The Evolution of Political Knowledge

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Introduction

The social sciences have rarely been considered fit for study as intellectual history. This, we think, will be a temporary phenomenon in light of the prodigious growth of this luxuriant branch of learning since World War II; its exfoliation into specialties and subspecialties; its expression in university departments and research institutes, and schools of thought; its intellectual trends and hot spots, texts and syntheses, blind alleys and fruitful innovations. Sooner or later, perhaps a generation from now, scholars will want to look at the growth and diversification of modern social scientific knowledge as a cultural artifact—or as many cultural artifacts. For the moment, we may be too close to the origins to be able to sort things out properly. But we can prepare the ground.

This essay traces some of the lines of intellectual influence that helped to form a significant portion of the literature on the U.S. Congress from the end of World War II to the present day. (We exclude here the literature on congressional elections, which is important in its own right.) In the subspecialty of political science known as congressional studies, there was a sharp upturn after World War II in the number and quality of books and articles that focused on the political behavior of Congress rather than its legal or constitutional powers, its administrative machinery, or its alleged inadequacies as a vessel of responsible party government.

The Anglophile “Responsible Party” Tradition

The most significant intellectual influence on prewar congressional studies was Walter Bagehot, whose *The English Constitution* (1867) inspired Woodrow Wilson to write *Congressional Government* (1885), later his Johns Hopkins doctoral
dissertation. (For a thorough account of the writing of this book, see Link 1968, 4:6–13). Wilson found the committee-dominated, decentralized Congress of the 1880s to be deficient when compared with what he understood to be the more disciplined British system. To Wilson and numerous academic successors, America suffered from a lack of responsible parties. Instead of programmatic parties that offered coherent platforms to the public, which were then implemented by the government, the U.S. system was characterized by separation between Congress and the president and by a lack of accountable leadership within the legislative branch. As a rough measure of the unempirical spirit of the time, contemporary readers still find it remarkable that Wilson was able to say to his fiancée that he wrote this influential work—which he styled a critique of “literary” theories of congressional activity—without once traveling the 40 miles from Baltimore to observe Congress directly (Link 1968, vol. 3, letter of January 22, 1885). Those who followed in his footsteps, on the whole, even when they maintained Wilson’s strong prescriptive (and anglophile) orientation, have more frequently availed themselves of the opportunity to study Congress in the flesh before pronouncing judgment.

An important academic successor of Wilson’s was William Y. Elliott (1896–1979), an Oxford D. Phil., Rhodes Scholar, and Balliol College man, who, in addition to a long and fruitful university career (especially at Harvard, 1925–1963), served as a senior staff member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Republican-controlled Eightieth Congress. Elliott’s book *The Need for Constitutional Reform* (1935) was written a decade before his most intensive congressional service and exemplifies the prescriptive mode that dominated prewar congressional studies. In the immediate postwar period, two Elliott doctoral students, Holbert N. Carroll and H. Bradford Westerfield, wrote excellent dissertations on Congress and foreign affairs (Westerfield 1955; Carroll 1958).

Both were primarily empirical, not prescriptive, in their approach. In his thorough survey of House involvement in foreign affairs, Carroll was especially alert in noting the growing importance of the House-dominated appropriations process in boosting congressional influence on U.S. foreign policy in the postwar years. Westerfield ultimately rejected the party-responsibility model of his mentor in tracing what became of congressional bipartisanship in foreign affairs between the Pearl Harbor attack and the Korean War.

**Sociologically Oriented Research: The First Generation**

In some ways, Arthur Maass (Harvard Ph.D., 1949) became Elliott’s successor in the Harvard Department. The book he wrote late in his career, *Congress and the Common Good* (Maass 1983), summarized a quarter century of teaching. In it, he made a strong argument in defense of Congress as an institution embody-
ing a meaningful conception of the common good, in dialogue with the literature that characterized American political institutions as arenas for the expression of group interests. This brought to the study of Congress a dispute that had preoccupied students of American political parties for half a century. "The focus throughout," he said, making a distinction that by the 1980s seemed anachronistic, "is institutional, not political behavior" (Maass 1983, vii). Like Wilson and Elliott, Maass combined the study of Congress with an abiding interest in public administration. One of Maass’s doctoral students, John Johannes (Ph.D., 1970), wrote a book on the management of congressional casework (Johannes 1984). Another, Joseph Cooper (Ph.D., 1961) has recently achieved broad recognition as a pioneer in uncovering the historical roots of contemporary congressional organization (see especially Cooper 1970).

