yet in the Senate, only twenty of the sixty members are facing re-election during a given Congress and thus would not create the same scale of

pressure for a committee or subcommittee. When looking at committee policy success, as opposed to activity in the process, another representational difference appears.

Senate committees that have jurisdiction of issues of higher public salience are systematically more successful at getting committee legislation passed on the floor than committees dealing with issues of lower public salience. This is not the case in the House, as issue salience has no significant impact on the success of committee bills in chamber. A number of issues may explain this difference. First, the House is simply more disorganized in terms of jurisdictional clarity across committees than the Senate (something I will discuss in more detail in the next section) and this disorganization is increased for committees dealing with more salient policy issues, which is not the case for the Senate. Additionally, and I argue probably more importantly, the fact that senators represent a large and necessarily broader statewide constituency, and the common observation that senators typically possess higher levels of political ambition and occupy a positions of historically greater prestige than a member of the House suggests that senators would feel compelled to be responsive to issues of greater interest to the public. While increasing salience in the House relates in more members with fiercer position, senators, typically representing more people and often desiring greater political achievement, may be compelled to identify and act on consensus. Such differences are not simply representative of some House members and some senators, these traits are historically distinguishing characteristics between the two chambers (Matthews 1960) which could very well persist and manifest in the general responsiveness and success of Senate committees.

Although the arguments presented above regarding representational differences between the House and Senate policy processes are certainly not conclusions of extensive and systematic research, they reveal a need for more comparative research on the nuances of the policy process across congressional chambers. The norm of identifying institutional differences and then studying each chamber individually fails to contribute to our understanding of the policy process, especially considering the practical reality that both chambers must pass legislation in order to make law. Such differences in the response to competing demands across chamber may necessarily create institutional points of conflict that must be settled in order for policymaking to occur. It is necessary that scholars not only identify such differences, but seek to explain where such nuanced difference come from and the impact of such nuances on policy outputs.

Another difference across congressional chambers revealed by analyses presented in chapter 4 is the overall difference in the jurisdictional organization of the House and Senate.

Institutional Dis-Organization

The descriptive statistics presented in Tables 9 (House) and 10 (Senate) revealed an extreme difference in the nature of competition and complexity of policy issue jurisdiction between the House and Senate. According the measure of jurisdictional entropy calculated in chapter 4, the House is nearly three times more disorganized than the House. While this difference may be somewhat expected due to the chamber simply have more than four times as many members, this is an extensive difference in the disorganization of the committee system and therefore the primary system for

originating and moving legislation within chamber. Such disorganization in the House, relative to the Senate, has serious implications for the policy process more broadly.

As a school teacher might say, in the House there appears to be a tendency for "too many hands to be in the cookie jar." The increased disorganization in the House committee system is a result of more committees seeking and competing for access to more policy issues, creating an unpredictable, and a not so divided-division of labor across committees. This competition can lead to changes in the jurisdictional rights of committees as well as introduce new information into policy debates and create policy change (Jones, Baumgartner and Talbert 1993; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; King 1994, 1997; Talbert, Jones and Baumgartner 1995; Hardin 1998; Baumgartner, Jones and MacLeod 2000; Hardin 2002). This difference in the ability of the Senate to maintain order in its legislative organization when compared to the House may contribute to the perspective suggesting that the House is now increasingly prone to non-traditional policy processes and the Senate is still more prone to the text book approach (Sinclair 1997). In a disorganized system like the House, parties and leaders may need to get creative in order to move prioritized pieces of legislation while in the Senate, the traditional operating procedure may suffice.

Normatively, it is unclear whether a clear division of labor or a more disorganized environment creates a more positive environment for policymaking. A disorganized system would be open to higher levels of information flow, giving more perspectives regarding policy problems and solutions more airtime. This may ultimately lead to wide shifts in policy preferences (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones and Baumgartner 2005), at least in one chamber, but create intense conflict within the

political system at large. Is this a good thing? Would greater organization in the House increase the ability for the chambers to communicate and craft quality legislation? Does the higher level of organization in the Senate committee system create a stagnant or consistently responsive legislative system? The surprising impact of changes in committee membership facilitating committees policy success noted in chapter 4 (Table 13), suggests that it does and that the Senate may need "shake-ups" to generate policy change. One may argue that this is evidence of an adaptive cycle of neglect and over-reaction that characterizes policymaking in Congress (Jones 2001; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Additionally, the disorganized House system may be increasingly prone to facilitating policy change because the ability for the electorate to trace the chain of blame if policies fail, while the conventional route in the Senate leaves a clear path of blame for policy mistakes (Arnold 1990). One thing is clear, this difference in the nature of policy making between the two congressional chambers deserves further, extensive investigation.

