TAKING THE LEAD

CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE POLICY PROCESS

by

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Taking the Lead: Congressional Staffers and Their Role in the Policy Process

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ABSTRACT

The world of congressional staff is largely an unseen one, both in the media and within political science. Little scholarship exists on their role in Congress, with nearly none on their role in the policy process and agenda setting. Most of the research on Congressional agenda setting and policy development ignores the role staff play in the process, assuming members do all of the work themselves and staff handle menial tasks. This dissertation looks at the role Congressional staff play in the agenda setting process in Congress. Using the data acquired from an original survey of over 500 current and former congressional staff in Washington, DC and case studies of five individual House and Senate offices, I am able to determine when and under what conditions staff are setting the agenda in Congress. Applying the principal-agent theory most often seen in bureaucracy research, I show staff come up with policy ideas and often set the policy agendas in individual offices and committees. Staff who have a better personal relationship with their bosses, have more experience, and have larger professional networks are more likely to set that policy agenda. These findings have significant implications for representative government; staff are hired to carry out the preferences of, and do much of the work we associate with, the elected members of Congress and thus, the voters.

DEDICATION

To Chad and Ellie – the adventure continues!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Walking through the halls of the Russell Senate Office Building or the Longworth House Office Building in Washington, DC will quickly give one the impression that this country's legislative branch is run by people in their 20's and 30's. These are not the members of Congress; these are the Congressional staff which number in the thousands, on both sides of the Capitol. Kingdon (2003) called Congressional staff "hidden" players in the political game, but they are anything but hidden in everyday Washington.

In fact, *Roll Call*, one of two newspapers that serve Capitol Hill, publishes the "Roll Call Fabulous 50" which is a list of the 50 most influential staffers on the Hill every year. They call them "the people behind the scenes who wield the power and drive their party's message" (Roll Call staff, 2014). These staffers are ranked based on access, mastery, influence, and spin (Roll Call staff, 2014). Top staffers are also acknowledged by their bosses on the floor of the U.S. House or Senate, when a large bill passes[1] or when a particularly valued staff member leaves congressional employment[2]. These statements are entered into the Congressional record, preserved for posterity. However, these staff members remain hidden, for the most part, from anyone outside the Beltway. For the most part, the only time regular Americans hear about them is when things go wrong, like their supposed exemption from Obamacare, the shooting of Gabe

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[1] Instances of this are numerous. One such example was a speech by Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison during the passage of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 Conference Report on February 06, 2012.
[2] One recent example was a December 4, 2014 speech by Sen. Thune paying tribute to his fifteen year employee Summer Pitlick Mersinger. This speech is available in the Congressional Record or at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqhuZPVdjoM&feature=youtu.be

Zimmerman during the 2011 Tucson shooting, or when staffers were involved in the Jack Abramoff scandal.[3]

It is understood Congressional staff are important to the policy process in Washington (Hall 1993; DeGregorio 1994). It is also known they can be leaders in the policy process (Hammond 1990). It is, however, still unanswered exactly what effect these staffers have on policy idea generation and development. It is also unknown whether staffers are perfect delegates of their bosses or whether this principal-agent relationship between the member of Congress and the staffer can break down. Further, do members of Congress actually want this relationship to break down or switch roles; do members knowingly, or unknowingly, end up following their staff on agenda setting and policy decisions?

Using an original data set, this dissertation will answer the question: What role do Congressional staffers play in the policy process, specifically in terms of agenda setting? More specifically, when and under what conditions do Congressional staffers make, or influence, policy decisions? Do Congressional staffers step out in front of their bosses in agenda setting, policy negotiation and development?

This research asks important questions for understanding how the principle-agent relationship works in Congress. A great deal of research focuses on that relationship between voters and elected officials and between Congress, or the President, and the bureaucracy. Little research exists that looks at the relationship between elected members of Congress and their staffers. No research exists which surveys the staffers directly on their views of this relationship.

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[3] Numerous news stories are available on each of these examples. A notable exception to the media focusing on when things go wrong is a 1991 New York Times article entitled "Congress's Influential Aides Discover Power but Little Glory on Capitol Hill."

Little research addresses exactly what role staffers are playing in the policy process[4]. Does the principal-agent relationship appear in Congress? Does the agent follow their principal's preferences? Is this potential ignoring of the preferences bad for representative government and good policy? What effect do these situations have on the policy process?

The first contribution of this research is the ability to better understand the principal-agent relationship between members of Congress and their staff. Also, this research makes a contribution to the policy making and agenda-setting literatures, which often leave Congressional staffers out of the story. Finally, this research will make a very important normative contribution, by gaining a better understanding of our system of representative democracy.

Throughout this dissertation, I will broadly refer to, and use the blanket term, Congressional (or House or Senate) staffers[5]. While this term encompasses five different types of staff, outlined below, employed by Congress, this research will predominately focus on the first three types. In keeping with how those employed in Congress speak, I will use "Senate" to refer to the United States Senate and "House" to refer to the United States House of Representatives. I will use "Congress", "Congressional", or "the Hill" to refer to the collective branch and the staffers employed there, generally.

The first, and largest, category is the member's personal staff. These individuals work directly for a specific member of Congress, and are physically located either in Washington, D.C. or the state or district. They are not campaign staffers, who are not directly studied in this research[6], but rather official congressional employees. The big distinction here is between

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[4] A similar vein of research looks at the role city managers play, in relation to mayors or city councils, in policy making. See Zhang and Feiock 2009.

[5] A number of the insights and information contained within this dissertation are unattributed, as they are supported by the author's personal experiences. I spent seven years working on the personal legislative staffs for two different U.S. Senators and with the Environment and Public Works Committee.

[6] Campaign staff are not directly surveyed, but as many campaign staffers become Congressional staff, they are indirectly included.

district/state and DC staff. District, or state in the case of the Senate, staff are primarily responsible for constituent case work. DC staffers, for the most part, handle the policy and legislative tasks for the member. Press responsibilities depend on individual member preferences, but many members have at least one press staff person in each location.

The second type of staff is committee staff. These staffers work for a specific committee or subcommittee. These staff are usually split between majority and minority and are normally loyal to a particular party, chairman or ranking member. However, some staff experts are shared by both sides or will transfer to work for whichever party is in the majority.

The third type is leadership staff. These are staffers who work for the chambers' leaders and are separate from both personal and committee. However, they have most likely served on a committee or on a personal staff in the past.

The fourth type is commission staff. This is the smallest category and includes staff who work for special Congressional commissions. Because of their size, ad-hoc nature, and relative obscurity within the process, these staffers will not be discussed in any detail in this research.

The final type of staff is officers and House and Senate officials' staff. In the House, this includes the Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, Chief Administrative Officer, Chaplain, Parliamentarian, Interparliamentary Affairs, Law Revision Counsel, Legislative Counsel, General Counsel, Inspector General, Emergency Preparedness and Planning Operations, and House Historian (Petersen, Reynolds, and Wilhelm 2010). In the Senate, this type of staff includes the Secretary of the Senate, Sergeant at Arms, Chaplain, Legislative Counsel, and Legal Counsel (Petersen, Reynolds, and Wilhelm 2010). These staff will not be surveyed or discussed in this dissertation, due to their lack of involvement in policy development.

History of Congressional Staff

The first question some may ask is why members of Congress need staff in the first place. Malbin (1980) argues it is because Congress has failed to handle its increasing workload. Additionally, as members' workload increases, they want to put their stamp on important issues, become less dependent on bureaucrats within the executive branch, receive credit for what they are doing (Mayhew 1974), and in essence centralize power as much as possible (Malbin 1980). These activities require staff. However, not all members are supportive of more staff and view them with skepticism, arguing they have too much power, insulate members, and take up too much space (Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). Even with the skepticism, not a single current member of Congress operates without a DC policy staff (see Legistorm data).

The first part-time staffers appeared in Congress in the 1840's, and by 1856 committees in both the House and Senate were employing full-time staff clerks (Malbin 1980; Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). Members were able to hire personal staff in 1893, and the number of staff increased following the passage of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (Malbin 1980). The greatest increase in staff, however, occurred following the passage of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 and the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, which created the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the House and Senate Budget Committees (Petersen 2008). Table 1.1 shows the increase in staffing over a period of 50 years.

Table 1.1 Congressional Staffing Trends from 1955-2005[a]

	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Senate					6351	6995	7168	7217	6830	6085	6803
House					10688	11843	12320	11964	10323	10419	10573
Congress	5706	6866	8754	11127	17039	18838	19488	19181	17453	16504	17376

a: From 1954-1974, House and Senate employee counts were reported together under the heading "Congress." Source: Congressional Research Service, Legislative Branch Staffing, 1954-2007

From 1977 to 2010, the number of House staff, which includes both personal and committee staff, increased from 8,831 to 9,808, which is an 11.06% increase (Petersen et al 2010). House personal office staff, 7,360 individuals in 2009, account for about three fourths of the entire number of staff (Petersen et al 2010). House committee staff numbered 1362 in 2009, and there were 219 leadership staff in the same time period. Congressional commissions[7] employed 29 individuals, and there were 828 staff within the offices of the officers and officials (Peterson et al 2010).

A note must be made about a very specific period of reductions in staff during this period of otherwise significant and steady staff increases. This reduction, which involved specifically committee staff, occurred following the 1994 Republican takeover of the House. Speaker Newt Gingrich cut committee staff by one-third[8]. While the outgoing majority party committee staff losing their jobs is a normal practice in Congress, these staffers were not replaced by Republican staff[9]. Speaker Gingrich simply eliminated the positions, decreasing the number of staff members supporting the committees in the House. This was done in an overall effort to cut budgets across the board, in all branches of government. These decreases can be seen in Table 1.2. Senate staff levels also decreased during this period. Interestingly in 1994, even before Speaker Gingrich was handed the gavel in 1995, staff levels were decreasing, down from a high point for both chambers in 1991. Staff levels for both chambers continue to remain lower than they were in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

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[7] In 2009, these included the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards; the Helsinki Commission; and the Congressional-Executive Commission on the People's Republic of China.
[8] Lee Drutman and Steven Teles "Why Congress Relies on Lobbyists Instead of Thinking for Itself." *The Atlantic*. March 10, 2015.
[9] Bruce Bartlett "Gingrich and the Destruction of Congressional Expertise." *New York Times*. November 29, 2011

Table 1.2 Staffing Levels of Congress from 1990-2000[b]

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Senate	7217	7495	7461	7417	7207	6830	6572	6768	6106	6164	6085
House	11964	12714	12676	12683	11516	10623	10351	10477	10435	10532	10419
Congress	19181	20209	20137	20100	18723	17453	16923	17245	16541	16696	16504

b:Staff numbers from Congressional Research Service "Legislative Branch Staffing 1954-2007

The overall staff increase is even more noticeable in the Senate, which over the same time period (1977-2010) grew from 3,380 to 6,099, an 80.44% increase (Petersen et al 2010). In 2010, there were 4,346 Senate personal staff, 1246 committee staff, 176 leadership staff, and 331 individuals employed by the officers and officials of the Senate (Petersen et al 2010).

Even with these increases, the early 1990's saw a decrease in numbers of overall legislative branch staffers, but the Congressional Research Service (CRS) has seen a slow increase in total numbers of legislative branch staff during the 2000's (Petersen 2008). As of 2005, there were 14,248 legislative agency[10] employees for a total of 31,620 legislative branch staff (Peterson 2008). This dissertation will focus solely on the congressional (committee, personal, and leadership) staff, who perform policy and messaging tasks directly on behalf of members of Congress.

While these staff increases are significant, with the advent of the 24 hour news cycle, and the increased constituent accountability of members which comes with it, why have staff sizes not grown even more during this time period? The simple answer is there are funding allowance caps. For 2009, the House Members' representational allowance (MRA) was capped at $922,350, which is the entire personal staff personnel budget for individual members of Congress (Brudnick 2009). House members are also limited to hiring 18 full time personal staff members, which are customarily split evenly between their DC and district offices.

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[10] These include: the Office of the Architect of the Capitol; U.S. Botanic Garden; U.S. Capitol Police; Congressional Budget Office; Government Accountability Office; Government Printing Office; Library of Congress; Congressional Research Service; and Office of Compliance.

Senators have a great deal more leeway in the number of staff they hire. Their office budgets are based on home state population, as well as the distance from Washington, DC to their home state. For instance, in fiscal year (FY) 2010, the average office budget allocation was $3,343,867.24. The range was $3,090,168 for the Delaware senators to $4,873,149 for the California senators (Brudnick 2009). It should be noted, this budget is not just used for Senate personnel salaries; it also pays for most official Senate expenses for the member and their staff.

So What?

Yes, congressional staff are important to the policy process and this dissertation ventures into new territories with the PAT and its application to the member-staff relationship, as well as providing new information on congressional agenda-setting. But why should we care? The answer proves to be more complex than just simply saying staff are involved in the agenda process.

The framers of the Constitution gave a great deal of power to Congress, outlining many more enumerated powers to the legislative branch than the other two branches combined.[11] When creating this new document, they also created a new form of government, a republican form of government. Madison, in Federalist Paper 39 said:

> *"It is evident that no other form would be reconcilable with the genius of the people of America; with the fundamental principles of the Revolution; or with that honorable determination which animates every votary of freedom, to rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government."*

In this form of government, power and authority are derived from a majority of the population, not a faction of the population. Members of Congress are elected directly (House of

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[11] See United States Constitution Article 1, Section 8

Representative) or indirectly (Senate)[12] by the people. The framers intended the members of the House to have the same interests and share an "intimate sympathy"[13] with the people who they represent. They intended this form of indirect representation to take the place of a meeting of the citizenry, or rather, direct democracy. They even anticipated these members would be reelected numerous times and become "masters of the public business."[14] In this way, we can see the framers of the Constitution assumed indirect democracy and representation would lead to these members of Congress acquiring great deals of expertise on the issues facing the country. Further, they required the qualifications of Senators to be more strenuous than those for the House, as the duties of the Senate require more information and stability of character.[15]

In this indirect democracy system, voters elect representatives to represent them in Congress, to represent the interests and preferences of the voting populace. Direct democracy is not feasible in the United States, so voters delegate the task of governing to members of Congress. These members of Congress have the time and resources to develop expertise on the issues. According to Dahl's (1956) democratic theory, there is broad agreement across America's citizens about core values and beliefs; because our representatives are part of that populace, they share the same beliefs. Therefore, voters have an expectation that their elected representatives will carry out their preferences and represent the interests of the public.

How, then, do congressional staff fit into this picture of American republican government and indirect democracy? There is no mention of staff in the Federalist Papers or the Constitution. The framers intended members of the House and Senate to do this work on their own, to represent their constituents on their own. However, that is not how the situation has evolved and

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[12] Prior to the ratification of the 17th Amendment of the Constitution on April 8, 1913. This amendment changed the election of senators to be by popular vote, rather than state legislatures.
[13] Federalist Paper 52, author is either Alexander Hamilton or James Madison.
[14] Federalist Paper 53, author is either Alexander Hamilton or James Madison.
[15] Federalist Paper 62, author is either Alexander Hamilton or James Madison

it is not reality. Those researchers, and voters, who ignore the role of congressional staff, do so at their own peril. Members of Congress now have an army of staff, both in Washington and their state or district, who help them with the job of governing and representation.

The member who drafts all of her own legislation, or in some cases even reads it before it's introduced with her name on it, is long gone. Members who research policies and come up with all of their own ideas and amendments to legislation are similarly rare. Only occasionally will members read their constituent mail, no longer staying in close contact with the people they represent. Instead, staff are doing these things. This situation dumps the whole notion of indirect democracy, set up by the framers of the Constitution, on its head. Voters do not elect congressional staff; in fact most do not even know they exist. These staff never go before the voters for approval. Therefore, how can they be held accountable to the people? In reality, they cannot, unless their boss is voted out of office or be let go by their boss. But, then an offending staffer might simply jump to another office or committee. The idea of staffers doing so much work for members of Congress seems at the least perplexing to voters, and at the most shocking and appalling.

However, what would Dahl say? He (Dahl 1956) would argue that since these staffers are Americans and since voters, members, and yes, even staffers share the same basic set of beliefs, these staffers are doing exactly what the voters would want. They are active participants in the indirect representation. They, on behalf of the members, have been delegated to carry out the preferences of voters and they are in fact carrying out these preferences. They work hand in hand with members of Congress in representing the American voter. With more and more being expected of our federal representatives, and 24 hour media scrutiny placed upon them, staffers are the only way members are able to complete all that which voters expect of them.

With the current approval rating of Congress being about 15%[16] and the view of Congressional staff most likely hovering somewhere close to that with the only news being scandal or negative press, most voters might not agree with this positive assessment, or remain skeptical of the situation. This is my argument, however. Staffers come to Washington, with a common belief in American values, and draft legislation, come up with policy ideas, and respond to constituent inquiries. They are an important piece of the indirect representation puzzle, doing much of the work the members of Congress do not have time, energy, resources, or expertise to do themselves. Staffers build up their own expertise and, with the blessing and authority granted to them by their members, accurately represent voters' interests. Further, these very experienced staffers are hired by other members or committees because of that specific expertise.

Just like members of Congress, sometimes these staffers are trustee type representatives (doing what they think is best, sometimes going against the wishes of the constituents to make the best decision, based on expertise) and sometimes they are delegate representatives (doing what the constituents prefer), but always they are active participants in this system of indirect democracy.

My argument is that indirect representation would not work without congressional staff; nothing would get done and we would lose valuable policy and procedural expertise which is held by these staffers. We cannot go back to the way it used to be, before congressional staff existed, when members did it all themselves. What we can do is better understand these individuals and what makes them tick. This dissertation attempts to do just that, to better understand staff, the member-staff relationship, and when staff set the policy agenda.

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[16] Real Clear Politics Average as of May 4, 2015,
http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/other/congressional_job_approval-903.html

This research seeks to shed a light on the unknown world of congressional staff and investigate what role they play in congressional policy making. Digging deeper, it aims to understand under what conditions (personal characteristics, institutional factors, and member specifics) staff will play a role in agenda setting. Examining these factors will help us better understand our entire system of indirect representation and how it really looks in today's Congress, taking us up out of the old scholarly view of Congress, based on outdated considerations.

Going Forward:

The remainder of this chapter outlines the previous work done in the areas of congressional staff, including a description of them, their types and duties, their role in the policy process, and case study research. It finishes with a discussion of the preferences and goals of members of Congress.

Chapter 2 includes a discussion of the principal-agent relationship and theory, including its application in political science and why I am using it to study congressional staff. The agenda-setting literature is briefly discussed, concluding with the definition used in this work. Finally, this chapter contains the ten hypotheses tested in this research.

Chapter 3 describes the research design and the survey I used for this analysis. It outlines criticisms and pitfalls of this research. An overview of the 21st century congressional staff is discussed. All variables, created from the survey, used in the analysis are included in this chapter.

Chapters 4 and 5 contain the qualitative analysis of the survey data. Chapter 4 tests all ten hypotheses using the more agent-specific dependent variables. Chapter 5 empirically tests the ten

hypotheses using the dependent variables which takes the member's actions and when the staffer goes against the member's preferences into consideration.

Chapter 6 qualitatively studies staff agenda-setting by looking at five congressional offices and how staff agenda-setting looks in an entire office setting.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 7, acknowledges limits of this work, provides the normative implications of this research, and outlines future work.

Review of Relevant Literature

The available research on these nearly 20,000 Congressional staff in Washington, DC, while limited, can be divided into three broad categories: a description of staffers and their titles and duties, which includes the diversity of staffers (women and minorities); the role and influence of staff in the policy process; and specific policy, committee, and staff type case studies.

Description of Staffers and Their Job Roles

It is appropriate to begin with descriptions of these individuals, both as individuals and their roles in Congress, as this is where the modern research began (see Fox and Webb Hammond 1977; Malbin 1980). Even though most of the descriptive research on Congressional staff is over 30 years old, many of these descriptive characteristics are applicable today. The research detailed in this review will provide a comparison, and framework, for the survey data gathered and used in this dissertation.

Overall, Congressional staffers are young, usually starting their careers on the Hill fresh out of undergraduate, law, public policy, or business school. Thus, the majority of Congressional

staff are in their 20's and 30's. The survey data used in this research shows not much has changed in the 35 years since Fox and Hammond (1977) conducted their surveys. This was not widely understood when the duo did their research, however, and they were surprised to find staff younger than they expected. They also found that the younger staff had higher levels of education than the older staffers.

A notable difference between the Capitol Hill in 1977 and today is the greater presence of women in higher positions, but the same can be said for women in Washington in general. While a gender gap still exists in Washington, it is much smaller than it was when Fox and Webb Hammond (1977) wrote their book[17]. Three-fourths of all people studied for their book were male. Women earned less, held fewer college degrees, and had lower status positions (Fox and Hammond 1977). They only found women in the roles of executive secretary, secretary, personal secretary, and assistant clerk.

It could be assumed equality measures are not reaching the very institution that passes those laws, but Friedman and Nakamura (1991) find that women are making good progress in gaining spots on Congressional committee staffs. However, they are not staying long, nor are they reaching the top positions on those committees (Friedman and Nakamura 1991).

Women are not the only minority staffer group to be studied by Congressional scholars. African American staffers are found more often in district offices than in the DC offices of members of Congress (Ziniel 2009). Further, they are not found in high policy positions, instead working in constituent services (Ziniel 2009). While Ziniel (2009) argues this is a normatively bad thing for African Americans, as they are having less policy influence, Grose, Mangum, and Martin (2007) find that African-American legislators in majority-minority districts hire a higher

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[17] These observations are the author's. As a female in Washington during the first seven years of the 21st century, I saw firsthand the role of women. The survey research contained in this dissertation provides further evidence for these observations.

proportion of African American staffers in their district offices. This has a positive effect on minority empowerment in those districts.

Moving beyond just simple age, gender, and racial descriptions, Capitol Hill staffers tend to have a similar personality type (Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). In general, staffers are highly educated, have strong party preferences and the same ideology as their boss, are from the same state as their boss, have high status, expertise, and are committed to their jobs and public service (Romzek and Utter 1997; Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). All staffers are hired for their judgment, loyalty, and expertise (Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). Differences display themselves between the chambers, however. Senate staff are more expert, specialized, highly trained, have stronger ideologies than their boss, and more of them come from their boss's home state (Fox and Hammond 1977).

The staffer's world is one of professionalism and courtesy, but unlike members, who are predominantly accountable to their reelection constituency (Fenno 1978), staffers have many layers of accountability, which includes anyone higher up in the hierarchy of the office, the member, and the constituents (Romzek 2000).

These staffers work exceptionally long, unpredictable hours (Romzek and Utter 1997). Most senior policy and press staffers are expected to be at their desk when their chamber is in session, even if that means 2 am, or throughout the night. They are on call to their bosses seven days a week, 24 hours a day. As Malbin (1977) found, this is not conducive to raising a family or having a life outside of one's job. After the advent of the Blackberry, every Capitol Hill staffer's must-have accessory, they were expected to be responsive at all hours, every day, many senior staffers sleeping with them next to their heads.

Together with the long hours, the workloads of congressional staffers can be intense. They are expected to take constituent phone calls and emails, draft and analyze legislation, and take all meetings within their areas of expertise. It could be argued the long, unpredictable hours, extreme workload, stress, and little to no personal recognition for their work are the main reasons we see a Congress mainly staffed by young professionals, and high turnover.

Other researchers have noticed Congressional staff careers are, in fact, relatively short (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981), but have also noted staffers gain substantial responsibility from their bosses in a very short amount of time (Peterson 2008). These short careers lead to high overall turnover, especially among Senate staffers who are often sought after for other jobs (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981). In fact, many a young staffer sees work in Congress as a way to get a better job elsewhere (Malbin 1980). Staff members often have their eyes on a career outside Congress (Malbin 1980). "…the staff person finds it important to develop a reputation for himself that, while not conflicting with his loyalty to his chairman, establishes his reputation as someone to be reckoned with in his own right" (Malbin, 164, 1980).

More specifically, previous research has found there was less staff turnover in the higher management positions, but a great deal within the legislative and press staff (Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). In 1977, the legislative staff averaged a little over 2 years in their jobs, with six years being the longest a staff served with any congressman (Fox and Webb Hammond). These numbers need updating as Congressional careers appear to be getting longer rather than shorter. This potential increased longevity could be playing a role in the overall principal-agent relationship, and have important policy implications.

High staff turnover in 1977 was attributed to the member and senior staff expecting young staffers to move on after a certain period of time (Fox and Webb Hammond). They did not

want the staffer to develop a career in Congress, or get into a routine or rut with their work. Fox and Webb Hammond (1977) hinted that the longer staffers were employed by the same member of Congress, the less responsive they would be in their work.

With this high turnover, comes the need for new staff, and recruitment of those staff. Overall, most members of Congress prefer to hire staff with ties to the state or district they represent (Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). These staffers inherently understand the issues and the people, and even the local press of the district or state; they speak the same language. Many factors have been found to affect how many staffers a member recruits from their home. In fact the more conservative a member, the more they hire from a home state, but Western members were found to hire fewer (Foxx and Webb Hammond 1977). One reason for this might be the sheer geographic distance from Western states to Washington, DC. It is hard to get young people to move that far from their home state. Home state is not the only important aspect, however. In the end, these potential staff must be well-educated, be in the right place at the right time, have good recommendations, and the right contacts (Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). In 30 years, not much has changed on that end.

Types and Duties of Staff

Congressional staff can be categorized in different ways, one being whether they are House or Senate, another being whether they work for a committee or in the personal office of the member of Congress, and finally their job title. While Price (1971), Malbin (1980), and Fox and Webb Hammond (1977) all developed classifications or new staff organizational methods, I will use the easier committee/personal, House/Senate, and job title distinctions. This is the

classification and language used by actual members and staffers. It is important, however, to understand how the political science field has understood, and organized, Congressional staff.

Committee Staff

Throughout this dissertation, I use the term "committee staff" to refer to all those staffers who are employed by a Congressional committee. For the most part, these are staffers for standing committees, as these committees play the largest role in policy development, authorization, and funding. This term will include both the majority and minority staff on a particular committee, and when applicable that distinction will be made.

Price (1971) was the first to describe committee staff with the terms policy entrepreneurs and professionals. Professionals spent a great deal of their time analyzing legislative proposals brought to them from interest groups or committee members. Entrepreneurs sought out opportunities where policy could be improved in the interest of the chairman and appeared to be activists.

Henschen and Sidlow (1986) continued the research of individual committee staff characteristics begun by Price (1971), by sending questionnaires to staffers on eight House committees[18]. They found many of the committee staffers were recruited to come to these committees and very few applied for the job (Henschen and Sidlow 1986). This reinforces the idea that, in Washington, who you know matters as much as what you know.

Committee staff can be divided into two categories: those that believe they work for the chair of the committee (or ranking member), and those that see themselves as working for the committee as a whole (Malbin 1980). Those that are loyal to a specific member usually get more

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[18] These committees included: Appropriations, Armed Services, Budget, Government Operations, Interior and Insular Affairs, Merchant Marine and Fisheries, Public Works and Transportation, and Ways and Means.

responsibility and freedom from their bosses, reading and writing the bill texts for their bosses and briefing them on what is in the bills (Malbin 1980). When their boss leaves the committee for any reason, those staff usually also leave the committee.

The Senate committee staff of the late 1970's differed from House staff in a few aspects. They tended to be more involved in drafting legislation and investigations (Fox and Webb Hammond 1977), and had greater contact with lobbyists. In the last 30 years, these distinctions between the chambers seem to have moderated.

DeGregorio (1988) changes the focus of this research by looking at the committee staffers' policy preferences. She finds these staffers are not advocating policies that their bosses would not have thought of before (DeGregorio 1988). In other words, staffers are acting as perfect agents of the members. She did find that some staffers do keep ideas from reaching their bosses, but only in the interest of expediency and continuity (1988). Unlike Price, she argues these staffers are not entrepreneurs, and operating in a traditional sense of the Congressional principal-agent relationship.

The actual job titles and duties of staffers are very similar for the House and Senate. Most committees are split between the majority and minority party, with a Staff Director, Chief of Staff or Clerk heading up each side, and often a deputy. Both the majority and minority committee staff have a legal team, called counselors. Both also have a press team, headed by a communications director and rounded out with press secretaries and press aids. The policy staffers are called professional or research staff and are usually specifically tied to either the majority or minority. The committee staffs are rounded out with various executive and staff assistants, all of whom are usually assigned to the majority or minority party on the committee.

Personal Staff

Personal staff includes all staffers who are employed by a specific member of Congress. This includes both those who work in Washington, as well as those who work in the field (district or state offices). Much of the research on personal staff focuses on describing these individuals and their jobs.

House and Senate personal staffers differ more than their corresponding committee staff. House aides are more generalists in their policy expertise than their counterparts in the Senate. This can be easily explained by the fact that House staffs are smaller than Senate staffs (see earlier discussion of personal office budgets). A House staffer must handle many different policy areas, which often have little to do with each other. This then causes the policy staff in the House to complain they are not able to gain a deep understanding of an issue (Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). These House staffers are also expected to do committee related work, because most members do not have access to staff on the committee. Staffs on both sides of the Hill also end up working on issues not related to their boss's committee assignments. As staff size increases, so does a staffer's ability to become more of a specialist on an issue. Senate staff are able to acquire more of an expertise on policy issues, since there are more of them.

Like committee staff, the actual job titles and duties are similar on both sides of the Hill. Most offices are led by a Chief of Staff (CoS) or Administrative Assistant (AA). Depending on the member's specific needs or preferences, this individual can be based in DC or state/district. This person supervises and controls the entire office, reporting directly to the member. In rare cases, usually Senate offices, an office will have both of these positions, with one handling the policy and press side of things and the other handling the administrative side of the office. The CoS or AA also handles political issues and is usually one of the political fund designees (see

Senate rule 41.1 of Standing Rules of the Senate) for the office. This position is the most trusted by the member and often times a longtime friend or work associate. They are older, but not necessarily more educated than other members of the staff (Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). In 1977, there was a definite gender difference, with only 23% of the AA survey respondents being women (Fox and Webb Hammond). The present research will show this statistic has changed for the more diverse.

Most offices are divided into different groups based on the type of job. The first is the legislative staff. They handle all policy and legislative matters. They are led by a legislative director (LD), who manages the legislative staff and usually handles one or two specific policy areas. This policy issue is often a key issue for the member or one on which she focuses as part of her committee assignments. In the House, the LD will generally staff the member on their main committee assignment.

Next are the legislative assistants (LA's), the policy specialists, who research and draft legislation and amendments, brief the member on policy issues, attend committee and constituent meetings with their boss, and write floor remarks and speeches. Most House offices employ 2 or 3, with the Senate employing many more. Senate LA's are often seen as equals to House LD's, in terms of expertise and prestige. LA's will handle a portfolio of specific policy issues, often broken down along traditional committee lines. For instance one staffer could handle the issue areas of agriculture, energy, and the environment. She would therefore staff her boss on those issues and handle those corresponding committees, including the ones on which her boss sits as a member.

Senate LA's are able to become true policy experts on their issues, again because there are more of them and their portfolios are smaller than a House LA's. A legislative staffer's

whole persona is defined by which policy issue area they handle and how much jurisdiction they have in their job. "…jurisdiction is a very serious matter to staffers, even more serious than it is for senators" (Malbin, 42, 1980). These staff build reputations around their areas of jurisdiction. If a particular staffer is seen as an expert by other staff, they will often be asked for their opinion and advice, even from staffers from other offices, parties or chambers[19]. In very rare cases, memos or speeches are shared between offices (Malbin 1980), but this is rare today following the incident when a Senator Martinez (R-FL) staffer wrote a potentially controversial memo regarding Terry Schiavo[20].

Fox and Webb Hammond (1977) found that most LA's in the late 70's were more educated than the AA or CoS and only 22% were women. While a gender gap still exists for specific policy areas, there are definitely more female LA's than previously identified. Males anecdotally dominate certain policy areas, such as agriculture and armed services.

Rounding out the legislative staff are legislative correspondents (LC's) or deputy LA's. In the House, each office has one or two LC's and these staffers respond to constituent inquiries and assist the LA's where needed. House LA's also respond to constituent inquiries (letters, emails, etc.) whereas this task is left to the LC's in the Senate. In the Senate, the LC's perform the same tasks as in the House, but also serve as back-ups to the LA's. Usually each Senate LC is paired up with an LA and they are able to become experts on issues as well.

The second major job type group is the press staff. At the top is a communications director or press secretary. Again, Senate press staffs are larger than House press staffs. Many offices keep at least one press staffer in the state or district to deal solely with the local press.

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[19] The author was once tracked down by a fellow Senate staffer from a different office at her parents' ranch in Montana the day before Christmas to answer a question regarding an issue on which she was considered an expert. She is still not sure how the staffer found the phone number.
[20] Many news stories are available on this issue.

Senate press staff usually consists of a communications director, press secretary, and at least one press assistant. House offices usually have one press aide. Press staff respond to all press inquiries, write press releases, editorials, and speeches, set up interviews, and work with the legislative staff on messaging of policy agendas and decisions.

The major third group is the administrative staff. An office manager or AA heads up this group. Many House offices end up sharing an office manager to conserve the budget. In the Senate, this person handles all administrative activities, including hiring and human resources. The member's scheduler falls into this category and this person handles all aspects of the member's personal, official, and campaign schedule. Most Senate staffs have a systems administrator (SA) on the payroll who handles technology issues for the staff and member. Like office managers, many House offices share an SA. Staff assistants, who answer the phones and handle basic mail duties, and interns round out the administrative staff.

The fourth major group in the personal offices is the state or district staff. These staff are usually located in different physical locations around the state or district, with office sizes ranging from one person to over 20. These staffers are the face of the member in the state or district. They perform the casework, but often times become policy experts themselves and will work closely with the DC staff on legislative issues. They are led by a state or district director. Often there will be a deputy state or district director and a team of field representatives. Depending on the member's preferences, the CoS or AA or even communications director might be stationed in the state or district.

How much interaction and communication with the member does each of these staffers have on a regular basis? The simple answer is: it depends. Each office is organized differently to encourage, accommodate, or dissuade interaction with the boss. Fox and Webb Hammond

(1977) identified three different types of staff organization in Congress. In hierarchical offices, the CoS or AA controls nearly all communication and information flow to and from the member of Congress. In individualistic offices, the professionals (which include the LD, LA's, press staff, and higher level state/district staff) operate independently and deal directly with the member and each other (Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). The coordinative offices operate with the AA or CoS serving as more of an advisor than controller of information and the professionals still have access to the member. They found most offices to be hierarchical or coordinative, with no patterns to be found in House versus Senate or Republican versus Democrat offices.

Personal staffers do not just coordinate and work with their coworkers and bosses on policy issues. They also coordinate with staffers from other offices, even those of a different party. It is often the case that some issues, like agriculture, are more regionally-based, than partisan. Staffers regularly work with the other members of the state's delegation, introducing joint legislation or issuing joint press releases. They also have regular interaction with committee staff. They rely on briefings and information from the executive branch and outside groups (Foxx and Webb Hammond 1977), which can include DC-based interest groups or trade associations, lobbyists, and home state-based organizations and companies. Both staffers and these groups are benefitted by building strong personal relationships with each other. The best lobbyists know how to work with staff and how to build those relationships (Malbin 1980). On the social side, staffers from both sides of the aisle and the Hill regularly socialize together after work at one of the Hill's many watering holes. Among the staff, at least, there exists a semblance of bipartisanship on Capitol Hill. Or at least this was the case until recent years. This dissertation will flesh out these questions and their effect on policy development.

What kind of role do congressional staffers play in the policy and legislative process? From the research, we learn staff know their limits, but within those limits, they have a great deal of freedom (Malbin 1980). The key is to find out what those limits are and how they are established. Malbin (1980) found the more entrepreneurial staff to be found in the Senate. While he does not explain why this might be the case, we can posit some possibilities ahead of the findings in this research. As stated earlier, Senate staff have a great ability to specialize in a policy area and they are usually better educated than their House counterparts. This could be because Senate staffs are larger. Malbin (1980) makes the claim that more staff equals more collective knowledge, which equals more power for the staff and the member. More entrepreneurial staff also equals an increased workload, rather than decreased, for members. These staffers write more bills and amendments and organize more hearings, only increasing the already heavy workload of members (Malbin 1980).

But what do these staff actually do? For one thing, they are the ones writing the legislation (while of course taking their boss's interests into account) reporting back to their bosses on progress, and arguing on behalf of their boss in negotiations (Malbin 1980). They are advising their bosses which colleagues to talk to in order to get things moving (Malbin 1980). They filter information to their bosses, which can be a normatively positive thing if they are keeping out the unimportant information, and only relaying the pertinent, but could also be detrimental to the member and their goals of law-making and representation. Staffers negotiate bill language amongst themselves, which can be helpful early in the legislative process (Malbin 1980), but they could also be keeping members from negotiating with each other, possibly finding new solutions to problems. As this process of decreased debate and deliberation among

members increases, the importance of staff also increases. The staff could be driving the agenda, precisely because members have delegated so much authority to them.

Specific Policy, Committee Case Studies

The third category of Congressional staff research investigates how staffers behave in specific policy situations. Manley (1968) in his case study of the Joint Committee on Taxation, finds the staffers on this committee provide the members with information from the outside, whether that is from lobbyists, interest groups, or members not on the committee (Manley 1968). As issue complexity increases, so does the influence staffers have on policy outcomes. Conversely, the more salient the issue is to a large number of people, the less influential staffers are in making big decisions (Manley 1968).

Whiteman (1987) conducts research on healthcare staffers, administering more than 300 interviews of both committee and personal staff. He finds committee staffers are the real experts, with personal staffers having a more general knowledge of specific healthcare issues. He expected to find staffers with backgrounds in healthcare, and was surprised to not find that. Instead, these staffers choose this issue or get assigned the issue in personal offices.[21]

Preferences and Goals of Members of Congress

Thus far, I have spent a great deal of time describing congressional staffers. However, a key player remains missing from the story – the member of Congress. Without the members, there would be no staff; there would be no Congress at all. We cannot learn much about staff

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[21] This is a common practice in Congress, with very few staffers having previous knowledge of the issue area (not just healthcare) which they are assigned, especially in personal offices.

taking the lead, and if they are agents of their principal's preferences, if we do not first understand the preferences of the members themselves.

A great deal of research examines member preferences and what affects those preferences and actions. This section will outline those factors, while also detailing goals of members of Congress.

The first factor to affect members of Congress's actions and preferences is that of their constituents, and in turn reelection. This is known as representation in the political science literature. The majority of this literature looks at individual members of Congress, rather than the collective, which is useful for my research as I am looking at individual staffers.

There are two types of representation: trustee and delegate (Miller and Stokes 1963). Trustees vote and make decisions based on what they think is best, while delegates vote their district or state's preferences, without any individual judgment. Miller and Stokes argue we see these different types of representation within the same member, dependent on which issue is being discussed.

But why do we see representation at all? Mayhew (1974) makes the argument that we can assume members are concerned with reelection first and foremost, thus will try to do everything in their power to get reelected by taking positions, claiming credit for, and advertising issues with which their constituents agree. Fenno (1977, 1978) counters Mayhew to some degree, by arguing members are concerned with both reelection and policies; members care deeply, and know a great deal about, their constituencies. Further, members believe voters make decisions based on how well they were represented (Arnold 1990), thus they make decisions based on public opinion and election outcomes (Stimson, Erickson, and MacKuen 1995; Peterson et al 2003; Jones and Baumgartner 2004).

Is there shirking by members of Congress? Do they sometimes ignore the preferences of their constituents? Yes, but they are usually punished for it on Election Day. Some members get away with shirking, but usually only during non-election years. They have been found to step up their representation when they are up for reelection and often stop strict party-line voting, to appear more independent (Rothenberg and Sanders 2000; Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002).

A second factor affecting the preferences of members of Congress is their party. Members are in a particular political party because they share a majority of policy stances with that party. In turn, the party leadership in Congress exerts certain pressures on individual members to vote in line with that party. After a period of decline, parties in Congress and the electorate are growing in power and influence (Rohde 1991, Aldrich 1995, Schlesinger 1985, Bartels 2000). Parties in Congress are deciding the agenda, often to the detriment of committee chairs (Cox and McCubbins 1993). Recently, former Senator Bob Packwood (R-OR) said of the situation involving former Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and outgoing Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR), "No majority leader in my era would have thought to attempt to go around the committee and negotiate over the head of the committee chair. You could not get away with it."[22]

Presidential influence, which is closely tied to party influence, is a third factor affecting the actions of members of Congress. The president's main power, according to Neustadt (1990), is his ability to persuade members of Congress to carry out his agenda. If that does not work, the president can always go public (Kernell 1997, Canes-Wrone 2001), which plays upon the earlier discussed role of representation. The president convinces the public of his ideas, who then pressure their elected officials. Finally, the president can threaten to veto legislation, which can

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[22] Lori Montgomery "Inside the collapse of the year's biggest tax deal." *Washington Post*. December 11, 2014

affect a member's voting decisions or what they can live with in a bill (see Cameron 2000, Kiewiet and McCubbins 1988; Dean and Arnold 2003).

A fourth potential influence on member preferences is that of interest groups. This, too, is tied to an earlier influence – representation and constituents. Any good interest group lobbyist will bring in a member's constituent to speak on behalf of that interest group. Interest groups know members of Congress will more often than not meet with a constituent over a lobbyist for an interest group. Further, these interest groups help in reelection as they provide information to members and give campaign contributions (Hansen 1991). While the amount of campaign contributions provided to members of Congress from organized interests is well documented in the media and by such groups as Opensecrets and the Center for American Progress, political scientists have continually found that money does not lead to legislative outcomes (Baumgartner et al 2009, 2014). The role money does play is the overrepresentation of certain interests, those with the money to pay quality lobbyists to prowl the halls of Congress on their behalf (see Schattschneider 1960, Baumgartner et al 2014). But, money does not lead to changed votes, instead members and staff listen to those groups whom they already agree with (Hall and Wayman 1995). Money buys access, not votes (see Magleby and Nelson 1990, Wittenberg and Wittenberg 1989).

Interest groups also assist in policy formation and agenda-setting in Congress, which includes both promoting policies, but also negative agenda control, where interest groups work to keep issues off the Congressional agenda (Kingdon 2003). Kingdon (2003) argues that if there is near universal agreement among the interest groups on a particular course of action, that avenue will most likely be pursued (2003). However, if there is disagreement, members will either strike a compromise or not take up the issue at all (Kingdon 2003). While most political

science research tends to depict interest groups as important to the policy process (e.g. Grossman 2012) surveys and case studies of members and lobbyists report this influence varies (see Smith 1995 summary) and Arnold (1990) claims they have limited effect on Congressional outcomes except in times of reelection.