The largest group of scholars to display the new empirical focus were either political scientists who had been associated with the Congressional Fellowship Program of the American Political Science Association (such as Brad Westerfield, who was in the first class of Fellows in 1953), or were students of Ralph Huitt (1913–1986) at the University of Wisconsin.

In any account of the professional study of Congress, the Congressional Fellowship Program of the American Political Science Association (APSA) deserves more than passing attention. It was an institutional invention of considerable ingenuity. The idea was to mimic in a congressional setting the clerkships that appellate judges gave to promising graduates of law schools, affording young political scientists hands-on experience in the legislative branch in a pre-CSPAN time when the public had limited regular access to Congress and very little knowledge of its routines. The program from the start included journalists as well. Members of Congress who might see little value in getting to know young scholars would have no difficulty in appreciating the benefits of acquaintance with a new generation of reporters on mutually beneficial terms. Piggy-backing on the higher status of journalists in the nation’s capital, many generations of political scientists have undertaken close participant observation of members, their offices, and their committees under APSA’s nonpartisan auspices. Over eighteen hundred men and women early in their careers have passed through the program. At first these were predominantly American political scientists and journalists; later, civil servants and health-policy specialists from medical schools were added to the mix, as were foreign scholars and journalists. Research political scientists have always been a minority of the population—less than one-third—but it is doubtful that funding could ever have been found to support political scientists alone.

Although the fraction of Fellows who have been political scientists is not overwhelming, the program, in nearly half a century of existence, has had a profound impact on the intellectual agendas of many able researchers who have
NELSON W. POLSBY AND ERIC SCHICKLER

TABLE 4.1: A partial list of political scientists who were APSA Congressional Fellows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham Holtzman</td>
<td>1953</td>
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<td>Harry H. Ransom</td>
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<td>Marvin Harder</td>
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<td>Charles L. Clapp</td>
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<td>H. Douglas Price</td>
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<td>Alan Fie llen</td>
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<td>Joyce M. Mitchell</td>
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<td>William C. Mitchell</td>
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<td>James A. Robinson</td>
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<td>Eddie N. Williams</td>
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<td>Daniel M. Berman</td>
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<td>Robert Gilpin</td>
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<td>Alan Rosenthal</td>
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<td>Raymond E. Wolfinger</td>
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<td>Alton Frye</td>
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<td>John S. Saloma</td>
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<td>Lewis A. Froman Jr.</td>
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<td>Irwin Gertzog</td>
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<td>John F. Manley</td>
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<td>D. Alan Heslop</td>
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<td>David R. Mayhew</td>
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<td>Marie-France Toinet</td>
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<td>Hugh Heclo</td>
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<td>Thomas E. Mann</td>
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<td>Norman J. Ornstein</td>
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<td>Karl T. Kurtz</td>
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<td>Charles S. Bullock</td>
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<td>Stanley Bach</td>
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<td>Glenn R. Parker</td>
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<td>David W. Rohde</td>
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<td>Ada Finifter</td>
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<td>Barbara Sinclair</td>
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<td>James A. Thurber</td>
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<td>Lawrence C. Dodd</td>
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<td>John W. Ellwood</td>
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<td>Bruce I. Oppenheimer</td>
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<td>Catherine Rudder</td>
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<td>Marcia Lynn Whicker</td>
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<td>Richard J. Born</td>
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<td>Burdett Loomis</td>
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<td>Henry Kenski</td>
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<td>David J. Vogler</td>
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<td>Jo Freeman</td>
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<td>Charles N. Tidmarch</td>
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<td>Gary Copeland</td>
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<td>Steven S. Smith</td>
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<td>David Kozak</td>
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<td>Paul C. Light</td>
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<td>Hanes Walton Jr.</td>
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<td>Christopher Deering</td>
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<td>Richard Hall</td>
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<td>Thomas Kazee</td>
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<td>Paul S. Herrnson</td>
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<td>Mark A. Peterson</td>
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<td>Lyn Ragsdale</td>
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<td>Daniel Wirls</td>
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<td>Forrest Maltzman</td>
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<td>Nicol C. Rae</td>
<td>1995</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Palazzolo</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diana Dwyer</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ben Highton</td>
<td>1998</td>
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contributed enormously to the empirical study of Congress. (Table 4.1 lists roughly a tenth of the political scientists who have participated in the program.)