Similar to the discussion of partisan and ideological difference and representational differences, along with the differences in institutional disorganization it is clear that the House and Senate manage the policy environment in sometimes strangely different way. Yet evidence presented throughout this dissertation suggests that committees in both chambers certainly respond to a variety of the same demands emanating from the policy environment. However, such responses to the policy environment appear to manifest in ways unique to each individual chamber. This highlights the dangerous water in which congressional scholarship is treading after years of neglecting comparative analyses of policymaking in the House and Senate.

While congressional scholarship has often succeeded in identifying chamber differences, explaining the development of such differences and the ultimate policy impact of such differences is just beginning to receive the attention it deserves. It is necessary to examine the Congress for what it is, a bicameral lawmaking body. Too often studies of the Congress attempt to provide generalizable theories of congressional phenomena but only regarding one chamber. However, based on the evidence presented in this dissertation, I argue that general theories of congressional policymaking should be the focus of scholarship. General theories, built to encompass both the House and Senate, create scenarios where empirical analysis and hypothesis testing will uncover nuanced differences between the chambers. This would increase our ability to predict and explain congressional policymaking in more practical and tangible ways.

I argue that this dissertation, combined with existing research, moves toward a general theory of adaptive policymaking in Congress that centers the flow of information between congressional committees and the broader policy environment.

Managing Information and Political Decision Making

In *Politics and the Architecture of Choice*, Bryan D. Jones (2001) makes a compelling case for the adaptive nature of decision making and choice in organizations and institutions. Jones (2001) eloquently describes the realistic nature of adaptive information processing that more genuinely represents the decision making capabilities of people and organization that the perfectly rational approach utilized in many studies of political institutions. Because human rationality is bounded and the ability for humans adapt to our environment is limited, Jones (2001) argues that actions taken by

both individuals and organizations cannot simply be based on objective information. Instead, through filtering information in our environment, we determine what pieces of information are relevant and which are irrelevant, and apply that information to the decision making task at hand. Facilitating what Jones (2001) calls an inherent tendency to "overemphasize" some factors and "neglect" others. Jones (2001) articulates how these same tendencies manifest in groups, and thus decision making bodies such as political institutions. This dissertation paints a picture of exactly how the U.S. Congress replicates this tendency toward adaptive information process through the management of the policy process by congressional committees and subcommittees.

In my theory of information management in Congress, I seek to paint a picture of the complex and information rich environment that surrounds the national policymaking process. I argue that Congress navigates this environment by allowing committees and subcommittees to manage information, filtering information in response to the variety of endogenous and exogenous demands facing the institution in order to structure the flow of information based on what policy issues and perspectives congressional institutions determine are relevant to the policy agenda. Congressional hearings serve as a management tool for committees and subcommittees to shape the "problem space" (Jones 2001) to match the desire of, and demands facing the Congress. Empirical evidence based on statistical analysis, as well as participant observation and interviews of congressional staff, suggests that this is precisely the role and purpose of committee and subcommittee action. Additionally, evidence suggests that when committees and subcommittees manage information in the policy environment effectively, success in the policy making arena follows. This dissertation adds to a

growing body of work that boundedly-rational and adaptive nature of decision making in American political institutions, especially the Congress.

Existing work highlights these decision making tendencies in major policy changes in Congress (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones and Baumgartner 2005), changes in budget allocations within the federal budget (Jones and Baumgartner 2005; True, Jones and Baumgartner 2007); and even within the regulatory tendencies of the federal bureaucracy (Workman, Jones and Jochim 2009). I argue that this dissertation builds on this growing body of institutional research by providing evidence that the Congress responds to variety of competing demands in managing information to construct the problem space utilized to make policy decisions, and that this activity impacts the success or failure of committee policymaking. In future work, I hope to build on this project by examining whether or not the tendency of "overemphasis" and "neglect" also manifest in the particular types of information and policy perspectives that committees and subcommittees attend to during the hearing process. Through case studies of individual committees and subcommittees, I hope to examine the ebbs and flows in the types of witnesses and the political positioning of information provided by witnesses in congressional committees. Additionally, I hope to examine the type of information excluded from the hearing process by committees and subcommittees that are still submitted to the political record via open petition. If this body of work is correct, there should be consistencies in the types of information emphasized in hearings, and a corresponding neglect to particular issues that is visible via trends in the nature of information submitted to hearing records by groups or individuals via the public record. Going one step further, future research should also study the reported

record of individual bills to be explain and understand the nuance influence of information management on policy formulation and adoption.