Current events and crises are final influences on the preferences of members of Congress. September 11 is a significant example of this. Before that Tuesday morning, most members of Congress were not primarily concerned with terrorism on our shores, defense of the homeland, or the extent to which the federal intelligence gathering organizations were communicating with each other. On Wednesday, those issues were at the top of every member's list of concerns. These events create a punctuation (Baumgartner and Jones 1991, 1993), changing what Kingdon would call the problem stream (2003), and all of a sudden Congress must act; Congress CAN act. In this situation, it was passage of the USA PATRIOT Act in October of that year, followed by the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in November 2002.

Goals:

Members of Congress have varied goals, and ambitions, for their public service (see Schlesinger 1966 for early discussion). Some simply want to make a positive impact on public policy and quietly retire. Others hope to use their experience to attain a powerful private sector job after they retire from public service. Still others have higher ambitions in public service, which could be becoming a committee chair, party leader, or running for a higher office. This final category is called progressive ambition. Some want all three or portions of each. These preference factors affect a member's goals and what they do with their public service.

There is a small research focus on de-recruitment, which is when members choose to retire, or are encouraged to retire from public life (Frantzich 1978). The larger focus, however, is

on recruitment (see Schlesinger 1966) and progressive ambition, or the politician running for a higher office. Not much has changed since Schlesinger said in 1966 "Ambition lies at the heart of politics" (1) and if we truly want to understand a member and their preferences, we must also understand their ambition (see Herrick and Moore 1993). Most of this research focuses on House members running for the Senate or governor, and less senior members have been found to seek higher office more than senior House members (see Rohde 1979). Herrick and Moore (1993) argue we must also include intra-institutional ambition, which is a member wanting to run for committee or party leadership within their institution. Measuring ambition is difficult to conceptualize in research, as it is a psychological attribute (Hibbing 1989) and cannot be identified in members unless they announce their intentions publically. Thus researchers must wait until that announcement is made, or look at members, historically, who ran for higher office or a leadership position. All members who are ambitious are expected to be more active in their policy and press activities, while the progressive ambitious are expected to not pass much legislation (Herrick and Moore 1993). Passing a bill in Congress takes a great deal of effort, effort which needs to be spent focusing on running for a higher office. An important finding for this research is that progressively ambitious members have more staff members than those who are statically ambitious, which is a member who is content to simply run for reelection for their current seat (Herrick and Moore 1993). They also change their roll call voting more than House members who are simply running for reelection (Hibbing 1986). In short, members with progressive ambitions, change their behaviors (Brace 1984).

Conclusion:

While the literature on Congressional staff is sparse, we do know a few things about them, as outlined in this chapter. They are young, well-educated, and ambitious. They have been delegated a great deal of legislative power by their bosses. These members have many conflicting influences playing upon them, which filters down to the staff. How does this all affect a staffer's ability to participate in setting the agenda in their office? More importantly, what does this mean for representative democracy? The answer to these questions will become clearer as we proceed.

Chapter 2 outlines the principal-agent relationship and theory and how agenda-setting and Congressional staff feed into that theory. This chapter also outlines the ten hypotheses to be tested in this research.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The Principal-Agent Relationship

> *But the most basic factor, the one that ultimately starts to grate on so many staff people, is the knowledge that however powerful they may appear, or however often they may have turned their own opinions into laws, they will never be anything other than surrogates for someone else.*
>
> *Malbin, 20-21, 1980*

> *I just don't want to spend the rest of my life carrying someone else's water.*
>
> *Malbin, 21, 1980*

While the larger question addressed in this dissertation is the level of staffers' involvement in policy development and its implications for indirect representation, the key question focuses specifically on staffers and when they set the agenda and come up with policy ideas for their bosses. To study this situation and relationship, the principal-agent theory is used. It is understood Congressional staff are important to the policy and messaging process in Washington (Hall 1993; DeGregorio 1994; Malbin 1980; Fox and Webb Hammond 1977; Deering and Smith 1997). It is also known they can be leaders in the policy process (Hammond 1990; Malbin 1980). However, it is less well known what role they actually play and if the traditional principal-agent relationship can be applied to members and their staff. Are staffers perfect subordinates, or agents, of their boss and their preferences, or do we see any violations? In other words, does a staffer lead the member of Congress in terms of agenda-setting? Under what conditions does the staffer come up with policy ideas and convince the member of its importance? Do members of Congress prefer a situation where staffers are taking initiative and do they consciously hire staff with expertise who can provide policy ideas and take the lead?

These questions are crucial for understanding if indirect representation, as envisioned and created by the framers of the Constitution, is possible with the presence of congressional staff. We assume members of Congress share the same beliefs and want to accurately represent the preferences of their constituents (Dahl 1956). If the preferences of the voters are still getting actualized into ideas and policies in Congress, albeit through the staff filter, then indirect representation still works.

Beginnings in Economics

But first, what is the principal-agent theory? The principal-agent theory framework is a technique used to study problems or situations where the principal employs the agent to carry out a certain task or job on behalf of the agent. The theory was first used in economics, in the study of insurance contracts (Spence and Zeckhauser 1971), but its usefulness in studying many other problems in the world of business and economics soon became evident.

According to Miller (2005), summarizing from the work of economists in the 1980's (see Holmstrom 1979 and Shavell 1979), there are a number of requirements for something to be considered a principal-agent model or relationship. The pertinent requirements are discussed in greater detail in the following paragraphs. The first is agent impact (Miller 2005), which means the principal's payoff is determined by the agent. The second feature is information asymmetry, which means the agent has more information than the principal and cannot be monitored continuously (Miller 2005). This aspect is discussed in greater detail below. The third requirement is asymmetry of preferences (Miller 2005); the two want different things. The fourth aspect, according to Miller (2005), is that the principal holds the initiative; the principal is the first mover and acts rationally to carry out her preferences. The fifth characteristic of the

principal-agent model is that both players have common knowledge about the agent which allows for backward induction and incentives for the outcome the principal wants (Miller 2005). The sixth and final requirement is ultimatum bargaining, which means the principal holds all the cards and can offer a "take it or leave it" option to the agent (Miller 2005 and Sappington 1991).

In the relationship, the agent works for the principal and each have their own preferences. The principal depends on the agent to carry out a great deal of the agency's operations, following the principal's preferences. In this relationship, often asymmetrical, a greater information advantage is held on the side of the agent and all the power and authority is held on the side of the principal (see Miller 2005; Weber 1958; DeFigueiredo, Spiller, and Urbiztondo 1999). Scholars call this information asymmetry (Miller 2005; Miller and Whitford 2002). Principals either starve or drown in information, with the agent having an incentive to hide certain aspects of the information (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991). Because of this asymmetry and the inherent variances in the interests of the principal and agent, this relationship is often rife with conflict (Bottom et al 2006; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991).

Through oversight and monitoring in the form of a series of incentives, punishments, and manipulation of each, principals should be able to convince the agent to carry out the same action as the principal would if they had the same information and resources (Miller 2005). In most principal-agent theory (PAT) research, an assumption is made in which the agent is passive and accepts what the principal doles out. A few scholars have identified cooperation and negotiation as another way for principals and agents to interact and prevent principals from unilaterally enforcing their preferences (Scholz 1991; Miller 2005), but this is not a predominate theme in the PAT literature. PAT assumes the agent is more risk averse than the principal, not wanting to be fired for doing something wrong (Bottom et al 2006; Miller 2005; Miller and

Whitford 2002). Thus, the principal must convince the agent to takes risks on the principal's behalf.

In the last 30 years, PAT research has focused more on rewards and incentives, rather than monitoring of agents (Miller and Whitford 2007). The idea is that if the principal can get the incentives right, the agents, operating in their own self-interest, will run the agency according to the principal's preferences, but it is naïve to believe agents can be perfectly controlled (Bottom et al 2006; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Miller 1992). An assumption is made that the agent responds in a self-interested way to this new incentive system, or institution (Miller 1992). However, in hierarchical systems, little negotiation or bargaining is occurring and Miller (1992) claims "hierarchy is the price people may choose to pay for efficiency in groups" (25).

Where do we see these relationships? They are present anywhere there is a principal (boss) who hires an agent (employee) to do a job for them. These are often hierarchical relationships and typically found in the study of economics and business/corporations (Miller and Whitford 2002, 2007). However, because the PAT can be applied anywhere where someone depends on someone else to carry out their preferences, often in a hierarchical structure, applying it to political systems seems obvious.

PAT and Political Science

This principal-agent relationship, or theory, has been studied and applied to many situations in the world of American political science, most notably between Congress or the President and the bureaucracy, with some work studying how outside factors, like interest groups (Moe 1989; Yackee and Yackee 2006) affect this relationship. In this situation, the bureaucracy,

or agency, is the agent, carrying out the preferences of either Congress or the President, who are the principals.

Why does Congress need to delegate to the bureaucracy in the first place? When does it delegate and when does it not? Congress has a choice on each and every policy issue: they can either make the policy themselves, or they can delegate most of the policy making to agencies (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999). Politicians are busy people, concerned with serving their district, making good policy, and running for reelection (Fenno 1973; Mayhew 1974). They are trying to be as efficient as possible and will make policy themselves if the benefits outweigh the costs; otherwise they will delegate this task to an executive branch agency (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991). The costs include informationally intense policy issues, issues where Congress might not have the required experts necessary to make good policy. Further, Congress delegates to decrease its already heavy workload, taking further advantage of agency expertise (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999). Every time Congress delegates any sort of policymaking activity to the executive branch, they enter into a principal-agent relationship.

Even with the obvious advantages of delegation, it is not an easy decision for Congress. As stated, the agencies have an information advantage, filled with experts. Members of Congress take the chance that the bureaucrats will not use this information advantage against them and become more of an expert than the members who created the agency (Huber and Shipan 2006; McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1987). However, if Congress does not delegate, they waste that policy expertise. Once Congress delegates to the bureaucracy, they naturally lose control of those policies and issues (Huber and Shipan 2006). They take the chance that a future administration will have vastly different political preferences than the current one. According to the ally principal, the principal delegates more to an agent who is ideologically close to them. However,

the political agent might not always be ideologically close (Huber and Shipan 2006). Congress must also share responsibility for the way the agency runs, and how policy is made, with the president, as he nominates political appointees and signs bills into law which establish agency rules (Calvert, McCubbins, and Weingast 1989). This information asymmetry, political uncertainty, difference in expertise, and conflict over control create very large tradeoffs and lie at the heart of PAT being applied to American politics.

Congress does not always abdicate its responsibility, however. Obviously, the more important the issue is to Congress, the less discretion they will give to the agency (Calvert, McCubbins, and Weingast 1989). When the preferences of Congress and the executive branch are far apart (like divided government), we see less delegation and discretion given to agencies (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999). Fiorina (1977) even goes a step further, arguing that Congress creates, and delegates to, agencies, knowing they will fail. This way, Congress can step in and save the day, blaming the executive branch for the failure (Fiorina 1977).

After looking at why and when Congress delegates to the bureaucracy, it is now appropriate to turn our attention to what this relationship entails. The literature can be split into two groups, based loosely on decision chronology. The first vein of literature focuses on agency design or ex ante control (Huber and Shipan 2006). This includes how Congress formulates the institutional rules of the agency at its conception to ensure the new agency carries out the preferences of its principal. The second collection of literature consists of delegation, incentives, and oversight of agencies, or ex post control (Huber and Shipan 2006). These three have been grouped because these three activities can occur interchangeably and at any point in time following the agency design phase. It should be noted that incentives, and punishments, can be built into the agency design, but for the most part occur in this post-design phase.

With a few exceptions, Congress is responsible for creating, designing, and funding executive agencies. Besides their own interests, Congress also listens to interest groups, constituents, and the executive branch itself when creating these agencies. Because of the need to please all these interests, and create an institution which can be controlled, the bureaucracy is very rarely designed to be efficient (Moe 1989). All these different interests are constantly pulling the agency in different directions. These groups have different levels of political power, with interest groups paying closer attention to relevant agencies than average voters, thus getting a larger say in how that agency is designed (Moe 1989). All interest groups are not created equal, with some having larger political pull than others. Further, the next election could reverse the political situation, causing political uncertainty. Congress knows this, and must create an agency which makes their political allies happy, while also insulating the agency from future political sabotage from unfriendly interest groups or administrations.

How does Congress create an agency amid all this political turmoil, one which they will be able to control and keep an eye on? McCubbins, Noll and Weingast (1987) in their seminal work, claim Congress institutes certain administrative procedures when they create the agency as a way of controlling the agency. This is called ex ante control, and because they claim oversight is difficult and for the most part reactive and time consuming, creating procedures for outside monitoring from the onset is the only way to assure the agency will follow its principal's preferences (1987).

Knowing what we know about the present day Congress, however, can we really expect these members to be so strategic and able to design agencies with so much forethought? Maybe not. In fact, staffers claim members are not thinking about the future (Macdonald 2007). Similar to Mayhew's (1974) work, staffers claim members are worried about now and do not make long-

term decisions on agency design because they fear they will lose control in the future (Macdonald 2007). Further, the more conflict during the drafting and debate of the legislation, usually caused by interest groups, the more freedom the agency gets. Staffers called this "punting to the agency" (Macdonald 2007). This is in direct conflict with what earlier scholars found (see Huber and Shipan 2006; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999). Congress cannot agree on the specifics of the agency, so leave it up to the agency to figure out. This way Congress is able to pass a bill, take credit with their constituents, but do not have to figure out the contentious details and run the risk of alienating voters and supporters.

Agency design is one way Congress can control the bureaucracy, its policy-making agent. The other is through direct, or indirect, oversight and incentives, which is called ex poste control. Reacting to earlier work which claimed Congress abdicated its oversight/monitoring responsibility (see later discussion of Niskanen and Lowi), the congressional dominance literature came about, which argued Congress does control the bureaucracy (see Weingast and Moran 1983). McCubbins and Schwartz (1984) outlined two different types of oversight: police patrol and fire alarm. Police patrol is similar to a police department doing regular patrols of a neighborhood; Congress is constantly and actively monitoring the executive agency. Police patrol oversight is active, expensive, and centralized. It also tends to waste time, because Congress will spend most of their time monitoring an agency, which is usually doing exactly what it should be doing.

Fire alarm is just like calling the fire department. The fire trucks do not patrol the neighborhood, looking for fire. They show up when someone sees a fire and pulls the alarm. This type of oversight is less active, less expensive, but also less centralized in Congress, because

Congress must rely on outside interest groups or constituents to monitor the agency and alert them when something is amiss (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984).

Congress tends to prefer fire alarm oversight, and let the costs of oversight fall to interest groups. Congress reacts to the inherent conflict in principal-agent relationships by relying on fire alarm procedures (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991). Through administrative procedures and writing specific legislative language, Congress enables less advantaged groups to participate in the oversight (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). In this way, interest groups serve as a second principal to the bureaucracy; they not only are engaged in the development of the agency (Moe 1989), they also participate in monitoring, oversight, and the rule-making process. Interest groups and business interests are able to pay for monitoring, experts, analysts, lobbyists, and comment writing (Yackee and Yackee 2006; Golden 1998). This takes the fiscal and informational pressure off Congress. The other side of this issue is the bureaucracy may be showing a bias towards business, or special, interests because that is who they are hearing from. While some studies have shown a rule-making bias towards business (Yackee and Yackee 2006) others are inconclusive (Golden 1998). What is clear, however, is interest groups spend a great deal of time monitoring and communicating with executive agencies.

Congress also conducts police patrol oversight, which is the prevue of the oversight committees in both chambers. This is done through continual staff monitoring, oversight hearings, the agency testifying on specific legislation, and informal meetings and negotiation (see Miller 2005 for discussion of cooperation and negotiation). With the information advantage held on the side of the agent, or agency in this case, it is imperative Congress participates in both kinds of oversight in order to keep an eye on them (see DeFigueiredo, Spiller, and Urbiztondo 1999 for further discussion of information advantage held by the agency).

Nevertheless, more principals, or committees with jurisdiction over a particular agency, do not necessarily lead to better oversight (Gailmard 2009). Too many cooks in the kitchen usually mean things fall through the cracks. This might be by design, however. Delegating more policy making to agencies pits committees against committees against agencies. It takes the power out of the hands of certain powerful committees, which could mean more of the legislature as a whole gets its preferences into policy (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999). Conversely, it has been found that when committee oversight (ex poste monitoring) is weak, the legislature gives less discretion to the agencies (Huber and Shipan 2006).

One of the major ways Congress provides oversight is in the form of the budget. Agencies want their budget to remain static at the very least, and preferably increased (Niskanen 1975). Thus, the agency will move closer to Congress' preferences to make this happen (Calvert, McCubbins, and Weingast 1989).

In the study of PAT in the business world, a large focus is placed on incentives for agents to follow the principal's preferences. We see this less in the work on political science and PAT, because while Congress does control the budget for the agency, they do not control individual bonuses for executive branch employees (Miller and Whitford 2007). This greatly decreases their ability to provide direct incentives to individual employees, but does allow them to increase the budget for individual offices within the department. Interestingly, experimental research has found that financial rewards actually cancel out the social motivations for doing a good job (Miller and Whitford 2002) which might hint that increased budgets will not make the bureaucracy perform any better, take more risks, or follow Congress' preferences to a higher degree.

Many scholars have argued a different incentive is present for government workers, which is tied to the employees' desire to serve the common good (Miller and Whitford 2007; 2002; Heckman, Smith and Taber 1996). Just simply working in public service and making a difference is all the incentive these government workers need. These workers self-select into these jobs, precisely because they have unique motivations (Heckman, Smith and Taber 1996). Even when career employees (nonpolitical bureaucrats[23]) are faced with political appointees and political hires (Schedule C's[24]) they adamantly disagree with, these employees still do their jobs, usually without complaint (Golden 2000). Their work performance can be better determined by feeling respected and important to the process, than if they agree ideologically with their superiors (Golden 2000).

Before continuing, an important counter argument must be made. Some scholars argue against the idea that legislators have the ability to provide oversight over bureaucracies at all; they claim these bureaucrats are nearly entirely independent and running roughshod over members of Congress (Lowi 1969; Niskanen 1975; Dodd and Scott). In 1969, Lowi argued Congress had abdicated its public policy responsibility, leaving the making of policy up to the bureaucracy, who is strongly influenced by interest groups. A different approach argues that through distributive theory, members of Congress seek to serve on committees which oversee agencies in which they have an interest. Bureaucrats only want to see their budget increased and thus the oversight committees, wanting to please the agencies, give them a larger budget and little oversight (Niskanen 1975). While this is not the argument which will be made in this work,

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[23] These employees of the agency stay employed even when the administration changes hands and when a new cabinet secretary is confirmed. They are not political employees; instead these are usually the policy experts.

[24] According to the *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions*, known as the *Plum Book*, Schedule C positions are the more than 7,000 federal civil service leadership and support positions in the legislative and executive branches of the federal government that may be subject to noncompetitive appointment. These employees are exempted from the competitive service because of their confidential or policy-determining character. In this case, noncompetitive means they are political hires and are usually vetted by the White House Office of Presidential Personnel.

it does provide insight into what would be the most extreme case of the principal-agent relationship between members and their staff. Under a similar situation as outlined in this research, staff would run Congress, writing and introducing whichever bills they wanted, or simply doing nothing.

Public Management and PAT

While this research does not focus on Congressional staff turnover, a cursory look must be given to why staffers choose to accept, and remain, in these jobs. Why do these staffers remain in these jobs, when they could demand a higher salary in the private sector? Why do they choose relative anonymity, rather than keep some of the legislative glory for themselves? Under PAT, we know agents will carry out their own self-interested preferences in the absence of adequate rewards and accountability (Mansouri and Rowney 2014; Eisenhardt 1989). Thus, why do these government employees do these jobs and in turn care about the preferences of their principal? Mansouri and Rowney (2014) argue we should extend the PAT to include the situation where the principal and the agent share a set of values, thus a system of responsibility and accountability is created in the office. The self-interested agent carries out the principal's preferences because they share the same preferences.

Much of what we know about public sector staff turnover comes to us from the research on public management and local government managers. Turnover in these positions can cause inconsistent outcomes and loss of institutional knowledge (see Heclo 1977, Wilson 1994). This loss of institutional knowledge with staff turnover could also potentially negatively impact Congressional policy making, therefore members of Congress would be wise to provide

incentives to keep their experienced staffers on staff and carrying out the preferences of the member.

Since it is not usually in the interest of the city government (or a Congressional office) for the staffer to leave (for congressional staff exceptions see Fox and Webb Hammond 1977), the important question for the underlying research is why do these city managers leave or conversely, stay. Understanding why Congressional staff might leave could explain why they remain and why they care about the preferences of their principal. City managers have been found to leave because of involuntary terminations (Kammerer, Farris, DeGrove, and Clubok 1962), political conflicts (DeHoog and Whitaker 1990), career advancement (DeHoog and Whitaker 1990), and institutional constraints such as an elected mayor and the type of representative system (district versus at-large) (Frederickson 1995; DeHoog and Whitaker 1990). However, longer tenures can be found when city managers have an employment agreement which outlines incentives and potentially insulates them from the community (Feiock and Stream 1998), they are in a city full of wealthy citizens, or the city council has little electoral turnover (see McCabe et al 2008).

Why PAT and Congressional Staffs?

It is clear the PAT has been applied to the world of business and corporations, where we see clear hierarchies and organization of offices, necessary for a principal-agent relationship. We also see how this theory can easily be applied to the relationship between Congress and the bureaucracy. So why should it apply to Congress itself, when most political science literature does not use the theory to look at Congressional organization? First of all, as Miller and Whitford (2002) make clear, most hierarchical relationships are principal-agent relationships.

From the earlier discussion of types and duties of staff, it is evident these offices are very hierarchical, with the member of Congress at the top of that chart. Second, we know congressional staff can be real policy experts, which could create an information asymmetry between them and their members. In fact, staff are often hired for their policy expertise. This sets up the classic PAT conflict. Third, members of Congress have increasing demands on their time, focusing on many different issues at once. Just like an executive of a company, members cannot be in all places at all times, dealing with reelection, chairing a subcommittee hearing, meeting with constituents, and writing an amendment to the energy bill currently being debated on the floor. This is where staff come in, and PAT tells us the principal will offer incentives to the agent to implement the principal's preferences.

In many ways, as seen in the above descriptions, Congressional offices are very similar to businesses. Are Congressional offices truly the same as a market-based office hierarchy, however? Of course not. They cannot distribute profits to employees, market forces are not present to keep inefficiency to a minimum, and we have seen staffers might not respond to an incentive system in a self-interested way (Miller 1992). The incentive structure for staff is different than that of a business, but that does not mean an incentive structure is not present. Congressional staffers go into these jobs knowing they will not receive personal recognition outside of their office for their hard work. They know they will not be well-paid and most will not receive any sort of bonus. These staffers have different incentives, which are to serve their state or party, make good policy, become an expert on their issues, or obtain a more lucrative job in the future. They put up with the negatives of the job and implement their boss's preferences on a daily basis because of this unique incentives structure.

Staffers have more of a binding contract than bureaucrats and, similar to the world of business, can be fired. Can we view these offices as a type of bureaucratic business? Most definitely. They adopt a structure of hierarchy in their offices, with the member as the head of the enterprise (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981; Loomis 1979). The members and their offices specialize in certain issue areas or activities, they formalize through work rules or a staff handbook, and they become more decentralized as the demands on their time increase (Loomis 1979; Fenno 1973). As all of this happens, members cannot possibly be doing it all simultaneously, but their staff can. They must rely more and more on staff to carry out these activities for them, just as a business executive relies on her employees. More amendments are written, more bills are introduced, more hours are spent in session, more hearings are held, more constituents are attended to; but fewer bills get passed as staffers still cannot vote on the chamber floors[25] (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981). In this way, the offices of members become more than the members themselves since if the member wants more press, more accomplishments, more bills introduced, it is the staff that does it (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981). The members are not subordinate, however. They still have the final say, for the most part, on hiring and firing, salaries, and helping staff acquire future jobs. We can now see members are not independent actors, and any look at Congressional organization and policy-making must also include a look at staff, which includes how personalities interact with institutional rules. An appropriate way to do this is through the lens of the principal-agent relationship.

What exactly does this relationship look like? Are staffers perfect agents of their bosses? Are they only instituting the member's stated preferences into policy decisions? Or are staffers

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[25] Interestingly, staff can, in essence, vote on behalf of their members in committee hearings by handing physical paper proxy votes signed by their boss to the committee chair or ranking member.

stepping out on their own? Do staff take the lead more than we previously thought? What would staff taking the lead look like?

Staffers would be the ones coming up with new policy ideas. They would set the agenda for the member of Congress. They would decide the legislative language and strategy in introduction and eventually passage of the legislation. They would negotiate with other offices and the committee staff on those activities. These policy ideas might very well be within the member's previously stated policy positions, or they could be taking the member in an all new direction. The member could be hiring staffers for their expertise, setting up a traditional principal-agent relationship. The member could encourage her staff to come up with these new ideas on their own. Conversely, the member might not know this is occurring, but does not punish staff when she finds out. In other cases, the member might not have authorized this agenda-setting leadership behavior, and punishes the staffer when she realizes what has been occurring. Members might institute procedures which encourage, allow, or dissuade staffers from taking the policy lead.

Staff taking the lead will show up in many different places. It could be as simple as a staffer conveying their boss's opinion or desires in a meeting or negotiation on legislation without first consulting their boss. They could bring a new policy idea to the member, which the member had not thought of previously, but is in the purview of their previously stated preferences. They might suggest a policy not within their preferences. The staffer might give the member a vote recommendation, which is either outside their preferences, or simply something the member does not have any knowledge of. They might sign onto a letter (for example: Dear Colleagues, letters to Administration officials, or letters to state or local governments) without the member asking for it first or without consulting the member at all. They might sign onto (co-

sponsor) legislation without consulting the member or without the member asking the staff to do this. The staffer, in certain situations, might actually introduce a bill on behalf of the member without consulting the member, or without the member asking for it or reading the text of the legislation.

None of these would be in strict violation of the traditional principal-agent relationship. In fact, PAT allows agents to act on their own, if they know they are acting within in the preferences of their principal. The violation would occur if the agent was acting against the preferences of the member of Congress. While this research does not assume there will be many violations of the principal-agent relationship, it will dig deeper into what this relationship entails in terms of Congressional staff, and will find out if staffers ever do go against their member's preferences.

Information asymmetry and expertise are those key components of the PAT which also are key characteristics of congressional offices. These components are seen also in the application of the theory to both business and bureaucracies. Congressional staff are hired for their experience with issues and their expertise on those topics. This experience ranges from personal experience with the issue, such as military service, or handling this issue for another member of Congress or committee. Experienced staffers are valuable to members and new members of Congress often attempt to hire a few experienced staffers, who know the issues better than the member. These staffers have much more time than their bosses to devote to the details of the issue, and therefore are the real experts, creating information asymmetry.

A final difference between the application of PAT to Congressional staff, as opposed to its application to business and the bureaucracy, is the asymmetry of preferences, which is outlined by Miller (2005) as a key component of PAT. In business, it is assumed the principal

and agent have different preferences; they each have their own idea what would be the best course of action. Even when applying the PAT to the relationship between Congress and the bureaucracy, it is understood the bureaucrats have different preferences than Congress, even when in the case of unified government. In Congress, most staff share a similar ideology, party, and policy stances with their boss, thus their preferences would be symmetrical, not asymmetrical.

The PAT was chosen as a theoretical framework for studying congressional staff because of the basic tenants of the theory, as well as the unique relationship that exists between members and staff. Members of Congress hire and depend on staffers to carry out a great deal of the tasks expected of them. Staffers meet with constituents, negotiate policy, come up with new policy ideas, draft and introduce amendments and bills, and submit floor speeches and committee statements. These staffers are hired for their expertise in the issue areas or their tie to the member. Members trust staffers to carry out their preferences in all situations. Oversight of staffers in all situations is impossible, thus members often have no idea what their staff are doing. They must rely on staff to keep them updated on policy developments. These unique characteristics of members and their staffers, and how the work of Congress is carried out on an everyday basis, make the PAT a logical framework.

Agenda Setting and Congress

Under the principal-agent relationship umbrella exists a number of activities in a congressional office which constitute the relationship. One of these activities is agenda-setting and how it is handled by the office. Agenda-setting is the aspect of the PAT which will be addressed in this research.

The specific question of when and under what conditions staffers take the lead and set the agenda can be placed squarely within the larger agenda setting literature, which only hints at the importance of staff (e.g. Kingdon 2003). In that literature, institutional constraints play a large role in explaining how the agenda is developed and policy is made. Because of the need for a simple majority[26] to pass legislation, some scholars such as Krehbiel believe policy outcomes can be due to where specific members, or the particular policy, fall on the ideological spectrum (1996, 1998). Specifically, the median voter sets the agenda in Congress. Still others find committee leaders (Shepsle and Weingast 1987) to be the determining factor in which policies are going to reach the floor, and those that are going to never see the light of day. Other scholars claim party leaders are the real agenda setters in Congress (see Rohde 1991; Aldrich 1995; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Sinclair 2002; Smith 2007). Parties either have homogenous preferences and are able to pass their preferred policies (Rohde 1991), or they are cartelized, which simply means the majority party has both positive and negative agenda control; they are able to keep what might be tough votes for some of their members off the floor (Cox and McCubbins 2005).

Situations, which exist within the institutional constraints, have also been found to play a role in the Congressional agenda. Divided government is argued by some to increase the agenda, as the out party puts their issues on the table to counter the president's (Shipan 2006) and others like Mayhew (1992) claim divided government has no effect on the productivity of Congress. However, while divided government might increase the size of the agenda, scholars such as Binder (2003) say divided government is what causes Congress to be mired in stalemate and gridlock, thus causing nothing to get done.

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[26] This sets aside the 60 vote requirement to invoke cloture on legislation in the Senate. Passing bills in the Senate still requires a simple 51 vote majority.

Other situations which affect the agenda are the presence of legislative sunsets and the need to reauthorize expiring legislation (Adler and Wilkerson 2009). These reauthorizations can also be classified as agenda setting through pure institutional constraints, because the sunsets were written into the laws themselves. Bills such as the Farm Bill (every five years), Highway bill (every five years), and the FAA Reauthorization (took nineteen extensions for it to finally be reauthorized) expire at the end of their authorization period, unless extended or completely reauthorized by their deadline. As these bills must be reauthorized to continue farm programs and the Highway Trust Fund dollars, they create an agenda of necessity for Congress. Congressional leaders must set aside other priorities to deal with these pieces of legislation.

Finally, certain external events can cause action in the policy arena. When these events occur and cause a sudden change in the national political climate, thus forcing Congress to act, it is called a punctuated equilibrium (Baumgartner and Jones 1991, 1993). September 11 and the 2008 recession are recent examples of punctuated equilibriums which caused the agenda to change in Congress. This theory is more reactionary than deliberative when describing how the agenda is developed. Kingdon's (2003) work can also be placed into this agenda change due to changing situations or events category. For him, one of the three streams involved in policy development (problem, politics, and policy) must change course so that all three can come together for a policy window to open. Then, with the help of a policy entrepreneur, the agenda can change. A stream can change course due to a large external event such as September 11, a change in the Administration, or a regime change in Congress (Kingdon 2003).

Institutional constraints and specific situations do not only constrain and empower members of Congress. These same factors also affect a staffer's ability to assist in setting the policy agenda. While congressional staff do not play a starring role in the above mentioned

literature (save for Kingdon, to a small degree), we can apply the same ideas to staff and their agenda setting capabilities. Staff also must operate within the same institutional situations. They still need a simple majority to pass bills, bills must be approved by committee and party leaders, divided government can hamper their ambitions, staff must write reauthorizations first before other bills, and large events can determine what they focus on first. Even more specific to staff and the institutional constraints they face are which chamber they serve in, whether they are in a personal, committee, or leadership office, and how long they have served in Congress.

The above agenda-setting literature focuses primarily on the agenda for Congress as a whole, or at least the individual chambers. This agenda involves the legislation which is introduced, and eventually passed. It includes the bills which are brought up in committees; it also includes the hearings and investigations which committees carry out. It focuses little on the work of individual offices, or even the more routine work of committees. This focus on the entire Congressional agenda accurately captures the work of the whole Congress, but misses the work done by individual offices and committees. It overlooks a great deal of what actually goes on in Congress on a daily basis. It completely leaves out the less significant work done in these offices.

I define agenda setting in Congress as something more. This research attempts to find out who is coming up with the ideas, which is the very first step in agenda-setting. But what ideas and therefore, agendas are included? This research focuses on the work of individual offices and committees, not just Congress as a whole. Most of the work of congressional offices is done behind the scenes; it is not the big visible actions political scientists have focused on in the past. Each congressional office has a number of different agenda items going on simultaneously, in many different issue areas, under the direction of many different staffers. A member very rarely will say "this is my agenda for this session of Congress and that is the only thing my office will

focus on for two years." Offices, members, and staffers, are agile and able to focus attention on many different policy ideas. This research acknowledges that aspect of offices and helps to show congressional agendas are more diverse than previously thought.

The ideas do not have to just be for large bills which will be introduced with much fanfare. These ideas, and subsequent agendas, do include ideas for new policies and legislation, amendments, floor statements, committee statements, but also smaller actions such as letters to other government officials (like Cabinet officials, lower agency heads, governors, and even local officials), Dear Colleagues, and meetings with other government officials and private industries.

The agendas in individual offices include negotiating with other offices and interest groups on bill language, but possibly never introducing a bill. It involves working with private companies, like a railroad, to improve service to their home state or district, or bring new industries and jobs to the state. It involves private talks with the White House, Cabinet, or Agency officials to release much needed emergency funds in response to an incident in the home district. It involves staffers talking with staffers in other offices to organize a prom dress drive when an Indian School back home burns down, taking all of the students' possessions with it, right before prom.

None of these agenda items have been picked up by political scientists in previous work, but makes up a large percentage of what offices, and staffers, do. What this research does is include more of the representation activities of offices than previously captured. Capturing these ideas, these agenda-setting items, involves all members of Congress from the very greenest freshman House member to the most seasoned Senator. Other research has focused on the big issues and leaves out most of what individual members of Congress. This research will include all offices and all ideas and agendas, no matter how small. It will embrace all staffers, no matter

their title or position in the office, and agenda-setting activities, no matter how insignificant they might have seemed to previous research.

A note must be made on what is <u>not</u> included in this definition of agenda-setting. It does not include the normal, everyday functions of an office and staffers, which include responding to constituent communication, constituent casework, research on issues, attending legislative and issue briefings, and meeting with constituents and interest groups. Of course many of these activities could help inform the agenda; constituents and interest groups may help the staffer develop ideas for the agenda, but for the most part, staffers are listening to updates from constituents in meetings and reading their views on the issues in their emails, letters, and phone messages.

One question which might remain is why use agenda-setting when studying members of Congress and their staff. The main reason this stage is used, is it is the first step in the policy process, the pre-decision stage as Kingdon would call it (2003). While all stages of the policy process are hard to nail down in terms of what factors affect it, the fewest outside factors will be present at this very first idea stage. All actions or agendas must start somewhere, and they start with an idea. I want to know where this idea comes from, if the staffer plays a role in this and what affects that. PAT works here because agenda-setting can be seen as one aspect of the relationship and how much is delegated to the agent by the principal. The ideas are either an extension of the member's preferences or not, they are done behind the members back or in perfect coordination with him, and the staffer is delegated this task because of their time, resources, and expertise.

The principal-agent relationship in Congress, specifically the agenda setting portion, and its effect on representation can be seen in two different ways. On one hand, it can be seen as a

negative story for representation. The member (principal) hires staffers (agents) to come up with ideas and be the policy experts. Oversight is difficult and the member often cannot know what the staffer is doing on a regular basis. The staffer might be advocating for policies and coming up with ideas which are different than what the member, and the voters, would want. The staffer is now controlling the agenda, with the authority granted by the member, but it is counter to the member's preferences. This is referred to as rogue behavior in this research.

On the other hand, this relationship can be seen as a positive story for representation. The staffer is still coming up with ideas and policies, but they are ones to which the principal would subscribe if she had the time and expertise to do it herself. Further, these policies fall in line with what the voters want and elected the member to carry out. The staffer has been granted a great deal of discretion and authority to do things which fall in line with the member's and voter's preferences. Through this delegation of authority, the member is better able to represent her constituents. More things get done in the name of representation, as the member has staffers to handle many issues and problems. They are able to meet with constituents and carry out the wishes of the voters. In this way, the principal-agent relationship between members and staff is a positive one for representation in Congress.

Hypotheses and Research Design

Based on the previous literature and the discussion of the principal-agent relationship, a number of hypotheses can be made regarding agenda-setting, decision making, and taking the lead. These actions will be referred to as either agenda-setting, decision making, or taking the lead (leadership), but they should all be seen as being interchangeable. The definition of agenda-

setting, which includes individual office agendas, no matter how seemingly insignificant, are inherent in these hypotheses.

The first group of hypotheses deals directly with the agent in the principal-agent relationship and agenda-setting. The second group of hypotheses puts both the principal and the agent in the analysis. Both sets of hypotheses are formulated from the key components of the PAT.

Agent Specific

> *H1: Administrative Procedures/Institutions - As the approval procedures get more efficient in offices, the more we will see staff setting the agenda.*

As McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast (1987) tell us, instituting administrative procedures are a key way to provide oversight of one's bureaucratic agents. PAT tells us principals develop these administrative procedures to ensure agents are carrying out their preferences, in essence hoops they need to jump through to get the job done.

Congressional offices are no different. From sending out a response to a constituent letter to introducing a new bill, the action must go through an office approval process. Different offices have different approvals and they include more or less red tape or hoops to jump through. Staffers predominantly view these laborious approval processes as less efficient. Some offices require in-depth memos be drafted outlining the action, which must be signed off on by the full hierarchy (legislative director, chief of staff, member of Congress) and can take much longer than the deadline for doing said action. Other offices require a formal memo, but are more streamlined in their approval process, only requiring one or two quick approvals. Still other offices give a great deal of latitude to their staffers and do not require much in the way of formal

approval procedures. These staffers, knowing their boss's preferences, are entrusted to act on their own.

This hypothesis can be tied directly to the earlier discussion of indirect representation. The member of Congress knows the voters have entrusted her with carrying out their preferences. Because of her lack of time to focus on everything in her prevue, she has hired staffers who she trusts and have a great deal of expertise on the issues to help her represent her constituents. She wants to ensure that is what is occurring. By creating these procedures in her office, she is doing just that. I argue these efficient processes with fewer hoops and less red tape will lead to more staff freedom and agenda setting. The principals trust their staff, thus they do not less oversight.

> *H1b: Administrative Procedures/Institutions – As the presence of outside*
> *oversight gets larger, the less we will see staff agenda setting.*

Oversight in Congressional offices can be viewed as part of the approval process and it occurs in many different ways. Similar to McCubbins and Schwartz (1984), we can see police patrol and fire alarm oversight occurring, although it might not look like the traditional methods of which those authors spoke. Police patrol would entail the member or chief of staff constantly checking in with staffers to see what they are working on, getting full reports on all meetings they attend, and giving them direction on their next moves. These staffers would spend a great deal of their time writing in-depth issue and recommendation memos for the member and the chief of staff (and possibly the LD). Little time would be left over for actually coming up with new ideas and agendas. We might see this type of oversight in offices with a less family-style office culture, and in one that is closed off to outside influences. On the other side, which would

be an office with little police patrol, would be staffers with a great deal of individual discretion for setting this agenda.

Fire patrol oversight is an interesting concept in congressional offices. In the bureaucracy, interest groups usually pull the fire alarm. But in congressional offices, staff can keep the member sheltered from interest groups, and other outside communication. Who, then, pulls the alarm? It still could be interest groups, lobbyists, and trade associations. Representatives from these groups often see members of Congress, or their chiefs of staff, at social gatherings, predominately fundraisers. If a staffer is being unresponsive to the group, or doing something the group knows is not in the best interest of the member, they might mention it to the member. Further, if these groups are based in the home state or district, they might notify the state or district staff that something is amiss in the DC office. The state staff will then notify the member or chief of staff. If the staffer is filtering information somehow, it could get back to the member.

Either of these types of oversight will cause the staffer to toe the line in terms of the member's preferences. The staffer might still be setting the agenda for the member, but it is much more controlled and completely in line with the member's preferences; they fear if they keep information from their boss, they will be punished. I argue those staffers who report that when a staffer filters information, it gets back to their boss will engage in fewer agenda setting activities.

> *H2: Personal Relationships - The closer the staffer and the member in terms of ideology and personal relationship, the more the staffer will set the agenda.*

From the bureaucracy literature, we know government agencies have ideologies and bureaucrats have their own individual political beliefs and ideologies (see Kennedy 2014;

Clinton, Bertelli, Grose, Lewis, and Nixon 2012). It makes perfect sense that congressional staffers would have their own ideologies, as well. Zhang and Feiock (2009) find in their work on city councils and managers that a council will assign more policy making power to mangers who share their political preferences and ideologies. Just as city council members are aware of their manager's preferences, members of Congress most likely know how their staff feel about issues, and where they fall on the ideological spectrum. They will trust those staffers with whom they share an ideology with more responsibility.

Another aspect of this is the actual personal relationship between the member and the staff. This could be a relationship that began before the member was even elected to Congress, during a particularly tough campaign, or over a number of years. Again, the work on city managers is applicable here, where it has been found that good relationships matter and conflict reduces the manager's tenure and policy making power (see Whitaker and DeHoog 1991; Zhang and Feiock 2009). These close personal relationships between members and staff will lead to more agenda-setting power.

> *H3: Networks - The broader the network of influences on a staffer, the more time they will spend setting the agenda.*

This hypothesis is about being connected. Networks increase an individual's professionalism, broaden their policy understanding, and increase their effectiveness (see Zhang and Feiock 2009). This connected and highly networked staffer is more experienced, thus they have a bigger issue network. They are comfortable with their member's preferences, and are true policy experts. They have more ideas, know the policy, and most importantly know the game. They are constantly working with the Administration, interest groups, lobbyists, trade associations, and constituents to come up with new ideas and policy angles. These staffers have

the member's best interests in mind, and are using their connections to set a strong policy agenda

for their member. They work with a broad variety of people, including staffers from other

offices, committee staff, administration officials, and interest groups.