The number of books and articles on all aspects of Congress written by members of this group is, of course, very impressive. Some of these scholars had already committed themselves to the study of Congress before they became Fellows, but many had not. Both subgroups found their horizons extended and their agendas transformed by the experience of working on Capitol Hill.
A decade after the Congressional Fellowship Program was begun, APSA intervened significantly once again in congressional studies by soliciting and receiving a grant from the Carnegie Corporation to sponsor what was called a Study of Congress. This large undertaking (1964–1969) was put in the charge of Ralph K. Huitt, who had already emerged as a major influence in the training of congressional scholars. Rather than conduct one consolidated inquiry in the style of Gunner Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* (1944), Huitt decided to spread the project out and support a number of members of the generation junior to him nationwide. (Works published under the auspices of the Study of Congress include Froman 1967; Polsby 1968; Polsby et al. 1969; Jones 1970; Manley 1970; Ogul 1976; and Patterson 1970.) When Huitt took up his administrative duties in Washington, Robert L. Peabody became Associate Director of the Study of Congress.

Huitt’s own scholarship played a strong role in giving the Study of Congress intellectual guidance. In particular, he had developed a preference for hands-on empirical study and close observation. Although Huitt never wrote a book, his grasp of the nuances and the realities of congressional politics was exceptional, and his teaching was frequently spellbinding.

Four remarkable articles in *The American Political Science Review* (*APSR*) between 1954 and 1961 constitute the heart of Huitt’s scholarly output. He asked (Huitt and Peabody 1969, vii), “Why should not Congress be studied as a legislature, and the behavior of its members analyzed against the institutional demands of the legislative process?” Today we might describe the endeavor as an attempt to assimilate Congress to organization theory.

The earliest of his *APSR* articles on Congress, a case study of a congressional committee (Huitt 1954), was concerned with “inventing a way to study the U.S. Congress from a library in Madison, Wisconsin.” Not the optimal locale, Huitt thought, for understanding a living, breathing institution: “It looked as if I might never get away from there” (Huitt and Peabody 1969, viii). Fortune smiled in the form of a Ford grant (1953–1954) and a significant professional connection: Huitt, a Texan with a University of Texas Ph.D., landed what was in effect a senior internship in the office of Sen. Lyndon Johnson of Texas through the intervention of Johnson’s childhood friend, Prof. Emmette Redford of the University of Texas Political Science Department. Johnson had just become the Senate Democratic leader. Huitt made the most of this connection, as well as a 1958 stint as legislative assistant to Sen. William Proxmire of his adopted state of Wisconsin. These experiences enabled Huitt to write with confidence about the ways in which two very different personalities, differently situated in the organization, shaped their careers and adapted to the web of organizational norms and practices that defined the Senate as an institution (see Huitt 1961a, b). And they strongly reinforced Huitt’s conviction that understanding Congress required inquiry into the way the institution looked to its inhabitants, not merely to academic outsiders.
This constituted a sharp break with the tradition of measuring Congress by the yardstick of responsible party government, as in the British model that had dominated the field since Woodrow Wilson’s day.

The last great landmark of the older tradition, marking a transition to the newer approach, was Stephen K. Bailey’s *Congress Makes a Law* (1950). This careful and evocative case study of the passage of the Employment Act of 1946 required four hundred interviews. Huitt appreciated Bailey’s interest in “what went on in the two houses where an intellectual’s dream of a national commitment to full employment was converted into a bill that could pass. The idea of paying attention to what legislatures do was revolutionary, and legislative scholarship was never quite the same after that.” But, Huitt continued, “The revolution was not complete. Bailey’s frame of theory was not the legislature itself but something called ‘a responsible two-party system’ which seemed important at the time” (Huitt and Peabody 1969, vii). Although Bailey had few students, he had many followers, especially in the creation of a pedagogical tradition. If there is something like a “textbook Congress,” it is embodied in the large number of books, written as texts, that follow in Bailey’s footsteps by describing in detail the process by which a particular law is enacted. (Examples include Berman 1962; Bendiner 1964; J. P. Harris 1964; Bibby and Davidson 1967; Eidenberg and Morey 1969; R. A. Harris 1969; Peabody et al. 1972; Redman 1973; Brezina and Overmyer 1974; Reid 1980; Birnbaum and Murray 1987; Martin 1994; and Elving 1995.) To the best of our knowledge, nobody has attempted a propositional inventory that examines this formidable body of reportage synoptically. If it were attempted, perhaps we could claim to have glimpsed the textbook Congress.