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Appendix: Interviews of Congressional Staff

From the Fall of 2008 till the Fall of 2009 I worked for the House Committee on Education and Labor, Chairman's Staff, as a policy assistant during an *American Political Science Association Congressional Fellowship*. During this time I observed the internal workings of this committee which inform my perspective of policymaking in congressional institutions. I also utilized this access to Congress to conduct semi-structured interviews (Kingdon 1973) with congressional staffers in order to inform my theoretical propositions and wrestle with empirical findings. Interviews with individual staff members were acquired via "snowball" sampling. Even as someone inside the Congress at the time, I found this to be the most effective way to acquire respondents who were willing to speak frankly regarding congressional policymaking activity due to the assumed level of trust garnered via friendly referrals. Because this type of sampling is a non-probability method that relies of referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects, it can be prone to bias. Due to this fact, I chose not to utilize the results of interviews for systematic quantitative analysis. Instead they are used throughout the project to add richness to the project by incorporating "inside-the-beltway" perspectives to propositions and findings. In all, I conducted 48 semi-structured interviews with individual congressional staff members. Of the 48 respondents, eight were working for Republican members of committee staff and 40 were serving on Democratic staff (some of both sides having been employed by the opposing party previously). 36 of my respondents were serving on committee staff and 12 in individual member offices. Many of the respondents working on committee staff had previous experience working in member offices. The experience level of the

respondents varied greatly, ranging from one to 40 years of experience working in Congress. Clearly this is not a "representative" sample of congressional staff members, but it is a diverse set of respondents. Despite the diversity of the sample, the respondents of all backgrounds had strikingly consistent and similar answers to most of my questions.

In hopes of generating the most thoughtful and frank responses to my inquiries as possible, many steps were taken. In hopes of making the interviews pressure free situations, interviews were scheduled for no more than 30 minutes. Although I took brief notes and maintained a checklist for expected and common responses (more detailed write ups were made immediately following the interviews), the interviews were not recorded and staff members were promised anonymity. I also made every effort to conduct the interviews in a conversational and relaxed manner. This approach was helpful in creating and maintaining an environment that promoted frank and thoughtful responses. This also allowed me to engage each subject in unique ways as the details and topical examples provided by the subjects varied, liberally inserting further questions or comments into the discussion. While such traits of unstructured interviewing were adopted to improve my rapport with interview subjects, I believe I combined positive features of both unstructured and structured interviewing with my semi-structured approach.

I did utilize and interview schedule in order to introduce structure, reliability, and replicability into my interviewing process. The scheduled questions were asked of each respondent, with the same wording. The order of questioning did sometimes vary. Thus, although there was a degree adaptation to individual respondents, I do believe the

interview data created to be replicable and potentially quantifiable (keeping the clear biases of a small, "snowball" sample discussed above in mind). The interview schedule consisted of the following questions:

1. What do you see as the role of committees and subcommittees in the policy process?
2. What do you see as the purpose of hearings?
3. Are either full committee hearings or subcommittee hearings more influential than the other? (Why?)
4. Is there a difference between the work of full committees and the work of their subcommittees? (Why?)
5. Who determines the policy perspectives displayed in hearings?
6. Do you consider hearings to be an outlet for competing policy perspectives?
7. Do you think hearings influence the views of members?
8. Are some subcommittees more powerful than others? (Why?)
9. Do you believe that hearings are used to primarily kill legislation or discredit specific policy positions?
10. From what sources do you commonly collect policy information?

Incorporating this schedule of questions into a conversational exchange about committee, subcommittees, and hearings in congressional policymaking added great depth to my thinking and consideration of the topics under investigation. I believe the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for thoughtful and frank responses

from congressional staff regarding work they are commonly engaged in, but seldom directly describe in words. In the words of John W. Kingdon, I believe that my semi-structured approach produced "the quantifiable data one desires from a structured interview, while at the same time preserving rapport and responses that are relevant to the particular respondent" (1973, p.287).