Conversely, these staffers could be overly influenced by outsiders, such as interest groups

(see Moe 1989 for similar discussion of interest groups and the bureaucracy), introducing bills

the groups want, but which might not be in the member's purview. If the issue is outside the best

interest of the state or district, this is a problem for good representative government. However, if

it is in the best interest, but just something the member or staffer did not come up with, it is

beneficial in terms of representation.

These staffers could be trying to curry favor with the interest groups or lobbyists,

jockeying for a future job with that group. This is not something the member of Congress would

likely approve of. As the staffer moves away from the member's preferences at the behest of an

interest group or lobbyist, fire alarm or policy patrol oversight and approval procedures must be

sufficient to bring them back.

> *H4: Information Asymmetry - The more complex the issue, the more staff agenda-setting will be seen.*
>
> *H4$_B$: The more experience the staffer has, the more agenda-setting will be seen.*

This is all about what is called information asymmetry in the PAT literature (Epstein and

O'Halloran 1999). Similar to the reasons why Congress delegates to agencies, many issues taken

up by Congress are very complex. The member does not have the necessary expertise to deal

with these issues. Thus, the staffer becomes the real policy expert in these situations. The

member might be interested in this issue, but it is simply too multifaceted and informationally

intense (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999) for the member to become an expert on. Using the

expertise of the staff is to the member's advantage, thus they can focus on other issues. Just like attention and focus, a member cannot be educated on every single issue before Congress. Again, this is why they have staff in the first place.

Particular staff are hired for their experience with these complex issues. Some are hired for their personal experience with the issue, such as hailing from an agriculture background and handling agriculture issues or serving in the military and handling defense issues. The longer they serve the member or committee, the more experience they gain with these issues. Staff are hired because they have worked for other members of Congress or committees, handling the issue.

Younger staffers, or those with less experience, are simply not versed in the congressional game. They do not know all the rules. They are content to go through the regular channels of getting approval to do things such as co-sign letters. Further, inexperienced staffers are not given large policy related responsibilities. For instance, in the Senate, these staffers are opening mail, answering the phone, or responding to constituent correspondence. There is little room for leadership behavior, as their work product is overseen by a number of more senior staffers. These staffers are also more concerned with keeping their jobs. They have not built up policy experience, and are thus seen as more expendable by senior staffers and the members themselves. These inexperienced staffers do not feel comfortable taking the lead, as they fear they could lose their jobs if their ideas do not perfectly mesh with that of the members'. Lastly, inexperienced staffers are the staffers with the least knowledge of their member's policy preferences and their legislative history. They do not feel comfortable acting on behalf of their boss because they are still learning their boss's policy stances.

The opposite is also true. Experienced staffers know the rules and norms, have large policy responsibilities, have little fear of getting fired, and know their boss's policy preferences extremely well. These staffers will be more likely to sign on to legislation or letters or speak on behalf of their boss in meetings with other staffers. Further, they feel comfortable taking new ideas to their boss.

Junior members, who want to take advantage of the policy expertise of their agents, will hire experienced staffers. Someone in the office needs to know how a bill becomes a law. The members defers to these experienced staffers on many issues and procedural issues when they first arrive in Washington. This gives the staffers a great deal of flexibility in their jobs. It also means the staffers do not check with the member on all issues and are participating in agenda-setting behavior on a regular basis. While this will create a very large information asymmetrical situation early on in a member's tenure, they will also be able to hit the ground running with experienced staff. Rather than both members and staff just learning where the committee hearings are held, these new members with experienced staff will have statements and amendments ready for their first hearing.

I argue the more complex the issue and the more experience the staffer has working on their issues, the more we will see staff agenda-setting.

> *H5: Personal Incentives- Those staffers who reported wanting to work in Congress initially to "make a difference" will engage in more agenda setting behavior.*

This hypothesis is tied to the PAT incentives literature, which says agents receive incentives (financial and otherwise) to follow the principal's preferences. Congressional staff are notoriously underpaid, able to make much more money if they moved to the private sector to work in government affairs for a private company or trade association. Congressional staffers

have similar salary levels across the institution[27], with very few instances of bonuses. Thus, financial incentives are not an accurate measure of how a principal might reward an agent for carrying out their preferences. What incentives are present for them to carry out their principals' preferences, then?

We must look to other incentives, which for government workers is their desire to make a difference and work in public service (Miller and Whitford 2007; 2002; Heckman, Smith and Taber 1996). These individuals seek out these jobs particularly for this unique incentive. These staffers who want to work in Congress to make a difference will engage in more agenda-setting behaviors, because that is what they came to Congress to do. They are rewarded simply by doing the work of their boss. They essentially bring their own incentives with them, by their desire to do good work. With this particular incentive come some possible drawbacks. These staffers possibly have their own preferences, which might conflict with their boss's preferences. While they will engage in more agenda-setting, those ideas and agendas might not be in line with the principal's preferences.

Principal Specific Hypotheses

While the main story of this work is the role the agent plays in the agenda-setting process, we cannot leave out the principal in the relationship. A great deal is known about members of Congress and their role in agenda-setting, because that is where most of the political science research is focused. Little is known about how the agents, the staffers, view their principal and their preferences. These hypotheses put both the principal and the agent in the analysis. The following hypotheses, which include the member, have been made based on theories developed from the previous literature discussion.

[27] For instance, an LA in Office X will make a similar salary to an LA in Office Y.

H6: Institutional - Senators will allow more staff agenda-setting than House members.

This hypothesis is a function of the work load, for both members and staffers, in the House of Representatives. Personal staffs are smaller in the House, thus each staffer has a great deal of policy responsibility. House members are pulled in many different directions, with a large workload themselves. In turn, House staff are pulled in numerous different directions. Setting policy goals and such simple activities as getting letters and co-sponsorships approved is difficult, leaving little time for agenda-setting. Further, as noted in Chapter 1, Senate staff tend to have more expertise and have more time to focus on specific topics. This paves the way for them to come up with new ideas and take the lead.

H7: Institutional - The more senior the member of Congress, the more staff will set the agenda.

The longer a member of Congress serves in Congress, the more they are considered electorally safe. This comes from a long history of constituent service, high name identification, and a large campaign war chest. These established and senior members of Congress are so safe, they worry less about the individual actions in the office, whether that is co-sponsoring a bill or sending out constituent letters. They might have allowed procedures and approval to get lax in their offices. They let staff drive the bus. Further, even though these members have established policy preferences, because of their electoral safety, they can occasionally take stances which appear to be counter to their previous work. The staffers lead the way on this.

H8: Information Asymmetry - The less a member is interested in an issue, the more staff agenda-setting will be seen on that issue.

H9: The less a member is involved in the issue, the more staff agenda-setting will be seen on that issue.

This is an attention story and related to the earlier hypothesis in the agent section regarding issue complexity. When the member is not on the committee of jurisdiction or does not have a set policy or strong preferences, they most likely will have less of an interest, or time, for the issue. For instance, members from an urban district or state might not have strong preferences on agricultural issues. Members cannot place an emphasis on every single issue before Congress. This is why they have staffers in the first place. Members must focus their energies on a select few issues which are important to them and their constituents, and on which they serve on the committee of jurisdiction. Other issues do not get the same attention, but must still be covered by staff. These issues, where there is little member attention, is where we will see staffers setting the agenda.

Similarly, members only have limited time to devote to dealing with specific issues before Congress. Again, this is why staff are so important to the management of the workload of Congress. If a member of Congress is very involved in the issue, there will be less policy room for the staffer to set the agenda. Conversely, if the member is not involved, she will rely on the staffer to come up with the specific policy direction.

> *H10: Personal Motives and Ambitions - Staff who work for members who are running for reelection will participate in fewer agenda-setting activities.*

Political ambition is a powerful thing. While most of the House respondents work for a member who is up for reelection[28], we still consider them politically ambitious under Schlesinger's (1966) categories. Specifically, those members who are running for their same position again are statically ambitions (1966). These members who are running for reelection are concerned about their image and what policies they are supporting, or spearheading.

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[28] The obvious exception will be those respondents who work for a member who is retiring. 27 survey respondents fit this category. Conversely, 82 Senate staff respondents work for a Senator who is running for reelection.

Since the data was collected in December 2013 and January 2014, we consider the members in their reelection cycle. These members definitely considered reelection when making decisions. Because they are spending a great deal more time focusing on their image, they are delegating fewer agenda-setting activities to their staff. The members are taking a much more active, and careful, approach to their actions in Congress. In short, ambition affects, and shapes, behavior (Brace 1984).

Conclusion

The principal-agent theory has been used to describe business relationships, as well as the relationship between the bureaucracy and Congress. This chapter makes the argument this theory can be used to study the relationship between Congress and their staff, specifically when discussing agenda-setting.

Based on the theory outlined in both Chapters 1 and 2, this chapter also defined ten hypotheses which will be tested in later chapters. The next chapter will discuss the research design, data collection, and variables used in the quantitative analysis.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the research design, data collection techniques, critiques of the collection mechanism, development of the instrument, and the data I will be using to address the theory and hypotheses outlined in Chapter 2. I will discuss in detail why this data collection method was decided upon over others. I will describe the coding of my data and the reasoning behind coding decisions. This chapter will also outline the key dependent and independent variables.

The story of this dissertation is the role these unseen and unelected policy advisors play in the process. While the DC world knows they are important, most voters do not fully realize the role they play. The original data collected will answer a number of questions, from the perspective of these staffers, which until now where unknown to political scientists and voters alike.

Research Design

In order to test the hypotheses outlined in Chapter 2, I compiled a new data set of congressional staff responses, gathered through online surveys. The first question to be addressed is why did I decide to gather data through a survey, rather than other, possibly easier, less messy methods?[29] The answer lies in the nature of Congressional staff. Earlier I discussed how these individuals are hidden from the process. They are not elected; they do not vote; their names do not show up on the bills or amendments, even though they wrote them. How exactly would one measure their contributions, outside of talking directly to them?

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[29] A discussion of pitfalls and critiques of this method can be found later in this section.

One option was to search Congressional Records for reference to staff's participation in bill passage. However, in the present atmosphere, Congress is not passing many pieces of legislation, but we know work is still being done. Also, there are those situations where members do not publically (in a Senate or House floor speech) thank staff or they do not thank all the staff who played key roles in getting a bill passed. This was an imperfect measure, and would have missed all of the small contributions of staff on both large and small issues, let alone many of the large contributions.

I could have looked at simple career longevity of staff in Congress, by counting how many years each staffer has been in Congress, and with a particular member. I could have also included their pay and education levels, when available. While this data might have helped answer if staff are hired, and rewarded, for their expertise, it would have not gotten at the larger issue of agenda setting and PAT. Further, it would not provide any answers on why some staffers play larger roles in policy development than others, and under what conditions they do so.

Finally, I could have used available data to address my hypotheses. As stated earlier, the research on congressional staff is limited, and recent research on this particular topic is even more limited. Private surveys done for private companies are not available to academics. The last political science research to ask a similar question was in 1980 (Malbin) and even then, the author did not delve deep enough into the actual contribution of Congressional staff. There also exist a number of case studies, but nearly all of these are of committee staff (see Manley 1968; Whiteman 1987; DeGregorio 1988). I could not locate any previous large scale studies or surveys which measured the contribution of all types of Congressional staff, on both sides of the Hill[30]. The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) does survey congressional staff on a

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[30] See later discussion of Annenberg survey of Congressional staff, which does survey staff, but does not inquire about their role in policy.

regular basis, and have studied communication and constituent engagement with Congress, as well as job satisfaction, engagement, and workload of staffers.[31] A recent report by CMF discusses what motivates staffers, and what they really do, and what factors affect their job satisfaction.[32] While I am interested in staff job satisfaction and why they choose to work in Congress in the first place, this research does not get at my larger question of staff agenda-setting.

The definition of agenda-setting, as outlined in Chapter 2, includes much more than the usual activities considered by researchers. Thus, most of what staff do on a daily basis does not get captured. Further, the agendas of individual offices, which is a focus of my work, are not included in agenda-setting studies. By creating my own survey instrument, I was able to provide for the inclusion of all legislative agenda activities and ideas by staff.

Without this important agenda-setting component, I could not adequately measure or understand the principal-agent relationship between staff and members, from the perspective of the agent. This was the part of the relationship I am most interested in, as the principal is often not aware if the agent is following the principal's wishes. Further, these principals in particular would most likely not give full credit to their agents and their role in the policy and agenda-setting process. Obviously, this could have negative political and electoral repercussions. Indirect democracy depends on the elected officials carrying out the wishes of the constituents and doing the work themselves. Thus, by ignoring the agent in this situation, we might miss the important impact they have on American public policy. Future research will study how members of

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[31] Congressional Management Foundation Projects, http://www.congressfoundation.org/projects
[32] Congressional Management Foundation. 2012. "Life in Congress: Aligning Work and Life in the U.S. House and Senate. A Joint Research Report by the Congressional Management Foundation and the Society for Human Resource Management"

Congress view this relationship and the role staff play in policy development, for comparison purposes. However, this is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Based on the data challenges listed above, I chose to survey current and former Congressional staff directly. I administered the survey online because I know the psyche of the Congressional staffer. They receive too much paper every day and throw away anything that does not affect them immediately, thus a paper survey is not feasible. They would not want a paper survey hanging around their desk in case the member drops by to discuss a recent vote or committee hearing. Further, ever since the anthrax attacks on the U.S. Senate in the fall of 2001, every piece of mail received in Congress is irradiated. This causes the paper to be yellowed, brittle, and often the pages are irreversibly glued together in the process. The online survey design avoided these challenges, while allowing respondents to remain anonymous.

Staffers spend all day on the computer and look for distractions; an online survey fit their lifestyle. If they did not feel comfortable filling it out at work on their government computer, they could do it at home and it was still submitted. Additionally, before beginning this survey, I had a good deal of experience with online survey tools, development, and administration through the multi-year Local Government Elections Project (Bickers, et al) and a survey of Colorado city council members and their use of experts in energy policy development.

A second major component of this research was case studies, which involved two House personal offices and three Senate personal offices. These case studies were conducted in November 2013 and will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Critiques and Pitfalls of Design

While I believed an original online survey was the best way to go about this research, I was not naïve to the potential problems involved with this particular research design, and was warned by well-meaning academics. Many suggested I do in-person interviews with a handful of current and former staffers, which is how much of the previous research in this area has been conducted. While this is an acceptable method for some research questions, it would not have given me a large sample size, would not be anonymous, and could have introduced considerable researcher and respondent bias.

However, my design is not without its own potential complications. The first critique of this design was that access would be difficult, or even impossible, to obtain. I agree. I was a staffer for seven years. I know firsthand that staffers are wary of their words showing up "above the fold" which could damage or end their political careers. These staffers are also apprehensive about people from outside their world, especially academics, asking personal questions.

I believe it is this firsthand knowledge that made me more sensitive to the concerns and needs of these staffers. Further, I was in a unique position as I still have a great deal of contacts in the Senate, where I previously worked. I also have very strong personal relationships in the House, with both members and senior level staffers. These relationships made follow-up case-studies with staff possible. These relationships also allowed me to send personal follow-up emails to chiefs of staff, LD's, and staff directors, assuring them of the legitimacy of this research. These individuals then encouraged their staffs to fill out the survey. Finally, I have remained in close contact with hundreds of former House and Senate staffers who provided important insight on the role staffers play in policy.

The second critique of this design is I am relying on the staffer's own perceptions of their work and their role in the process. Can we really trust what they say? Will they not embellish their involvement?

My answer is it is the staffer's own perceptions of their role in the process and self-reporting activities which is the important and interesting part of this research. This is a study focused solely on staffers, not members. In the principal-agent relationship, this research looks at the agent. Since we presume they are doing much of the actual work, how they see themselves and their roles is exactly what I am interested in. I rely on them to report their boss's preferences and characteristics. This is what is important, the perceived preferences, because again, staff are the ones carrying out these preferences. These self-revelations will get deeper into this principal-agent relationship than ever before. It will also tell us about how representation is perceived and carried out.

A third critique relates to the question about staff's role in the overall messaging and policy process. This critique is that the more traditional methods of measuring Congressional outputs, like bills introduced, co-sponsorships, hearings planned, numbers of meetings, number of amendments introduced, and letters sent, might not be the best way to measure staff influence (Fox and Webb Hammond 1977). I agree. These are common output measures used by political scientists, but they tell us nothing about how staff are really influencing policy and messaging. This is precisely why I am relying on self-reporting. Staffers themselves are some of the best judges about how their actions are affecting the larger process.

A fourth problem with this survey, from a researcher's standpoint, is the issue of anonymity and confidentiality. My respondents are anonymous to me, as well as to any future users of the data. This anonymity was crucial in getting staffers to respond to the survey. In my

initial interviews with staff before creating the survey, this was a key factor. They did not want me knowing who they were, or more importantly, who they worked for. Anonymity of respondents and confidentiality of their responses does much to build trust and encourage responses, but it diminishes adding in additional information to the data. I would be unable to add in additional information about the offices, or member legislative actions later. Follow-up contacts of certain respondents would be impossible. I decided getting more, and honest, responses to my survey was worth these complications.

The final problem with this survey is that of external validity. Surveys were sent to every legislative staffer currently working in Congress, but not everyone filled it out. There is an aspect of self-selection, and selection bias in that staff decided if they would fill out the survey or not. Selection bias is a problem in nearly all survey research. Further, I am very aware some offices simply do not allow their staff to respond to any survey, no matter the source[33]. This eliminates those types of offices from my sample. In the real world of studying Congress, these are the realities of acquiring data.

The Survey Instrument

After acknowledging and understanding the potential complications with the research design and data gathering method, the first step was to examine existing elite surveys of this nature. One notable example was the 2004-2005 Annenberg Congress survey (Princeton Survey Research Associates International 2004). While this survey asks questions directly of Congressional staff from both the House and the Senate, the questions do not pertain to the individual staffer's role in any sort of policy development or agenda setting. They all ask about

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[33] Even though some offices do not allow their staff to answer surveys, I was able to convince a few former colleagues who are now Chiefs of Staff to allow their staffs to complete the survey, thus the results do contain responses from offices which normally do not respond to these inquires.

their opinions about the productivity, and outcomes, of Congress in more general terms. Further, there are only 70 Senate staff respondents, out of a total of 252 staffers surveyed (Princeton Survey Research Associates International 2004). While respectable given the difficulty in getting staff to respond to surveys, this is not a representative sample. However, I was able to get ideas for my own survey, as well as how to properly frame questions from this survey. Other surveys were scanned for ideas and wording of questions, as well as the scholarly work on survey research (ex. Converse and Presser 1986; Zaller and Feldman 1992; Weisberg 2005; Pasek and Krosnick 2010).

I made two preliminary research trips to Washington, DC in June 2011 and September 2012. During these trips I met with high level current and former staffers from both the House and Senate to inform the survey.[34] I tested potential questions at these meetings and received feedback on wording and additional questions. They also shared the likelihood of their fellow staffers filling out such a survey. As a result of this feedback, I eliminated a larger networks component from the survey because the staffers I spoke to unanimously agreed these questions would not be answered and would turn off respondents.

Next was the development of the survey instrument itself[35]. There were actually two versions of the survey. One version went to all current legislative staffers, while a second went to former staff. There is very little that differentiates the two surveys. The former staffer survey simply used past tense language in the questions, rather than present.[36] If a respondent indicated they were a former staffer, they received a prompt which said, "As a former staffer, please put

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[34] I was also able to meet with Dr. Christine DeGregorio during the June 2011 trip and received a great deal of invaluable advice from someone who has done this type of research throughout her career.

[35] The full surveys, both the version sent to current and former staff, are included in Appendix A. The survey questions which provided important variables will be discussed in later sections of this chapter. The recruitment letter is also included in Appendix A.

[36] For instance "In which chamber DID you serve?" as opposed to "…do you serve?"

yourself back in time to the most recent job you held as a congressional staffer for the duration of this survey. Please answer the following questions with respect to that most recent job."

Two additional questions were asked of former staffers. These included asking former staffers how long ago they left Congressional employment, and if they were interested in working for Congress again at some point. No additional, or distinct, questions were asked of current staffers.

The survey contained a number of heretofore unasked questions of Congressional staffers, but also some simple demographic questions, as well. Respondents were asked questions such as which chamber they serve (House or Senate), type of office, how long they have worked in Congress, title, if they have worked for other members or committees, if their boss[37] is up for reelection, their boss's party, their ideology, age, gender, education level, race, and marital status. They were also asked more in-depth questions, such as how they got their job and what issue areas they handle for their member. For the key policy related questions in the survey, respondents were asked to think back over the past year and respond how important they and others are to the policy process, how involved they are with specific activities, how often their boss takes their recommendations, their boss's involvement and interest in their key issue, who do they work with and go to for information, their level of discretion conducting numerous activities, if information is filtered in their office, and their relationship with their boss.

Staffers were not asked directly if they took the lead on setting the policy agenda for their boss, as they most likely would not have admitted it. Instead, they were asked how involved they were in different activities and how much discretion they had in varied areas. The protection of

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[37] "Boss" is a common term used on Capitol Hill and refers to which member of Congress an individual works for. It is used interchangeably with "my member" or "the member." It does not refer to their Chief of Staff, Clerk, or Staff Director. Even though this terminology is widely used and understood, the first time it was used in the survey, it was accompanied with the text: "Note: whenever the colloquialism "boss" is used, it refers to the member of Congress you work for."

privacy was extremely important in this study and staffers needed to feel comfortable answering the questions. Further, policy preferences of the member were not measured, as it is the staffers' perceptions of the members' preferences that are important.

Once the first draft of questions was developed, I inputted them into the online survey tool, Qualtrics. Having used both SurveyMonkey and Qualtrics in previous research projects, I decided upon Qualtrics because of its sophistication and aesthetically it appears more professional to the respondent[38].

Once developed, I sent the recruitment letter and survey to a number of individuals for comments, which included my committee, three APSA fellows currently working in Congress, and numerous friends and former colleagues who are current or former Congressional staff members for comments. This important step allowed me to rework problem questions, clarify question wording, add options and additional questions, and eliminate unnecessary questions before sending it out. The survey was taken numerous times during this process, which helped to weed out programming bugs. A final version of the survey was sent to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Colorado and received "exempt" status.[39]

It should be noted that even with the additional testing, awkward question wording, and response choices, and typos were present on the final drafts[40]. These could cause internal validity issues, as the responses might be affected by these problems. For this reason, numerous indicators for agenda-setting (dependent variable) and most of the independent variables will be used in the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5.

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[38] David Carr, "Qualtrics Dominates Academic Survey Research." InformationWeek, July 24, 2013. Available online at http://www.informationweek.com/qualtrics-dominates-academic-survey-research/d/d-id/1110904?
[39] See Protocol #: 13-0615 from October 24, 2013.
[40] Full surveys available in Appendix A

Simultaneously to creating and testing the survey, I was developing my population of survey respondents. Due to a projected low response rate[41], I made the decision to survey every DC based Congressional staffer who handled a policy issue for their boss. I decided to focus solely on the DC staffs because, as stated previously, most DC staffs focus on policy, while state and district staffs focus on case work. While I fully understand the importance and critical contributions state and district staff provide for their member, Washington, DC is where bills and amendments are introduced and debated, where the majority of committee hearings[42] are held, and where votes are taken. Thus, most members of Congress house their national policy staff in DC, who stay in close contact with the state and district staff.

For my survey population, I subscribed to the online database Legistorm. According to their website, they are the "only online source for staff salaries, financial disclosures, trips, gifts and earmarks. We've expanded our offerings to include the most accurate and up-to-date contact information and the most detailed intelligence on Hill staffers available."[43] This database is updated daily, thus is more up to date than the printed directories[44] or the Leadership Directories Congressional Yellow Book. This database provides names, titles, genders, email addresses, policy areas (if applicable), previous Congressional employment, and education in a few cases.

Legistorm allowed me to see which staffers handle a policy issue, and which issues they cover, even if they are staff assistants or press secretaries. For the most part, policy issues are handled by chiefs of staff, general counsels, policy advisors, legislative directors (LD), legislative assistants (LA), and legislative correspondents (LC) in personal offices. Staff

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[41] See Kim Bartel Sheehan, "E-mail Survey Response Rates: A Review." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. January 2001.
[42] Field hearings are an obvious exception.
[43] Available at http://www.legistorm.com/index/about.html
[44] The advantages and disadvantages of using these directories have been outlined in a 2010 CRS report by Peterson, Reynolds, and Wilhelm.

directors, counsels, clerks, professional staff members, analysts, and researchers handle policy issues on committee staffs. Leadership staffs are populated mostly with policy advisors and analysts.

I included legislative staff for all members of the House of Representatives, including the members who represent the District of Columbia and the US territories and protectorates, all 100 senators, all committee staff in both the House and Senate, and all leadership staff from both sides of the Hill. Due to the large cost of downloading lists of staffers (over $400 for all the House legislative assistants), I inputted each office, staffer, their email, and gender individually into spreadsheets. This produced 5444 individual Congressional staffers. This number included: 2365 House personal office staffers, 1350 Senate personal office staffers, 806 House committee staffers, 792 Senate committee staffers, and 131 leadership staffers from both sides of the Hill.

The second important component of this survey population is former staffers. These respondents were surveyed to access latent feelings about staffers' roles in the process. Further, it was decided these individuals could very well provide a more honest view of how staffers affect policy. These former staffers also could feel more comfortable filling out a survey, with their job or their boss's reelection no longer on the line.

These former staff subjects were accessed through chain-referral sampling, or the snowball approach, with existing subjects recruiting other subjects from among their pool of former staff acquaintances. I began by sending the recruitment email to 75 former colleagues from both the House and Senate. They then sent it on to others. While it is difficult, and in most cases impossible, to assess response rates with this approach, there is no reliable database of all former Congressional staffers. By using this method, I could almost assure a high response rate,

quality responses, and individuals who have worked in Congress in the last 10 years, so their recollections are fresh.

The survey was administered in December of 2013 and January of 2014. Two reminder emails were sent over two weeks. As the population of Congressional staffers is in constant flux (which is easily seen by the updates Legistorm sends out each week about individuals moving on and off the Hill), this list of staffers should be seen as a snapshot from the months of October and November in 2013. These specific staffers cannot be assumed to be there for any length of time, but because of the representative nature of the survey results, we can make assumptions about staffers as a group.

The research on incentives tells us they improve response rates (see Miller and Dillman 2011), but they were not used for this survey. Following the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, staffers became wary of any outside gifts, as all gifts from lobbyists are now prohibited. As any appearance of impropriety is strongly questioned, incentives were not used to encourage staffers to fill out the survey.[45]

As stated earlier, the survey was sent to 5444 current congressional staff emails. Of that, 492 emails were undeliverable, bounced, or were rejected by an individual office's firewalls. Thus, the survey was received by 4952 individual congressional staffers.

As for the success of the Qualtrics survey, 474 current staffers opened the email, but 28 of them did not fill out more than one question, leaving 446 viable current staffer responses. This is a 9.0% response rate. After sending out 75 surveys to former staffers, I received responses from 83 of them. Response rate cannot be calculated for former staffers, because, as stated previously, I used the snowball approach. Three respondents did not indicate whether they were

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[45] Author sought guidance from a current senior Senate Administrative Assistant on this decision.

current or former staffers and two of these did not fill out the survey. These two sets of responses were combined for one large data set, thus giving me a sample size of 530.

The Twenty-first Century Congressional Staffer – the Data

With such a large population, the first question is is the sample representative of the population. The following table (3.1) shows the survey respondents seem to be representative of the larger population of congressional staffers, at least in terms of the few variables which are available from Legistorm. This table compares the entire population of staffers who handle policy issues to the survey respondents. The numbers indicate their percentage in each category. There is no reason to suspect my results are not representative of all congressional staffers. It must be acknowledged, nevertheless, this research does not study the entire population, but a select group who self-selected to take the survey.

Table 3.1: Population vs Sample

Category	Population Percentage	Survey Sample Percentage
House	60	52
Senate	40	48
Personal	69	66
Committee	29	31
Leadership	2	3
Democrat	51	44
Republican	49	56
Chief of Staff	10	7
Legislative director	9	10
Legislative Assistant	22	26
Legislative Correspondent	12	7
Male	60	66
Female	40	34

Due to the seemingly representative nature of this data, I argue my results can be applied to congressional staffers as a whole. It should be noted the survey sample percentages include

former staffers, who were asked to put themselves back in time to when they were staffers. The representative nature of the data does not seem to be affected by including these individuals.

As has been stated, the last time a project of this type was conducted was in the 1970's (see Fox and Webb Hammond 1977; Malbin 1980). What has changed and what remains the same?[46] For one thing, according to the survey, staffers are still young. Over 55% of all staffers who handle policy are between the ages of 26 and 35. They are also very well educated; 61% have a graduate degree of some sort. Further, 21% of respondents have a law degree, while only 9.5% are employed as counsels in Congress. While men still greatly outnumber women in congressional policy roles, women in these roles are up 10% from the 1970's. We are also seeing women in more leadership positions in all three types of office. In fact, according to Legistorm, 28% of all congressional chiefs of staff are female[47] and 30% of staff directors are women.[48] The research from the 1970's did not look at racial minority staffers, but my survey shows that over 10% of today's policy staffers are non-white.[49]

According to the survey, staffers still share ideologies with their boss (similar to the 1977 research of Fox and Webb Hammond). In fact, 45% share the exact same ideology as their boss. This came from a direct question on the survey, which asked the respondents to place themselves and their boss into the following categories: very liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, and very conservative. If respondents saw themselves as very liberal or conservative, they overwhelmingly also placed their bosses into the same category. Contrary to the work of Fox and Hammond (1977), I did not find that staffers were more extreme than their bosses, at least according to their own perceptions.

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[46] See earlier discussion of staffers in 1970's in "Description of Staffers and their Job Roles."
[47] My survey results show 26% of all chiefs of staff respondents are female.
[48] 38% of my staff director respondents were female.
[49] Racial data is not available from Legistorm

Today's staffers are very well educated, as noted earlier. They are also dedicated to their jobs and making a true difference. Nearly 41% of the survey respondents, when asked what made them want to work in Congress in the first place, indicated a reason larger than themselves; usually it was about making a positive difference for their country or state. Anecdotally, five staffers, when asked what made them want to work in Congress in the first place, answered "The West Wing." 34% of staffers felt they are "very important" to the agenda process.[50] These staffers also have previous congressional experience, as 59.5% of respondents have worked for other members or committees prior to their current boss. Not only do they have previous congressional experience, 56.4% of all respondents had previous experience with the specific policy issues they handle before being hired by their current boss. This typically is how more seasoned and experienced staffers get hired by new offices, which is reinforced by the data with 35% of staffers being recruited or asked to work for their current boss. This previous experience could be academic degree; working in the industry of that particular issue; personal experience (like growing up on a farm or ranch and handling agriculture issues); previous congressional experience; working in the Administration; or working for a lobby or trade group.

While they are experts and dedicated to their jobs, tenures are relatively short. 42% of respondents have worked for their current boss for less than 2 years. The largest individual category of total time worked in Congress (including previous employment) was 2-4 years at just under 21%. 54% of former staffers worked less than a total of 8 years in Congress, while 61% of current staffers have worked less than 8 years in Congress. There is a marked difference between the sides of the Capitol on this. House staffers have shorter Congressional tenures over all, with the largest category of respondents (25.5%) serving between 2-4 years and nearly 65% serving

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[50] Question choice categories were: not at all important, very unimportant, somewhat unimportant, neither, somewhat important, very important, and extremely important

less than 8 years total. On the Senate side, there is much better distribution and the largest total years served category 10-15 years at 18%.

We can surmise the long hours are not conducive to having a family, or much of a life outside of work, as less than half of all respondents are married (46%). These long hours and little recognition for the jobs they are doing do not seem to have a large negative impact on longevity and satisfaction, however. 47% of former staff would work in Congress again in the future and only 10% of current staff plan on leaving Congressional employment in the next 3 months. A vast majority report having a positive relationship with their bosses; when asked to place their relationship on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the best possible relationship, 80% rank their relationship above 5. The most telling of all questions is the one which directly asked respondents how satisfied they are with their current job. The largest category was the highest level of satisfaction (very satisfied), with 33.8%. Only 1.9% of respondents said they were very dissatisfied and only 15.8% of respondents indicated they were dissatisfied in some way with their job (combination of very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, or somewhat dissatisfied). Interestingly, staffers felt that their coworkers and other staffers of their same level in other offices were also satisfied with their jobs.

This satisfaction could be tied to the earlier discussion of how important the staffers feel to the process or their desire to make a positive difference in policy. It could also be due to their office's culture. 91.32% of respondents, when asked to describe their office culture, chose at least one of the following categories: "family atmosphere, personal relationships among staffers, low key atmosphere, superiors are friends." In terms of socializing outside of work with coworkers, only 3.9% of staffers indicated they never socialize with their coworkers outside of work hours. 24% socialize one a month and 23% do it 2-3 times a month. On the other end of the

spectrum, 5.5% socialize daily and 9% indicated they hang out with their coworkers 2-3 times a week.

Key Dependent Variables

This dissertation is about the role congressional staff members play in the policy process, specifically the agenda setting process, within individual congressional offices and committees. I am interested in the principal-agent relationship within Congress and when staffers are taking the lead, and when they follow, during the agenda-setting process, and what affects this. Thus, I am interested in dependent variables which measure an individual staff member's role in the policy process. There are numerous ways staffers can take the lead and come up with ideas and actions on their own, thus there are a number of dependent variables in this research. All will be used to test the hypotheses. I operationalized staffer's agenda setting power and activities through a number of variables. All dependent variables are created from specific questions asked on the survey, or new variables created from numerous questions on the survey. Additionally, numerous dependent variables were used in an attempt to reduce the issues from problematic question wording and to come at the idea of agenda setting from different direction. The first key finding of this survey, and this research, is that staffers are setting the agenda and coming up with idea in varying degrees, which is evident from the following dependent variables. This survey marks the first time staffers' involvement in this type of activity has been quantified to this degree. This contribution should not be overlooked or diminished.

Involvement in Presenting New Policy Idea

The first main dependent variable for this research measures how involved the staffer is in the process of presenting a new policy idea to their boss. Since this measures involvement, it captures any agenda setting activity, no matter how large or small, from all levels of staffers. This could be the lowly legislative correspondent offering up a new idea, or the chief of staff advocating an all new direction for the member to go.

This variable comes from a question which asked: "With your top issue in mind, please rank how involved you are with the following activities in your office." Respondents were presented with a number of different situations, but for this variable the following is used: "Bringing new policy ideas/actions on the issue to your boss." The choices were: Never (coded as 0), rarely (1), sometimes (2), most of the time (3), and always (4). This variable has 349 observations, a mean of 2.8, and a standard deviation of 1.1.
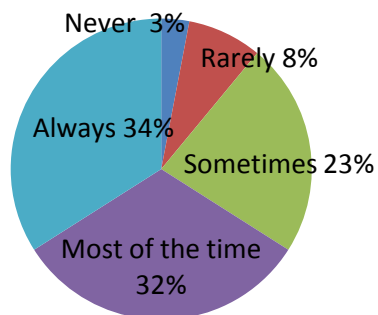

Figure 3.1: Involvement with Presenting New Policy Idea to Boss

Frequency of Presenting New Ideas

The second main dependent variable is similar to the first in that it looks at staffers presenting new ideas to the member. However, this measures the frequency that the particular respondent is solely responsible for presenting the new idea to their boss. They are not sharing

the duty with other staffers. It also asks the staffer to identify a very specific period of time; they are asked how often they are presenting new ideas in the last year. This helps narrow down their responses, so they are not averaging over their career or just thinking of the most recent example. This time period gives them the option of choosing a very big issue they have been dealing with in their area of expertise over the last year.

This dependent variable is created from a question on the survey which asked: "In the following situations, with your top issue in mind, please identify how often you can recall doing the following in the past year: Presenting a new policy idea or direction to my boss." The choices were: never (coded as 0), rarely (1), sometimes (2), most of the time (3), and always (4). There are 347 observations of this variable, with a mean of 2.5 and a standard deviation of 1.1.
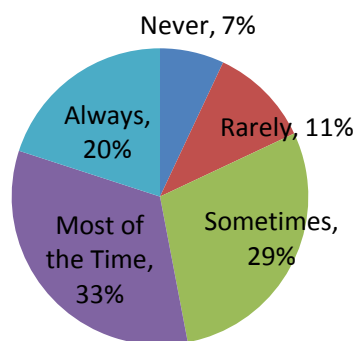
Figure 3.2: Frequency of presenting a new policy idea or direction in past year

Taking Ideas

The third main dependent variable is an important measure of agenda setting because it measures how often a member is taking the staffer's advice on new ideas. This is a bit different than the previous questions which asked simply how often a staffer was doing this. This variable measures how often the boss is actually listening and following through on that advice, so a more accurate look at agenda-setting.

The question was: "How often does your boss take your advice on new ideas or actions on your top issue, and follow through with your suggestions on action?" The choices are: never (0), rarely (1), sometimes (2), most of the time (3), and always (4). It had 342 observations, a mean of 2.6, and a standard deviation of .8.
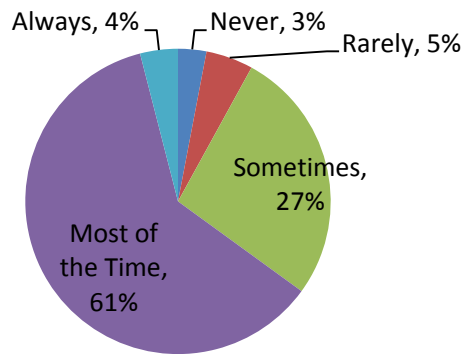

Figure 3.3: Frequency of boss taking advice on new policy idea and acting

Freedom and Rogue

The final category of dependent variables measures how much freedom a staffer has to act on behalf of their boss. It also measures how often a staffer will go rogue and advocate for policies not in line with their boss's preferences. The question is: "In the following situations, with your top issue in mind, please identify how often you can recall doing the following in the past year." The categories included: "Negotiating language or strategy on behalf of my boss, in his/her best interest, without running everything by my boss; Presenting a new policy idea or direction to my boss; Co-signing letters or co-sponsoring legislation in areas my boss supports without prior approval; Voicing my disagreement with my boss on a policy idea or action; Introducing Legislation in areas my boss supports without prior approval; Saying something in a meeting/negotiation that is contrary to my boss's stated preferences; Advocating for a policy stance not in line with my boss's previous preferences, or ignoring the member's wishes on particular legislation or policy; Co-signing a letter or co-sponsoring legislation not in line with

my boss's preferences; and Introducing legislation not in line with my boss's preferences." The choices for each category were: Never (0), Rarely (1), Sometimes – about half the time (2), More than half the time (3), and I do this every single time (4).

The Freedom variable is the sum of the first five responses, which are all doing things on behalf of the boss, usually without their approval, but within their stated preferences. It also includes voicing disagreement directly to their boss to gauge how comfortable respondents are giving honest advice; in other words, measuring exactly how much freedom the staffer feels. This variable had 347 responses, a maximum value of 20, a minimum of 0, a mean of 7.74, and a standard deviation of 3.59.

The Rogue variable is the sum of the remaining four categories (Saying something in a meeting/negotiation that is contrary to my boss's stated preferences; Advocating for a policy stance not in line with my boss's previous preferences, or ignoring the member's wishes on particular legislation or policy; Co-signing a letter or co-sponsoring legislation not in line with my boss's preferences; and Introducing legislation not in line with my boss's preferences) which measures how often the staffer has gone rogue in the past year. These activities are when the staffer goes against the member's stated preferences, perhaps acting on their own accord, in line with their own preferences. This is comparable to the discussion in Chapter 2 of the components of the PAT (Miller 2005), where in the PAT an asymmetry of preferences is present. This dependent variable attempts to measure just how different the preferences are and more importantly if the staffer acts upon that.

This variable has 347 observations, a maximum of 16, a minimum of 0, a mean of .68, and a 1.62. As is clear from the summary statistics, very few staffers actually admit to any of these rogue behaviors, but a few do, which will provide for interesting analysis. From the

summary statistics, we also see very few staffers are acting contrary to the member's stated

preferences, arguably because they have preference symmetry.

Disagree

One other dependent variable can be created from an individual question that went into

these larger variables. This is the Disagree variable, mentioned above, and is created from:

"Voicing my disagreement with my boss on a policy idea or action." This variable has 347

observations, a mean of 1.61, and a standard deviation of 1.05. This variable specifically gets a

bit deeper into the principal-agent relationship and whether the agent is comfortable openly

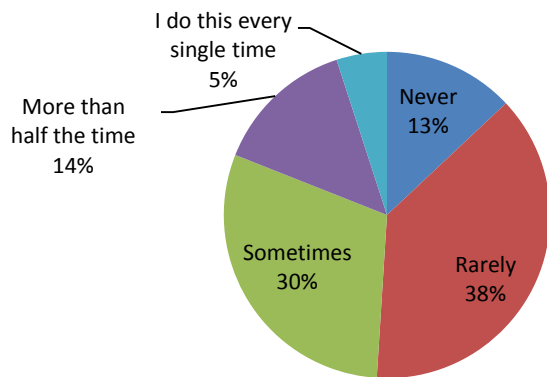challenging the principal, or if they just take whatever they are given.

Figure 3.4 Disagreeing with Boss on Policy Issue

Critique of Dependent Variable Indictors

As mentioned earlier, there are instances of awkward wording in the survey questions and

responses. The questions which are the basis for the dependent variables are not immune to this.

Again, numerous dependent variables and indicators are used in this research in an attempt to

lessen the impact of those problematic questions. Specifically the questions which created the

first two dependent variables are problematic, in terms of how the respondent might interpret the

question and the answer choices. The first question was "With your top issue in mind, please

rank how involved you are with the following activities in your office." The situation for this variable included: "Bringing new policy ideas/actions on the issue to your boss." The choices were: never, rarely, sometimes, most of the time, and always. The next dependent variable was created from the following question: "In the following situations, with your top issue in mind, please identify how often you can recall doing the following in the past year: Presenting a new policy idea or direction to my boss." The choices were: never, rarely, sometimes, most of the time, and always. As one can see, these questions might be confusing to respondents. The reasoning behind asking questions in this manner is simple; because of the large number of questions on this survey, situations and questions were often combined into charts of similar questions or situations to ease survey fatigue[51].