Two other contemporaries of Huitt’s wrote important works incorporating the study of Congress into the discipline-wide movement focusing on political behavior, but neither of them produced many students. David Truman (b. 1913) was a major figure in political science from the publication of his *The Governmental Process* (1951), early in his career. *The Congressional Party: A Case Study* (Truman 1959) portrayed the ways in which the political parties organized the work of the Eighty-first Congress (1949–1951). The idea was to seek hard empirical measures—especially through the analysis of roll calls—to assess the actual impact of parties on the life of an institution alleged to be lacking (by standards of the time) in party responsibility. Truman (1959) found more structure than the prescriptive literature of the day presumed existed. This added meaningful detail to an emerging portrait of Congress as an autonomous institution that was important in its political system despite its lack of resemblance to the Westminster model. This book was Truman’s last significant scholarly effort before he became a senior member of the administration at Columbia University and later President of Mount Holyoke College. His departure from the world of
scholarly endeavor in American politics deprived the field of one of its sharpest minds and one of its most generous teachers.

Lewis Anthony Dexter (1915–1995) was an immensely prolific maverick. Although his B.A. from the University of Chicago was dated 1935, his sociology Ph.D. from Columbia was delayed until 1960 because of a conflict with his supervisory committee. He never stayed long enough at one teaching job to accumulate a body of students, but his writings about Congress, many of them employing a quasi-anthropological style of observation and exhaustive interviewing, were held in very high esteem by the next cohort of scholars, who passed his unpublished manuscript (which later was accepted as his doctoral dissertation), “Congressmen and the People They Listen to,” around among themselves samizdat-style or excavated his early articles in out-of-the-way journals (Dexter 1957, 1960/1961).

Dexter was interested in how congressional organization constrained the attention patterns of members of Congress. Ignorance of these constraints handicapped outsiders in their attempts to influence outcomes. It was no use, Dexter pointed out, attempting to put heat on members of the wrong committee, or approaching the right committee after it had decided the issue. Dexter collected a tremendous fund of political lore, which he frequently published in an unprocessed form. His work created the impression that Congress was a complicated, contingent world containing a vast variety of possible narratives. For example, Dexter propounded the highly fruitful idea that the congressional district was best understood as a sociopsychological construct in the mind of the member of Congress, an archipelago embedded in the population located within the district’s geographical boundaries. This explained, among other things, why two senators from the same party and the same state might behave differently and see their representational roles differently, yet both survive comfortably, and why the same district might be well represented successively by members of different parties.

Sociologically Oriented Research: The Second Generation

By the 1960s, the empirical study of Congress had begun to flourish and develop in a number of different directions. Three articles appeared in a single issue of APSR, all written by University of Wisconsin scholars: Huitt’s (1961a) classic on Lyndon Johnson’s Senate leadership; an utterly persuasive article by Huitt’s doctoral student Charles O. Jones (1961) on the House Agriculture Committee and the way it organized to serve agricultural interests nationwide; and a path-breaking examination of the hitherto mysterious committee-assignment process in the House by a recent Wisconsin Ph.D., Nicholas Masters (1961).

These and other contributions—especially on the House of Representatives—
reflected an important turn in the study of Congress. It was possible in short order for one of us, with Robert L. Peabody, to put together a book of readings on the House that for a time captured an enthusiastic market and ultimately went through four editions, thanks to “an extraordinary reawakening of scholarly interest in the U.S. House of Representatives” (Peabody and Polsby 1963).