When we are presented with possible question confusion, a researcher must be honest about how the questions were interpreted. This is an issue with all surveys, as respondents interpret questions differently based on their own understanding and situation. With the first question, a respondent might read this question as being involved in any and all issues in the office, even though it is specified they should think of their own top issue. They might be unsure what exactly "always" means in terms of being involved in an issue. This question was attempting to find out that if an issue in the respondent's area of expertise is being presented, they are involved in that process. It attempts to find out just how critical this staffer is to the process. The second question is similar. The respondent might again be confused on what "always" presenting a new policy idea to their boss looks like. Again, this question is attempting to find out just how much agenda-setting the staffer is doing, albeit with confusing response choices.

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[51] These questions can be viewed in Appendix A, which contains the full survey instrument.

Even with the awkward response options, these variables had good distribution as can be seen in the earlier graphics. Respondents did not automatically just answer "sometimes" or "always." They also did not drop off in their response rates on this question. 66% of respondents responded to these two questions, which is similar to all other questions (even higher than some).

Ten hypotheses are involved in this research, which creates the need for various quality indicators. All independent variables are created from questions on the survey. These variables are both institutional (type of office, chamber, and job title) as well as more behavioral (relationship with boss). There are also control indicators, which include age, education, as well as type of office and whether the staffer is current or former.

Agent Specific Variables

The first set of variables is related directly to the agent specific hypotheses. These variables were inspired and informed by the PAT literature.

-Administrative Procedures

The idea of administrative procedures (McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1987) is a well-known one in the bureaucracy and PAT literature. It argues these procedures are implemented to provide oversight of one's agents. While Congressional offices do not have administrative procedures like bureaucracies or businesses do (mandatory reports, budgeting updates, etc.), they do have approval procedures. These approval procedures are established to provide approval of actions such as cosponsoring legislation or responding to a constituent letter. Every office or

committee has their own system of approval and staff view these as more or less efficient. These procedures should be seen as the red tape of offices, the hoops a staffer must jump through to get things done. The less red tape, the more efficient is the process.

To create the administrative procedures variable, staff were asked: "In your opinion, your office's approval process is inherently: completely inefficient (coded as 0), somewhat inefficient, neither, somewhat efficient, very efficient (coded as 4)." For the most part, staffers felt their office was doing a good job, with 46.9% feeling their office's process was somewhat efficient and 29% thinking it was very efficient. There were 303 observations of this variable, with a mean of 2.88 and a standard deviation of 1.04.

Another concept in the PAT literature is that of filtering information, and if it is occurring. Malbin (1980) first wrote about staff negotiating on behalf of their bosses and advising. It can be assumed staffers are filtering information to their bosses, purely in the name of brevity and simplicity. It is not appropriate or even realistic to be able to relay the entire contents of every meeting a staffer might have back to the member. Thus, staffers must filter information to their boss. As stated earlier, this could be positive if they are only relaying the pertinent information in a timely fashion. On the other hand, it could be damaging if they are withholding important information. This potential filtering gives staffers even more power, and the ability to set the agenda. The important PAT aspect of this filtering information is if the member finds out about this filtering from an outside source. This is the fire-alarm aspect of administrative procedures and oversight.

During my pre-survey interviews and editing assistance from staff, I realized the filtering questions were problematic. Staffers were not comfortable answering whether they personally were filtering information from and to their bosses. Because of this, I do not pose this question

directly to respondents, but asked it about other staffers. I asked them to answer other questions (e.g. job satisfaction) on behalf of their coworkers and others of their same level, getting very similar responses for all. Thus, I felt comfortable not asking directly, but instead posing: "Sometimes we choose which, and how much, information to share with others; in essence we are filtering information. How often do you think other staffers (at or near your same level) filter information FROM their boss to interest groups, other staff, constituents, etc.? Conversely, how often do you think other staffers filter information TO their boss from other staffers, groups, constituents?" The choices were: never (coded as 0) rarely, sometimes, often, and always (coded as 4). The Filtering From variable has a mean of 2.49 and a standard deviation of .9. The Filtering To variable has a mean of 2.36 and a standard deviation of 1.01. This shows us filtering information from and to their boss is occurring on a fairly regular basis.

While it is obvious filtering is occurring, in order to truly test the PAT aspect of this action, we must know if there is any fire alarm type oversight. In essence, is the member finding out about this filtering of information? Without asking for any normative assessments of the action, staffers were asked if these filtering actions ever get back to the boss. 48% said no and 52% said yes. This Filtering Back variable had 298 observations, a mean of .52 and a standard deviation of .5.

-Personal Relationships

As stated earlier, legislative staff usually work in very close physical quarters. Often, because of the long, unpredictable work hours, they spend more time with their coworkers and boss than their families, especially if those families are across the country, back in their home states. I argue positive relationships in these situations leads to more agenda-setting.

A number of variables look at staffers interpersonal relationships with their boss and their coworkers. The first is ideology; we can argue that if staffers and their bosses have similar ideologies, the boss will feel more comfortable with the staffer taking the lead on policy ideas. The survey asked respondents to place themselves, their boss, and their coworkers on an ideological spectrum, which went from very liberal (coded as 0) to very conservative (4). Interesting, the plurality of staffers, 30% said they were somewhat conservative. The mean of the staffer ideology variable is 2.24 and the standard deviation is 1.21.

Further, if staffers considered themselves very liberal or conservative, they thought their bosses were on those extremes as well, and overall they view ideologies to be very similar. This counters a bit what Fox and Webb Hammond found in the 1970's, that Senate staffers had stronger ideologies than their bosses. The overall correlation between staffer and boss ideology is 0.76. My data shows very little difference between House and Senate staffers on this (House: 0.77, Senate: 0.74).

The staffers reported their bosses having a similar distribution of ideologies, which is understandable, with more conservative bosses than liberal ones. The mean of the Boss Ideology variable is 2.51 with a standard deviation of 1.37. Respondents reported their coworkers to be similar to them as well, with a mean of 2.24 and a standard deviation of 1.3.

To test Fox and Hammond's initial findings, I created a new Ideological Distance variable, which is the key variable for the analysis. This variable attempts to determine how different the preferences are for the principal and the agent and if they are symmetrical or asymmetrical. This variable is the absolute value of the ideological distance between respondent and their boss. For instance, if the staffer placed themselves at a 0 and their boss at 1, the total ideological distance is 1. If they both were 0, the distance is 0 and they are considered the same,

ideologically. This variable does not account for staffers being more or less ideologically

extreme, but does measure how different they view themselves from their boss. The minimum

value was 0 and the maximum was 3. 45.3% had no difference, while only 2 respondents (.65%)

had the maximum distance of 3. The mean of this variable is .66 and the standard deviation is

.68.

The second key variable in this group comes from a direct question on the survey which

asked respondents to rank their personal relationship with their boss on a scale of 1 to 10, with

10 being the best possible relationship. 23%, which was the largest category, ranked their

relationship as a 9. Respondents clearly see their relationships as positive, which is shown even

more with the mean of this Boss Relationship variable being 7.3 and the standard deviation is

2.3.

-Staffer Networks and Information

Staffers pride themselves on their connections and their ability to get quality information

for their bosses or themselves. The more experienced staffers have large issue networks, working

with these networks to either benefit their members, or help out their friends in the lobbying

world and set up high paying jobs later on. I hypothesize that the broader the professional

network of a staffer, the more they will engage in agenda setting activities. To test this, I asked

staffers: "With your one top issue in mind, who of the following have you worked with in the

last year? How often?" The categories were: Other staff in your office/committee, State staff (if

in personal office), Senior staff in other personal offices (same party), Junior Staff in other

personal offices (same party), Staff from across the aisle, Staff in the other chamber, Committee

staff, Leadership staff, Congressional Support (CBO, CRS), White House, Administration staff,

Constituents, Campaign staff, Trade associations/interest groups/lobbyists, and

Academics/scientists. The choices were: never (coded as 0), less than once a month, once a

month, 2-3 times a month, once a week, 2-3 times a week, and daily (coded as 6).

Table 3.2: How often Staff work with Administration Officials

	Democrat	Republican
Never	18	29
Less than once a month	19	25
Once a month	9	11
2-3 times a month	23	13
Once a week	12	10
2-3 times a week	16	9
Daily	3	3

Coworkers and committee staff were the most popular daily contacts with 52% and 34%

of the staffers, respectively. Interestingly, the White House was one of the least popular, with

50% of the staffers reporting never working with them. It would appear neither the White House

nor the Administration in general are very popular with staffers. 24% of staffers reported never

working with the Administration and 22% say they do it less than once a month. I posited this

could be based on party; more Democrat staffers are working with the Democrat Administration

more often. However, Tables 3.2 and 3.3 show party has a very small effect.

Table 3.3: How often Staff work with White House Staff

	Democrat	Republican
Never	39	57
Less than once a month	34	28
Once a month	11	7
2-3 times a month	6	4
Once a week	4	2
2-3 times a week	4	1
Daily	2	1

The least popular group was campaign staff. 81% of staffers say they never work with these individuals, which is a normative positive finding, as campaign and official staff are legally kept separate, save the for the political designees.

Not all members of the network are created equal, however. Working with junior staffers in other offices, your coworkers, and state staff is not usually considered having a large professional network. Conversely, if you work with other senior staffers in other offices, committees, leadership offices, lobbyists or trade associations, staff from the other party or chamber, and the Administration, you are considered to be a well-networked staffer. Thus, these are the groups which will be included in the analysis.

Table 3.4 indicates the distribution of the networking variables.

Table 3.4: Staff Working with Outside Individuals

	Never	Less than once a month	Once a month	2-3 times a month	Once a week	2-3 times a week	Daily	Obs	Mean	Stand Dev
Senior Staff in other offices	5	11	13	19	20	20	12	312	3.4	1.7
Committees	6	6	8	11	14	21	34	311	4.2	1.9
Leadership	16	21	16	17	15	9	6	311	2.4	1.8
Lobbyists	5	8	13	18	17	26	13	312	3.6	1.7
Other Party	10	13	12	20	16	17	12	312	3.2	1.9
Other Chamber	13	25	21	19	11	8	3	313	2.3	1.6
Admin	24	22	10	17	12	12	3	312	2.2	1.8

-Information Asymmetry

The concept of information asymmetry within the PAT says that the issues agents deal with are very complex and require expertise. Every staffer handles a very specific portfolio of issues and becomes an expert on them, much more than the member. The staff are hired to be the experts and know the intricate details of the issues for the member. I argue the more complex these issues, the more we will see agenda-setting from staff because members simply do not

understand the issue or do not have the bandwidth to devote to the details. Further, staff become experts on these issues because they have previous experience dealing with these issues. Members of Congress often hire staffers who have previous experience with the issues. I argue the more experience a staffer has with the issue, the more agenda-setting we will see.

This group of variables measures the concept of information asymmetry by looking at issue complexity and staffer experience. The first measures the complexity of the staffer's top issue. Every staffer has a good grasp on the level of complexity of their issues. They know which are the most complex and which are the least. On the survey, staffers were asked how complex they would rank their top issue from the past year. Respondents ranked their issues as "not at all complex (coded as 0), below average (1), average complexity (2), above average complexity (3), and very complex (4)." The Complexity variable has 338 observations, a mean of 3.01, and a standard deviation of .81. We can see staffers view their issues as having an above average complexity, which could affect how important they view themselves and the role they think they are playing in the process.

The second information asymmetry variable measures if the staff had experience with this issue prior to working for their current boss. They were asked: "Did you have experience with this top issue before working for your current boss?" Having previous experience is coded as 1 (56.4%) and not is 0 (43.6%). These previous experiences ranged from academic degree relating to the issue to a personal connection to the issue (grew up on a farm and handling agriculture issues). The largest source of previous experience at 55.8%, is, unsurprisingly, working for another member of Congress. However, second is holding an academic degree at 36.6%. The previous experience variable has 337 observations, a mean of .56 and a standard deviation of .5.

The third variable in this group measures how much experience, or seniority, the staffer has on the staff of their current boss. Staffers were asked how long they have worked for their current boss (former staff were asked how long they worked for their most recent boss). A plurality of staffers, 21%, has worked for their current boss less than 1 year. In fact 82% of all staffers have served their current boss for 6 years or less. When we delve deeper into experience, 59.5% of all staffers have worked for other members of Congress prior to their current boss. The plurality of staffers, 20.7%, has served in Congress for a total of 2-4 years. What we can glean from a quick look at these responses is experience is prevalent in Congress and that experience can be gained in a very short period of time. The Time Worked for Current Member variable is coded from 0 to 10, with choices being less than 1 year (coded as 0), 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 3-4 years, 4-6 years, 6-8 years, 8-10 years, 10-15 years, 15-20 years, 20-25 years, and more than 25 years (coded as 10). The mean is 2.52 and the standard deviation is 2.22. The average tenure of staffers in a specific office is between 2 and 4 years.

The final variable in this group measures how long the staffer has worked in Congress, both on the staff of their current boss and any other employment they may have had. As stated earlier, nearly 60% of the respondents worked for at least one other member of Congress or committee before their current job, so this is a good measure of experience. If they indicated they worked for other members of Congress, they were then asked how long they have worked in Congress, with the options being: "less than 2 years (coded as 0), 2-4 years, 4-6 years, 6-8 years, 8-10 years, 10-15 years, 15-20 years, and more than 20 years (coded as 7)." The largest response category was 2-4 years with 21%. This seems surprising only until we remember that these jobs have very high turnover and staff do not stay in these positions long. Therefore, these individuals are acquiring important policy experience in a very short period of time, with the average being

6-8 years. The Total Time Worked for Congress variable has 300 observations, a mean of 3.07 and a standard deviation of 2.02.

-Personal Motives

The role of incentives and rewards is well plowed territory in the PAT literature on businesses and corporations. However, the role that financial incentives play in the public sector, for government employees, is not as applicable. Something else is keeping these bureaucrats in their jobs, making them seek these jobs out in the first place. That "something else" is the desire to make a difference and make government better (see Miller and Whitford 2002, 2007). The same can be argued about congressional staffers. Respondents were asked an open ended question: "What made you want to work in Congress in the first place?" As mentioned earlier they responded with all manner of things, but their responses were coded as a 1 if they indicated something larger than themselves or altruistic and 0 if they indicated something about themselves.[52] 59% of respondents indicated they were not there to make a difference, while 41% said they were. This variable has 404 observations, mean of .4 and a standard deviation of .5.

Principal Specific Variables

The second set of variables deal directly with the principal specific hypotheses. All variables are created from questions asked on the survey. While members were not surveyed or interviewed, the staffers (agents) were asked specific questions about their bosses (principals).

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[52] Responses that were coded as 1(wanting to make a difference) included: "Opportunity to serve my home state" and "Commitment to public service." Responses that were coded as 0 (not wanting to make a difference) included: "The West Wing. Also, I have a degree in poli-sci, so it was either here or Starbucks," "Better than cleaning toilets," and "I'm a political junkie."

This is important in the PAT because we are interested in how well the agents are carrying out what they believe to be their principal's preferences.

-Institutions

The first institutional hypothesis posits there are significant differences in the agenda setting abilities of Senate versus House staffers. This variable is created from a simple question asked on the survey, which asked in which chamber they currently work. House staffers are coded as 0 (52%) and Senate staffers coded as 1 (48%). This variable has 529 observations, a mean of .48 and a standard deviation of .5.

The second institutional hypothesis relates to seniority of the member of Congress, or how long they have served in Congress. The tenure of members is measured by a question on the survey which asked respondents how long their boss has served in their current chamber of Congress.[53] The question was open-ended with respondents able to enter in a specific year amount. Some wrote 20+, 25+, or 30+, possibly because they did not want to be able to be identified. I coded each of these as simply 20 or 25 years served in the current chamber. Even though the actual amount could be more, I cannot know for sure. One respondent wrote "you could pinpoint staff with these responses." While this is true, I am not interested in specifically identifying each of the respondents, and this was assured in the letter and IRB approval. One respondent said "forever." Unfortunately, this had to be coded as missing data, as I am not sure how long that particular member has served. There are 478 observations of this Boss Years variable, and it has a mean of 12.99, and the standard deviation is 10.14.

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[53] For those who work for a senator who previously served in the House, those additional years of experience are not captured here. However, if they do work for a senator who served in the House, that is captured in another variable.

-Information Asymmetry

Just as the complexity of the issue and experience of the staffer must be measured to study information asymmetry, so must the member's interest and involvement with the issue. Staffers were asked: "How personally interested do you think your boss is in this, your top, issue? 0 is the least amount of interest and 10 is the most." The Boss Interest variable has 337 observations, a mean of 7.2 and a standard deviation of 2.5. The second part of this hypothesis asks about a member's involvement with the staffer's top issue over the past year. Again, they ranked that involvement on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being 100% involvement. There are 324 observations of the Boss Involvement variable; it has a mean of 6.8 and a standard deviation of 2.4. These two variables show us most members are interested in the issue, but have less time to be totally involved in every detail. This simply reinforces previous statements that staff are valuable for the time and energy they are able to devote to these policy issues.

-Personal Motives and Ambitions

When members are in cycle or running for a higher office, they are under a great deal of pressure and scrutiny. This causes them to focus their attentions on specific areas. I argue with this added stress of running for reelection, staff will have less freedom to set the agenda. Staffers were asked: "Is your boss running for reelection this cycle?" No is coded as 0 (63%) and yes as 1 (37%). There are 510 observations of the Reelection variable, which has a mean of .63 and a standard deviation of .5.

Controls:

The analysis also contains a number of control variables. These controls include staffer type, current or former staffer, party, gender, age, and education level. All were direct questions asked on the survey.

For staffer type, this means whether the staffer works on the personal, committee, or leadership staff. Dummy variables were created for the three types, with serving in the specific office coded as 1 and not serving in that type of office coded as 0. In terms of percentages, 66% of respondents work in a personal office, 30% work in a committee office, and 4% work in a leadership office. Current staffers are coded as 0 (85%) and former are coded as 1 (15%). As shown earlier in Table 3.1, these percentages[54] are very representative of the larger population of all congressional staffers. Democrats are coded as 0, with Republicans 1. Males are coded as 0 and females as 1. Older individuals are coded higher. Higher levels of education are coded as high. The summary statistics of all of the controls can be seen in Table 3.5.

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[54] This excludes the current versus former staffer numbers. The snowball approach was used to survey former staffers as there are thousands of former staffers and no database of them all.

Table 3.5: Control Variable Statistics

Variable name and Description	n	Percentage of Respondents	Mean	Stand. Dev.
Office				
Personal	346	66	0.66	0.48
Committee	163	30	0.31	0.46
Leadership	19	4	0.04	0.19
Status			0.15	0.36
Current Staffer	474	85		
Former Staffer	83	15		
Party			0.7	1.16
Democrat	223	44		
Republican	287	56		
Gender			0.34	0.48
Male	204	66		
Female	106	34		
Age			3.44	1.84
Under 20	0	0		
21-25	27	9		
26-30	86	28		
31-35	84	27		
36-40	38	12		
41-45	20	7		
46-50	16	5		
51-60	26	9		
Over 60	9	3		
Education			3.31	1
High school	0	0		
Some college	3	1		
College	92	30		
Some graduate school	23	8		
Any graduate degree (JD, MA, MBA, PhD, MD)	189	61		

Conclusion

This chapter has described the research design, the data collection process, and the key

variables for this research. It has given us a glimpse into the world of today's Congressional

staffer and how they differ from that of 40 years ago. This chapter has also outlined how I will

test the theories and hypotheses from Chapter 2. Those tests will come about by using the actual responses from current and former congressional staff.

The next two chapters will use empirical methods to test the hypotheses from Chapter 2. The first will focus on the agent-specific dependent variables and the second will focus on the more principal specific ones. The sixth chapter will employ whole office case studies to delve deeper into the idea of staff agenda-setting and PAT. The final chapter will acknowledge the limitations of this work, look at the normative implications of this research, and outline future work.

CHAPTER 4: PRINCIPAL AGENT THEORY AND AGENT AGENDA-SETTING

Introduction

Few argue whether Congressional staff are important to the policy and political process in Washington; it is understood. Even though we rarely hear about them, they are not completely unseen or ignored by the media. Occasionally, they are at the center of controversial news stories dealing with their role in the policy and investigative process.

In March 2014, Sen. Dianne Feinstein's Intelligence Committee staff were at the forefront of the debate on the CIA's interrogation and detainee policies and practices. During a yearlong investigation by the committee, it came to light the CIA was hacking into the computers of the committee staff. In a floor speech on March 14, Sen. Feinstein said, "Without prior notification or approval, CIA personnel had conducted a search — that was John Brennan's word — of the committee computers at the offsite facility. This search was not only of documents provided by the committee by the CIA but also a search of the stand-alone and walled-off committee network drive containing the committee's own internal work product and communications."[55] When she refers to the "committee" she is referring solely to the committee staff and the violation of their privacy.

In a show of bipartisanship, Sen. Lindsey Graham came to the defense of the staff and Sen. Feinstein by saying, ""This is Richard Nixon stuff. This is dangerous to the democracy. Heads should roll; people should go to jail if it's true."

Staff even make cameos in campaign rhetoric. Here in Colorado, where the issue of women's rights was a hot topic in the 2014 midterm Senate race between incumbent Senator Mark Udall and challenger Congressman Cory Gardner, staff made an appearance. In debates,

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[55] Niels Lesniewski, "Feinstein: CIA spied on Intelligence Committee." *Roll Call*. March 11, 2014.

Rep. Gardner accused Sen. Udall of paying his female staff less than his male staffers, $0.86 to every dollar paid to his male staffers.[56]

 Again, political scientists and journalists realize the importance and contributions of congressional staff. But as I have posited from the first page of this dissertation, just how important are they? What exactly are they doing? How much power do they have to set the policy agenda? Are they perfectly following or leading their bosses? When do they do these activities? This chapter will take the first step towards quantifying when and under what conditions we see staff stepping out and taking the lead in setting the agenda for their boss.

 Chapter 2 outlined a number of general hypotheses related to agenda setting and both the agent and the principal in the relationship. They covered staffer and member attributes and institutional differences. Chapter 3 discussed the research design, data collection, and the data which will be used to test the hypotheses. This chapter will take that data and begin to analyze the ten hypotheses, using the more agent specific dependent variables. The following chapter will analyze the hypotheses, using the dependent variables which include the principal's actions and when the agent goes against the principal's preferences.

Agent Agenda Setting

 Researchers expect all of their theories and hypotheses to be significant in their findings. Otherwise, we would not bother making them. However, realistically we know this is not how it turns out. In this portion of the research, there are three key hypotheses and findings. They include the hypothesis (H2) which argues that personal relationships between the staffer and boss matter in staff agenda setting situations. The second key hypothesis (H3) and finding in this part

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[56] Nat Stein, "In last-stretch Pueblo face-off, Udall, Gardner fire up supporters." *Colorado Independent*. October 10, 2014.

of the research is that the size and make-up of a staffer's network will affect agenda setting. The third and final key prediction (H4$_b$ and H7) is experience matters when we are considering staff agenda setting. This experience is both of the staffer and the member. Staffer experience includes personal experience with the issue, number of years working for their boss, and the total number of years they have worked in Congress. Additionally age of the staffer is a proxy for experience and expertise in Congress. Experience of the member also matters in this research; years in office serves as the proxy for member experience.

All three of these hypothesis provided significant results, with the third key finding receiving some ambiguous results in the full models[57]. Personal relationships do matter. The closer that relationship is, the more the staffer is setting the agenda in their office. They are more involved with coming up with new ideas and offer up more new policy ideas to their boss. These staffers are being empowered to set the agenda in their office because of their personal relationships with the boss. The make-up of networks also is a significant predictor of staff agenda-setting, specifically if a staffer works with staffers from across the aisle. Staffers who work in a bi-partisan way are setting the agenda more. Finally, a key aspect of the PAT, information asymmetry proves to be significant in this research. Staffer experience matters, as does member experience. While the older and more experienced the staffer the more they are setting the agenda, the longer the member has served, the less we see staff agenda-setting.

The following discussion will briefly outline the data and methods used for this analysis, before providing the analysis which provides evidence for the above findings. The three key hypotheses will be analyzed first, followed by analysis of the remaining seven.

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[57] These findings, which include the coefficient becoming negative but still significant, will be discussed in the Full Model section.

Data and Methods

In the original discussion in Chapter 2, the first set of five hypotheses dealt directly with agent (staffer) specific situations and attributes, and agenda setting. We know staff are important to the policy process. From the discussion and analysis of the dependent variables in Chapter 3, we now know they are participating in agenda setting activities and offering up policy ideas to members of Congress. What remains is a discussion of what is causing that activity. The second set of five hypotheses discusses the more principal centric predictions, and how principals affect the staffer's ability to set the agenda. Again, this research will focus on the three key hypotheses, which are from the first set, first and then the final seven.

As is evident from the previous discussions of agenda setting, the act itself can look very different in varying situations. Many different actions by staffers can be seen as agenda setting or taking the lead in congressional offices. Some of these actions are very significant, others less so. This chapter will look at three different agenda-setting actions: how involved a staffer is in presenting new ideas to their boss, how often they give new ideas to their boss, and a freedom variable which measures how much discretion a staffer has to act in a number of situations. Chapter 5 will look at the final three actions, which include how often the member takes the staffer's idea and acts, when a staffer goes outside the boss's preferences, and when a staffer disagrees with their boss on policy issues.

The first three dependent variables were grouped together because they focus primarily on the staffer and her policy actions. She is acting with her boss's preferences at the forefront. The member has little role in these actions. The second three dependent variables (as discussed in Chapter 5) are grouped together because they involve both the principal and the agent. The staffer is presenting an idea to the member and they act upon it. The second dependent variable

in this group measures how often the staffer goes outside the member's preferences. The final

action is how often the staffer openly disagrees with the member regarding policy ideas and

direction.

These six variables are measuring very different things, evident in Table 4.1, which

shows the correlations of all 6 dependent variables. The highest correlation, 0.68, is between a

staffer's freedom to engage in a number of activities and how often a staffer provides their boss

with a new idea. This high correlation is most likely due to the fact that the freedom variable is

made up of many indicators, including how often a staffer provides a new idea to their boss. The

same is true of the high correlation between freedom and disagreeing. They are not the same,

however, and measure two different, but similar, activities. Numerous dependent variables are

used in this analysis to more accurately attempt to capture agenda setting. Further, using

numerous dependent variables lessons the negative impacts of indicators created from survey

questions with awkward wording or response (see Chapter 3 for additional discussion of this).

Table 4.1: Correlations of Dependent Variables

	Involve with new idea	Frequency of giving new ideas	Freedom	Boss taking idea and Acting	Rogue	Disagree
Involve with new idea	1					
Frequency of giving new ideas	0.63	1				
Freedom	0.51	0.68	1			
Boss taking idea and Acting	0.49	0.49	0.44	1		
Rogue	-0.02	-0.01	0.28	-0.06	1	
Disagree	0.4	0.47	0.67	0.29	0.17	1

Along with concerns regarding the six dependent variables measuring the same actions,

one might question the large number of independent variables and if they are truly capturing

distinct characteristics or activities. The correlations of all independent variables can be viewed

in Table 4.2 on the following page. A first glance shows the correlations between these variables being predominately very low, with most being below 0.1. A few exceptions appear, however. A staffer's total number of years working in Congress is highly correlated with a number of things, namely the networking variables, which measure how often a staffer works with different groups of individuals. These are all correlated between 0.55 (Administration officials) and 0.69 (senior staffers in other offices). This seems logical, as longer serving, more experienced staffers will have larger networks and feel comfortable working with many outsiders. Interestingly, the individual network groupings are not highly correlated with the other network components (none above 0.6). Thus, even with the higher correlation with total number of years in Congress, these variables are not measuring the same thing and all can remain in the analysis.

Table 4.2 Correlations of Independent Variables

	Effic. of Approval Process	Filtering Information from your Boss	Filtering Information to your Boss	Boss finds out about Filtering (0-no, 1-yes)	Staff and Member Ideol. Distance	Personal Relationship with Boss	Senior staff in other offices	Work with Committee staff	Work with leadership staff	Work with lobbyists/trade	Work with staff of other party	Work with staff from other chamber	Work with Administration officials	Complexity of Issue	Previous Experience (0-no, 1-yes)	Time worked for your current boss	Total amount of Time in Congress	Wanted to Make a Difference	Chamber (0=House, 1=Senate)	Boss Years in Chamber	Boss Interest in Issue	Boss involvement with Issue	Up for Reelection
Efficiency of Office Approval Process	1																						
Filtering Information from your Boss	0.0	1																					
Filtering Information to your Boss	-0.1	0.3	1																				
Boss finds out about Filtering (0-no, 1-yes)	0.1	0.1	0.1	1																			
Staff and Member Ideol. Distance	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	-0.1	1																		
Personal Relationship with Boss	0.3	-0.1	0.0	0.2	-0.1	1																	
Work with senior staff in other offices	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.2	1																
Work with Committee staff	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.5	1															
Work with leadership staff	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.6	0.5	1														
Work with lobbyists/trade	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.3	1													
Work with staff of other party	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	-0.1	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.5	1												
Work with staff from other chamber	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	-0.1	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.3	1	1											
Work with Administration officials	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.3	1	0.3	1										
Complexity of Issue	0.1	-0.1	-0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0	0.0	0.1	1									
Previous Experience (0-no, 1-yes)	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	-0.1	0	0.0	0.2	0.00	1								
Time worked for your current boss	0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.3	-0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0	0.0	0.1	-0.01	-0.2	1							
Total amount of Time in Congress	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	1	0.7	0.6	0.13	0.1	0.1	1						
Wanted to Make a Difference	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0	0.0	0.1	-0.04	0.1	0.1	0.1	1					
Chamber (0=House, 1=Senate)	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	-0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0	0.0	0.2	0.07	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	1				
Boss Years in Chamber	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0	0.1	0.3	0.11	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2	1			
Boss Interest in Issue	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	-0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.0	0	0.1	0.2	0.09	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	-0.1	0.1	1		
Boss involvement with Issue	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	-0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.0	0	0.1	0.2	0.08	0.1	0.1	-0.1	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.7	1	
Up for Reelection	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	-0.1	0.1	0.0	0	0.0	-0.2	-0.10	0.0	-0.2	-0.2	-0.1	-0.5	-0.1	0.2	0.1	1

The other highly correlated variables are a member's interest and involvement with the staffer's top issue at 0.71. Again, this is a logical correlation result as a member's interest and involvement would naturally be similar. However, once again, these are not measuring the same thing, which is evident by the correlation not being 1.0 or even 0.9 and both can remain in the analysis.

Data

Briefly, the data for this portion of the analysis comes from the original survey I administered to all Congressional legislative staff in late 2013 and early 2014. To test this set of hypotheses, I will use variables all created from direct questions asked on the survey. As agenda-setting takes many forms in a congressional office, the first three dependent variables discussed in Chapter 3 will be used to test the ten hypotheses outlined above. The independent variables for this portion of the analysis are also detailed in Chapter 3, within the Key Independent Variables section.

As outlined in Chapter 3, there are six controls which are included in every model. These include the type of office a staffer works in, status (current or former staffer), party, gender, age, and education level. The type of office variable is simply a dummy variable for a personal office. There are two other types of offices, committee and leadership, but these two are combined in this dummy variable, as I am mostly interested in whether the staffer works in a personal office or not. Further, only 19 respondents indicated they worked in a leadership office. The status variable is also a dummy variable, with current coded as 0. Men are coded as 0 in the gender variable, with women coded as 1. In party, Democrats are coded as 0, with Republicans as 1.

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) analysis is used for all models.

Key Findings

The first key hypothesis and finding that personal relationships affect staffer agenda setting comes from a rather new area of the PAT.

> *H2: Personal Relationships - The closer the staffer and the member in terms of ideology and personal relationship, the more the staffer will set the agenda.*

This relationship varies not just between offices and committees, but even among the individual staffers in a particular office. The member will have a different type of relationship with each of the staff. They might have a similar view of the issues or they might have a strong personal relationship, forged over many years and campaigns. Again, it is difficult to measure how close a member and staffer are in terms of ideology and relationship. No objective measures are available for these. Thus, staffers were asked to place both themselves and their boss on an ideological spectrum and to gauge their personal relationship. Staffers have a very good idea of their boss's views on the issues, since it is their job day in and day out to carry out those views and preferences. They know how liberal or conservative their boss is because of this. Staffers also are keenly aware of how close they are to the boss; in fact staffers know how their relationship compares to their coworkers and they often use these closer relationships to their benefit.

The results for personal relationships are shown in Table 4.3. While it does not matter how close a member and staff are in terms of their ideology in predicting agenda setting, the closeness of their personal relationship does. In fact, the closer the relationship, the more agenda setting we see in all situations. These simple models show strong support for H2, even without the significance of ideological distance.

Table 4.3 Personal Relationships and Agenda Setting

	Involved with New Idea	Frequency of presenting new idea	Freedom
Staff and Member Ideological Distance	-0.01 (.09)	-0.07 (.09)	-0.16 (.3)
Personal Relationship with Boss	0.15* (.03)	0.15* (.03)	0.42* (.1)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	-0.09 (.14)	-0.09 (.14)	0.22 (.46)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.03 (.15)	0.34* (.15)	0.58 (.5)
Party (D=0, R=1)	-0.01 (.06)	-0.08 (.06)	-0.35 (.18)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	0.11 (.13)	-0.28* (.13)	-0.4 (.44)
Age	0.09* (.04)	0.07 (.04)	0.27* (.12)
Education	-0.04 (.06)	0.1 (.06)	0.39 (.21)
Constant	1.65* (.32)	1.02* (.33)	2.64* (1.06)
N	267	267	268.00
R-squared	0.15	0.19	0.16
F value	5.70*	7.63*	6.11*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *p<.05

These close personal relationships can occur with all types of staffers. They can occur with those the member spends a great deal of time with, even if the staffer has only been on staff for a short period of time[58]. They can also be with staffers who have been on staff for decades, or worked on the first, or most recent, campaign of the member.

Relationships with the boss are not the only important ones for a staffer. This leads to the second key hypothesis and finding:

> *H3: Networks - The broader the network of influences on a staffer, the more time they will spend setting the agenda.*

Staffers work with others in their own office on issues and new ideas, but also those in other offices and committees, the other party or chamber, the Administration, and interest

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[58] One interesting example of this is that of Will Heaton, who in 2002 was promoted to Rep. Bob Ney's Chief of Staff after serving as his personal driver. Rep. Ney was reported telling young Mr. Heaton that he was the only one Ney truly trusted. While the ending to this story is not a happy one, as Heaton was caught up in the Abramoff scandal, he still has the distinction of being the youngest Chief of Staff in the House of Representatives, at age 23

groups. Staffers with larger networks means they are more connected and better able to get things done, and I argue more of an agenda setter.

In order to operationalize a staffer's network, I had to know who they worked with and how often. Despite the fact staffers were not comfortable listing everyone they worked with in an average week or month; I was able to ask them how often they worked with a set list of people (lobbyists, Administration officials, staffers from the other chamber, etc.). While I might miss a few types of people or specific individuals these variables do attempt to measure the influence of an individual's network.

H3 posits that a staffer's network matters for agenda setting. It argues the broader the network of influences, the more agenda setting we will see. In the simple models in Table 4.4, we are able to determine how influential the aspects of the network are on agenda setting. In other words, we are able to see if as instances of the staffer working with particular groups of people increases, so does agenda setting.

Table 4.4 Networks and Agenda Setting

	Involved with New Idea	Frequency of present new idea	Freedom
Work with senior staff in other offices	-0.02 (.05)	0.04 (.05)	0.09 (.15)
Work with Committee staff	0.04 (.05)	0.06 (.05)	-0.08 (.15)
Work with leadership staff	0.02 (.05)	0.08 (.05)	0.31* (.14)
Work with lobbyists/trade association	0.004 (.04)	-0.01 (.04)	-0.06 (.13)
Work with staff of other party	0.07 (.05)	0.13* (.05)	0.45* (.14)
Work with staff from other chamber	0.08 (.05)	-0.01 (.05)	0.29 (.16)
Work with Administration officials	0.07 (.05)	-0.05 (.04)	-0.02 (.13)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.39* (.16)	0.39* (.16)	1.64* (.5)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.04 (.15)	0.25 (.15)	0.24 (.47)
Party (D=0, R=1)	0.04 (.15)	-0.02 (.05)	-0.31 (.16)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	0.02 (.13)	-0.21 (.13)	-0.57 (.41)
Age	0.15* (.04)	0.15* (.04)	0.48* (.11)
Education	-0.01 (.06)	0.1 (.07)	0.41* (.20
Constant	1.36* (.34)	0.57 (.35)	1.47 (1.07)
N	285	284	285
R-squared	0.17	0.22	0.25
F Value	4.26*	5.76*	6.96*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *p<.05

As discussed earlier, staffers who work in a bi-partisan manner have the most success with agenda-setting. They offer more new ideas to their boss and have more freedom in their office. These mature staffers do not let petty party differences get in the way and work to get things done; thus their bosses rely on them for quality ideas and they are given a great deal of freedom.

While working with the other party is the only category which accurately predicted more than one agenda setting activity, there is support for the third hypothesis. Networks and working with individuals outside your own office do affect how much you are setting the agenda in your office.

It should be noted the current survey dataset does not allow for additional, more in-depth, social network analysis on the networks of congressional staff. Future work in this area and how it affects a staffer's agenda setting abilities is possible, but will require additional data collection.

The third key finding and hypothesis focuses on information asymmetry and experience. Information asymmetry is a cornerstone of the PAT. The staffer, as the agent, is the real policy expert in this relationship. The principal, in fact, hires experienced staffers or those who have experience with the specific issue; the principal expects the staffer to be the expert on these issues. These hypotheses are:

> *H4: Information Asymmetry - The more complex the issue, the more staff agenda-setting will be seen.*
> *H4$_B$: The more experience the staffer has, the more agenda-setting will be seen.*

I argue complex issues are those with which the member must delegate to staff the most. The member might have a vague idea of the generalities of the issue, but the staffer spends most of his time learning the intricacies of the issue. Thus, the member trusts the staffer to make recommendations and take the lead on these issues. Staffers gauge the complexity of their issue themselves in this research, because as I have argued previously, staffers are very well aware of how complex every issue in their prevue is compared to the others.

As mentioned previously, staff are hired, and rewarded, for their previous experience with the issues or in Congress. Staff with experience either in Congress or with the member have larger networks and a better relationship with the member, thus we will see more agenda-setting from them.

When we look at information asymmetry on its own (Table 4.5), we can easily see that staffer experience matters, while complexity of the issue does not. Previous experience is significant in predicting involvement with new issues. The longer one has worked for their

current boss not only predicts freedom, but also involvement with new issues. The longer a

staffer has worked in Congress, the more we see all types of agenda setting. Further, staffer age

acts as an additional proxy for experience in these models. Here, the increased age of the staffer

leads to all three types of agenda setting. If we look back at the previous two tables, we also see

age significantly predicting agenda setting when included with the other key variables. These

findings provide strong support for information asymmetry. Staffers are rewarded for their

higher levels of experience.

Table 4.5 Information Asymmetry and Agenda-Setting

	Involved with New Idea	Frequency of presenting new idea	Freedom
Complexity of Issue	0.04 (.08)	-0.004 (.08)	-0.32 (.25)
Previous Experience (0-no, 1-yes)	0.39* (.13)	0.2 (.14)	0.13 (.42)
Time worked for your current boss	0.09* (.03)	0.04 (.03)	0.27* (.09)
Total amount of Time in Congress	0.01* (.004)	0.02* (.005)	0.07* (.01)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.18 (.14)	0.26 (.14)	1.12* (.44)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.05 (.15)	0.33* (.16)	0.27 (.49)
Party (D=0, R=1)	0.08 (.05)	0.01 (.05)	-0.1 (.16)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	0.05 (.13)	-0.27* (.13)	-0.55 (.41)
Age	0.11* (.04)	0.12* (.04)	0.38* (.12)
Education	-0.05 (.06)	0.09 (.07)	0.35 (.2)
Constant	1.42* (.38)	0.71 (.40)	1.95 (1.22)
N	282	282	283
R-squared	0.15	0.16	0.21
F value	4.63*	5.34*	7.12*

Full Model Results

The previous discussion and tables depict the results which would be found if only those

small sets of variables were present and affecting staffer agenda-setting. We know congressional

offices, staffers, and members are much more dynamic than that, however. There are many

factors present in an office environment which affect agenda setting, thus as many of those

factors which can be accurately theorized and measured should be included in the analysis. The following analysis includes all factors and variables discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, in an effort to see if the significant nature of the variables persists or diminishes with the presence of additional factors.

To reiterate, this chapter deals with the three dependent variables which look at more agent centric agenda setting actions. Below each of the key three hypotheses is analyzed in relation to those three dependent variables. Three models for each dependent variable were run. The first shows how well the agent only variables explain the three agenda setting activities. The second shows only the principal-specific variables and the third is the full PAT model. These results can be seen in Table 4.6.

Overall, these models are doing a good job of explaining the variance of the three dependent variables, in some cases 40% of that variance (with the frequency of offering new ideas to their boss). It is clear to see the full model is doing the best job (these have the highest R-squared values of the three); what this tells us is we cannot leave either the member or the staffer out when we try to describe agenda-setting. Interestingly, the agent models alone explain more of the variance of the dependent variables than the principal models alone.

Table 4.6 PAT and Staffer Agenda-Setting

	Involvement with New Ideas			Frequency of giving new ideas			Freedom		
	Agent Model	Principal Model	Full PAT Model	Agent Model	Principal Model	Full PAT model	Agent Model	Principal Model	Full PAT model
Efficiency of Office Approval Process	-0.01 (.07)		0.04 (.07)	-0.05 (.07)		-0.04 (.07)	0.06 (.22)		0.06 (.23)
Filtering Information from your Boss	-0.02 (.09)		-0.05 (.09)	-0.04 (.09)		-0.1 (.09)	0.1 (.28)		-0.01 (.29)
Filtering Information to your Boss	0.08 (.08)		0.1 (.08)	0.12 (.08)		0.09 (.08)	0.3 (.26)		0.18 (.26)
Boss finds out about Filtering (0-no, 1-yes)	0.14 (.14)		0.14 (.15)	0.13 (.15)		0.07 (.15)	0.44 (.47)		0.47 (.49)
Staff and Member Ideol. Distance	-0.01 (.1)		0.04 (.11)	0.11 (.11)		0.17 (.11)	0.46 (.34)		0.5 (.36)
Personal Relationship with Boss	0.11* (.04)		0.1* (.04)	0.12* (.04)		0.1* (.04)	0.19 (.11)		0.06 (.13)
Work with senior staff in other offices	0.1 (.06)		0.14* (.06)	0.04 (.06)		0.08 (.06)	0.08 (.19)		0.12 (.20)
Work with Committee staff	0.1 (.06)		0.1 (.06)	0.07 (.06)		0.07 (.06)	-0.07 (.18)		-0.12 (.19)
Work with leadership staff	0.07 (.06)		0.07 (.06)	0.08 (.06)		0.04 (.06)	0.38* (.19)		0.19 (.20)
Work with lobbyists/trade	0.13* (.06)		0.12* (.06)	0.04 (.06)		0.03 (.06)	0.19 (.18)		0.05 (.20)
Work with staff of other party	0.14* (.05)		0.14* (.06)	0.12* (.06)		0.11* (.06)	0.35* (.18)		0.38* (.19)
Work with staff from other chamber	0.09 (.06)		0.08 (.06)	0.01 (.06)		0.03 (.06)	0.42* (.2)		0.48* (.21)
Work with Administration officials	0.1* (.05)		0.15* (.05)	-0.04 (.05)		-0.003 (.05)	0.07 (.15)		0.2 (.17)
Complexity of Issue	0.02 (.09)		0.03 (.09)	-0.04 (.09)		-0.03 (.09)	-0.28 (.29)		-0.2 (.31)
Previous Experience (0-no, 1-yes)	0.27 (.15)		0.17 (.15)	0.26 (.16)		0.2 (.09)	0.12 (.49)		0.2 (.51)
Time worked for your current boss	0.04 (.03)		0.06 (.04)	-0.001 (.03)		0.04 (.04)	0.19 (.11)		0.35* (.13)
Total amount of Time in Congress	-.05* (.01)		-0.06* (.01)	-0.01 (.01)		-0.01 (.01)	-0.04 (.11)		-0.02 (.04)
Wanted to Make a Difference	0.06 (.14)		0.13 (.14)	0.1 (.14)		0.16 (.14)	0.35 (.46)		0.37 (.47)
Chamber (0=House, 1=Senate)		-0.002 (.15)	0.04 (.18)		0.18 (.15)	0.35* (.18)		.09 (.5)	-0.43 (.59)
Boss Years in Chamber		-0.01 (.01)	-0.02* (.01)		-0.03* (.01)	-0.03 (.01)		-0.03 (.02)	-0.06* (.03)
Boss Interest in Issue		0.04 (.04)	-0.02 (.04)		0.09* (.03)	0.07 (.04)		0.07 (.12)	0.08 (.14)
Boss involvement with Issue		0.02 (.04)	0.02 (.04)		0.04 (.04)	0.02 (.04)		0.12 (.12)	0.01 (.14)
Up for Reelection		0.25 (.15)	0.31 (.18)		0.34* (.15)	0.51* (.18)		0.31 (.51)	0.66 (.59)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.36 (.2)	-0.08 (.15)	0.06 (.21)	0.3 (.21)	-0.14 (.15)	-0.04 (.21)	1.55* (.65)	0.63 (.50)	0.95 (.71)
Status (current=0, former=1)	-0.14 (.17)	0.16 (.15)	-0.17 (.17)	0.22 (.17)	0.45* (.15)	0.22 (.17)	-0.12 (.54)	0.79 (.48)	-0.11 (.55)
Party (D=0, R=1)	-0.04 (.06)	0.03 (.05)	-0.03 (.07)	-0.06 (.07)	-0.05 (.05)	-0.07 (.07)	-0.31 (.21)	-0.26 (.17)	-0.34 (.22)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	0.27 (.15)	0.04 (.13)	0.27 (.15)	-0.15 (.15)	-0.31* (.13)	-0.16 (.15)	-0.24 (.49)	-0.56 (.44)	-0.25 (.51)
Age	0.08 (.05)	0.15* (.13)	0.08 (.05)	0.09 (.05)	0.14* (.04)	0.06 (.05)	0.39* (.15)	0.49* (.12)	0.34* (.16)
Education	-0.09 (.07)	-0.02 (.37)	-0.13 (.07)	0.07 (.07)	-0.08 (.06)	0.04 (.07)	0.29 (.23)	0.33 (.21)	0.23 (.24)
Constant	1.09* (.57)	2.0* (.37)	1.51* (.61)	-0.01* (.59)	1.02* (.37)	0.07 (.61)	-0.42 (1.85)	3.6* (1.23)	1.01 (2.05)
N	214	273	200	214	272	200	215	273	201
R-squared	0.29	0.12	0.35	0.3	0.24	0.4	0.33	0.13	0.36
F value	3.23*	3.18*	3.17*	3.42*	7.31*	3.86*	3.88*	3.54*	3.39*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *p<.05

In terms of the first key finding focusing on personal relationships, these closer relationships remain important predictors of agenda setting behavior, even when confronted with additional variables and controls. The closer these relationships, the more a staffer is involved in presenting new ideas and has a higher frequency of presenting new ideas. These personal relationships do not predict overall staffer freedom, however. I do not believe this means these staffers with close relationships are not doing these things. Rather, I do not think the personal relationship is a clear predictor of having freedom. It is clearly due to other things in the model. Besides the inability of personal relationships explaining staffer freedom, these models provide support for this hypothesis. Similar to the earlier results, the difference or similarity of ideologies does not affect staffer agenda setting.

The second key finding relates to a staffer's network and if they work in a bi-partisan nature. As can be clearly seen in Table 4.6, even with the inclusion of the additional variables in the models, the more a staffer works with staffers from the other party, the more they engage in all three agenda setting activities included in this chapter. Few of the other networking variables are significant in these models. I do not think these staffers are not working with the other groups. This is simply the only group that helps explain these particular behaviors in a consistent manner. Staffers that work with staff from the other party have more freedom to do more activities in their offices. These are most likely more experienced staffers who look beyond party to get things done for their boss, and their boss knows it.

The final key finding focuses on staffer experience and information asymmetry. The first part of this hypothesis (H4), deals with complexity, receives no support in any of these models. Complexity does not seem to matter in terms of agenda-setting. It is occurring no matter how

complex the issue. Previous experience with the issue also is not significant in predicting these actions. Experience with the issue is not the only type of experience, however. The longer the staffer has been employed by their current boss, the more freedom they have in their office.

Overall experience in Congress is the most interesting characteristic in this group. While this variable was significant in predicting all three behaviors in the smaller models, it is now only significant in predicting one agenda setting activity – involvement in presenting new ideas to the boss. The longer a staffer has worked in Congress, the less likely they are to be involved in presenting those new ideas. There are two puzzles to solve here. The first is why is this variable only predicting one dependent variable and the second, more interesting, is why is it now negative. Unlike in the smaller models, total years of experience in Congress is only significantly predicting one agenda setting activity. In terms of the other two dependent variables, we look at what is significant in predicting those behaviors, in the full models, rather than total years in Congress. Both chamber type and whether the member is up for reelection are significant when the dependent variable is how often a staffer gives new policy ideas. These two things seem to matter more than any variable which measures experience in this model. Further, member experience matters here. The longer a member has served, the less we see this activity. In this particular model, with this dependent variable, member attributes seem to be playing a real role. In the freedom models, the staffer's experience with their boss matters. This seems to have taken the place of the total years of congressional experience. Experience still matters, just with the member.

The second part of this puzzle is figuring out why the coefficient switches from positive to negative from the smaller models to the full being involved with new ideas model. This is

drastically different than the smaller model, where this variable was signed in the positive. This different result is possibly due to the nature of larger models having a higher predictive power. When we look at only selected variables, they act differently than when we look at the whole picture. Further, these more experienced staffers are not simply involved with presenting new ideas; they are doing it by themselves, which is why age is significant in the final freedom model. The other significant variables in this model shed additional light on this reversal of sign for total time in Congress. Working with senior staff in other offices; lobbyists; staff from the other party; and Administration officials are all significant in predicting this, while longer serving staff is not. Further, the longer a member has served in Congress, the less staff agenda setting we are seeing in this particular dependent variable. These variables do not show up as consistently significant in the other models, which tell us there is something unique about this dependent variable. It is possibly capturing agenda setting by younger, less experienced staffers. Their very short tenure in Congress is actually working against them at this point in their career. Further, it could be young staffers working for longer serving members, as the longer the career of the boss, the less we see this behavior. This variable could also be capturing older, more experienced staffers who did not report being simply involved with presenting new ideas, instead feeling like they are leading the charge. Thus, the more experienced they are, the less they will particulate in this particular activity. Since no clear conclusions can be drawn from these models, future analysis could be done with additional variables and controls to determine what is occurring with this particular dependent variable.

Age is a proxy for experience and the older and more experienced the staffer, the more freedom they have in their offices. The final piece of the experience argument is that of the

member themselves. The longer the member has served, the less we see staffer agenda setting in all situations.

Even with the inclusion of additional variables and controls, the full models still show the key findings are significant. The following analysis discusses the additional hypotheses and variables outlined in Chapters 2 and 3.

Additional Hypotheses

The first set of agent hypotheses deals with administrative procedures and the oversight present in individual offices[59].

> *H1: Administrative Procedures/Institutions - As the approval procedures get more efficient in offices, the more we will see staff setting the agenda.*
>
> *H1b: Administrative Procedures/Institutions – As the presence of outside oversight gets larger, the less we will see staff agenda setting.*

Administrative procedures are a key aspect of PAT and the study of bureaucracies (McCubbins, Noll and Weingast 1987). In a congressional office, these procedures can be equated to the approval process. Every office has them, which includes more or less hoops to jump through to get actions or documents approved. Staffers are well aware of these procedures; the steps are very familiar, and used on a daily basis. Every staffer has a good sense of the efficiency of this process – how easy or hard it is to get something through the process and receive the final approval. While these processes are a daily part of every staffer's life, no matter whether they are at the bottom or the top of the hierarchy, the challenge in a survey instrument is quantifying how strict or lenient these procedures are. How much oversight is really present?

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[59] This analysis includes personal, committee, and leadership offices.

Staffers might outline a very thorough and tedious process which from the outside seems strict, but to the staffer seems very reasonable. They might be able to get things approved in a very short time. Conversely, what looks like a short process, and only has one or two hoops, might take weeks. Therefore, staffers were not asked to describe the approval process, but to rank how efficient they think their office's process.

It can be argued this measure is too subjective, leaving it up to the individuals to rank the efficiency. I contend this is exactly the perspective needed in this research, which is concerned with the agent and how the agent views the relationship between themselves and the principal. The PAT is all about how the agent perceives the principal's preferences and how well they do or do not carry out those preferences.

The second half of this hypothesis also focuses on oversight, specifically what McCubbins and Schwartz call fire alarm oversight (1984). They say Congress does not have the time or resources to provide constant oversight of the bureaucracy, thus they rely on outsiders like interest groups or individual citizens to keep an eye on the government for them. When an interest group finds something amiss, they pull the fire alarm, notifying Congress they need to act. They developed this idea with Congress and the bureaucracy, but I argue it can also be applied to Congress and staff. Members cannot know what their staff are saying all of the time. Staffers filter information to and from their bosses and it occasionally can get back to their bosses, either from other staffers or lobbyists and interest groups.

We know filtering occurs, but it is important to measure how often staff think it occurs. However, this is a sensitive topic and staffers were not comfortable saying how often they did it. Therefore, they were asked to estimate how often they think staffers of their same level behave. Measuring when and how often this information gets back to the boss are also very problematic

as this is also a delicate area. Staffers were again asked to report on others. Unlike with Congress and the bureaucracy, this fire alarm oversight is not known to the public, it does not manifest itself in congressional hearings or investigations. Instead, it is quiet and handled internally. Therefore, while asking staffers about others is not perfect, it is as close as we can come to measuring filtering and this type of oversight.

The final hypothesis in the agent specific set deals with a staffer's reasoning for wanting to work in Congress in the first place.

> *H5: Personal Incentives - Those staffers who reported wanting to work in Congress initially to "make a difference" will engage in more agenda setting behavior.*

Principal-Specific Hypotheses

The first two principal-specific hypotheses are institutional in nature. Both were created by simple questions asked on the survey. In both of these situations, the institutional constraints play a key role in agenda-setting. Senators allow more agenda-setting because their staffers are more experienced and can focus on specific issues. The more senior members of Congress are electorally safe and can allow staff to run the policy show in their offices.

> *H6: Institutional - Senators will allow more staff agenda-setting than House members.*

> *H7: Institutional - The more senior the member of Congress, the more staff will set the agenda.*

The second set of principal hypotheses center around information asymmetry, similar to H4 above. If a member is not interested or involved in an issue, it opens the door for staff involvement.

H8: Information Asymmetry - The less a member is interested in an issue, the more staff agenda-setting will be seen on that issue.
H9: The less a member is involved in the issue, the more staff agenda-setting will be seen on that issue.

The final hypothesis in this research is all about a member's personal ambitions and motivations. If she is running for reelection, she will take a more active role in her office's activities. She will be less likely to turn over important policy decisions to her staff and will have a very clear policy agenda for her campaign, thus they will have less opportunities for agenda setting.

H10: Personal Motives and Ambitions - Staff who work for members who are running for reelection will participate in fewer agenda-setting activities.

Results and Analysis

Agent-Specific Hypotheses Results

To reiterate, the first hypothesis deals with administrative procedures and predicting the many forms of agenda-setting. The focus of the discussion will be on the full PAT models. What we first notice about the administrative procedure variables is they are not significant in predicting any of the three agenda-setting behaviors by staffers.

If we take these approval process variables out of the full model and analyze them on their own with the three dependent variables (Table 4.7), we see similar results. One notable exception is when staffers filter information to their boss, they are more likely to be involved with presenting new ideas to their boss, the staffer has a higher frequency of presenting new ideas to their boss, and they have a great deal of freedom to do many activities in line with their boss's preferences. These staffers are savvy; they know what to share with their boss, what they

need to know and what they do not need to know. They do not bother their bosses with every single detail of what they are doing, thus the member trusts them to do their jobs.

Table 4.7 Administrative Procedures and Agenda Setting

	Involvement with new idea	Frequency of giving new ideas	Freedom
Efficiency of Office Approval Process	0.08 (.06)	0.04 (.06)	0.3 (.19)
Filtering Information from your Boss	-0.06 (.07)	-0.003 (.08)	0.03 (.23)
Filtering Information to your Boss	0.13* (.07)	0.15* (.07)	0.5* (.21)
Boss finds out about Filtering	0.18 (.13)	0.2 (.13)	0.78* (.4)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.05 (.14)	-0.07 (.14)	0.51 (.43)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.16 (.15)	0.44* (.15)	0.88 (.46)
Party (D=0, R=1)	0.05 (.05)	-0.01 (.05)	-0.22 (.16)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	0.05 (.13)	-0.25 (.04)	-0.45 (.41)
Age	0.16* (.04)	0.15* (.04)	0.48* (.11)
Education	-0.04 (.06)	0.11 (.4)	0.3 (.2)
Constant	1.84* (.4)	1.04* (.4)	2.37 (1.25)
N	285	285	286
R-squared	0.11	0.15	0.15
F Value	3.31*	4.71*	4.93*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *p<.05

Interestingly, when staffers report that the member finds out about this filtering (someone pulls the fire alarm), this leads to more freedom for staffers to do a great deal of activities within their boss's preferences. Thus, when there are members of Congress who are paying close attention and have a good outside network of informants, staffers are given a great deal of latitude because the member will be notified when a staffer steps outside their established preferences.

While the bi-partisan nature of a staffer's network has been discussed in the key findings sections, there remain a number of other network components. Staffers work with a diverse group of people on a regular basis. These additional components and their behavior in the larger

models are discussed here. When trying to explain the frequency with which the staffer is involved in presenting new ideas to her boss, working with senior staff in other offices, lobbyists, staff of the other party, and Administration officials are all significant. Working with committee, leadership, and other chamber staff are not significant in predicting this type of agenda setting. This could be due to the fact that this dependent variable picks up all levels of involvement; it could be possible that more junior staff do not work with these types of staff

The final agent specific hypothesis, H5, argues that those staffers who reported wanting to make a difference as their reason for wanting to work in Congress in the first place will engage in more agenda-setting behaviors. This hypothesis receives no support in the full models, as seen in Table 4.6. Agenda setting is occurring whether the staffer wanted to make a difference or not. However, when looked at as the only main independent variable (Table 4.8), making a difference significantly predicts a staffer having freedom to engage in a number of activities within the member's preferences.

Table 4.8 Personal Motivations and Agenda-Setting

	Involved with New Idea	Frequency of presenting new idea	Freedom
Wanted to Make a Difference (0-no, 1-yes)	0.22 (.13)	0.2 (.13)	0.83* (.42)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.08 (.14)	0.16 (.15)	1* (.46)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.17 (.15)	0.51* (.16)	1.03* (.49)
Party (D=0, R=1)	0.01 (.06)	-0.01 (.06)	-0.26 (.18)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	0.15 (.14)	-0.18 (.14)	-0.25 (.44)
Age	0.16* (.04)	0.15* (.04)	0.55* (.12)
Education	-0.04 (.07)	0.1 (.07)	0.26 (.22)
Constant	2.21* (.3)	1.42* (.31)	3.95* (.97)
N	266	266	267
R-squared	0.08	0.11	0.12
F value	3.29*	4.66*	5.18*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *p<.05

Institutional constraints are a key component of the existing agenda-setting literature. In this research, H6 and H7 deal with institutional constraints, chamber and years in office respectively. As seen in Table 4.6, the chamber is significant when predicting the frequency with which staffers offer new ideas. In this case Senate staffers offer more ideas than House staffers, which provides support for H6.

H7 argues that the longer a member has been in office, the more we will see agenda-setting by staff. In all three of these models, the opposite is true. While the variable is significant in all three models, it is counter to what the hypothesis argues. The longer a member has been in office, the less we see all three types of staff agenda-setting and leadership. While this may seem counterintuitive at first, it makes sense. Members who have been in office for a long period of time have a set agenda. Their policy agenda has not changed for years. Everyone knows the Senator who focuses only on defense or agriculture issues. What they say within those areas does not change. Therefore, staffers have little opportunity to offer any changes to that agenda; it has been set. Staffers who handle issues outside of that agenda never get a chance to offer ideas; similarly staffers who handle those agenda issues never get to deviate from the established talking points and set policy.

Looking at these institutional constraint variables on their own does not offer any significant differences, thus an individual table is not necessary.

Similar to H4, H8 and H9 theorize that information asymmetry will have an effect on agenda setting. In this case, it is the member's interest and involvement with the staffer's key issue. In the three large models, neither is significant in predicting any of the behaviors. The boss's interest in the issue is significant only when looking at the principal variables alone, and

in the opposite direction as predicted, when predicting frequency of new ideas. Similarly, when looking at only these information asymmetry variables, the only significant predictor is the boss's interest and only when frequency of offering new ideas is the dependent variable.

The final hypothesis, H10, posits that when members are up for reelection, they will allow less staff leadership on policy. Reelection is significant, but in the opposite direction predicted. When members are up for reelection, the number of new ideas offered by staff actually increases, not decreases. This could be because members are preoccupied with the election, thus they allow staff to take the lead. Further, members might be looking for new ideas to help with their campaign, and these ideas come from staff.

Effects of Control Variables on Agenda Setting

While control variables are not part of the ten hypotheses, they do provide important insight into agenda-setting. Although other variables were significant in the smaller models, the only control variable which proved to be significant in predicting the full model agenda setting behavior was age. The older the staffer, the more freedom they have in their office. The older, more mature, staffers are simply given (or take) more opportunities to act within their boss's preferences.

Interaction Analysis

In an effort to tease out more nuances in the data, a number of interactions were created. This was done to see if the three key findings remain after introducing these interaction affects. While this is not the main analysis, it does provide additional information on the key findings.

The first interaction included both party and chamber interacted with the main independent variables from the full models. As both of these are, in essence, dummy variables, we can see how changing party or chamber affects the significance of the key variables. In this analysis, Democrat is coded as 0 and Republican as 1, with the House coded as 0 and the Senate coded as 1. The new interaction terms were tested in the full PAT model with all three dependent variables.

These particular two variables were used for interactions due to the fact that we as political science scholars often find the House operates differently than the Senate, in many different capacities. The interaction with the chamber variable is to determine if agenda setting by staffers differs in the two chambers. Further, party is often an important variable in political science analysis. The interactions with party and chamber were created to see if agenda-setting differs among the two parties and between the two chambers.

When looking at predicting how involved a staffer is with a new idea in her office, all significant variables remained significant in the interaction model, save for two. A staffer's personal relationship and age were no longer significant in the interaction model. In essence, when the staffers worked for a Senate Republican this personal relationship is not a significant predictor of that behavior. Thus, a personal relationship in this type of office does not determine whether a staffer will be involved in new policy ideas. Further, her increased age does not predict that either. This full model had an R-squared of .42 and an F value of 2.21.

I ran the model with each type of interaction on its own (just party interactions and just chamber interaction variables). Personal relationships remained insignificant in both of these models. This has interesting implications for the second hypothesis and first key finding, which argues these relationships matter in all offices. However, we cannot say anything about the

significance of these personal relationships between the member and the staffer when we separate out the differences in chamber and party.

When the dependent variable is how often staffers present new ideas to their boss, personal relationships are once again not significant, in any situation (when all interactions are included, or just party or just chamber). Thus, chamber and party, specifically Senate Republicans, wash out the significance of this variable. The R-squared in this model is .44 and the F value is 2.41.

In the final analysis, with freedom as the dependent variable, there was no difference in the key independent variables with the inclusion of the interaction terms. All significant variables remained significant. The R-squared of this interaction model is .41 and the F value is 2.14. In the original full models in Table 4.6, personal relationships were not significant. This remained consistent, and now is consistent with the other interaction models.

A second set of interaction terms was created with staffer tenure (total years worked in Congress) and member tenure. Tenure acts as a proxy for experience and expertise in both cases, which is an important aspect of PAT, as well as a key component of the indirect democracy argument. The results can be seen in Table 4.9. Since there were a number of changes from the original models in Table 4.3, a table was created to see the changes more clearly. Those variables which were not significant in the original or in the numerous interactions were not included. However, all variables were included in the models for analysis. A minus (-) sign specifies this variable is no longer significant. A double plus (++) sign indicates this variable is now significant. An equals sign (=) indicates the variable was significant in both the original and the interaction model. The interaction models were run with staffer tenure interactions alone and then with both member and staffer tenure interactions.

Table 4.9 Staff and Member Tenure Interactions - Change in Significance from Original Models

	Involved with new idea		Frequency of giving new idea		Freedom	
	Staff Tenure	Member and Staff Tenure	Staff Tenure	Member and Staff Tenure	Staff Tenure	Member and Staff Tenure
Staff and Member Ideol. Distance				++		
Personal Relationship with Boss	-	-	=	=		
Work with senior staff in other offices	-	-				
Work with leadership staff		++				
Work with lobbyists/trade	-	=				
Work with staff of other party	=	=	-	-	=	-
Work with staff from other chamber					-	-
Work with Administration officials	=	=				
Previous Experience (0-no, 1-yes)	++	++				
Time worked for your current boss					=	-
Total amount of Time in Congress		++	++			
Chamber (0=House, 1=Senate)			=	-		
Boss Years in Chamber	++ (neg)		++ (neg)			
Up for Reelection			=	=		
Age					-	-
Education		++				
Chamber*boss tenure		++				
Work with other party*boss tenure				++ (neg)		
Complexity * staff tenure					++ (neg)	
Work with other chamber * staff tenure					++	
Work with leadership staff * staff tenure						++ (neg)
Constant	1.41	3.32	-3.64*	-2.89	-5.11	-6.97
R-squared	0.41	0.52	0.46	0.51	0.44	0.49
F value	2.35	2.38*	2.78	2.20*	2.61*	2.12

Significance measured as $p<.05$. "=" indicates significance in both original models from Table 4.3 and interaction. ++ indicates new significance in interaction. "-" indicates no longer significant in interaction model. "Neg" indicates the coefficient is negatively signed.

When the dependent variable was a staffer being involved in presenting a new idea to their boss, a staffer's personal relationship, as well as working with senior staff in other offices, ceased to be significant predictors, when experience was taken into consideration. When only staffer tenure interactions were included, a staffer working with lobbyists ceased to be a significant predictor. What does become significant, however, is whether the staffer had previous

experience with the issue. One interaction was significant; staff who work for more senior Senators are more involved in new ideas.

An interesting finding when predicting how often a staffer presents new ideas is that the ideological distance is now a significant predictor. This variable was not significant in any of the models, but when staffer and member tenure is interacted with the other variables, it is significant. The interaction between a staffer working with staffers from the other party and their boss's tenure is significant in this model. Staffers who work for more established members and who work with those across the aisle, seem to engage in these activities more, most likely because they are comfortable doing so and have the experience and necessary contacts. In this case, these interactions seem to be capturing exactly what we intended: expertise.

Freedom measures how much discretion a staffer has to do a number of activities. A number of variables no longer are accurate predictors of this behavior as seen in the table, but some of the interactions are significant. When only the staffer tenure interactions were included, both the complexity and working with the other chamber interactions become significant. With complexity, we again see expertise at work. Complex issues draw the more experience staffers, or the more experienced staffers are given those issues. Either way, they lead to more discretion. Working with staffers from the other chamber and staffer tenure also lead to more staffer freedom. This also seems to be a proxy for staffer expertise and their numerous contacts and experience.

A final note about the F values is appropriate here. All F values for all the individual hypotheses tests, as well as the full models and the new interaction models, were significant. Therefore, these models do have significant predictive capabilities, even if the individual variables were not always significant.

Conclusions:

In looking at these three agent-centric dependent variables, limited support is shown for all ten hypotheses. However, strong support is shown for the effect of personal relationships, bi-partisan staffers, and staffer experience on agenda setting. While the majority of the hypotheses and variables received limited support if any, the significant findings still tell us a great deal about staff agenda setting.

In some cases, more support could be found by looking at a smaller subset of the variables, analyzing just the ones covered in the particular hypothesis. While this is gratifying from a researcher's perspective, it does not give the whole story of what is occurring in staff policy leadership and must be taken with a grain of salt. Those few characteristics would never be acting alone in a real world situation.

What is clear from these results is certain staff are offering up ideas and have a good deal of freedom to act on behalf of their boss, within their established preferences. We also have some limited information on what causes those agenda-setting actions to increase or decrease, specifically those with closer personal relationships with their boss, those who work with staffers from the other party, and those with experience and expertise.

The three dependent variables in this chapter looked solely at staffer actions. They are offering up ideas or participating in activities of which their boss approves. We are left wondering, however, what happens next? Do members act? Do members respond? When do we see actual policy being made from staff ideas? Do the staffers ever go beyond the preferences of members? When do staffers disagree with the members? Chapter 5 will get deeper into what happens after the ideas are offered and when staffers strike out on their own in terms of agenda-setting.

CHAPTER 5: THE PRINCIPAL STRIKES BACK –THE PRINCIPAL AND THE AGENT WORK TOGETHER TO SET AGENDA

> *"Dear Sasha and Malia, I get you're both in those awful teen years, but you're a part of the First Family, try showing a little class. At least respect the part you play. Then again your mother and father don't respect their positions very much, or the nation for that matter, so I'm guessing you're coming up a little short in the 'good role model' department. Nevertheless, stretch yourself. Rise to the occasion. Act like being in the White House matters to you. Dress like you deserve respect, not a spot at a bar. And certainly don't make faces during televised public events."[60]*
> -Elizabeth Lauten, communications director for Representative Fincher (R-TN)

Introduction

Staffers and the members of Congress they work for often have different preferences and ideas. Staffers have their own Facebook, Twitter, and other social media accounts on which they share their personal opinions. However, staffers need to be careful. They, along with their bosses, are under intense public and media scrutiny because of the easy access of these social media sites, as is evident from the recent situation with Rep. Fincher's press aide. The staffer/member relationship is a traditional principal-agent relationship where they each have different preferences, motives, and interests. However, staffers are paid to have the same preferences as their boss and carry those preferences out. When a staffer steps out of line from those preferences, it reflects badly upon the member. And in some cases, like with Ms. Lauten, the staffer must resign or get fired, when they step outside what their boss thinks is acceptable.

This chapter addresses the principal side of this relationship, or rather includes their preferences into the picture. What happens after a staffer presents an idea to a member? What affects how the boss will react to that? What about when a staffer goes against their boss's preferences or openly disagree? What causes a staffer to do those things?

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[60] Paige Lavender. "GOP Staffer Elizabeth Lauten Resigns Following Comments about Sasha, Malia Obama. *The Huffington Post*. December 1, 2014.

Agent Agenda Setting with Principal Response

Chapter 4 outlined three key features of staffer agenda setting. These features are predominately staffer specific and seem to be driving the majority of staffer agenda setting. This chapter will also focus on those three aspects. The first finding, and argument, is that personal relationships matter; the closer the personal relationship between the member and the staffer, the more the staffer is empowered to set the agenda and come up with policy ideas in the office. The second key finding is that a staffer's network matters. The more a staffer works with specific groups, particularly those of the opposite party, the more that staffer will come up with policy ideas and set the agenda. The final key aspect of this research is that staffer experience and expertise lead to agenda setting. This comes from a key feature of the PAT called information asymmetry where the agent holds a great deal more information, experience, and expertise about the issue at hand than the principal. The principal then must rely on the agent to handle this issue and carry out their preferences.

The data and methods used for this analysis of these three key features are in the following section. The three key findings and hypotheses will be analyzed first, followed by analysis of the remaining seven hypotheses which were outlined in Chapter 2.

Just as Chapter 4 dealt with the first five hypotheses outlined in Chapter 2, this portion of the analysis looks at the second set of dependent variables and what causes them to occur, using the theoretical projections made in the hypotheses. The focus will be on the three key features of staffer agenda setting, but will also include the other remaining seven hypotheses. The dependent variables used in this analysis are very different than the ones tested in Chapter 4; they introduce the principal into the relationship. The member is able to respond; the staffer can disagree with the member, or the member can have their preferences challenged in this analysis. The three key

features addressed in Chapter 4 will most likely behave differently in this analysis, because the dependent variables (the agenda setting actions) analyzed in this chapter are so very different than the ones used in Chapter 4.

Data

Briefly, the data for this analysis comes from the original survey I administered to all Congressional legislative staff in late 2013 and early 2014. All independent variables were created from direct questions asked on the survey. These variables are outlined in Chapter 3, under the Key Independent Variables section, and in Chapter 4.

The first dependent variable looks at what happens after the staffer presents an idea to their boss. This variable measures how often the member of Congress takes the staffer's policy idea or advice and acts up on it. This is true agenda setting, not just a component of it. The staffer is coming up with the ideas and the member is acting up on them. It is included in this group of variables because it requires the principal to act, in response to the agent. It requires that the staffer is setting the agenda, providing an idea, but that the member hears the idea, and then acts upon it.

The second dependent variable used in this chapter is the Rogue variable. Similar to the Freedom variable used in Chapter 4, this variable is the composite of how often a staffer engages in a number of different activities ("Saying something in a meeting/negotiation that is contrary to my boss's stated preferences; Advocating for a policy stance not in line with my boss's previous preferences, or ignoring the member's wishes on particular legislation or policy; Co-signing a letter or co-sponsoring legislation not in line with my boss's preferences; and Introducing legislation not in line with my boss's preferences"). It is clear from these activities that this

variable measures when an agent steps outside their principal's preferences. Most of the other

actions in this research only identify when the staffer is acting within the member's set

preferences. This variable is unique in that it does the opposite. While a staffer going rogue does

not occur very often, the models will attempt to find out what causes that to occur.

The final dependent variable in this portion of the analysis, the Disagree variable,

measures how often a staffer disagrees with their boss about policy ideas or direction. This seems

like a simple, innocuous, variable, but instead gets at the deeper relationship between a staffer

and member. Only those staffers who feel comfortable in their job will do this, or who do not

care how long they work for the member. Many things can affect if a staffer will dare to disagree

with their boss; these models will shed some light on what those things might be. Even though

some might view "disagree" as a negative term, this dependent variable should not be viewed as

a positive or negative action. Some members appreciate and encourage their staff to challenge

them, while others do not.

When using so many different variables to measure a similar type of activity, one might

worry they are all measuring the same thing. However, as can be clearly seen in Table 4.1 in the

previous chapter, which shows the correlations, these dependent variables are distinct and

measuring different activities.

Key Findings

Similar to the analysis in Chapter 4, all ten hypotheses will be tested using the full

principal-agent model independent variables and the dependent variables detailed above.

However, the key findings will be analyzed first.

Personal relationships are the focus of H2 and they are the first main finding. Table 5.1 shows the results when only these personality variables are analyzed. This table shows that this key finding continues to receive strong support with these dependent variables. As the personal relationship gets stronger, or better, the member is more likely to take the staffer's policy idea and act upon it. At the same time, the staffer feels more comfortable disagreeing with the member over policy issues. Both of these seem logical. A close relationship is forged over a period of time and when a staffer brings good ideas to their boss. Therefore, the member trusts the staffer. Further, this close relationship and trust allow the staffer to openly disagree with the member of Congress on policy issues. The staffer still has the best interest of the member in mind, and wants to do what is best for them and their constituents. As has been argued in Chapter 3, disagreeing with the boss should not be seen as a pure negative act, or as the staffer going against the boss's preferences. Often, the staffer has a better grasp of the member's previous issue stances or voting history than the member, as it is their job to do so. Thus, this staffer is disagreeing to keep the member in line with previously established preferences or campaign promises. The personal relationship does not accurately predict rogue behavior, which should also seem logical. If the two have a close relationship, we should not see rogue behavior.

Table 5.1 Personal Relationships and Agenda Setting

	Boss Takes New idea and acts	Rogue	Disagree
Staffer and Member Ideological Distance	0.04 (.06)	-0.01 (.16)	-0.03 (.09)
Personal Relationship with Boss	0.11* (.02)	0.02 (.05)	0.14* (.03)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	-0.07 (.09)	0.34 (.24)	0.1 (.14)
Status (current=0, former=1)	-0.01 (.10)	-0.39 (.26)	0.02 (.15)
Party (D=0, R=1)	-0.03 (.04)	-0.01 (.09)	0.003 (.05)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	0.06 (.09)	-0.22 (.23)	0.04 (.13)
Age	0.01 (.02)	0.08 (.06)	0.11* (.04)
Education	0.04 (.04)	0.16 (.11)	0.07 (.06)
Constant	1.72* (.21)	-0.28 (.55)	-0.12 (.32)
N	265	268.00	267.00
R-squared	0.14	0.03	0.16
F value	5.01*	1.15	6.26*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *p<.05

The ideological distance is not significant in any of the models, which is another aspect of the personal relationship. This seems counterintuitive at first glance – if a member and staffer have similar policy preferences and ideologies, the member should take those ideas more. It should also significantly predict whether the two will disagree or not. It should be significant but signed negatively. The same goes for rogue behavior. What we overlook is that a staffer's personal ideology and policy preferences matters little in a congressional office. They are hired to carry out their boss's preferences; therefore, their own ideology rarely comes into play. Anecdotally, some staffers are not even of the same party as their boss. These individuals are able to set aside their own political beliefs and take on the persona and preferences of their boss. Their own ideology does not matter.

Large professional networks can be a double-edged sword for congressional staffers. They can increase their policy expertise and effectiveness (Zhang and Feiock 2009) or they can overpower the member's preferences, as in the case of interest groups (see Moe 1989). The second key finding is that networks matter, specifically working in a bi-partisan manner, in

predicting agenda setting behaviors. H3 argues that the larger a staffer's network, or the more they work with those outside their own office, the more we will see agenda setting.

Table 5.2 shows the results in predicting these three activities, if only network variables are tested. The key finding of working in a bi-partisan manner receives limited support in these situations. The more a staffer works with staffers from across the aisle, the more likely they are to disagree with their boss on policy issues. As iterated earlier, this should not be seen as a negative. These staffers have a larger network, which even in the politicized and polarized environment of today's Congress, have managed to have good working relationships with those of the other party. They most likely are also more experienced staffers with a good relationship with their boss. Therefore, they feel comfortable voicing their disagreement with their boss. However, this bi-partisan network could also be a negative for the member; the staffers might be taking on more of the ideas of the other party and therefore disagreeing with the member with more negative intentions. Additional insight on this aspect could be further explored in a longitudinal study, to see what occurs the longer a staffer works with the other party.

Table 5.2 Networks and Agenda Setting

	Boss Takes New idea and acts	Rogue	Disagree
Work with senior staff in other offices	0.01 (.03)	-0.04 (.08)	0.01 (.05)
Work with Committee staff	0.003 (.03)	-0.13 (.08)	0.03 (.05)
Work with leadership staff	0.03 (.03)	0.1 (.08)	0.11* (.04)
Work with lobbyists/trade association	0.01 (.03)	-0.03 (.07)	-0.08* (.04)
Work with staff of other party	0.04 (.03)	0.06 (.08)	0.12* (.04)
Work with staff from other chamber	0.06 (.04)	0.07 (.08)	-0.05 (.05)
Work with Administration officials	0.01 (.03)	-0.04 (.07)	0.03 (.04)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.2 (.11)	0.25 (.27)	0.53* (.16)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.002 (.1)	-0.37 (.25)	0.06 (.15)
Party (D=0, R=1)	-0.01 (.04)	-0.06 (.08)	0.04 (.05)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	-0.06 (.09)	-0.24 (.22)	0.01 (.13)
Age	0.07* (.02)	0.09 (.06)	0.17* (.03)
Education	0.04 (.04)	0.14 (.11)	0.01 (.06)
Constant	1.71* (.24)	0.21 (.57)	0.08 (.33)
N	282	285	285
R-squared	0.12	0.05	0.18
F Value	2.83*	1.10*	4.65*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *$p < .05$

Working in a bi-partisan manner did not significantly predict the other two activities, which most likely is a factor of this small set of variables used in this analysis. However, it could also be that members might not fully trust these staffers or they are only bringing ideas counter to their preferences and therefore do not take their ideas and act. The lack of significance for the rogue behavior could be due to the small numbers of this dependent variable in the first place; this variable is simply not significant in predicting this very specific behavior.

When looking at the larger aspect of networks and the remaining network components, a very limited number of significant results appear. The more a staffer works with lobbyists and interest groups, the less they disagree with their boss. This could be due to the simple issue that more experienced staffers work with lobbyists and they have less to argue with their boss about.

Another option is the staffer has already decided they are leaving their current job for a lobbying job and thus do not care enough about the member or their policies to argue.

The final key finding of this research focuses on information asymmetry and experience and how they cause increased agenda setting. The importance of information asymmetry to the overall PAT has been discussed throughout this research. But does it play a role in these specific agenda setting activities? H4 does not differentiate between the six dependent variables and posits the more complex the issue and the more experience a staffer has, the more agenda setting will be done by that staffer.

Table 5.3 depicts the results when only the information asymmetry independent variables are used. Similar to results in Chapter 4, issue complexity does not matter, but staffer experience finds some limited support. Previous experience with the issue leads to the boss taking a staffer's idea and acting. The longer a staffer has worked in Congress, the more the boss will take their ideas and the more the staffer will disagree with their boss. The length of the staffer's tenure with the member has no effect on any of these agenda setting activities. Age, however, which is a proxy for experience and expertise in this research accurately predicts both a boss acting upon an idea and the staffer feeling comfortable disagreeing with the member.

Table 5.3 Information Asymmetry and Agenda Setting

	Boss Takes New idea and acts	Rogue	Disagree
Complexity of Issue	0.03 (.05)	-0.12 (.13)	-0.07 (.08)
Previous Experience (0-no, 1-yes)	0.19* (.09)	-0.36 (.22)	0.01 (.13)
Time worked for your current boss	0.03 (.02)	0.01 (.05)	0.05 (.03)
Total amount of Time in Congress	0.01* (.003)	0.01 (.01)	0.01* (.004)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.12 (.10)	0.35 (.22)	0.38* (.13)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.03 (.11)	-0.48 (.25)	0.04 (.15)
Party (D=0, R=1)	0.01 (.03)	-0.02 (.08)	0.06 (.05)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	-0.08 (.09)	-0.25 (.21)	-0.05 (.13)
Age	0.06* (.03)	0.12 (.06)	0.15* (.04)
Education	0.03 (.04)	0.13 (.1)	0.04 (.06)
Constant	1.51* (.27)	-0.02 (.63)	0.1 (.38)
N	279	283	283
R-squared	0.12	0.05	0.15
F Value	3.64*	1.52	4.78*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *$p<.05$

No variables in this model are significant in explaining rogue behavior. The lack of significance for the experience variables is most likely caused by a number of things. First, this is a small subset of variables. Experience and complexity of the issue are never going to be the only factors at play in an office or with a staffer. Further, as stated earlier, these agenda setting activities are very different. Rogue behavior is a very unique action and it is difficult to nail down what exactly is causing staffers to advocate for policies outside of their boss's preferences.

Full Model Results

The key findings have been discussed in the previous section. However, these results only looked at the key variables in small groups. We know these staffer, member, and office attributes would never exist in isolation, even if they make for simple, easy to understand results. Therefore, the additional variables discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 will be tested in this section. This not only gives us a better, more empirically accurate depiction of an actual office

environment, it also allows us to see if the significance of our key findings disappears with the addition of supplementary controls. These variables will be attempting to predict the three dependent variables which include the principal in the staffer agenda setting action.