One reason we felt justified in concentrating on the House was that the Senate was so much better covered in the newspapers. Senators were well-known public figures. Indeed, in the 1950s Senators Estes Kefauver and Joseph McCarthy had become household names, and the committees associated with each were the subjects of much attention in the news media. Several senators contested for the presidential nomination of 1960, and both major parties that year nominated candidates from the Senate.

In the world of scholarship there were also the articles of Ralph Huitt, and a book by Donald R. Matthews (b. 1924) of the University of North Carolina, *U.S. Senators and Their World* (1960), that dominated the field. In particular, Matthews’s chapter headed “Folkways of the Senate” (also an article, Matthews 1959) codified a great deal of what we thought we were learning in a less systematic way from Dexter and from the news media about how the Senate operated. It proved to be of great utility to have the norms that seemed to be so influential in the lives of senators spelled out and fortified by substantial independent research.

Matthews (Princeton Ph.D., 1953) had previously indicated a deep interest in a sociological approach to politics with his dissertation, “U.S. Senators: A Study of the Recruitment of Political Leaders.” An adaptation focused on theoretical issues, *The Social Background of Political Decision-Makers* (Matthews 1954), was published in a very successful series edited by his mentor Richard Snyder, who later at Northwestern also inspired James A. Robinson’s study of the House Rules Committee (1963) and numerous other writings by Robinson on Congress.

The productivity of the next generation of congressional scholars is so voluminous as nearly to preclude compact summary. But the work of one scholar achieved special prominence. In the more than two hundred years since the founding of the American nation no scholar has contributed more to the understanding of the U.S. Congress than Richard F. Fenno Jr. (b. 1926). Fenno began with what turned out to be a diversion from his career-long scholarly focus: a very successful Harvard dissertation (under W. Y. Elliott) on the president’s cabinet that he later turned into a book (Fenno 1959). From that point onward, Fenno has devoted himself single-mindedly to the study of the U.S. Congress, an effort that now encompasses fourteen books (Munger and Fenno 1962; Fenno 1966, 1973, 1978, 1982, 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1996, 1997, 2000). It hit an early high point with the magisterial *Power of the Purse* (Fenno 1966), a detailed portrait of the congressional appropriations process, starring...
the House Appropriations Committee as that institution existed during the period 1947–1965. In this book, Fenno offers a distinctive and useful vocabulary for the discussion of Congress: a focus on internal structure, on the interplay between committee loyalties and party loyalties, and on the development of norms of behavior and role expectations tied to committee service. Fenno shows how these norms and roles affect actual public policy—votes on the floor of the House, dollars and cents in the federal budget. Fenno’s extraordinary sensitivity as a field worker, the clarity of his thinking about ethical, methodological, strategic, and substantive issues that were puzzling us all, his capacity to make something theoretically interesting out of raw political experience, and his friendly availability as a colleague soon made him signally influential among Congress watchers. Moreover, he got fascinating results.

Half a decade before The Power of the Purse came out, it was clear that Fenno was onto something. His congressional section of National Politics and Federal Aid to Education (Munger and Fenno 1962) was a tidy case study. But it was his paper, “The House Appropriations Committee as a Political System: The Problem of Integration,” first given at an APSA convention, then published as an APSR article, that caught the attention of Congress watchers and established his influence among them (Fenno 1962).

The rejuvenation of the Rochester department where Fenno taught also played a significant role in multiplying his influence. Among the contemporary scholars of Congress who passed through Fenno’s seminars over the years have been Theodore Anagnoson, Peter Aranson, John Blydenburgh, Morris Fiorina, Linda Fowler, Keith Krehbiel, James Murphy, Keith Poole, Lynda Powell, David Rohde, Kenneth Shepsle, Barbara Sinclair, Richard Smith, John Stolarek, Theodore Westen, Peter Wissel, Jack Wright, and Diana Yiannakis. Political scientists will recognize many of these as significant contributors to the literature.

By the time Congressmen in Committees came along, the Fenno hallmark was well established (Fenno 1973). This book took as its task the explanation of variations in the styles and performance characteristics of congressional committees. Committees, in Fenno’s analysis, embody to different degrees the varying goals that members of Congress bring to their work: the desire for reelection, the desire to make good policy, the desire to exercise influence in Washington. The aggregation of these goals, filtered through various environmental constraints, produces different strategic premises, decision-making processes, and public policy results.