There are three models for each dependent variable. The first shows how well the agent only variables explain the three agenda setting activities. The second shows only the principal-specific variables and the third is the full PAT model. The results of these models can be seen in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Principal Agent Theory and Preferences

	Member Takes Idea and Act			Rogue			Disagree		
	Agent Model	Principal Model	Full PAT Model	Agent Model	Principal Model	Full PAT model	Agent Model	Principal Model	Full PAT model
Efficiency of Office Approval Process	0.04 (.05)		.01 (.05)	-0.01 (.12)		-0.03 (.13)	-0.06 (.07)		-0.06 (.07)
Filtering Information from your Boss	-0.01 (.06)		-.05 (.06)	-0.03 (.15)		0.01 (.16)	-0.09 (.09)		0.1 (.09)
Filtering Information to your Boss	0.08 (.05)		.04 (.05)	0.1 (.14)		0.09 (.15)	0.07 (.08)		0.04 (.08)
Boss finds out about Filtering	-0.1 (.1)		.08 (.1)	0.21 (.25)		0.32 (.27)	0.05 (.15)		0.09 (.15)
Staff and Member Ideol. Distance	0.09 (.02)		.05 (.07)	0.24 (.18)		0.18 (.20)	0.09 (.11)		0.11 (.11)
Personal Relationship with Boss	0.09* (.02)		.08* (.03)	-0.02 (.06)		-0.02 (.07)	0.08* (.04)		0.04 (.04)
Work with senior staff in other office	0.03 (.04)		.04 (.04)	-0.15 (.10)		-0.17 (.11)	0.03 (.06)		0.01 (.06)
Work with Committee staff	0.02 (.04)		.03 (.04)	-0.14 (.10)		-0.16 (.10)	0.07 (.06)		0.06 (.06)
Work with leadership staff	0.02 (.04)		-.02 (.04)	0.05 (.1)		0.04 (.11)	0.12* (.06)		0.07 (.06)
Work with lobbyists/trade	0.05 (.06)		.02 (.04)	-0.11 (.10)		-0.16 (.11)	-0.04 (.06)		-0.07 (.06)
Work with staff of other party	0.06 (.04)		.04 (.04)	-0.13 (.10)		-0.14 (.10)	0.08 (.06)		0.09 (.06)
Work with staff from other chamber	0.04 (.04)		.08* (.04)	0.05 (.11)		0.01 (.12)	-0.06 (.06)		-0.05 (.07)
Work with Administration officials	-0.01 (.03)		.01 (.03)	-0.08 (.08)		-0.07 (.09)	0.06 (.05)		0.1* (.05)
Complexity of Issue	0.03 (.06)		.04 (.06)	-0.2 (.16)		-0.17 (.17)	-0.8 (.09)		-0.07 (.09)
Previous Experience (0-no, 1-yes)	0.19 (.10)		.2* (.1)	-0.54* (.16)		-0.44 (.28)	0.01 (.16)		0.04 (.16)
Time worked for your current boss	0.003 (.02)		.02 (.02)	0.02 (.06)		0.04 (.07)	0.03 (.03)		0.08* (.04)
Total amount of Time in Congress	-0.01 (.01)		-.01 (.01)	0.05* (.02)		0.06* (.02)	-0.01 (.01)		-0.002 (.01)
Wanted to Make a Difference	0.07 (.09)		.07 (.09)	-0.25 (.25)		-0.3 (.28)	0.06 (.14)		0.05 (.15)
Chamber (0=House, 1=Senate)		.09 (.11)	.15 (.12)		-0.26 (.25)	-0.6 (.33)		-0.39* (.15)	-0.63* (.18)
Boss Years in Chamber		-.002 (.01)	-.004 (.01)		0.01 (.01)	0.02 (.02)		-0.02* (.01)	-0.02* (.01)
Boss Interest in Issue		.04 (.02)	.02 (.03)		-0.05 (.06)	-0.06 (.08)		0.01 (.03)	0.02 (.04)
Boss involvement with Issue		.01 (.03)	-.03 (.03)		-0.02 (.06)	-0.05 (.08)		0.05 (.04)	0.002 (.04)
Up for Reelection		.07 (.11)	.11 (.12)		-0.01 (.25)	0.03 (.32)		-0.26 (.15)	-0.27 (.18)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.03 (.13)	.10 (.11)	.02 (.14)	-0.04 (.35)	0.31 (.25)	0.06 (.39)	0.6* (.20)	0.17 (.15)	0.5* (.22)
Status (current=0, former=1)	-0.05 (.11)	.11 (.10)	-.08 (.11)	-0.4 (.29)	-0.35 (.24)	-0.4 (.30)	-0.06 (.17)	0.19 (.14)	-0.01 (.17)
Party (D=0, R=1)	-0.03 (.04)	.03 (.04)	-.06 (.04)	-0.05 (.11)	0.003 (.09)	-0.001 (.12)	0.02 (.07)	0.02 (.05)	0.01 (.07)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	0.06 (.1)	.02 (.09)	.09 (.10)	-0.53* (.26)	-0.26 (.22)	-0.53 (.28)	0.14 (.15)	-0.02 (.13)	0.07 (.16)
Age	0.02 (.03)	.08* (.03)	.02 (.03)	0.17* (.08)	0.11 (.06)	0.17* (.09)	0.16* (.05)	0.17* (.03)	0.15* (.05)
Education	0.04 (.05)	.02 (.05)	.03 (.05)	0.1 (.12)	0.13 (.11)	0.1 (.13)	-0.01 (.07)	0.04 (.06)	-0.004 (.07)
Constant	0.94* (.38)	1.8* (.26)	1.35* (.4)	0.74 (.10)	0.39 (.61)	1.01 (1.13)	-0.58 (.59)	0.77* (.36)	0.17 (.63)
N	212	272	198	215	273	201	215	272	201
R-squared	0.25	0.08	0.28	0.15	0.05	0.19	0.24	0.17	0.32
F value	2.54*	2.10*	2.27*	1.39	1.20	1.40*	2.53*	4.95*	2.81*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *p<.05

In terms of explaining the dependent variable (R-squared values), these models do not perform as well as those in Chapter 4, but this is predominantly due to the inclusion of the Rogue models. The PAT model only explains 19% of the total variance of the Rogue variable. Something else, or many something else's, are to "blame" for this behavior among staffers. The other two models perform much better, explaining about 30% of the agenda setting behavior. Thus, these models provide us with a decent idea of what is causing a member to take a staffer's idea and act up on it, and what causes a staffer to disagree with their boss on policy issues.

The first key finding of personal relationships positively affecting staffer agenda setting does receive some support. Even though it is only significant in predicting one behavior, it is the behavior which we would most likely expect and further reiterates its important status. The closer the personal relationship between the staffer and the member, the more likely the member is to take the staffer's ideas and act upon them. Personal relationships are not significant when predicting rogue behavior or disagreement; something else is causing these behaviors to occur. Similar to earlier findings, ideological distance between the staffer and the member does not significantly predict any of these activities.

A staffer's network, specifically the presence of staffers from the other party in that network, is the focus of the second key aspect of this research. Working in a bi-partisan manner is not significant in predicting any of these behaviors. With the addition of the full model, this aspect of the network ceases to predict a staffer disagreeing with their boss (see Table 5.2), but working with Administration officials is now significant.

The full hypothesis receives limited support in the full models. The more a staffer works with staffers from the other chamber, the more they present ideas to their boss and the boss acts upon those policy ideas. Additionally, the more a staffer works with Administration officials, the

more they will disagree with their boss on policy direction. Why is this happening? Why are these the only groups which are significant in these models? We might think these are only the committee or leadership staff, but the simple crosstabs do not show this. Both personal and committee staff are working with these types of groups at similar levels, so that is not the case. Yes, that may be one aspect, but more factors are at play.

The most likely explanation is the experience level of the staffer. Only mature, experienced, knowledgeable staffers will have contacts in the other chamber and in the Administration. These experienced staffers, therefore, will have the member's trust and will be able to present good ideas and also disagree when the member is moving in a policy direction the staffer thinks is questionable.

The third and final key finding relates to information asymmetry and staffer experience. Table 5.4 once again shows us complexity of the issue is not significant in predicting any of the behaviors; thus H4 does not receive any support in these three models. It should be noted staffers are self-assessing the complexity of their top issue. As mentioned previously, staffers do have a good grasp of how their top issues stacks up against other issues in the office or even within their prevue, but this lack of significance could be due to staffers underestimating, or overestimating, the complexity of their issue. This could be affecting the lack of significance of this variable. The other option is complexity really does not matter in agenda-setting. Staffers are engaging in these activities no matter the nature of their specific issue, and whether they engage is due to other things.

The other side of information asymmetry, as seen in Hypothesis 4b, is the staffer's level of experience, which is broken up into three different types of experience: with the issue itself, with the member, and in Congress. The experience with the issue could have come from personal

experience (like working on a farm and handling agriculture issues), higher education degree, working in the industry, or handling the issue for another member of Congress or committee. As we can see in Table 5.4, if a staffer had previous experience with the policy issue, the member takes their ideas and acts upon them at a higher level. This makes logical sense; members trust the staffer's judgement because of their experience with the issue. The other support for H4b comes as the staffer's number of years with their current boss increases, so does the frequency of the staffer disagreeing with their member about policy issues. Again, this is about comfort and trust on both sides.

The most interesting finding relating to this hypothesis, and really this whole set of variables, is found in the Rogue model. As the staffer's total number of years of experience working in Congress increases, so does the occurrence of rogue behaviors. As no other variables have been significant (save for previous experience, but only in the agent variables model) in predicting rogue behavior, this is noteworthy. Staffers with a long tenure working in Congress often feel ten feet tall and bulletproof. In other words, they do not worry about being fired, as they think they are so valuable to the policy process. In reality, they most likely are important, in that they have more experience with the issue than anyone else and have a great institutional memory. However, no one in Congress is above getting fired, and these staffers who are engaging in rogue behaviors, which are contrary to their boss's preferences, need to be careful.

The world of the congressional office and staffer is a complex one, but one where we can narrow down key aspects of what is causing agenda setting to occur. With the inclusion of the full models, these key aspects, for the most part, still remain relevant, or at least interesting in explaining that staff activity. This section focused on the key findings and variables as they relate

to the full models. The following section includes analysis of the additional seven hypotheses and variables from Chapters 2 and 3.

Additional Analysis of Hypotheses and Variables

Following is a discussion of the seven remaining hypotheses and how well they perform in these three full PAT models. Additional analysis is provided for each hypothesis, in which only the specific variables mentioned in that hypothesis are tested. As discussed earlier in relations to the key findings, these situations would most likely never occur in the real world of congressional offices, it helps us to see what effects these situations and characteristics are having on their own. For the most part, the results are very similar to the full models in Table 5.4, but occasionally there are some interesting differences in the smaller models.

Agent Specific Hypotheses Results

H1 deals with administrative procedures and none of these variables are significant in any of the full models. This makes sense when we analyze the particular actions attempting to be explained. If a member is going to take a staffer's idea and act upon it, it really does not matter what path it went through to get to that point. A good idea is a good idea and a member of Congress will decide that when she receives the idea. Similarly, if a staffer is going to go rogue or disagree with their boss, the administrative processes will most likely not slow down those actions. Approval processes or the threat of their action getting back to their boss do not matter to this particular type of staffer.

If the administrative procedures are analyzed on their own (if these were the only factors involved in an office and how it operates), which can be seen in Table 5.5, the efficiency of the

approval process IS significant in predicting whether the member will take the staffer's idea and
act upon it. Staffers are not held back by onerous red tape and hoops to jump through. Their
office approval process is a streamlined process, where staffers feel they have the freedom to
take good ideas to their boss. The members trust their staff, therefore they do not institute
rigorous approval procedures, they remove red tape, and staff bring them good ideas upon which
they can act.

Table 5.5 Administrative Procedures and Agenda Setting

	Boss taking idea	Rogue	Disagree
Efficiency of Office Approval Process	0.09* (.04)	0.004 (.09)	0.002 (.06)
Filtering Information from your Boss	0.02 (.05)	-0.04 (.11)	0.03 (.07)
Filtering Information to your Boss	0.12* (.05)	0.08 (.1)	0.08 (.07)
Boss finds out about Filtering	-0.02 (.09)	0.22 (.19)	0.2 (.12)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.07 (.09)	0.22 (.21)	0.21 (.13)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.08 (.1)	-0.28 (.230	0.19 (.15)
Party (D=0, R=1)	0.002 (.04)	-0.02 (.08)	0.04 (.05)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	-0.03 (.09)	-0.3 (.2)	-0.01 (.13)
Age	0.08* (.03)	0.09 (.06)	0.17* (.04)
Education	0.04 (.04)	0.09 (.1)	0.04 (.06)
Constant	1.56* (.28)	-0.16 (.61)	0.26 (.39)
N	282	286	285
R-squared	0.09	0.04	0.11
F value	2.71*	1.22	3.55*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *p<.05

Additionally, when a staffer filters information to their boss (or believes that other
staffers at their same level do this), there is a higher occurrence of the boss acting upon an idea.
These do provide support for H1, but only in the hypothetical situation when these are the only
influences in an office.

Young people come to Washington to work in politics for a variety of reasons. H5 argues
that those who came wanting to make a difference will do more agenda setting. Table 5.1 shows
this hypothesis does not receive any support. A staffer's original intentions do not matter in

terms of how often a member of Congress takes their idea acts, whether the staffer will go rogue, or if a staffer will disagree with their boss. What this tells us is even staffers who come for less altruistic reasons are effective in their offices.

When personal motivations are the only key variable used in the models (Table 5.6), along with the controls, wanting to make a difference causes the boss to take new ideas and act at higher levels. However, in the real world, a staffer wanting to make a difference would never be the only factor affecting their ability to set the agenda.

Table 5.6 Personal Motivations and Agenda Setting

	Boss Takes New idea and Acts	Rogue	Disagree
Wanted to Make a Difference (0-no, 1-yes)	0.22* (.09)	-0.05 (.21)	0.17 (.13)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.04 (.1)	0.25 (.23)	0.27 (.14)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.15 (.11)	-0.34 (.25)	0.18 (.15)
Party (D=0, R=1)	-0.02 (.04)	-0.11 (.09)	0.03 (.05)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	-0.003 (.10)	-0.26 (.22)	0.03 (.13)
Age	0.08* (.03)	0.11 (.06)	0.19* (.04)
Education	0.03 (.21)	0.08 (.49)	0.02 (.07)
Constant	2.08* (.21)	0.13 (.49)	0.53 (.29)
N	264	267	266
R-squared	0.07	0.04	0.11
F value	2.56*	1.49	4.55*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *p<.05

Principal Specific Hypotheses Results

The next five hypotheses focus on principal specific factors which affect staffer agenda setting. The first set involves institutional factors – chamber and seniority. H6 theorizes Senate staffers will engage in more agenda-setting than House staffers. In Table 5.1, chamber type is significant in causing the staffer to disagree, but in the opposite direction. Senate staffers are LESS likely to disagree with their bosses on policy direction. Why might this be? Existing

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literature helps us little on these issues, as the scholarship on congressional staff is so limited. What we do know is Senate staff are more experienced, mature, and educated (Fox and Hammond 1977). Could the personal nature of Senate staff be decreasing the disagreement? Perhaps, but it could also be due to other factors as well. The models show us other negatively signed predictors of disagreement. None of these other factors are significant so we cannot make any definitive statements about them, but we can get a glimpse into what might be causing more or less disagreement.

The second institutional hypothesis, H7, posits the more senior the member, the more staff agenda setting will occur. Similar to the results in the previous hypothesis discussion, a member's years in office are significant, but in the opposite direction as predicted, when predicting how often a staffer will disagree with their boss on policy issues. The longer a member has been in office, the less likely a staffer is to disagree with them. The original hypothesis does not cover disagreement, but rather agenda-setting more broadly. While disagreement is a type of agenda-setting, it is not like the other types. Staffers might not feel it worth their effort to argue with their boss about policy, as their minds have been made up for years. Further, a staffer comes into their job with a senior member knowing the member's policy preferences are set; it does not make sense to argue with them.

When looked at on their own in Table 5.7, the institutional constraints variables perform in the exact same way as the full models. Senate staffers significantly predict disagreement, but in the negative. Senate staffers are not disagreeing with their bosses. Further, the longer the member has served in Congress, the less a staffer disagrees with them. Both of these results are identical to the full models.

Table 5.7 Institutional Constraints and Agenda Setting

	Boss Takes New Idea and Acts	Rogue	Disagree
Chamber (0=House, 1=Senate)	0.02 (.09)	-0.25 (.20)	-0.29* (.12)
Boss Years in Chamber	-0.001 (.01)	0.01 (.01)	-0.02* (.01)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.1 (.1)	0.3 (.24)	0.09 (.14)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.1 (.1)	-0.36 (.24)	0.17 (.14)
Party (D=0, R=1)	-0.02 (.04)	-0.01 (.08)	0.03 (.05)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	-0.02 (.09)	-0.22 (.21)	-0.05 (.13)
Age	0.08* (.02)	0.08 (.06)	0.17* (.03)
Education	0.03 (.04)	0.13 (.10)	0.05 (.06)
Constant	2.18* (.21)	-0.06 (.50)	1.09* (.29)
N	284	287	286
R-squared	0.05	0.04	0.13
F Value	1.65	1.39	5.02*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *p<.05

The next set of hypotheses deals with information asymmetry, similar to H4. These hypotheses focus on the principal's information and interest in the issues. H8 hypothesizes the less a member is interested in a staffer's policy issue, the more agenda setting the staffer will be able to do on that issue. H9 posits the same but with involvement; the less involved a member is on the issue, the more agenda setting will be done by the staffer. Neither of these hypotheses receives any support in any of the models shown in Table 5.1. Does member interest or involvement not matter? I do not think we can make that argument. A more likely explanation is they do not predict these specific actions. An even more probable reason is if a member is not interested or involved in a particular issue, the staffer will not be proposing any ideas in those areas anyway.

These information asymmetry hypotheses continue to receive no support when these variables are analyzed on their own, as shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Information Asymmetry and Agenda Setting

	Boss Takes New idea and acts	Rogue	Disagree
Boss Interest in Issue	0.04 (.02)	-0.05 (.05)	0.01 (.03)
Boss involvement with Issue	0.003 (.03)	-0.01 (.06)	0.05 (.03)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.11 (.1)	0.31 (.22)	0.32* (.13)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.12 (.1)	-0.32 (.23)	0.21 (.14)
Party (D=0, R=1)	-0.01 (.04)	-0.01 (.08)	0.04 (.05)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	0.02 (.09)	-0.24 (.21)	-0.02 (.13)
Age	0.07* (.02)	0.11 (.06)	0.18* (.03)
Education	0.03 (.04)	0.12 (.1)	0.04 (.06)
Constant	1.89* (.23)	0.3 (.51)	0.13 (.31)
N	287	287.00	286.00
R-squared	0.06	0.04	0.13
F value	2.36*	1.40	5.32*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *p<.05

Personal motivation is the focus of the final hypothesis in this research. It argues staffers who work for members running for reelection will engage in fewer agenda setting activities. This hypothesis receives no support; reelection is not significant in predicting any of the behaviors. This is mostly likely due to the nature of these dependent variables. If a member is going to take ideas from staff and act, they will do it all of the time, not just during reelection. Reelection is not affecting if a staffer will go rogue; those types of staffers will do those activities no matter the member's situation. Reelection also does not affect whether a staffer disagrees with their boss or not; again, these staffers who are inclined to do this will most likely do it no matter the political situation of their boss.

Once again, if personal motivation is analyzed alone against these dependent variables (Table 5.9), the same results are attained as those shown in the full models in Table 5.1. Personal motivation is not significant in predicting any of these more principal centric dependent variables.

Table 5.9 Personal Motivation and Agenda Setting

	Boss Takes New idea and Acts	Rogue	Disagree
Up for Reelection	0.04 (.09)	0.09 (.2)	-0.04 (.12)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)	0.07 (.09)	0.26 (.21)	0.24 (.13)
Status (current=0, former=1)	0.12 (.10)	-0.32 (.23)	0.19 (.14)
Party (D=0, R=1)	-0.004 (.04)	-0.03 (.08)	0.04 (.05)
Gender (0-male, 1-female)	-0.02 (.09)	-0.21 (.2)	-0.02 (.13)
Age	0.08* (.02)	0.08 (.05)	0.17* (.03)
Education	0.02 (.2)	0.11 (.1)	0.04 (.06)
Constant	2.17 (.2)	-0.07 (.44)	0.64* (.27)
N	298	300	299
R-squared	0.04	0.03	0.1
F value	1.94	1.25	4.51*

Coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses, *$p < .05$

Effects of Control Variables on Agenda Setting

As is often the case in quantitative analysis, the control variables can provide interesting insight into what is causing the dependent variable to vary. This is the case in this situation. When a staffer works in a personal office, they have a higher frequency of disagreeing with their boss. This can be attributed to geography. Most members spend the majority of their time in their personal office, meeting with constituents, reading briefs, and working with their staff. Thus, these staffers get more face time with their boss. The member knows his personal staff on a more personal level than he knows his committee staffers. Chairs of committees spend much less time in their committee office, and as a result they often do not build those strong relationships with staffers. Members do not even know all of their committee staff, as they can number close to a hundred.

Gender is significant, but only when the agent variables are tested against rogue behavior. Females are less likely to engage in rogue behavior, when only the agent specific variables are analyzed. In the full PAT model, gender is not significant. This further reiterates the importance

of including both the principal and the agent factors in any model of Congressional agenda-setting.

A staffer's age is once again a significant predictor of these agenda setting behaviors. As the staffer's age increases, so does the frequency of rogue behavior and disagreeing with the boss on policy. These mature, self-assured staffers know exactly how much they can get away with, even if that includes engaging in activities counter to their boss's established preferences.

Party, status, and education are not significant in any of the models. This runs counter to what we might think in terms of party, as party seems to matter in a great deal of political research. However, in this case, it does not. One might also think former staffers would report more instances of some of these behaviors, but that is not the case, or rather, status does not predict these behaviors. Education could also be hypothesized to predict agenda-setting, with higher educated individuals offering ideas and the boss acting upon them, because of their higher education attainment. Again, this is not the case.

Interaction Analysis

Similar to what was done in Chapter 4, additional analysis was completed on this data to determine if the importance of the key findings remains after introducing additional aspects of the data. Again, chamber and party were interacted with the key independent variables. Chamber is coded with the House as 0 and the Senate as 1. Party is coded with Democrat as 0 and Republican as 1. The interactions were tested along with the full PAT model with the three dependent variables discussed in this chapter. There are three different models for each dependent variables as the chamber and party interactions were done on their own, as well as

together. These interactions were done to see how party and chamber might affect what is happening with agenda-setting.

The results can be seen in Table 5.10. This table depicts the change in significance from the original models shows in Table 5.4. Only those variables affected are included for simplification purposes. Variables which were neither significant in the original nor the interaction have been left out of the table. The "=" sign indicates the variable is significant in both the original and the interaction model (no change from original). The "-" indicates the variable is no longer significant in the interaction model. "++" specifies the variable is significant in the interaction, but was not in the original model. If they have "neg" behind them that indicates the coefficient was negative.

Table 5.10 Chamber and Party Interactions – Changes from Original Models

	Member Takes Idea and Act			Rogue			Disagree		
	Chamber	Party	Both	Chamber	Party	Both	Chamber	Party	Both
Boss finds out about Filtering (0-no, 1-yes)						++			
Personal Relationship with Boss	=	=	=						
Work with staff from other chamber	-	-	-						
Work with Administration officials							-	-	-
Previous Experience (0-no, 1-yes)	-	-	-						
Time worked for your current boss				++			-	-	-
Total amount of Time in Congress				=	=	=			
Chamber (0=House, 1=Senate)							-	=	-
Boss Years in Chamber							=	-	=
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)							=	=	=
Age				=	-	-	=	=	=
Approval*chamber	++								
Time worked for current boss*chamber				++ (neg)					
Total time in Congress * party					++ (neg)				
Previous Experience * chamber							++		++
Constant	1.02	1.32*	1.07	0.59	-0.49	-0.53	-0.09	-0.48	-0.52
R-squared	0.36	0.31	0.38	0.23	0.26	0.29	0.37	0.37	0.4
F value	2.27*	1.84*	1.87*	1.22	1.46	1.29	2.39*	2.42*	2.06*

Significance measured as p<.05. "=" indicates similar significance as original models from Table 5.1. ++ indicates new significance in interaction. "-" indicates no longer significant in interaction model. "Neg" indicates the coefficient is negatively signed.

The first obvious result which can be seen from these results is the lack of any large changes in significance from the original models in Table 5.4. Personal relationships remain

significant in causing a member to take a staffer's idea and act upon it. A few interesting changes

are, however, present. Looking at the first dependent variable, which measures how often a

member takes the staffer's idea and acts upon it, two variables are no longer significant in any of

the interactions. When party and chamber are interacted with the variables, which because of the

coding, means they work for Republican Senators, working with staff from the other chamber

and Administration officials are no longer significant predictors of this agenda-setting behavior.

One of these is easily explained as the Administration was controlled by Democrats at the time

of this survey. The other is less obvious. It could be that Republicans were not in the majority in

the Senate, thus had little reason to work with House staff, no matter the party. These findings

have interesting implications for the key finding regarding working with staff from the other

party. When specific party is included, the findings change.

One interaction proved to be significant in the new model. When the approval efficiency

variable, which is an important aspect of the PAT and the way a member makes sure her

preferences are being followed to ensure indirect democracy is still working, is interacted with

chamber, that variable is a significant predictor of a member acting upon a staff idea. This means

that as the approval procedures in the Senate get less strict and more efficient, a staffer gets their

ideas into action. These new results show some support for the first and sixth hypotheses, which

argued the approval process and chamber mattered in agenda-setting. These variables were not

significant in any other models, which tells us party and chamber are important to the approval

processes story.

Predicting what is known as rogue behavior proved difficult in the original models, with

only two variables, a staffers total years working in Congress and age, being significant. The

interactions provided additional significant variables, higher R-squared values, but insignificant

F values. This indicates these models are not particularly good fits for predicting rogue behavior. The other option is there is too much "noise" (insignificant variables which do little to predict rogue agenda-setting) which is causing this insignificant F test.

Returning to the rogue models, there were more significant predictors of the behavior, indicating these variables depend on the presence of party or chamber. When the staffer works for a Senate Republican, the higher the chances that the boss finds out about a staffer's filtering information (external/fire alarm oversight), the more a staffer will participate in rogue behavior. This does not seem to be logical, but possibly these particular staffers do not fear the external oversight or the repercussions from rogue behaviors. Further, experience once again matters, as the longer a Senate staffer has worked for their boss, the less rogue behavior is seen when only chamber is interacted with the key variables. Finally, the longer a Republican staffer has worked in Congress, the less they will engage in rogue agenda-setting. This shows additional support for the key aspect of experience and expertise.

The final three columns show the results of the disagree models. Little has changed in these in terms of new significance. The only significant change was Senate staffers with previous experience disagree with their boss on policy ideas. This shows support for the third key finding on information asymmetry.

A number of variables were no longer significant, however, when chamber and party were interacted with the key variables. It is not significant if a Senate Republican works with Administration officials, which again seems logical. It also does not matter how long you have served with your current boss. It is not clear from these results if these staffers do not disagree with their boss at all or if tenure with their boss is not important in predicting this behavior.

Interestingly, Republican member tenure does not matter, in terms of explaining staff disagreement.

Similar to Chapter 4, the second set of interactions included staffer and member tenure in Congress. Again, both sets of tenure measures act as a substitution for experience and expertise, which is a key factor in the indirect democracy argument and PAT. The results can be seen in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11 Member and Staffer Tenure Interactions – Changes from Original Models

	Member Takes Idea and Act			Rogue			Disagree		
	Member	Staff	Both	Member	Staff	Both	Member	Staff	Both
Staff and Member Ideol. Dist.					++ (neg)	++ (neg)			
Personal Relationship with Boss	-	-	-						
Work with Committee staff					++ (neg)				
Work with leadership staff									++
Work with lobbyists/trade					++ (neg)				
Work with staff of other party					++	++	++		
Staff from other chamber	-	-	-					++	
Work with Admin. officials							=	-	=
Complexity of Issue					++ (neg)				
Previous Experience	=	=	=						
Time worked for current boss							=	-	-
Total Time in Congress		++	++	=	-	-			
Chamber (0=House, 1=Senate)							=	-	-
Boss Years in Chamber							-	-	-
Boss Interest in Issue	++					++ (neg)			
Boss involvement with Issue	++ (neg)								++ (neg)
Up for Reelection							++		++ (neg)
Personal office (0=no, 1=yes)							=	=	=
Gender (0-male, 1-female)				++ (neg)		++ (neg)			
Age				=	-	-	=	=	=
App. Process * member tenure									++ (neg)
Boss interest * member tenure	++ (neg)								
Chamber * member tenure	++			++ (neg)			++		++
Filter back * member tenure				++		++			
Prev. Exp. * member tenure							++		++ (neg)
Other party * member tenure							++		++ (neg)
Ideol. Distance * staff tenure					++	++			
Leader staff * staff tenure									++ (neg)
Other party * staff tenure					++ (neg)	++			
Other chamber * staff tenure					++				
Boss interest * staffer tenure						++			
Complex of Issue * staff tenure								++	
Constant	1.6*	-1.08	-0.25	-0.14	7.51*	5.81*	0.17	-2.35	-1.46
R-squared	0.37	0.38	0.44	0.32	0.44	0.52	0.44	0.39	0.51
F value	1.97*	1.99*	1.69*	1.54*	2.60*	2.35*	2.67*	2.17*	2.28*

Significance measured as p<.05. "=" indicates similar significance as original models from Table 5.1. ++ indicates new significance in interaction. "-" indicates no longer significant in interaction model. "Neg" indicates the coefficient is negatively signed.

A member taking a staffer's idea and acting is arguable the most important agenda-setting activity in this set of dependent variables and personal relationships and working with staff from the other chamber are no longer significant in any of the models. This means we cannot reject the null hypothesis for Hypothesis 2 and 3. However, when member tenure is taken

into consideration, their interest and involvement in the staffer's top issue are now significant predictors of acting upon that staffer's idea, however boss involvement has a negative coefficient, showing a strong counter for the eighth and support for the ninth hypotheses. The senior member who is very involved in the policy idea will not take the staffer's ideas, which follows the logical opposite of the hypothesis.

Unlike the earlier models, the rogue interaction models all have significant F-values, which means these models fit much better with these tenure interactions. A number of interesting changes are present in these models, both when staffer and member tenure are taken into consideration, mostly in predicting significant less rogue behavior. As ideological distance increases with an increase in both types of tenure, so does rogue behavior, which supports the second hypothesis. However, distance on its own is significantly negative in both situations. When experienced staffers work with a number of outside groups, their tendency to go against their boss's preferences also decreases. As an experienced staffer works with a complex issue, their rogue behavior decreases. Long serving Senators also predict less rogue behavior by staffers. Interestingly, when member tenure is interacted with the key variables, females are participating in less rogue behavior.

The final dependent variable is when a staffer disagrees with their boss on a policy direction or idea. Again, the interactions produce a number of additional significant variables, which are similar to the other models. In these models, reelection becomes significant, but in the opposite direction, for the first time in predicting this set of dependent variables, when increased member and staffer tenure are factored in, showing counter support for hypothesis 10. Also, as the approval process gets more efficient and the longer a member has served, the less a staffer

will disagree with them. If a staffer with greater tenure has previous experience and works for a long serving member of Congress, they also do less disagreeing.

Conclusions

At first glance, the first thing one notices is there is limited support for the three key aspects of this research. Personal relationships continued to be relevant in both the smaller model and the full models, particularly when causing a member to take an idea and act upon it. Bi-partisanship ceased to be relevant in the full models, but gained traction in the interactions. Experience had varying levels of support, with all types showing predictive powers in different situations, including in the interactions.

However, none of the key variables were significant in predicting all three agenda setting behaviors tested here. What we must remember, however, is the unique nature of these specific dependent variables. The member of Congress acting upon the policy idea posed by the staffer is the most similar to the previous chapter's agenda-setting activities. However, it still requires a large action on behalf of the member and this action should not be taken lightly. When members decide to act upon policy ideas, they are making a very large statement, which could affect the national political climate. This is not taken lightly by members. It is only natural these ten hypotheses and these select few independent variables might need additional thought, theorizing, and analysis.

Similarly, a staffer going rogue is not necessarily what one might consider agenda-setting, but it most definitely is, albeit negative, or contrary to the principal's preferences. As was established in Chapter 3, these occurrences are rare, but they do occur. More work is needed to determine what is causing a staffer to do this. The same can be said for explaining why a

staffer disagrees with their boss. This action is much more common, but these hypotheses do not specifically address disagreement and therefore these independent variables are likely not the only ones which should be considered.

The additional information gained by the interactions of chamber, party, member tenure, and staffer tenure proved valuable in the case of these dependent variables. Unlike Chapter 4, more leverage was created with these interactions and dependent variables. This is most likely due to the very unique nature of these particular agenda-setting activities as discussed above. A staffer going rogue is a complex situation, and needed additional analysis. While these models definitely provided additional leverage on predicting this behavior, they are still only predicting between 30 and 50% of the total variance.

In terms of the control variables, the effects of party, chamber, type of office, and status on agenda setting need to be further teased out. For this research on PAT, they were not the key variables, but they seem to be playing an interesting role in agenda setting.

The main take away for this research is once again that these behaviors are occurring in congressional offices on a regular basis. The challenge remains to continue to identify what is causing these activities to transpire and their larger effect on policy making and representation.

CHAPTER 6: AGENDA SETTING IN PRACTICE – A CLOSER LOOK AT FIVE CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

Introduction

The preceding chapters have shown staff are participating in setting the agenda in Congressional offices. Staffers are coming up with new policy ideas, they are presenting these ideas to their bosses and their bosses are acting upon them, staffers have a great deal of freedom in carrying out a number of activities both within and outside their boss's preferences, and finally congressional staffers disagree openly with their boss when it comes to the policy direction of their office. These might not be the types of activities which we first think of when we think of national policy agenda setting, but ideas need to begin somewhere. No, it is not rolling out an entirely new legislative package or program. It is not advocating the member change her course on a large policy. Carrying out seemingly simple policy agendas such as deciding to put your boss on as a co-sponsor of an amendment might not seem like a large agenda setting item, but it is an example of furthering the member's preferences and moving the policy ideas forward. Often, more junior or even minority members do not engage in larger activities but do plenty of smaller, more representation focused actions. These are all agenda setting items.

The preceding chapters have analyzed and emphasized the conditions and factors which will affect the likelihood that an individual staffer engages in these activities. Questions remain however. What else is causing this agenda setting to occur, because these models are only explaining, at the very most, 40% of the total variance of the variables? Something else is going on.

In this chapter, I will provide a more comprehensive look at entire congressional offices. The focus here is on the office, not the individual staffer. This qualitative approach will explore

the personal and professional interactions between staffers and their bosses in a collective setting. By this I mean rather than looking at individual staffers and how they interact with their bosses, these case studies will analyze individual offices and how staffers in the same office interact and set the agenda within that office. I am interested if there is something about the particular member and the office atmosphere he creates, rather than the individual staffer. Or is it a combination of the two; do members hire specific types of staffers who will fit in with the office atmosphere they want to create, or continue?

The legislative staff in five different personal offices are studied, two House and three Senate offices. Initially, I attempted to select offices which represented the same state to keep that independent variable constant. However, access was an issue and only two offices which represent the same state are included. The other two were chosen for geographic, tenure, and partisan diversity, as well as where I had strong chief of staff contacts in order to allow me to conduct these studies. Absolute anonymity and confidentiality was assured to the chiefs of staff and members who agreed to open their doors to my research. Therefore, to protect that assured anonymity, few identifying characteristics will be included in the type of office or staffer. Each office is designated simply by a letter and the staffers by that letter and their own identifying number.

I was not able to interview every legislative staffer in each office. Instead, I was allowed to speak to those staffers who had time and who the chief of staff approved. In many cases, I was also able to talk with the chief of staff. The types of staffers[61] I was granted access to included legislative directors (LD), who head up the legislative staff; legislative assistants (LA), who are the policy specialists, and legislative correspondents (LC) or aides, who assist the LA and respond to constituent correspondence.

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[61] For full descriptions of the types of staffers in a congressional office, see Chapter 1 – "Types and Duties of Staff."

I did not digitally, or otherwise, record any of the conversations. When initially

discussing that possibility with chiefs of staff, we decided together to not record these

conversations as this would have made staffers, and members, uncomfortable and possibly

jeopardize the entire case study portion of the research. I agreed completely, having been a

staffer for seven years. At the beginning of each interview, each staffer was told: *"This study will*

examine the role Congressional staff play in policy development. I want to be clear that you can

withdraw at any time, or choose to not answer questions. Do you agree to participate in this

study?" Every respondent responded in the affirmative.

Committee and leadership staff were not studied in the case studies of this research. The

reasons for this were numerous. The first reason is committee staffs are much larger than

personal staffs (Malbin 1980) and therefore, much harder to get a good overview of the types of

staff and the office culture. Interviewing five or six, or even 10 committee staffers would have

provided interesting data, but would not have given me a clear overview of the staff, when the

committee staffs number in the hundreds. Along the same lines, many committee staffs are

spread out over many offices, floors, and even buildings, thus they do not have the same team

atmosphere, or culture, that can often be found in personal offices. I am interested in how distinct

offices operate and if that affects agenda setting, thus large, spread out committees did not meet

my needs. This is a critique of existing research on committee staffs; researchers interview or

survey a few staffers from a committee, or even subcommittee (which usually have a distinct

culture from the full committee) and think they can make claims about the committee as a whole,

which I disagree with for the above mentioned reasons.

The case studies in this chapter will follow a similar pattern. I will provide a brief

narrative of the office, as well as the types of staffers working there, followed by how the staffers

perceive their office. Each case study will be summarized and categorized into the type of office the staff have described and which I have been able to analyze.

As these interviews were conversational in nature, the stories will be presented as such. I wanted the staffers to relax and feel comfortable answering these questions and have an open dialogue with me (another reason the conversations were not recorded). I strove to make these less of a formal, academic interview and more of a conversation. I felt I had achieved this, when one staffer said to me "This has been the most therapeutic conversation I've had in forever. I feel like I should pay you for this therapy!"

The same, or very similar, questions were asked of every staffer in each office. The key questions used in these case studies will be:

> *Where do ideas for new bills/amendments/letters to Admin come from? Boss? You?*
> *Interest groups? Constituents?*
> *Tell me about the role outside influences play – interest groups, businesses,*
> *constituents - play in what you do every day.*
> *Tell me about the approval process in your office.*
> *How much discretion do you have as a staffer in carrying out your boss's ideas?*
> *What is your relationship like with your boss?*

These questions were selected from the larger interviews because they are directly related to the PAT and agenda setting issues discussed in the previous chapters. These key issues are: who is coming up with ideas, approval processes (administrative procedures), discretion, outside networks, representation, and personal relationships. These discussion topics get at the larger PAT concepts discussed in depth throughout this research.

Case 1 – Office of Representative "A"

Rep. A is a relatively junior member of the majority party in the House of Representatives, having served two terms. Rep. A plans to run for reelection in the fall of 2014[62] and represents a predominately rural/suburban district in the West.

The legislative staff is small in this office, as is the norm in most House offices, with nearly every employee handling policy issues, from the chief of staff on down to the staff assistants. The interviewees included the chief of staff (A-1), the legislative director (A-2), and a legislative assistant (A-3). A-1 and A-3 are not from the state which this member represents (from here on will be referred to as "home state"); A-3 handles an issue area important to the district. A-2 is from the home state and handles issues important to the district. A-1 and A-3 have worked for other members of Congress, prior to working for Rep. A.

The predominant theme in this office was that ideas come from anywhere – staff, constituents, outside influence. This member of Congress is an "ideas" person and thinks nearly everything has the potential to be a good idea. Rep. A will consider new ideas with the staffers and flesh out the concepts. In this sense, the staffers all agreed this is not a hierarchical office; they universally felt they had full access to their boss to bring policy ideas to the attention of the member. Along the same lines, Staffer A-1, who has worked in other congressional offices, said this staff works together much more than in other offices, mulling over ideas amongst themselves. One key comment from Staffer A-3 was that the staff has the member's "best interests in mind" so will never present something that might hurt the member politically or in a policy sense. The staffers might get ideas from meetings they have had with constituents, interest groups, other members, news articles, or their own independent ideas.

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[62] These interviews were conducted in the fall of 2013.

One of the key places from which ideas are generated is from outside groups. In Rep. A's office, outside groups really have the power to drive policy. Since this member thinks everyone has a voice in their office, constituents and outside groups from the home state have a great deal of power. Rep. A always wants to know what the folks back home are saying. During Congressional recesses, the member is back in the district and according to Staffer A-2, the member "sends us emails or texts with new ideas" while in meetings with constituents.

Once those ideas make it from the simple idea stage, they must be carried out. This leads directly to how much discretion the staffer has in carrying out the ideas and the approval process. Even though this office seems more casual, it still has a very established approval process and procedures. Things still move from the LA, to the LD, to the COS, and finally to the member. The communications director also looks at most everything that leaves the office. All staffers made it very clear that absolutely nothing leaves this office without the member looking at it. However, no staffers felt this approval process was onerous or even unnecessarily hierarchal.

This staff felt they have a great deal of discretion in carving out their boss's ideas. Rep. A usually listened to the staff's advice, with the exception being the occasional floor vote. Since every staffer knows they are there to serve the member, these staffers were quick to say if the member voted counter to their recommendation, they still need to make sure they understand why and make the press work for the member.

It should come as no surprise after the discussion of the inner workings of this particular office that they have a close relationship with each other and their boss. This member will sit in the leg pit[63] and talk with the staff. Staffers often go out after work to socialize at a House side

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[63] Colloquialism for where the legislative staff sits in a congressional office

watering hole[64], and they report the member will occasionally join them for dinner or happy hour.

Case 2 – Office of Representative "B"

Rep. B is a four term member of Congress in the minority party in the House. Rep. B plans to run for reelection. Rep. B represents a predominantly urban/suburban district in the West. Again, this legislative staff is small. The interviewees included the legislative director (B-1) and a legislative assistant (B-2). Neither staffer is from the home state; both have worked for Rep. B for less than 3 years.

Rep. B also focuses on ideas which come from this district. However, this member has his/her "own agenda," according to B-1, which comes predominately from the member's committee assignments. This is where a great deal of the policy direction comes from. Outside groups play a large role, but for the most part, these ideas from outside groups go to the member first, and then get doled out to the staff to handle. Staffer B-2 reported that staff do not have time to generate many ideas on their own, which is more common in House offices, than Senate, as the portfolios of House staffers are so much larger.

Approval played out similarly, while discretion was a little different than the other House office studied. Similar to Rep. A, Rep. B looks at everything (letters, memos, amendments, etc.) before it leaves the office. The staff does not sign onto a bill without the member seeing it first. The member reads every response to constituent letters and inquiries. The approval process within the staff is standard for offices, where the LD approves everything first, then gives to the

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[64] Capitol Hill staffers differentiate the sides of the Capitol by saying "House Side" or "Senate Side." Each has its own bars and restaurants.

member or the COS. The communications director will also look at most things, including vote recommendations.

Both staffers reported their discretion was not as much as they would like. They attributed this to not being in their jobs long enough (B-1 has only been LD for six months). B-1 also hinted that the trust relationship needed to be built up with the member before the member will trust the staffer to do many things that other House LD's normally do.

While the staffers interviewed do not have a close personal relationship with the member, they both stressed the laid back atmosphere of the office. It was noted that the office takes on the personality of the member, and since the member does not take him/herself too seriously, the office has a collegial atmosphere.

Case 3 – Office of Senator "C"

Sen. C is a senior member of the minority party in the Senate, representing a southern state in the Senate. The legislative staff is large as Sen. C is the ranking member of a committee, and legislative staffs are always larger than those in the House. Interviewees included C-1, a legislative assistant; C-2, another legislative assistant; C-3, the legislative director; and C-4, a legislative aide (which is similar to a legislative correspondent). All of these legislative staffers are from the home state and none have worked for another member of Congress. C-2 identifies as the opposite party as Sen. C, but enjoys working for the senator nevertheless.

Save for the legislative aide (C-4), who was not privy to how new policy ideas are generated, every staffer said ideas come from constituents in this office. In the case of this office, the ideas are presented to the staff, rather than the member, and if the ideas are consistent with the boss's preferences, they then work their way up. The LA will develop the idea into a policy

proposal or action and it will then work its way up the hierarchy. Thus, outside groups and constituents play a large role in providing initial ideas as well as data on policy proposals and existing legislation. However, staffers are the key component in getting the policy from idea to action. If the staffer does not like the idea, it dies. Staffers in this Senate office have a great deal of policy power.

Approval and discretion in this office are very different from the House offices studied. In terms of approval, the LA works with the LD or possibly the COS if the issue might have political ramifications. Otherwise, the LA decides something is a good idea and the LD gives it a stamp of approval and the LA is able to run with it, without further approval from higher up the chain. All staffers in this office know the senator's record and preferences, because of his/her long service in the Senate, and follow those previously established policy preferences, even though the senator does not approve everything.

Every staffer in this office said staff have a great deal of discretion. In fact, C-3, the LD says that staff have the ultimate discretion in this office. The member is hands off; he/she trusts the staff to carry out the preferences. In fact, staffers in this office are able to introduce bills, cosponsor legislation, and send letters to important officials without the member approving, or even knowing about it, beforehand. However, every staffer said they will tell the member after the fact, but try not to get "too far ahead" of the member on things. It goes without saying the senator does not approve any constituent mail. The member will follow the staff vote recommendations nearly 100% of the time.

The member will back up the staff when necessary. One example was C-3 negotiating legislative language on behalf of the boss. C-3 knew the boss's wishes and also knew the boss would give him a great deal of discretion to negotiate, and back up the staffer if necessary.

None of the staffers in the office of Sen. C reported having a close personal relationship with their boss. They all said it was very professional, with Sen. C trusting the staff to do their job without a great deal of intervention. One staffer, C-2, even said the relationship with the senator was standoffish; they do not interact much.

Case 4 – Office of Senator "D"

Sen. D is a two term senator in the minority party in the Senate, representing a Midwest state. Sen. D is also a ranking member of a committee. Interviewees included two legislative assistants (D-1 and D-2) and two legislative correspondents (D-3, and D-4). Every staffer included in this case study was from the senator's home state. One of the LA's previously worked for another senator from the home state.

Every staffer for Sen. D reported that policy ideas are staff driven in this office. These ideas come almost exclusively from constituents, home state interest groups, and occasionally from a staffer's own experience (as in the case of D-2 and D-4 who had previous experience in the industries whose policies they now handle for the senator). A great deal of focus is placed on the constituents in this office, according to the staffers interviewed. These staff made the point that they would not know what to do if it were not for the constituents alerting them to a problem or issue in the home state. This is very similar to fire alarm oversight (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984), in the case of bureaucracies. Congress, and staffers, cannot be everywhere, keeping a constant eye on everything in their purview. Thus, they rely on outside groups like constituents to alert them to problems or potential policy opportunities in the home state. One Sen. D staffer, D-3, even commented that the "people back home underestimate their role in the process (in DC)."

With all this staff power, comes an exhaustive, sometimes onerous approval process in this office. There is a very strong staff hierarchy here, which all staff interviewed acknowledged. An LA will come up with an idea and discuss it with the LD. The LA drafts a memo and it then goes to what the staffers referred to as "the group," which includes the deputy COS, COS, and the communications director, along with select committee staff leadership. After this group has approved the memo, bill, or letter, it can then go to the Senator for final approval if it warrants Sen. D's attention. D-1 said "Really there is too much group think here." Staffer D-4, a legislative correspondent who's letters to constituents[65] must be edited by the LA, back to the LC for corrections, then to the communications director, back to the LC, then to the correspondence manager for final approval before being sent. This staffer, having worked in the Senate for 1.5 years, starting out as a receptionist, said "It's cumbersome but necessary."

With the exception of D-2, who is older than the other legislative staffers in this office and older than the average congressional personal office staffer, has a great deal of experience working in two branches of government, and personal experience with the policy issue, every staffer bemoaned the lack of discretion in this office. They each made the point that the office is very hierarchical and they have little discretion. One, D-3, commented staffers do not have much discretion when talking with constituents on the phone; they must be constantly conscious of what they say.

While the hierarchy and lack of discretion seemed to affect all staffers similarly, their relationships with their boss was very different. The LC's reported having a close, more casual relationship with Sen. D. They attributed this to the Senator knowing their family back home and having worked previously as a receptionist, who talk to the Senator every day. D-1, who has

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[65] Most offices make it a point of responding to every constituent correspondence, be it a letter, email, or phone call. LC's are the primary writers of these letters in the Senate. LA's primarily handle this duty in the House.

worked for Sen. D for nearly seven years, said their relationship is strictly professional. The

Senator trusts staff to get things done and leaves them to it. Sen. D will occasionally vote

differently than the staff advised or not heed advice on signing onto letters and the Senator does

not explain to the staffer why he/she went against the recommendation. D-2, who has more

experience, reported a mutual respect and close working relationship.

Case 5 – Office of Senator "E"

Sen. E is a freshman majority senator from the eastern United States. Interviewees

included Sen. E's chief of staff, E-1, and the legislative counsel, E-2. The chief of staff, having

worked for the previous senator from the state, is from the senator's home state. The counsel,

having worked for numerous members of Congress, is not from the home state.

This case study is slightly different than the previous four, in that the top two staffers in

the office were interviewed, rather than a range of legislative staffers. However, both of these

staffers, having worked for many years in Congress, have worked as LC's, LA's, and LD's for

other senators. They remain intimately involved with policy in their current positions. These two

staffers are also in a unique position in this study, in that they are able to compare their current

office and boss to the numerous others they have worked for in the past.

Contrary to the other Senate offices, but similar to the House offices, both staffers

reported that issues and new policy ideas are member driven in this office. An interesting

narrative was provided by the chief of staff, E-1, which seems to encapsulates the attitude of the

ideas phase in this office: ""Things are member driven here. Sometimes his/her ideas are specific

and sometimes not. Whoever is standing in front of him/her when s/he thinks of something is the

one who hears about it. Usually this is the COS. I will then give this to staff, often translating it

for them and giving them direction. I will filter information from boss to the staff." If ideas do come from staff, it is discussed internally first before going to the senator. In this office, tenure of the staffer determines how much leeway and discretion they are given in coming up with new ideas.

Outside groups, including constituents, seem to play a much smaller role in this office than in the other offices studied. The senator wants to hear new ideas from staff; he/she wants to know what is going on in the world and enjoys reading interesting news articles sent from the staff. This appears to be how the outside world reaches this senator.

With this type of office, the approval process is not hierarchical at all. E-2 said there is a flat hierarchy, especially compared to other Senate offices. The Senator makes the final call on things; in fact both LC's and LA's are able to take things directly to the boss, which is very different from the other two Senate offices. When issues come from the top, which is the primary direction, this office has an interesting approval chain. It goes from the senator, to the COS, and down to the LD for implementation. With a flat hierarchy and a simple approval process, each staffer is given a great deal of discretion. E-2 said this is because the senator "hired a bunch of people who get the job done." It appears to the outside researcher the staffers are given enough rope to hang themselves, in that the member will not back them up if something goes wrong. The Senator is more involved in things that interest him/her, if the senator has less of an opinion on a particular issue, the staffer has a great deal of discretion, with the COS having the final say.

This Senator is unique among colleagues, which means the office is also different from other offices. Both staffers reported this office is very professional, with everyone there to achieve the boss's goals. As a result, this office is not as much of a family as other offices both

staffers worked in previously. The relationship between member and staff is also very professional.

Analysis:

These five cases, while comprised of many different staffers in different offices, representing different states, parties, and chambers, have similarities. They also have very important differences. The key here is to determine what they add to the quantitative study of staff agenda setting. What color and context do they add to this story? These case studies are included to provide additional insight into agenda-setting.

House Offices

The cases can easily be grouped into chambers for analysis. The House offices both focus on outside groups, specifically constituents, for providing policy ideas and direction. This seems to be a function of House offices and their reelection cycle. Since these members are constantly running for reelection, they must pay close attention to constituents. A very clear difference in these two offices was the role of staff; in Rep. A's office, staff play a key role in coming up with, and developing ideas. In Rep. B's office, staff play a very limited role, receiving their direction from the member, who is taking direction from outside groups tied to committee assignments.

Both members of Congress played a large role in the approval recess, reading nearly every document which leaves their office with their names on it. The approached staff discretion differently, doling it out equally in Rep. A's office, but basing it on trust and tenure in Rep. B's office.

In science, we are taught to look at the simple explanations first. In this case, one key difference between these two members of Congress is party. However, party is not mentioned much in these offices. Both members work with members of the other side of the aisle and are considered relatively moderate in their caucuses. Party does not make sense in this situation. Another key difference is time in Congress. Rep. A has been in Congress for two terms, Rep. B for four. In the scheme of things, this is a very small difference. Four years does not usually make members act drastically different, but it is a difference we must consider. Additional time in Congress may have made Rep. B more hesitant in trusting staff and putting more emphasis on ideas from the committee. A further, more longitudinal look at these two offices would provide additional information on this aspect. If in two or four years, the office of Rep. A was revisited, would we find that they had taken on more of the characteristics of Rep. B's office? Possibly.

The real differences seem to be attributed to member personality. Rep. A simply trusts the staff more and has a closer relationship with the staff than Rep. B has. This member is open to staff ideas and agenda setting. It does not matter how long the staff has worked for Rep. A or if they are from the home state; they all are given agenda setting powers. Rep. A's office seems to run by the adage "hire good people and they will do good work." These staffers seem to have more discretion and the trust of the member. While this office seems to have less of an overall direction than that of Rep. B, who focuses on committee issues, staff agenda-setting is very prevalent.

Senate Offices

The Senate offices provided additional insights into congressional offices, providing their own similarities and differences. After the first two cases, it appeared ideas and policy direction

in Senate offices would be driven by outside interests, constituents, and in turn, be almost completely staffer driven. In both the office of Sen. C and Sen. D, ideas originated with constituents and were presented to the staffer, usually the LA. The LA would then fully flesh out the idea and present it to the LD, and run it up the chain of command. The critical and central role of outside groups and constituents, similar to that focus in the House, almost seems counterintuitive since Senate terms are six years. This is good news for indirect democracy and representation; Senators place a large level of importance on their home states, no matter if they are up for reelection or not.

The third Senate case, however, threw a wrench in these assumptions and conclusions. Sen. E's office is more top down in terms of ideas and policy ideas. This senator brings ideas to the staff and then lets them run with it. Outside groups and constituents seemed to take a backseat to larger, national policy issues in this office. This office focused on the national news of the day. The case of Sen. E is less of a positive story for indirect democracy and representation of the home state, but a positive for those voters who prefer their senators to be more statesmen/woman like, and focus on larger, national issues, rather than small, regional, state-specific issues. Further, if Dahl (1956) was correct, the national interests and core beliefs will also be shared by the voters in Sen. E's home state.

Case Studies and Key Hypotheses

An important contribution of case studies is their ability to further analyze the hypotheses. While five simple case studies done over the course of a few days do not allow us to prove or disprove any of the hypotheses, they can provide additional support or contradictions to what was found in the quantitative analysis. More importantly, these five case studies can offer

additional insights and information that the quantitative analysis cannot. They help add context to the quantitative results. These case studies can provide additional information on the processes that make these offices tick and how staffers are empowered or restricted in their agenda setting abilities.

We have already seen how these studies have added a great deal of meat to the story of agenda-setting. This section will study what additional insight they can provide for the ten hypotheses, which are restated for ease of analysis.

The three key findings and hypotheses from the quantitative analysis will be discussed first, following by the additional hypotheses.

H2: Personal Relationships - The closer the staffer and the member in terms of ideology and personal relationship, the more the staffer will set the agenda.

Personal relationships are the focus of H2. The ideological difference hypothesis received mixed support in the quantitative analysis. While the staffer and member ideological distance was not significant in the main PAT models seen in the quantitative chapters, it did prove significant in the member and staffer tenure interaction models when predicting the frequency of a staffer presenting new ideas to their boss. Also, as the distance increased, in the tenure models, rogue behavior decreased.

Ideological difference was not asked in the initial case study interviews, thus it was asked in follow-up conversations[66]. The major difference was once again staffer C-2, who identifies as a different party than their boss; however that staffer reported a great deal of discretion in setting the agenda. The staffers who could be reached from the offices of Rep. A and B reported being

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[66] Follow-up conversations were able to be obtained with seven staffers, with at least one from each office, even if those staffers were no longer working for that member.

of the same party and ideology as their boss[67]. Senate staffers proved to be a bit more diverse. All staffers reported being of the same party (save for C-2), but of varying ideologies, as their boss. C-3 and E-2 were more conservative than their bosses, while D-2 was more liberal.[68] These staffers all were ones who reported having a great deal of discretion, and even though the differences in ideology were not large (still on the same side of the spectrum as their bosses) this is counter to the original hypothesis. However, the large contributing factor of case studies is they allow us to look at the whole staffer, or even whole office. These staffers who have different ideologies than their boss but who still have a great deal of discretion also have a great deal of experience and expertise. The personal relationship portion of this hypothesis received a great deal of support in the quantitative analysis and is a key finding of this entire dissertation. It accurately predicted a staffer being involved with presenting new ideas (this became insignificant when interacted with staff and member tenure), a higher frequency of giving new ideas, and a member acting up on the ideas (also became insignificant when interacted with staff and member tenure). However, in the interaction models, this relationship ceased to be significant when party and chamber were taken into consideration when predicting how involved a staffer is with new ideas and the frequency of providing new ideas. Further, these relationships were not significant when staffer and member tenure was taken into account and predicting staffer involvement with new ideas and a member taking a new idea and acting. These interaction models hint we may not be able to reject the null hypothesis in the case of Senate Republicans and longer serving staff and members.

As has been stressed in this portion of the research, these studies focus on the whole office, rather than how individual staffers, and how staffers within specific offices are

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[67] Follow-up conversation with A-1, A-3, and B-1 on May 11-15.
[68] Follow up conversations May 11-15

empowered to set the agenda. Thus, individual relationships with the bosses receive less focus. Personal relationships between members and staff develop in a number of ways; the staffer could have worked on a campaign, they could have worked together in a previous job, or their first interaction might have been when the staffer was hired to work on the congressional staff. The relationship can get stronger as time goes on and the member comes to trust the staffer. In these cases, it is a combination of many of those things. Rep. A has a very limited number of former campaign staffers on staff, but most of the staff have been in the office since the beginning, allowing for closer relationships. Rep. B's staff is relatively new and thus does not have a close personal relationship. Sen. C's office does not report having close relationships between staff and member, possibly due to the long tenure of the member. Sen. D's office was once populated by a large number of campaign staffers and those who had worked with Sen. C previously, which is not the case now; with most feeling they do not have a close personal relationship. Sen. E is new, as are the staff, and the personal relationships are fewer. We can think about what might happen as these offices go forward in time, and that time might affect these relationships. As offices get further away from those early, relationship forging years and experiences, personal relationships become less important for staff agenda setting. Those staff who worked on the campaign come in with a great deal of discretion, but move on, only to be replaced by staffers who lack a personal relationship with the member. Until the member serves a number of terms, those staffers might have to trudge along in the office, without a great deal of agenda-setting power.

Staffer and member personality are closely tied to personal relationships. The effect of member and staff personality is difficult to accurately study in quantitative work, but it becomes clearer in these case studies. The case studies clearly showed that member personality can make

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a difference and seems to be a driver in staffer agenda-setting capabilities in the Senate and the House.

Sen. E's personality causes him/her to focus on national issues, and be more of a statesperson. Sen. C's and Sen. E's staff have a great deal of discretion and the approval process is easier. Sen. D's office is hierarchical with little discretion. These senators seem to have hired staff which fit the personality of the office. Sen. C hires qualified staff who do not need constant hand-holding and are comfortable with taking responsibility for issues and not receiving their boss's approval. Sen. D has placed people in the top jobs who are sticklers for perfection, and who revel in hierarchy. Sen. E has hired staffers who are policy go-getters and are comfortable focusing on national issues.

Based on the case study interviews, the personality attributes of individual staffers wash out a bit in House offices, and those of the member come to the forefront. A very likely possibility is staff agenda setting is still a factor of staff attributes; members who give their staffers more trust and discretion in policy simply hire staffers who will do it, staffers with experience, who have large networks, and a desire to make good policy. These members foster the administrative procedures which will allow this to occur.

> *H3: Networks - The broader the network of influences on a staffer, the more time they will spend setting the agenda.*

H3 argues the larger that network, the more agenda setting, and is the basis of the second key finding in this research, which argues that networks and more specifically bi-partisan networks lead to agenda setting. While this data does not measure the actual size of a staffer's network, it does measure how often a staffer works with different groups, as a proxy for network

size. This is not a perfect measure, and is a limitation in the data, but as staffers were not comfortable naming their network, this is the reality of the data. This hypothesis received a good deal of support in the quantitative analysis. Only working with leadership and committee staff did not significantly predict any agenda-setting behaviors. It should also be noted no network components were significant in the initial rogue model, however a number of groups became significant when interacted with member and staffer tenure.

Staffers were not comfortable discussing the specific members of their networks in either the initial conversations which formed the basis for the survey or the case study interviews. They were much more comfortable discussing their networks in general terms. Since one of the key findings of the quantitative work is that bi-partisanship leads to more agenda setting, staff were asked if both they and their boss worked with, or had friends, of the other party. All respondents reported that their bosses worked with members of the other party. Some bosses sought out a bi-partisan co-sponsor on nearly every piece of legislation they introduced (both the Representatives and Sen. D) and others tried to work with the other party when it was appropriate (Sen. C and E). Staffer E-1, however, said his boss was not overly concerned with it" (working with someone from the other party). E-2 expanded upon Sen. E's mentality: he/she "enjoys people who match his/her personality not the party." Some staffers reported their bosses had friends from the other party, which were predominately developed at the gym.

Staffers had a very diverse experience with bi-partisan work and personal relationships. Few of the House staffers had friends from the other party, save for A-2 who had roommates of the other party. Two of the House staffers had been employed in Congress long enough to experience staff trips paid for by outside and had made friends and work contacts that way. A-3

said "I wish I had more (friends and contacts from the other party)." None of the House staffers reported having close work contacts of the other party.

The Senate staffers reported both more friends from the other party, as well as working with those from the other party at higher levels. Only the LC (D-4) from Sen. D's office reported not having any friends from the other side of the aisle. D-1 said "I love my (other party) friends! They are my best work friends." D-2 said "Some of my best friends are (other party)." C-1 said: "I think the more (other party) friends you have the better off you are." Both D-3 and C-4 had roommates from the other party. All of the staffers reported working with staffers from the other party.

Few conclusions can be drawn from this discussion of a staffer's bi-partisan network. Some offices, and individual staffers, provide support for the network hypothesis and key finding, while others challenge the hypothesis and earlier quantitative results. What is clear is that staffers themselves see the importance of working with the other party, even if they are unable to do so. They know they get more done and have better information if they work in a bi-partisan manner.

Staffers also answered in broad terms the role of outside and interest groups in their office. This hypothesis received mixed support in the case studies. Outside groups play a large role in the agenda-setting in offices. When staff work with these outside groups, it often leads to more staff discretion. Sen. E's office is one interesting outlier where constituent groups seem to play a small role, yet staff discretion and agenda setting is clear and significant. In some offices, like Rep. B and Sen. D, where outside groups and constituents play a large role, staff discretion was low.

The large role which is played by outside groups in these offices is a positive story for

indirect democracy and representation. These groups are often from the home state, or have

members in the home state. Thus, the views of voters and constituents are reaching Congress and

staff are acting up on their recommendations.

> *H4: Information Asymmetry - The more complex the issue, the more staff agenda-setting will be seen.*
>
> *H4$_B$: The more experience the staffer has, the more agenda-setting will be seen.*

Information asymmetry, as addressed in H4, received support in the quantitative analysis.

Complexity of the staffer's main policy issue was not significant in any of the main PAT models.

It was significant, however, in the interaction models. It became significant when complexity

was interacted with staffer tenure in predicting overall staff freedom (discretion) and a staffer's

tendency to disagree with their boss. As complexity and staffer tenure both increase, so does

freedom and disagreement.

In the original case study interviews, complexity of the staffer's specific issues was not

addressed, as these studies were more of a look at the whole office, rather than a look at

individual staff attributes. In follow-up discussions, staffers provided a mixed bag of responses.

For the most part, their response was "it depends."[69] Most could not remember exactly what they

were working on during the time period of the case studies[70] thus could not provide an accurate

response. However, all contacted staff said they have more complex issues and less complex

ones, often dealing with both types on an average day. The member understands some of the

complex ones, but on the ones she does not have an interest in, staffers report being given more

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[69] Follow up conversations May 11-15, 2015
[70] November 2013

leeway,[71] which shows support for the hypothesis. Returning to the quantitative analysis, these staff that handle complex issues have definitely served in Congress for longer periods of time (for instance, E-1 and E-2), which is consistent with the interaction results.

Staffer experience, which is a proxy for policy expertise, was measured in a number of ways in the quantitative analysis and is a key aspect of the research. Previous experience with the issue, time worked for the current boss, and total years worked in Congress (staffer tenure) were all used to measure staffer experience and expertise. Again, this portion of the hypothesis received mixed results. Previous experience with the main policy issue was significant when predicting a member acting up on a staffer policy idea or proposal. In the interaction models, previous experience was also significant when member and staffer tenure were taken into consideration when predicting staff disagreement and being involved with new ideas. It was also significant when party and chamber (Senate Republican) were taken into consideration when predicting disagreement. A staffer's tenure with their current boss was significant when predicting staffer freedom (discretion in following their boss's preferences) and a staffer's ability to disagree with their boss on a policy idea. It was also significant when predicting rogue behavior in longer serving Senate staffers, but in the negative, so less rogue behavior. A staffer's total tenure working in Congress was a bit ambiguous in the quantitative results. It was significant, but negative, when predicting being involved with presenting new ideas and going rogue. Total tenure was also interacted with all other key variables for additional analysis, which provided a great deal of significant results, particularly when predicting rogue behavior (these individual results are discussed in each individual hypothesis).

Staffer experience was discussed to a small degree in the case studies. Staffers with more experience nearly always had the greatest amounts of discretion, even in the office of Sen. D,

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[71] Follow up conversations May 11-15, 2015

where the hierarchy and approval processes were burdensome on staff. However, in the office of Sen. E, even LC's with a year under their belt are still given the power to take ideas directly to the senator. Sen. C's more senior staffers felt they had more discretion, than the more junior staffers. Again, this is varied support and some contradictions to the original hypothesis. However, these more senior Senate staffers showing more discretion are consistent with the findings from the quantitative analysis. House members still look at everything that leaves their offices, even when it was done by more experienced staffers, which is also consistent with the quantitative results. One questions from the quantitative result remains, however. Because staffers were not asked specifically about the different types of agenda setting (i.e. the distinction between being involved with presenting new ideas and frequency of giving new ideas) as used in the quantitative analysis, more leverage on why total number of years in Congress might be causing less involvement in new policy ideas was not possible. Further discussions and parsing out of the specific agenda setting behaviors could be looked at in future research. An interesting proxy for experience in the case studies is being from the home state or district of the member. These staffers have experience that cannot be attained by others; they inherently know how the constituents feel about issues and their distinct culture. When meeting with groups or constituents, they share a common bond and constituents respond positively to this.

Being from the home state occurs in varying degrees in not only these case studies, but Congress as a whole. The two House offices have the lowest level of home state staffers, which tends to be a trend throughout the House. House staff have a higher turnover and it is often difficult to find qualified people to work in these offices for a short period of time. While the experience gained from being from the home state does not appear to affect Rep. A's staffers, it

might be playing a factor in the office of Rep. B. Staff have less discretion, which could stem from their lack of innate experience with the issues of the district.

The Senate offices have much higher numbers of staffers from the home state, which is also the norm for Senate offices. In fact, every staffer interviewed from the offices of Sen. C and D are from the home state. One out of two in Sen. E's office is from the home state. In these offices, this home state experience does not seem to affect staffer agenda setting in any consistent way. Some offices encourage it and others tend to discourage it. Do staffers who come from the home state have a better chance of acquiring this power? Tentatively, yes, if they are in an office which eventually allows and supports this behavior. However, even this experience might not help those staffers who are in an office which dissuades staffers from this behavior.

Again, when staff are from the home state, it has positive ramification for representation and indirect democracy. These staff have close contacts with the voters and constituents. They not only speak the same language, share a common experience and culture, they also listen much closer to these constituents. They take their ideas seriously and put those ideas into action by fleshing them out and sharing them with their boss.

Case Studies and Additional Hypotheses

The key hypotheses and findings from the quantitative analysis, and how they materialize themselves in the case studies were discussed in the previous section. This section takes a look at the remaining hypothesis and how the case studies further informs them.

> *H1: Administrative Procedures/Institutions - As the approval procedures get more efficient in offices, the more we will see staff setting the agenda.*

> *H1b: Administrative Procedures/Institutions – As the presence of outside oversight gets larger, the less we will see staff agenda setting.*

The first two hypotheses are focused on administrative procedures. The first argued simplified approval processes will increase staff agenda-setting. In the quantitative analysis in chapters 4 and 5, very limited support was found for this hypothesis. None of these variables were significant in the large models as seen in Table 4.2 and 5. 1. Only when these variables were analyzed on their own (Table 4.3 and 5.2) were any of them significant. In those cases, filtering information to the boss significantly predicting the first three dependent variables and the member taking the staffers idea and acting. When the boss finds out about the filtering (fire alarm control), the staffer has more freedom. In these smaller models, the approval process efficiency was significant in predicting the boss taking a staffer's idea and acting.

The only support for this hypothesis in the large models comes from the interaction models. When chamber is interacted with the key variables, the increased efficiency of the approval procedures in the Senate is significant in predicting that a member will take a staff policy idea and act. In what seems counterintuitive, in the party and chamber interaction model (Republican and Senate coded as 1), when the odds of a boss finding out about filtering increases, so does rogue behavior.

With limited support for these hypotheses in the quantitative analysis, we turn to the case studies to acquire more leverage on this concept, which is key concept in the PAT. In the qualitative studies, we see strong support for the approval process hypothesis across nearly all the cases.

In Sen. D's office, there is a huge hierarchical process which the idea must weave its way through to be approved. Because of this onerous hierarchy in the office, the staffers feel they have little policy discretion. Not everything goes to the Senator for final approval, after being

approved by "the group." This arduous process seems to appease both the higher ups in the office, and the Senator, in terms of final approval.

Sen. C's office had a very easy approval process; in essence, if the LA thinks it's a good idea, the LD and COS give it a cursory look. This office was very different from the other two in that the senator rarely sees things before they go out the door. Staff have the power to introduce legislation, amendments, and sign onto letters without it first being approved by the senator. These staffers felt very free in their abilities to come up with ideas and see them through to completion. This can be shocking to those who do not study Congress. Most voters want to believe their Senators know everything that comes from their office, that carries their name, but this is just not the case and not a huge revelation for those who work in Congress. One positive in the case of Sen. C is that the idea and policy direction seem to be almost totally constituent driven.

Sen. E is similar to Sen. C in terms of the ease of the approval process. However, Sen. E plays a much larger role in coming up with the ideas in the first place. Sen. E gives ideas and direction to the staffers and then turns them loose. In the situation where ideas are staff-driven in this office, the hierarchy is flat, with both LC's and LA's able to take things directly to the senator.

Reps A and B had a standard approval process and their staffers felt differently about discretion, which came down to member personalities and trust between the member and staff. These mixed results showed limited support for the hypothesis within the House of Representatives cases.

The more onerous the procedures, the less the staff feel like they have discretion and ability to set the agenda (like in Sen. D's office). Senators D and C have a flatter hierarchy and

the approval processes are minor; staffers in both offices felt they had a great deal of discretion in setting the agenda. As stated earlier, the approval process was similar, but individual staffer discretion was not in the House studies. The difference between House and Senate is, therefore, an important aspect of the research.

The case studies, therefore, provide much more support for this hypothesis than was found in the quantitative analysis. This makes sense as the case studies allowed staffers to expound upon responses, think more critically about their own experiences, and add context to their responses. These options are simply not possible in quantitative research.

Outside oversight, as discussed in H1b, was not tested in any significant way in the case studies, as these are questions the staff did not feel comfortable answering. The level of outside group influence on the office was discussed. Every office except Sen. E had a great deal of outside influence on policy, with differing levels of staff agenda setting and discretion. This hypothesis receives only marginal support here, and received very limited support in the quantitative analysis, as noted above.

> *H5: Personal Incentives- Those staffers who reported wanting to work in Congress initially to "make a difference" will engage in more agenda setting behavior.*

Personal incentives are discussed in H5. Not surprisingly, staffers were hesitant and not entirely comfortable answering what made them want to work in Congress in the first place, even if their anonymity was assured in the final study. However, they did answer in a qualitative sense on the survey. The desire to make a difference was not significant in the original PAT models. This variable also ceased to be significant in any of the interaction models.

This question was asked again in follow-up interviews, as this type of question is more appropriate for this type of research. A-1 reported being passionate about certain policies and

conservative values, while A-3 answered using more of the traditional "make a difference" language. B-1 was passionate about making good policy, thus also falling into the make a difference category. D-2 discussed his/her lifelong dedication and work in public policy, thus supporting the initial hypothesis. Both E-1 and E-2 were passionate about the "cause" of their ideological beliefs. Interestingly, they both said they were much more passionate when they first came to Congress; they each had lost some of that desire as time went on and reality set in.

The use of the word passionate is not accidental or used facetiously. Many of the staffers used that word in their responses. Most of these qualitative responses are inconsistent with the findings in the quantitative analysis. While there were many staffers who reported wanting to make a difference (41% of all respondents) in the qualitative data, this did not translate to agenda-setting. However, in the qualitative analysis, these same staffers who are regularly given discretion and agenda-setting power are also the ones who want to make a difference. Is this enough to say we can reject of null of this hypothesis? No, but it definitely gives us a deeper understanding of personal incentives and why congressional staff put their own lives on hold to do these demanding, arduous jobs, with little pay or personal recognition.

> *H6: Institutional - Senators will allow more staff agenda-setting than House members.*
>
> *H7: Institutional - The more senior the member of Congress, the more staff will set the agenda.*

Institutional factors are the topic of H6 and H7. The quantitative analysis provided some support for this hypothesis. Staffers who worked for Senators were more likely to give a higher number of new ideas to their boss and also disagree with their bosses on policy ideas. Further, chamber was interacted with all key independent variables to further determine if there was something special about the variables working in conjunction with chamber. These interactions

did provide support for the hypothesis in many cases, including ease of approval procedures in the Senate leading to the member taking a staffer's idea and acting. Also, Senate staff with a great deal of experience are more likely to disagree with their bosses.

In the case studies, some support was found for H6. Sen. C and E clearly gave their staff free rein, while Sen. D kept the staff on a short rein. Rep. A encouraged the staff to come up with ideas and talk freely with the member, while Rep. B kept things closer to the vest and got most of his/her ideas from outside groups. It was very top down in that office, with staff having no time to offer ideas. These mixed results seem to be consistent with the mixed results in the quantitative chapters, which show once again that member personality might be more at play here than the simple effects of the chamber on agenda-setting.

Member tenure was often significant in the quantitative analysis, but in the opposite direction predicted. The longer a member served, the less likely a staffer would be involved in new ideas, give new ideas to the boss, have freedom to carry out activities on behalf of the member, and disagree with the member. This finding supports the idea of indirect democracy and appears to be telling us representation works; with added experience and expertise the member is doing more on their own. Because of these interesting results, member tenure was interacted with all of the key independent variables. Again, these individual results can be seen in the tables, as well as discussed in the other hypotheses.

While only one truly senior member of Congress's staff was studied (Sen. C), we can look more broadly at how tenure might affect discretion. Rep. B has served longer than Rep. A and allows less discretion than Rep. A. Even though Rep. A allowed staff to do many things, this member looks at everything before it goes out the door. This is counter to the original hypothesis, but is consistent with the findings in the quantitative analysis.

No clear assumptions can be made based on length of tenure in the Senate. Sen. C has served the longest by far in this research and allows a great deal of agenda setting. This member allows the most staff agenda setting in this research, where staff put Sen. C's name on things without running it past the senator first. This provides strong support for the hypothesis, and is inconsistent with the findings in the quantitative analysis.

Sen. E has been there the shortest time. Sen. E's staff is smaller, and seems more agile in adapting to new directions and issues. There is less of a focus on the committee and leadership obligations, since this senator has few. Sen. C and D have both of these obligations, which creates larger staffs and senators with many demands on their time. This could explain the power of staff in both offices; the power is just manifested very differently in the two. Sen. C's office has created a staff where staff have final power and a great deal of discretion even at the lower levels. Sen. D's office has created a very strict hierarchy, with approval power resting in the top levels of the staff.

Sen. D is the second longest serving (2 terms) and allows the least amount of staff discretion. Sen. E is the lone freshman in this research and allows staff a great deal of discretion, more than either House member, but still less than Sen. C.

No clear conclusions regarding the hypotheses can be drawn from these case studies. Overall, these institutional factors do not appear to be consistent, or even accurate, predictors of staff agenda setting and discretion when we take into account both

> *H8: Information Asymmetry - The less a member is interested in an issue, the more staff agenda-setting will be seen on that issue.*
>
> *H9: The less a member is involved in the issue, the more staff agenda-setting will be seen on that issue.*

Member interest, H8, and involvement, H9, provided additional murky results. The initial quantitative analysis in the PAT models showed no significant findings on member interest or involvement. In the interactions, staffer and member tenure provided some limited significant findings. As interest and member tenure increase, they also take fewer staff ideas and act, which supports H8. As interest increases (with both tenures in the model), rogue behavior decreases. As involvement goes up, disagreement decreases.

With such murky findings in the quantitative results, we turn to the case studies for additional insights. Rep. A seemed to be interested and involved in it all, and allowed a great deal of staff discretion, which is counter to the hypotheses and consistent with the initial quantitative results. Rep. B only seemed to be overly involved and interested in committee issues and allowed little discretion, which provides support for both hypotheses. Neither Sen. C or D seemed to be overly interested or involved in any of the issues, with the staff discretion being drastically different in each office, which again provides mixed support and consistent with the quantitative analysis. Sen. E had very clear interests and involvement, and a great deal of staff discretion, which again is counter to the hypothesis. Member interest and involvement are therefore not the sole determinants of staff agenda-setting.

> *H10: Personal Motives and Ambitions - Staff who work for members who are running for reelection will participate in fewer agenda-setting activities.*

The member's personal motivations are the focus of H10, which maintains that those members who are up for reelection will allow less staff agenda setting. The quantitative analysis provided mixed results. When a member is up for reelection, we see a higher frequency of the staffer providing new ideas to them, but this was the only significant finding in the initial models. In the interaction models, when member tenure was included, reelection leads to more

disagreement. However, when both staff and member tenure was included, it leads to less disagreement by staff. No conclusions can be drawn from these results.

In what seems to be the theme of these case studies, varying results are found once again when looking at reelection. Both House members are obviously up for reelection (both are running) and their offices fostered varying levels of staff agenda setting. Only one Senator was up for reelection and that office had the greatest staff discretion of the entire study. Sen. D and E were not up for reelection and, similarly to the House offices, no overall conclusions could be drawn from those two. This particular variable obviously needs more data and work regarding staff agenda-setting.

Conclusion:

With all the varying outcomes for these hypotheses, few significant conclusions regarding the hypotheses can be drawn from the case studies. This is frustrating from an academic and researcher's perspective, but does provide a great deal of additional information and insight into what is happening behind the closed doors of the halls of Congress.

The three key findings all received support in the case studies, but each was also contested as well. What this tells us is either the sample size was too small, or possibly when allowed to flesh out answers, staffers become much more dynamic. The factors that affect agenda-setting are all intermingled and tied together both in individual staffers and for individual members and offices. It must also be understood that these case studies, and the surveys, were a brief snapshot of staff agenda setting. These aspects can change over time either in individual offices as members gain more experience or responsibility, or when staffers grow and change in their congressional careers.

What, then, is causing staff agenda setting? All hypotheses received some support, but every single one is also disputed, in these brief staff studies. The answer, or at least a portion of the answer, once again seems to be individual personality of members. This is nearly impossible to test in quantitative work. It is also difficult to get at in these case studies. The effect of member personality only creeps out in the interviews and becomes more visible during the analysis, when all five offices are considered comprehensively using the same criteria. Because every member's personality is different, it is difficult to accurately predict staff and member agenda setting behavior just by that factor, however. Is member personality the sole driving factor for the varying levels of staff agenda-setting? No, it is not, but it does have an important effect and should be added to the list of significant variables analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5.

When personality is added in with the other variables to test the hypotheses, we can start to make tentative claims about when we should see more or less staff agenda setting. There will always be outliers in every study, but we can make a few observations which are backed up by the case studies. When the administrative procedures are less strict, we will see more agenda setting. Information asymmetry does matter; even in the most hierarchical offices, more experience earns you more discretion. From these initial conclusions, we can move forward in further explaining what is going on regarding staff agenda-setting.

The value of the case study approach should be clear. While the ten hypotheses received varying levels of support in the previous two chapters, this chapter provided real color and context for those results, specifically for the key findings. Without the case studies, this research would not have contained the additional information about staffers working in a bi-partisan manner and how their bosses view that relationship. Further, the added information of whether the staffer was from the home state or not and how that is viewed in the office provided more

support for the experience hypothesis. Without the case studies, the idea of individual member personality would not have come forward. These cases also provided additional support for the results found in the quantitative research, such as chamber and party having little significant effect on agenda-setting. This finding seemed counterintuitive, as political scientists often believe these factors are important, but it became clearer in the case studies. While there are many factors that affect the level of discretion each staffer will have, chamber and party do not seem to be two of them. Without the case studies to reinforce this finding, one might have believed something to be amiss in the analysis or quantitative methodology used.

This chapter has provided new insights into the role congressional staff play in individual offices and what is affecting staff agenda setting. These five brief studies of five House and Senate offices has provided a much deeper look at how staffs affect the agenda and how they interact with their bosses for this to occur. The following concluding chapter will provide general analysis, lessons for voters, and limitations of the research.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Agenda setting has been defined as the very first stage in the policy process, where the ideas for policy are formulated. Agenda setting by staff in the United States Congress can take many forms. This research has explored a number of those forms, which has included staff coming up with ideas and presenting them to their boss, staffer freedom and discretion in carrying out a number of activities (like co-sponsoring legislation and negotiating bill language), a staffer disagreeing with their boss on a policy idea or direction, and a member taking a staff idea and acting up on it.

The public, and even some political scientists, often view agenda setting as solely the "big issues" or actions, those policy ideas and topics which, following the agenda setting stage, become the focus of intense congressional hearings, lengthy legislation, heated floor debates, and heavy media scrutiny. This research makes no such requirement, because not every office and member gets involved in the big issues. The agenda for a new, freshman, member of the House might include simply an idea for helping out a small community in their district. The agenda for a committee chair might be introducing a bill outlining a new sanction proposal for Iran.

One of these actions will get a great deal of media attention, the other will not, and in other political science agenda-setting research the former action would not have even been included. This is because without talking to the staff, a researcher has no knowledge or access to this information. By asking staff what they are working on, we are including ALL agenda setting, even when it is merely signing onto a letter to the Secretary of Agriculture about crop insurance rates, which may seem minor, but might be a very big issue for that district and office.

The most junior staffer can set the agenda in their offices if they are helping come up with new policy ideas for their boss, and that is finally being captured in this research. It should be noted, the larger, more public agenda-setting items and ideas by staff are also included in this research.

By including all of these agenda setting activities, this research captures an expanded picture of indirect democracy, representation, and what congressional offices are doing to work on the issues and problems affecting their home states. This is the work many voters want done, and staff are helping to make it happen. Today's member of Congress is expected to be knowledgeable about nearly every issue currently facing the country and their state. They are also expected to champion a number of issues important to their state or district. These issues are of varying complexity and require real expertise to not only understand, but solve the problems associated with them. Members simply do not have the capacity or aptitude to do all of that. This is where staff come in. Without staff, members of Congress would only be able to do a fraction of what they do now, and would not accomplish many of the tasks which voters expect of them.

An Editorial Look Back Before Moving Forward

While I came to graduate school with the intention of studying congressional staff and their role in the policy process, it was not until I entered the dissertation phase I was able to begin this line of research. I soon found the research on staff was greatly lacking and I worried access would make my project difficult, but decided my unique situation would make it slightly more feasible.

The standard methods of gathering data on staff includes searching for mention of staff in the Congressional Record, or looking at how many staffers each member had and compare that with the productivity level of members – like the number of bills and amendments each

member introduced. These methods also include small scale case studies of groups of staffers, usually in a committee setting. These avenues are the tried and true techniques of political science. I knew these were not going to answer the questions of what role do staff play in the policy process, if they are setting the agenda, and what causes some staff to do more than others. These techniques were not going to be able to measure the smaller, but vitally important, activities that take up so much staff time and constitute the larger representation piece of what offices do. Therefore, the survey and case study approach were used.