Home Style (Fenno 1978) follows logically from Congressmen in Committees. If how committees behave is in some measure the reflection of members’ needs and goals, then it becomes important to reach backward into the environments from which members, in all their variety, spring. Home Style explores the terrain out of which members of Congress come and discusses the dilemmas that
congressmen face in reconciling the disparate and often conflicting demands, values, and perceptions of home and the distant congressional workplace. It was in connection with research for this book that Fenno noticed that although congressmen are nearly everywhere popular with their own constituents, Congress as a collective entity is low in popularity. In response, he discovered, congressmen frequently succumb to the temptation to run against Congress, a plausible solution to the conundrum now sometimes known as Fenno’s paradox. Like most professional students of Congress, through the early years of his career Fenno gave more of his time and affection to the House of Representatives than the Senate. The House, as we all know, is more open to observation. It is more complex in its structure, more difficult to predict in its outcomes, and altogether a more satisfying object of study. Fenno’s more recent work, however, has gone a long way toward redressing the imbalance (see, e.g., Fenno 1986).

By the time Fenno was ready to tackle the Senate, he had established a style of work and had discovered an overarching problem. These interacted to influence his work product. The problem was turning the study of representation in a large-scale society into an empirical inquiry. The method was close observation of elected officials one by one as they constructed their own treaties with their constituents back home, educating constituents on the constraints that they faced as public servants in Washington and learning constituent demands and requirements. A companion challenge for senators and representatives was finding a niche in the legislative institution that allowed them room to pursue activities that satisfied their varied goals of survival, public service, and political influence and that they could explain to their constituents.

Fenno got to know a dozen or so senators very well over the years, and he wrote absorbing books about five: Mark Andrews of North Dakota as he, quite unexpectedly, failed to be reelected to the Senate; John Glenn of Ohio as he leveraged a position in the Senate (and his fame as an astronaut) into a presidential candidacy; and Pete Domenici of New Mexico, Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, and Dan Quayle of Indiana as they managed their senatorial careers, coping with minority status, the workings of the seniority system, the resources of a committee chairmanship, and other contingencies of Washington life.

In another book, Fenno (1996) distilled a great deal of what he was learning about the interface between politicians and voters by closely following the campaigns of twenty senatorial candidates. And in still another, switching back to the House of Representatives, he contrasted two members of Congress from Georgia—one from the 1970s, the other from the 1990s—to illustrate how styles of representation have changed with the changing political demographics of the South (Fenno 2000). More and more, it seems, Fenno’s intense interest in the practical tasks of representation require detailed observation of the ways in which individual members of Congress cope with a cluster of challenges set by
the social facts of American democracy: large electorates at a great distance from the capital, with mass media and political parties as important competing sources of intermediation.

Fenno was senior member of a cohort of congressional scholars that frequently crossed paths on Capitol Hill. “We met in the early 1960s,” he wrote, “as members of a small group of young political scientists who came together to share the excitement of our budding research on Congress. We got a grant [from the Social Science Research Council] to get together periodically in Washington to take members of Congress to dinner and talk about how to study Congress. There were eight of us—Doug [Price], Chuck Jones, Nelson Polsby, Bob Peabody, Milt Cummings, Randall Ripley, Joe Cooper and myself—‘The Boys of Congress’” (Fenno 1998).

Among this group, Fenno’s work takes up the most space on the bookshelf. The work of Hugh Douglas Price takes up the least (1975, 1998). His influence was extremely important, however, magnified by the good communications that generally prevailed among students of Congress in his generation and by his generosity as a colleague. Price was a gifted student of V. O. Key, and showed Key’s triple-threat talent: keen historical curiosity, statistical facility, and the imagination to put together compelling explanations of institutional behavior combining both.