Thanks to both the quantitative and qualitative analysis in this research, it is time for congressional scholars to revisit agenda-setting and the role of congressional staff in that process. Earlier scholarly works which attributed large portions of agenda-setting to the members (principals) missed the mark. This research has shown us this process can be staff driven in Congressional offices, with the staff coming up with ideas, or working with their boss to develop ideas. Thus, this research provides a number of broad conclusions. First, staff are playing a key role in this agenda-setting process in individual congressional offices. Second, agenda setting is more than just the big ideas and actions. Third, there are three key aspects of staff and offices which drive staffer agenda setting. There are interesting things going on in the interactions between members and staff which cause this agenda setting to occur at varying levels, or not to occur at all.

General Findings

The first broad conclusion of this research is staff ARE playing a role in agenda setting in their offices. Staff are involved in presenting ideas to their bosses, they come up with ideas, they receive new ideas from constituents or outside groups, and they cultivate those ideas into a

policy direction. Even staff in the most junior positions are involved in developing ideas and presenting them to the member. All six dependent variables used in the quantitative analysis, which attempt to measure different types of agenda-setting, had a great deal of variation. Staffers were participating in these actions to varying degrees, which included: how involved a staffer is in presenting new ideas to their boss, how often they give new ideas to their boss, a staffer's freedom which measures how much discretion a staffer has to act in a number of situations, how often the member takes the staffer's idea and acts, how often a staffer goes outside the boss's preferences, and when a staffer disagrees with their boss on policy issues. The fact that staff reported participating in these actions proves staff are playing a role in agenda-setting.

The second key conclusion is that agenda setting is more than just the big actions or pieces of legislation, which have dominated the study of Congress. All manner of congressional office activities were included in this research, from the very basic to the most advanced. As stated earlier, the actions of junior staff are then captured, because often it is their decision to bring forward an idea, like co-sponsoring an amendment or co-signing a letter to a Cabinet Secretary. These actions are all part of an individual office's and member's agenda, but previously were not captured. It should be noted, this research, and the dependent variables, capture even when a staffer is merely involved in bringing a new idea to the boss.

Finally, there are three key drivers of staff agenda setting. While there are a number of attributes, situations, and institutional constraints which affect staffer agenda-setting, the focus of this work has been on a staffer's personal relationship with their boss; the nature of a staffer's network, specifically working with those of the opposite party; and staffer experience. The ideological distance between members and staff played very little role in agenda setting, but the member and staffer's personal relationship did. The closer that relationship, the more agenda-

setting staff were able to engage in. This finding persisted throughout the research, predicting nearly every dependent variable, and continuing to be relevant when additional controls were added. The origin of this relationship was not explored, but it was a key one for staffer agenda setting.

The second key predictor of staff agenda setting was the nature of their network or who they work with on a regular basis, specifically staffers from the other party. The more staffers work in a bi-partisan way, are more likely they are to engage in agenda setting in their own office. The other components of a staffer's network definitely played a role in agenda setting, as well. A staffer who regularly works with other senior staffers, lobbyists, staff from the other chamber, and Administration officials were also more likely to participate in agenda setting activities. This finding was most likely a factor of staffer experience in that the more experience and the longer the staffer has served in Congress, the bigger their networks. That experience and expertise lead to more agenda setting. When interacted with staffer tenure, many of these network components ceased to be significant predictors, thus confirming much of the agenda setting is really more to do with staffer tenure.

The third and final key feature of staff agenda setting is staffer experience. Information asymmetry is a key component of PAT and also proved to be a key aspect of this research. Issue complexity mattered very little, but staffer experience did matter. Previous experience with the staffer's main issue (which could be acquired any number of ways including working for another member of Congress, working in the private sector, or personal ties), number of years with their current boss, and total staff tenure in Congress all predicted varying types of staff agenda-setting. Further, as found in the case studies, the experience of being from the home state played a role in

staffers being given more agenda setting power. This type of experience is gained by simply

being born or from the same state that the member represents.

A number of additional findings were also discovered in this research, in relation to the

other hypotheses and variables. While the administrative procedures, in each office did not

significantly affect agenda setting in the initial PAT quantitative analysis, they did accurately

predict agenda setting behavior in the interactions. As approval procedures got more efficient

and less onerous in the Senate, a member would act upon a staff idea. Also, as those approval

processes got more efficient in longer serving member's offices, the less we see staff

disagreement. Additional insight was found in the case studies. Some staffers seemed to believe

these strict procedures lead to a lack of discretion, which caused staffers to feel like they had

little say in the end product (and vice versa). Was it really the strict, or hierarchical, approval

process which caused the lack of agenda-setting in these studies of five congressional offices?

Possibly, but more likely these procedures were a factor of the office more broadly. Offices

which did not want to foster staff leadership, instituted these procedures to keep a closer eye on

things. Conversely, those offices which supported staff agenda-setting provided their staff with

discretion and had a flatter hierarchy.

Personal incentives of staffers were perhaps the most difficult concept to nail down in

this research, living up to their nickname of "warm fuzzies." A staffer's reason for wanting to

work in Congress in the first place provided no leverage in the quantitative analysis. In the

qualitative work, personal incentives seemed to wash out when other factors where considered

such as member personality, office culture, and staffer experience. Voters may desire their

member's staff to have a desire to serve their country and altruistically make good policy, but

that desire does not seem to translate to a staffer's ability to set the agenda in their offices. From

a good government standpoint, this is most likely a good thing. Not all staffers come to Congress for the "right" reasons, they instead come because they are in between jobs, need experience, want resume builders before law school, or want to work in politics because the power appeals to them. However, both sets of staffers come to work every day and try to make the best policy and decisions they can for their bosses and the states and districts they represent.

The principal, or member, specific attributes proved to be influential in varying degrees. In terms of institutional factors, we see a higher frequency of Senate staffers giving ideas to their bosses and less disagreement. The longer a member has served, which is another proxy for experience, albeit member experience, we see less staffer agenda-setting in the quantitative, but conflicting results in the qualitative. Member interest and involvement offer little information on their own in the quantitative analysis. Reelection provides similar lackluster insights, save for predicting a higher frequency of staffer ideas. The main finding in terms of member attributes came from the case studies; member personality and how they create a unique office culture affects staff agenda setting a great deal. Some members hire staffers who will get the job done and who they absolutely trust, while others want to keep a tighter lid on their staff.

Is it always the member who is the source of agenda setting behavior? No! The member sets the initials tone of the office, hires staff who she/he thinks will get the job done, and the offices evolve over time. In bigger offices, like Senate offices, the high level staffers become the boss, having more of a say in how much agenda setting is done among their fellow staffers in the hierarchy. These staff in high places create a system where they have all the power; they are the gatekeepers to the Senator.

Limitations and Future Research

As discussed in Chapter 3, this research design was faced with a number of challenges from the very beginning. The survey instrument had a few cases of awkward wording and confusing options and questions. It also was not completely random as some offices simply do not allow staffers to respond to any survey instruments. Further, the snowball approach was used for former staff, which does not provide an accurate look at all former Congressional staff.

As staff were asked about their role in the process, we are left with some questions. Are staffers conflating their role in the process? Possibly. That is why both current and former staff are included in this research and they are controlled for in the models. But, we still must factor in that some staff may overestimate their own agenda-setting abilities and that provides some limitations for this research. However, through my own work in Congress and through the case studies, I am convinced the predominant behavior of staff is to not overvalue their role and instead downplay it in deference to their bosses.

Further, due to the complete anonymity of the survey results, follow-up information was not able to be acquired to see if members did actually act upon the staffer's ideas. This aspect is a limitation in terms of determining the absolute role staff play in policy development. However, this research does give us a much better idea of when and under what conditions staff are coming up with the ideas and acting on their own in terms of agenda setting.

In terms of future work, this research opens up all sorts of new questions in terms of the inner workings of Congress. We know a great deal of ideas come from staff, but what percentage is coming from staff? The case studies provide valuable insight into this question, but more interviews would help answer this question to a greater degree? Where are staff getting the ideas? Again, we know from the interviews that constituents and outside lobby and interest

groups provide a great deal, but we need to know more about how they develop into policy ideas and get presented to the boss.

The network analysis piece mentioned in earlier chapters is another opportunity for future work. Do these networks affect what ideas the staffer is bringing forward? Do these networks then provide outside support in working with other staff to gain momentum for the policy? We already know interest groups provide this service, but how does that translate to staffers and vice versa?

Next, this data holds more potential than what is presented in this research. Gender and minority were captured in the survey and looking at what effect they play on agenda setting is a future project. Policy subject areas were collected in the survey; does agenda setting by staff change based on policy area? Do certain policy areas attract different types of staffers?

Finally, this research only looks at the very first step in policy development, the agenda-setting stage. A more comprehensive look at the role of staff from idea to implementation stage would complete this look at how staff influence American policy. This is a much larger bite and was beyond the scope of this dissertation and the capabilities of one survey instrument.

What does this mean for Representation and Indirect Democracy? A Message for Voters and Members:

This dissertation began with the goal of looking at the role staff play in coming up with ideas for policies, basically agenda-setting, and how much discretion they have in that process. This research does give us a first look at that process and the key factors which affect a staffer's ability or willingness to set the agenda. This has been discussed in detail throughout the work.

What quickly evolved, however, was another key implication of this research - that of representation and our system of indirect democracy.

As outlined earlier, the framers of the Constitution did not envision a legislative body and branch which depends so heavily on unelected staff to complete the work expected of it. They also most likely never envisioned a full-time Congress whose members were expected to be experts on every issue facing the nation. But, that is the system we now have. From the very basic tasks of answering the phones and responding to constituent inquiries, to the more comprehensive tasks of drafting and negotiating legislation, staff are not only involved, they are leading the charge. What does this mean for our system of indirect democracy? What message and lessons should voters and members take away from this?

First, voters should be aware this is occurring; and they can take comfort in it. Without staff, most of the smaller agenda items in an office would never get done. Letters in support of their sons' or daughters' acceptance to the service academies would not get written. Attention to smaller, local issues would not be paid. Voters' opinions on bills and votes would never be heard if it was up to one person to answer the phones, read the emails, do the research on the bills, and report back to the boss. Further, these staffers are often from the home state of the member, as was seen in the case studies. They care about their home and want to do what is right. They know the issues themselves and have experience with the topics the voters are bringing forward. Finally, they have similar mentalities and beliefs as the constituents; this translates to agendas which mirror what the voters want. Indirect democracy is working. It is working because of the staff, not in spite of them. They are carrying out the preferences of both the voters and the members in a way which would not be possible without them.

Second, the main thing members will realize on their first day in office is how much their constituents expect of them. The second thing they will realize is they cannot do it alone. They then need to decide if they want their staff to play a larger or smaller role in agenda-setting and realize they hold the keys to that ability. Member personality and the culture they develop in their offices affect their abilities to carry out the member's preferences and agenda. If the member decides she wants staff to take an active role in agenda-setting, taking some of the pressure off her to be competent in all areas, she can do a number of key things. The member will need to hire staff who they already have, or envision having, a good personal and professional relationship with. They need to hire staff with experience and expertise if they want staff to participate in agenda-setting. These staff can be from the home state, which gives them immediate credibility with the constituents and the member, or they can have experience with the issue they will handle. These experienced staffers should also have a strong network of work contacts and colleagues; with a focus on bi-partisan contacts.

Conclusions:

This research has challenged the more traditional view of congressional agenda setting and its exclusion of some key factors, namely the role of congressional staff. Am I saying all agenda-setting in Congress is completely staff driven? Absolutely not! I am realistic, in agreement with much of the previous research, and know there are many factors that affect agenda-setting. Many of those factors were outlined in Chapter 2. What I am saying is the contribution of staff needs to be included in that collection of agenda setting research. I realize in some of these situations, the member comes to the staffer with a rough idea and the staffer then develops that idea into something tangible. In others, the member comes with a solid idea and

asks the staff to simply put it in bill format. Members will also occasionally do things on their own, either on the chamber floor or in committee. However, there are those cases when an idea comes solely from the staffer and she then takes it to the member and develops it into something larger. There are also those cases when staffers simply are carrying out a member's established preferences by introducing an amendment or co-sponsoring a bill, without prior member approval. These are all agenda-setting activities, and they are done by staff.

This research turned the spotlight on staff and their own recollections and views of the process in a methodical way for the first time. Much of this work focuses on staff and what they bring to the table. Is it possible members who prefer staffers who take the lead and have a greater agenda-setting capability, simply hire those types of staffers? Of course. But this is the important point. There are those principals who delegate to their agents to set the agenda. They are consciously dividing up their workload to the experts. Are there other, very senior members who know the game and consciously and unconsciously leave it up to staff to run the office (like Sen. C)? Absolutely, and it is these offices where voters need to keep a close eye to ensure representation is working.

After all of this, should we be concerned about the agenda-setting power held by congressional staff? Yes and no. Yes, in that we should question any consolidation of power, particularly in the hands of those who do not face the voters. No, in that the system is working. Voters have access to staff, working with them on the key issues affecting their state or district. If voters had to wait to meet with the members about every issue, they would never get to see them. Much is expected of the office of a member of Congress, staff make sure those expectations are met. This increased workload of Congress has led to more, and more empowered, staff. Further, the members themselves know their own limitations, but also want to

do what is right by their constituents and have permitted this process of staff agenda setting. The members have created office cultures and have hired experienced staffers which allow them to ensure their preferences, and thus the preferences of the voters, are being carried out. They have hired staff with whom they have good relationships, who have large networks, are bi-partisan, and have a great deal of policy expertise. These staff are incredibly knowledgeable about not only the issues, but the home state. They share the core beliefs of those they represent. They have the member's and voters' best interests in mind and follow their preferences. If the member is doing the bidding of those they represent, we can be comfortable in knowing so are the staff.

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APPENDIX A –SURVEY INSTRUMENTS INCLUDING RECRUITMENT LETTER

Current Congressional Legislative Staff Survey

Q1 Are you a current or former staffer?
- ❍ Current (1)
- ❍ Former (As a former staffer, please put yourself back in time to the most recent job you held as a congressional staffer for the duration of this survey. Please answer the following questions with respect to that most recent job.) (2)

Answer If Are you a current or former staffer? Former Is Selected
Q73 As a former staffer, how long ago did you leave Congress?
- ❍ less than 2 years (1)
- ❍ 2-4 years (2)
- ❍ 4-6 years (3)
- ❍ 6-8 years (4)
- ❍ 8-10 years (5)
- ❍ more than 10 years (6)

Q2 In which chamber do you serve?
- ❍ Senate (1)
- ❍ House (2)

Q3 In what type of office do you work?
- ❍ Personal (1)
- ❍ Committee (2)
- ❍ Leadership (3)

Q4 How long have you worked for your current boss (Note: whenever the colloquialism "boss" is used, it refers to the member of Congress you work for)?
- ❍ Less than 1 year (1)
- ❍ 1-2 years (2)
- ❍ 2-3 years (3)
- ❍ 3-4 years (4)
- ❍ 4-6 years (5)
- ❍ 6-8 years (6)
- ❍ 8-10 years (7)
- ❍ 10-15 years (8)
- ❍ 15-20 years (9)
- ❍ 20-25 years (10)
- ❍ More than 25 (11)

Q5 What is your current job title?
- ○ Chief of Staff (1)
- ○ Legislative Director (2)
- ○ Legislative Assistant (3)
- ○ Legislative Correspondent (4)
- ○ Legislative Fellow (5)
- ○ Legislative Aide (6)
- ○ Staff Director (7)
- ○ Clerk (14)
- ○ Professional Staff (8)
- ○ Counsel (9)
- ○ Policy Advisor (10)
- ○ Researcher (11)
- ○ Research Assistant (12)
- ○ Other (13) _____

Q8 Have you worked for other members of Congress or committees previous to your current employment?
- ○ No (1)
- ○ Yes (2)

Answer If Have you worked for other members of Congress or committe... Yes Is Selected
Q80 How many total years have you worked in Congress? This includes all previous Congressional employment, even if it was not consecutive.
- ○ less than 2 years (1)
- ○ 2-4 years (2)
- ○ 4-6 years (3)
- ○ 6-8 years (4)
- ○ 8-10 years (5)
- ○ 10-15 years (6)
- ○ 15-20 years (7)
- ○ more than 20 years (8)

Q9 What is your boss's party affiliation?
- ○ Democrat (1)
- ○ Republican (2)
- ○ Other (3) _____

Q10 How long has your boss served in this chamber?

Q12 Did your boss previously serve in the House of Representatives?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q18 Is your boss running for reelection this cycle?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q33 Did you work full time on any of your current boss's previous campaigns? This means you left Congressional employment and went on the campaign payroll.
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q81 As a former staffer, are you interested in working for Congress again at some point?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q25 How did you get your current job? Check all that apply.
❑ Asked to apply/recruited (1)
❑ Answered job posting (2)
❑ Friends (6)
❑ Professional connection (7)
❑ Family connections (3)
❑ Worked on the campaign (4)
❑ Other (5) _____

Q26 Did you interview with the member of Congress personally?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q27 What made you want to work in Congress in the first place?

Q16 Do you anticipate leaving Congressional employment in the next 3 months?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q34 What top 2-3 issue areas do you cover for your boss? These issues are the ones you spent a majority of your time on in the past year.

Q37 Do you handle any of your boss's committee assignments/issues?
- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q43 Think of the most recent instance of your office instigating action on an issue in your area of expertise, big or small. This could be a Dear Colleague, letter to the administration, press release, bill, amendment, committee hearing, etc. What was this issue and what was the action?
Q45 What did you do to help move the issue from idea to implementation? Example: Where did the initial impetus for action come from? What did you do to implement?

Q59 Please rank how important to the overall agenda setting process the following players are (this means they are coming up with the policy ideas and focusing energies) in your office:

	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)	Somewhat Important (5)	Very Important (6)	Extremely Important (7)
You (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
How important others think YOU are to the process (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
How important are other staffers of your same level in other offices (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Interest Groups in your office (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Your boss in your office (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q38 In the past year, think of the one top issue on which YOU worked, the issue that took/has taken the majority of your time. What was that issue?

Q55 With your top issue in mind, please rank how involved you are with the following activities in your office. Please add in "other" if there is something important we missed.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the Time (4)	Always (5)
Drafting bill or amendment language (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Writing talking points or hearing questions for your boss (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
High level advising of your boss on the important details (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Negotiating policies with outside groups (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Advising your boss on lesser aspects of the issue (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Bringing new policy ideas/actions on the issue to your boss (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Working with other offices to support this issue (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Working with other offices on getting legislation passed (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Taking most of your direction from senior level staffers (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Very little policy involvement in my office (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Other (11)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Other (12)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q69 In the following situations, with your top issue in mind, please identify how often you can recall doing the following in the past year.

	Never (1)	Rarely (1 or 2 times) (2)	Sometimes (about half the time) (3)	More than half the time (4)	I do this every single time (5)
Negotiating language or strategy on behalf of my boss, in his/her best interest, without running everything by my boss. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Presenting a new policy idea or direction to my boss (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Co-signing letters or co-sponsoring legislation in areas my boss supports without prior approval (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Voicing my disagreement with my boss on a policy idea or action. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Introducing Legislation in areas my boss supports without prior approval (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Saying something in a meeting/negotiation that is contrary to my boss's stated preferences (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Advocating for a policy stance not in line with my boss's previous preferences, or ignoring the member's wishes on particular legislation or policy (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Co-signing a letter or co-sponsoring legislation not in line with my boss's preferences (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Introducing legislation not in line with my boss's preferences (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q35 Did you have experience with this top issue before working for your current boss?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q36 If yes, please specify the previous experience you had working on, or being exposed to, this issue. Check all that apply.

❑ Academic degree (1)

❑ Worked in industry (2)

❑ Personal connection to issues (3)

❑ Handled for another member of Congress (4)

❑ Worked in Administration (5)

❑ Lobbied on these issues for trade group (6)

❑ Lobbied on these issues for private company (7)

❑ Other (8) _____

Q47 Over the previous 12 months, how often do you interact with your boss on your top issue in an average week?

○ Never (1)

○ Once a week (2)

○ 2-3 Times a Week (3)

○ Daily (4)

○ Depends (5) _____

Q48 Is your contact with your boss on this issue usually:

❑ Via email (1)

❑ Phone (2)

❑ In person (3)

❑ No contact (4)

❑ Other (5) _____

Q50 How often does your boss take your advice on new ideas or actions on your top issue, and follow through with your suggestions on action?

○ Never (1)

○ Rarely (2)

○ Sometimes (3)

○ Most of the Time (4)

○ Always (5)

Q49 How often does your boss use your vote recommendations on this issue?
- ○ Never (1)
- ○ Rarely (2)
- ○ Sometimes (3)
- ○ Most of the Time (4)
- ○ Always (5)

Q51 Using the past year as an example, how important is your top issue to the state or district your member represents?
- ○ Not at all Important (1)
- ○ Very Unimportant (2)
- ○ Somewhat Unimportant (3)
- ○ Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)
- ○ Somewhat Important (5)
- ○ Very Important (6)
- ○ Extremely Important (7)

Q52 In the past year, has your boss been a leader in Congress on your one top issue?
- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q40 How involved would you say your boss was on your top issue in the past year? 0 is the least and 10 meaning 100% involved with every detail of this issue.
_____ Boss involvement (1)

Q70 How personally interested do you think your boss is in this, your top, issue? 0 is the least amount of interest and 10 is the most.
_____ Boss's interest (1)

Q83 How complex would you rank this issue?
- ○ Not at all (1)
- ○ Below average (2)
- ○ Average complexity (3)
- ○ Above average complexity (4)
- ○ Very complex (5)

Q46 This issue is:
- ○ Highly partisan (1)
- ○ Moderately partisan (2)
- ○ Not partisan (3)

Q41 With your one top issue in mind, who of the following have you worked with in the last year? How often?

	Never (1)	Less than Once a Month (2)	Once a Month (3)	2-3 Times a Month (4)	Once a Week (5)	2-3 Times a Week (6)	Daily (7)
Other staff in your office/committee (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
State staff (if in personal office) (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Senior staff in other personal offices (same party) (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Junior Staff in other personal offices (same party) (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Staff from across the aisle (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Staff in the other chamber (16)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Committee staff (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership staff (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Congressional Support (CBO, CRS) (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
White House (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Administration staff (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Constituents (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Campaign staff (12)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Trade associations/interest groups/lobbyists (13)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Academics/scientists (14)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other (15)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q42 With your top issue in mind, in the last year, how often did you rely on the following for information?

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	All of the Time (5)
Other staff in your office/committee (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Staff from other committees (2)	○	○	○	○	○
State staff (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Senior staff from other offices (same party) (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Junior staff from other offices (same party) (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Staff from across aisle (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Staff from the other chamber (19)	○	○	○	○	○
Committee staff (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership staff (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Congressional support (CRS, CBO) (9)	○	○	○	○	○
White House staff (10)	○	○	○	○	○
Administration officials/staff (11)	○	○	○	○	○
Constituents (12)	○	○	○	○	○
Trade associations/interest groups (13)	○	○	○	○	○
Other Lobbyists (14)	○	○	○	○	○
Academics/scientists (15)	○	○	○	○	○
Press/trade publications (16)	○	○	○	○	○
Other (17)	○	○	○	○	○
Other (18)	○	○	○	○	○

Q61 Every office has its own system of approval, with different staffers getting more leeway than others. For instance, some offices must have actions approved by numerous senior staffers before it goes to the member. How much discretion do YOU have to give final approval to the following?

	Does not apply (1)	None - I am at the bottom of the office hierarchy (2)	Some (3)	Quite a Bit (4)	An Extreme Amount (5)	Besides the member, I have final say on this (6)
Constituent Letters (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Floor statements/talking points/opening statements (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Press releases (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Vote recommendations (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ideas for hearings/witnesses (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sending/signing onto a Dear Colleague (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sending/signing onto a letter to Administration, outside group (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Cosponsoring legislation (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Introducing a new bill/amendment (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q86 Some members of Congress choose to have smaller, or larger, roles in the approval processes in their offices. How large of a role does your BOSS play in approving the following?

	Does not apply (1)	None - she/he trusts staff to handle (2)	Some (3)	Quite a Bit (4)	An Extreme Amount (5)	The member must approve every single one. (6)
Constituent Letters (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Floor statements/talking points/opening statements (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Press releases (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Vote recommendations (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Ideas for hearings/witnesses (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sending/signing onto a Dear Colleague (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sending/signing onto a letter to Administration, outside group (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Cosponsoring legislation (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Introducing a new bill/amendment (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q62 a.   In your opinion, your office's approval process is inherently:
❍ Very efficient (1)
❍ Somewhat efficient (2)
❍ Neither (3)
❍ Somewhat inefficient (4)
❍ Completely inefficient and unorganized (5)

Q60 Sometimes we choose which, and how much, information to share with others; in essence we are filtering information. How often do you think other staffers (at or near your same level) filter information FROM their boss to interest groups, other staff, constituents, etc? Conversely, how often do you think other staffers filter information TO their boss from other staffers, groups, constituents?

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
Filter information from their boss to others (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Filter information to their boss from others (2)	○	○	○	○	○

Q72 In your experience do these filtering actions ever get back to their boss?
○ No (1)
○ Yes (2)

Q56 How would you rank your personal relationship with your boss? (0 is no relationship and 10 is the best)
_____ Relationship (1)

Q14 Job satisfaction - How satisfied:

	Very Dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Somewhat Dissatisfied (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Satisfied (5)	Satisfied (6)	Very Satisfied (7)
Are you with current job (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Do you think your coworkers are with their job (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other staffers, in other offices, in your same job (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q24 Ideology - how do you classify:

	Very liberal (1)	Somewhat Liberal (2)	Moderate (3)	Somewhat Conservative (4)	Very Conservative (5)
You (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Your coworkers (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Your boss (3)	○	○	○	○	○

Q20 How would you describe your office culture? Check all that apply.
❑ Family atmosphere (1)
❑ All business, very professional (2)
❑ Strict hierarchy (3)
❑ Personal relationships among staffers (4)
❑ No personal relationships among staffers (5)
❑ Low key atmosphere (6)
❑ Superiors are friends (7)
❑ Superiors keep very professional, non-congenial relationships (8)
❑ Other (9) _____

Q22 How often do you socialize with your coworkers outside of regular work hours?
○ Never (1)
○ Less than Once a Month (2)
○ Once a Month (3)
○ 2-3 Times a Month (4)
○ Once a Week (5)
○ 2-3 Times a Week (6)
○ Daily (7)

Q64 What is your gender?
○ Male (1)
○ Female (2)

Q65 Age?
- ○ Under 20 (1)
- ○ 21-25 (2)
- ○ 26-30 (3)
- ○ 31-35 (4)
- ○ 36-40 (5)
- ○ 41-45 (6)
- ○ 46-50 (7)
- ○ 51-60 (8)
- ○ Over 60 (9)

Q66 Race you most closely associate with:
- ❑ White (1)
- ❑ Black (2)
- ❑ Hispanic (3)
- ❑ Asian (4)
- ❑ Native American (5)
- ❑ Other (6) _____

Q67 Highest education received:
- ○ High school (1)
- ○ Some college (2)
- ○ College (3)
- ○ Some graduate school (4)
- ○ Law degree (5)
- ○ Masters degree (6)
- ○ MBA (7)
- ○ PhD (8)
- ○ MD (9)
- ○ Other graduate degree (10)

Q87 Marital status:
- ○ Single (1)
- ○ Married (2)
- ○ Divorced (3)
- ○ In a serious relationship (4)

Former Congressional Staff Survey

Q1 Are you a current or former staffer?
- ⭘ Current (1)
- ⭘ Former (As a former staffer, please put yourself back in time to the most recent job you held as a congressional staffer for the duration of this survey. Please answer the following questions with respect to that most recent job.) (2)

Q73 As a former staffer, how long ago did you leave Congress?
- ⭘ less than 2 years (1)
- ⭘ 2-4 years (2)
- ⭘ 4-6 years (3)
- ⭘ 6-8 years (4)
- ⭘ 8-10 years (5)
- ⭘ more than 10 years (6)

Q2 In which chamber did you serve?
- ⭘ Senate (1)
- ⭘ House (2)

Q3 In what type of office did you work?
- ⭘ Personal (1)
- ⭘ Committee (2)
- ⭘ Leadership (3)

Q4 For how long did you work for your most recent boss (Note: whenever the colloquialism "boss" is used, it refers to the member of Congress you work for)?
- ⭘ Less than 1 year (1)
- ⭘ 1-2 years (2)
- ⭘ 2-3 years (3)
- ⭘ 3-4 years (4)
- ⭘ 4-6 years (5)
- ⭘ 6-8 years (6)
- ⭘ 8-10 years (7)
- ⭘ 10-15 years (8)
- ⭘ 15-20 years (9)
- ⭘ 20-25 years (10)
- ⭘ More than 25 (11)

Q5 What was your most recent job title?
- ○ Chief of Staff (1)
- ○ Legislative Director (2)
- ○ Legislative Assistant (3)
- ○ Legislative Correspondent (4)
- ○ Legislative Fellow (5)
- ○ Legislative Aide (6)
- ○ Staff Director (7)
- ○ Professional Staff (8)
- ○ Counsel (9)
- ○ Policy Advisor (10)
- ○ Researcher (11)
- ○ Research Assistant (12)
- ○ Other (13) _____

Q8 Did you work for any other members of Congress or committees prior to your most recent employment?
- ○ No (1)
- ○ Yes (2)

Answer If Have you worked for other members of Congress or committe... Yes Is Selected
Q80 How many total years did you work in Congress? This includes all previous Congressional employment, even if it was not consecutive.
- ○ less than 2 years (1)
- ○ 2-4 years (2)
- ○ 4-6 years (3)
- ○ 6-8 years (4)
- ○ 8-10 years (5)
- ○ 10-15 years (6)
- ○ 15-20 years (7)
- ○ more than 20 years (8)

Q9 What was your boss's party affiliation?
- ○ Democrat (1)
- ○ Republican (2)
- ○ Other (3) _____

Q10 How long had your boss served in this chamber at the time you left?

Q12 Did your boss previously serve in the House of Representatives?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q18 Was your boss up for reelection when you last worked for her/him?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q33 Did you work full time on any of your most recent boss's previous campaigns? This means you left Congressional employment and went on the campaign payroll.
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q81 As a former staffer, are you interested in working for Congress again at some point?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q25 How did you get your most recent job? Check all that apply.
❑ Asked to apply/recruited (1)
❑ Answered job posting (2)
❑ Friends (3)
❑ Professional connections (4)
❑ Family connections (5)
❑ Worked on the campaign (6)
❑ Other (7) _____

Q26 Did you interview with the member of Congress personally?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q27 What made you want to work in Congress in the first place?

Q34 What top 2-3 issue areas did you cover for your boss? These issues are the ones you spent a majority of your time on in the final year of your employment.

Q37 Did you handle any of your boss's committee assignments/issues?
- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q43 Think of the most recent instance of your office instigating action on an issue in your area of expertise, big or small. This could be a Dear Colleague, letter to the administration, press release, bill, amendment, committee hearing, etc. What was this issue and what was the action?

Q45 What did you do to help move the issue from idea to implementation? Example: Where did the initial impetus for action come from? What did you do to implement?

Q59 Please rank how important to the overall agenda setting process the following players were (this means they were coming up with the policy ideas and focusing energies) in your office:

	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)	Somewhat Important (5)	Very Important (6)	Extremely Important (7)
You (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How important others think YOU are to the process (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How important are other staffers of your same level in other offices (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Interest Groups in your office (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Your boss in your office (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q38 In your last year of working in Congress, think of the one top issue on which YOU worked, the issue that took the majority of your time. Put yourself back in time. What was that issue?

Q55 With your top issue in mind, please rank how involved you were with the following activities in your office. Please add in "other" if there is something important we missed.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the Time (4)	Always (5)
Drafting bill or amendment language (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Writing talking points or hearing questions for your boss (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
High level advising of your boss on the important details (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Negotiating policies with outside groups (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Advising your boss on lesser aspects of the issue (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Bringing new policy ideas/actions on the issue to your boss (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Working with other offices to support this issue (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Working with other offices on getting legislation passed (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Taking most of your direction from senior level staffers (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Very little policy involvement in my office (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Other (11)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Other (12)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q69 In the following situations, with your top issue in mind, please identify how often you can recall doing the following in the final year of working for Congress.

	Never (1)	Rarely (1 or 2 times) (2)	Sometimes (about half the time) (3)	More than half the time (4)	I do this every single time (5)
Negotiating language or strategy on behalf of my boss, in his/her best interest, without running everything by my boss. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Presenting a new policy idea or direction to my boss (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Co-signing letters or co-sponsoring legislation in areas my boss supports without prior approval (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Voicing my disagreement with my boss on a policy idea or action. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Introducing Legislation in areas my boss supports without prior approval (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Saying something in a meeting/negotiation that is contrary to my boss's stated preferences (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Advocating for a policy stance not in line with my boss's previous preferences, or ignoring the member's wishes on particular legislation or policy (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Co-signing a letter or co-sponsoring legislation not in line with my boss's preferences (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Introducing legislation not in line with my boss's preferences (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q35 Did you have experience with this top issue before working for your current boss?
◯ Yes (1)
◯ No (2)

Q36 If yes, please specify the previous experience you had working on, or being exposed to, this issue. Check all that apply.
❑ Academic degree (1)
❑ Worked in industry (2)
❑ Personal connection to issues (3)
❑ Handled for another member of Congress (4)
❑ Worked in Administration (5)
❑ Lobbied on these issues for trade group (6)
❑ Lobbied on these issues for private company (7)
❑ Other (8) _____

Q47 During the last 12 months of working for Congress, how often did you interact with your boss on your top issue in an average week?
◯ Never (1)
◯ Once a week (2)
◯ 2-3 Times a Week (3)
◯ Daily (4)
◯ Depends (5) _____

Q48 Was your contact with your boss on this issue usually:
❑ Via email (1)
❑ Phone (2)
❑ In person (3)
❑ No contact (4)
❑ Other (5) _____

Q50 How often did your boss take your advice on new ideas or actions on your top issue, and follow through with your suggestions on action?
◯ Never (1)
◯ Rarely (2)
◯ Sometimes (3)
◯ Most of the Time (4)
◯ Always (5)

Q49 How often did your boss use your vote recommendations on this issue?
- ○ Never (1)
- ○ Rarely (2)
- ○ Sometimes (3)
- ○ Most of the Time (4)
- ○ Always (5)

Q51 Using your last year working in Congress as an example, how important was your top issue to the state or district your member represents?
- ○ Not at all Important (1)
- ○ Very Unimportant (2)
- ○ Somewhat Unimportant (3)
- ○ Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)
- ○ Somewhat Important (5)
- ○ Very Important (6)
- ○ Extremely Important (7)

Q52 In that last year, was your boss a leader in Congress on your one top issue?
- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q40 How involved would you say your boss was on your top issue during that year? 0 is the least and 10 meaning 100% involved with every detail of this issue.
_____ Boss involvement (1)

Q70 How personally interested do you think your boss was in this, your top, issue? 0 is the least amount of interest and 10 is the most.
_____ Boss's interest (1)

Q83 How complex would you rank this issue?
- ○ Not at all (1)
- ○ Below average (2)
- ○ Average complexity (3)
- ○ Above average complexity (4)
- ○ Very complex (5)

Q46 This issue was:
- ○ Highly partisan (1)
- ○ Moderately partisan (2)
- ○ Not partisan (3)

Q41 With your one top issue in mind, which of the following did you work with in your last year? How often?

	Never (1)	Less than Once a Month (2)	Once a Month (3)	2-3 Times a Month (4)	Once a Week (5)	2-3 Times a Week (6)	Daily (7)
Other staff in your office/committee (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
State staff (if in personal office) (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Senior staff in other personal offices (same party) (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Junior Staff in other personal offices (same party) (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Staff from across the aisle (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Staff from the other chamber (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Committee staff (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Leadership staff (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Congressional Support (CBO, CRS) (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
White House (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Administration staff (11)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Constituents (12)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Campaign staff (13)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Trade associations/interest groups/lobbyists (14)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Academics/scientists (15)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Other (16)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q42 With your top issue in mind, in that last year, how often did you rely on the following for information?

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	All of the Time (5)
Other staff in your office/committee (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Staff from other committees (2)	○	○	○	○	○
State staff (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Senior staff from other offices (same party) (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Junior staff from other offices (same party) (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Staff from across aisle (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Staff from the other chamber (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Committee staff (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership staff (9)	○	○	○	○	○
Congressional support (CRS, CBO) (10)	○	○	○	○	○
White House staff (11)	○	○	○	○	○
Administration officials/staff (12)	○	○	○	○	○
Constituents (13)	○	○	○	○	○
Trade associations/interest groups (14)	○	○	○	○	○
Other Lobbyists (15)	○	○	○	○	○
Academics/scientists (16)	○	○	○	○	○
Press/trade publications (17)	○	○	○	○	○
Other (18)	○	○	○	○	○
Other (19)	○	○	○	○	○

Q61 Every office has its own system of approval, with different staffers getting more leeway than others. For instance, some offices must have actions approved by numerous senior staffers before it goes to the member. How much discretion did YOU have to give final approval to the following?

	Does not apply (1)	None - I am at the bottom of the office hierarchy (2)	Some (3)	Quite a Bit (4)	An Extreme Amount (5)	Besides the member, I have final say on this (6)
Constituent Letters (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Floor statements/talking points/opening statements (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Press releases (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Vote recommendations (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Ideas for hearings/witnesses (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sending/signing onto a Dear Colleague (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sending/signing onto a letter to Administration, outside group (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Cosponsoring legislation (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Introducing a new bill/amendment (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q86 Some members of Congress choose to have smaller, or larger, roles in the approval processes in their offices. How large of a role did your BOSS play in approving the following?

	Does not apply (1)	None - she/he trusts staff to handle (2)	Some (3)	Quite a Bit (4)	An Extreme Amount (5)	The member must approve every single one. (6)
Constituent Letters (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Floor statements/talking points/opening statements (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Press releases (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Vote recommendations (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Ideas for hearings/witnesses (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sending/signing onto a Dear Colleague (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sending/signing onto a letter to Administration, outside group (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Cosponsoring legislation (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Introducing a new bill/amendment (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q62 In your opinion, your office's approval process was inherently:
- ❍ Very efficient (1)
- ❍ Somewhat efficient (2)
- ❍ Neither (3)
- ❍ Somewhat inefficient (4)
- ❍ Completely inefficient and unorganized (5)

Q60 Sometimes we choose which, and how much, information to share with others; in essence we are filtering information. How often do you think staffers (at or near your most recent job level) filter information FROM their boss to interest groups, other staff, constituents, etc? Conversely, how often do you think other staffers filter information TO their boss from other staffers, groups, constituents?

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
Filter information from their boss to others (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Filter information to their boss from others (2)	○	○	○	○	○

Q72 In your experience did these filtering actions ever get back to their boss?
○ No (1)
○ Yes (2)

Q56 How would you rank your personal relationship with your boss during your last year of employment? (0 is no relationship and 10 is the best)
_____ Relationship (1)

Q14 Job satisfaction - How satisfied:

	Very Dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Somewhat Dissatisfied (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Satisfied (5)	Satisfied (6)	Very Satisfied (7)
Were you with job at time of departure (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Do you think your former coworkers were with their job (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other staffers, in other offices, in your same job (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q24 Ideology - how do you classify:

	Very liberal (1)	Somewhat Liberal (2)	Moderate (3)	Somewhat Conservative (4)	Very Conservative (5)
You (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Your coworkers (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Your boss (3)	○	○	○	○	○

Q20 How would you describe your former office's culture? Check all that apply.
❑ Family atmosphere (1)
❑ All business, very professional (2)
❑ Strict hierarchy (3)
❑ Personal relationships among staffers (4)
❑ No personal relationships among staffers (5)
❑ Low key atmosphere (6)
❑ Superiors are friends (7)
❑ Superiors keep very professional, non-congenial relationships (8)
❑ Other (9) _____

Q22 How often did you socialize with your coworkers outside of regular work hours?
○ Never (1)
○ Less than Once a Month (2)
○ Once a Month (3)
○ 2-3 Times a Month (4)
○ Once a Week (5)
○ 2-3 Times a Week (6)
○ Daily (7)

Q64 What is your gender?
○ Male (1)
○ Female (2)

Q65 Age at time you left Congressional employment
- ◯ Under 20 (1)
- ◯ 21-25 (2)
- ◯ 26-30 (3)
- ◯ 31-35 (4)
- ◯ 36-40 (5)
- ◯ 41-45 (6)
- ◯ 46-50 (7)
- ◯ 51-60 (8)
- ◯ Over 60 (9)

Q66 Race you most closely associate with:
- ❑ White (1)
- ❑ Black (2)
- ❑ Hispanic (3)
- ❑ Asian (4)
- ❑ Native American (5)
- ❑ Other (6) _____

Q67 Highest education received:
- ◯ High school (1)
- ◯ Some college (2)
- ◯ College (3)
- ◯ Some graduate school (4)
- ◯ Law degree (5)
- ◯ Masters degree (6)
- ◯ MBA (7)
- ◯ PhD (8)
- ◯ MD (9)
- ◯ Other graduate degree (10)

Q87 Marital status at time of departure from congressional employment:
- ◯ Married (1)
- ◯ Single (2)
- ◯ Divorced (3)
- ◯ In a serious relationship (4)

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Greetings from a former Hill staffer. My name is Sara Hagedorn and I am currently in the final year of my PhD work, writing my dissertation. Prior to graduate school, I worked in the Senate for seven years.

My research focuses on the role individual Hill staffers play in the legislative process, and the numerous factors that affect that role. Up until now, this area has been largely ignored in political science research. This was one of the reasons I decided get my PhD – to show, and study, the practical side of Congress, not just the theoretical one.

However, to do this, I need your help and insights. Below you will find a link to an online survey, which will help me tell a more complete story. The survey is completely voluntary and anonymous. You may choose to withdraw at any time. Your answers will not be traced to you; in fact all results will be aggregated and used in quantitative analysis. The University of Colorado Institutional Review Board has approved this survey and your anonymity is guaranteed through that approval. The survey will take less than 20 minutes and will influence the way political scientists view Congressional staff.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. By clicking on the survey link below, you affirm that you have been informed about this study and that you want to participate.

If you would like to discuss this survey, or my research in general, with either me or the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Kenneth Bickers (Kenneth.Bickers@colorado.edu), please do not hesitate to contact us.

This survey is specifically for staff who handle legislative issues at all levels. If you believe you have received this survey in error, please disregard this email.

Thank you,
Sara Hagedorn
PhD Candidate
Department of Political Science
University of Colorado-Boulder