Price’s trenchant comments on the emerging literature, his observations on the growth of legislative professionalism, his creative leap that linked trends in electoral politics with the entrenchment of seniority in the early twentieth century, all had a tremendous impact on his colleagues. This was true even though he rarely wrote down an argument in full. We students of Congress passed his occasional papers among ourselves and treasured his remarks at chance meetings and at conferences. He involved himself actively as a cheerleader and kibitzer in the intellectual life of his colleagues. Fenno remembers:

When I was finishing my 1960s manuscript on the politics of the appropriations process, Doug came over to Rochester from Syracuse and spent a long day—into the night—at the house critiquing the manuscript and talking about it. It was an incredibly helpful and stimulating day. And it was his idea—not mine. In the 1990s, when I sent him a copy of my book on Dan Quayle and, again, the one on Mark Andrews, he responded with scattergrams showing me how I could have clarified my distinction between the partisan and personal components of their support. In both cases, he had spent a day in the library, he said, collecting the necessary data. Accompanying the Andrews scattergram was an elaborate causal analysis, recreating the book’s entire argument with boxes and arrows—a typical Price effort to help you think about a complex set of relationships. He had an uncanny ability to see where your argument was going and where it could be improved. (Fenno 1998, xiv)
Two of Price’s doctoral students wrote significant works on Congress: John Manley (Syracuse Ph.D., 1967) and Elaine Swift (Harvard Ph.D., 1989) (see Manley 1970, Swift 1996).

Whereas Fenno was his generation’s preeminent hedgehog, knowing and concentrating on one big thing, Charles O. Jones was the great fox, a scholar whose contributions span such diverse topics as public policy and its analysis, the presidency, political parties, and the separation of powers, as well as Congress. Jones combines tremendous range with great modesty. It is his style to advance knowledge along many fronts but never to claim exclusive turf anywhere; hence, there is a tendency not to associate his name with any single magnum opus. But his presence is especially important in at least three endeavors. First, he is the leading academic student of the Republican party (see Jones 1964, 1965, 1970). Second, his book *Clean Air* (Jones 1975), which covers multiple levels of governmental and political activity, and describes a policy process that transformed the city of Pittsburgh, is a major and an exemplary work of policy analysis. Third, his work on the separation of powers has made the most thorough and the most powerful case against those comparativists who mistakenly describe the United States as a presidential system of government (Jones 1994, 1995).

Only a deeply committed congressional scholar would be likely to acquire the intellectual ammunition to sustain this argument. The depth of Jones’s engagement in the study of Congress is most apparent in his highly original textbook (1982), which synthesizes enormous amounts of material and combines it felicitously with the results of decades-long personal study, fieldwork, and research.

Jones identifies himself as a student of political institutions primarily because these institutions make policy; hence, for most of his students at (successively) the Universities of Arizona, Pittsburgh, Virginia, and Wisconsin, the study of Congress has been incidental to the study of the public policies that have been the focus of their work. But there are a few exceptions, notably Randall Strahan (University of Virginia Ph.D., 1986) and Daniel Palazzolo (University of Virginia Ph.D., 1989), who have written on Congress directly (Strahan 1990; Palazzolo 1992, 1999).

In the twenty-five years from the end of World War II to the early 1970s, scholarship on Congress displayed five notable features:

1. A turn away from the issue of party responsibility as the great organizing theme of congressional studies and an embrace of the spirit of the behavioral movement, which brought political science closer to the other social sciences in its methods and concerns. For congressional studies, this meant measuring the performance of Congress against the requirements of an autonomous legislative body whose members had important representational responsibilities.
and which collectively had significant independent impact on the making of public policy.

2. Numerous individual studies of work groups within Congress, notably committees (Peabody 1963; Robinson 1963; Manley 1970; Fenno 1966) and state delegations (Truman 1959; Fiellen 1962; Deckard [Sinclair] 1972), and in studies of the politics of internal management, especially narratives describing party leadership struggles and the strategic principles that dominated these significant events (especially “inside” versus “outside” strategies) (Polsby 1963; Peabody 1976).

3. A proliferation of sequential narratives portraying the complicated processes through which specific individual bills were transformed into laws.

4. Studies characterizing the institutional structures and historical development of the House and Senate, providing individual treatments of each. For the first time, the House and Senate began to emerge as distinct entities in the scholarly literature as befits their independent standing in the Constitution. Increasing opportunity to study the bloc structure of Congress as reflected in roll calls on the floor, and to track the ways in which Congress gratified or failed to gratify presidential requests. (Such information became available with the emergence of adequate publicly available record keeping, largely thanks to the Congressional Quarterly organization, but also owing to public-spirited scholars located in the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress.) The information could be considered in the aggregate or by tracking the performance of individuals, and could be used not only to monitor policy outcomes but also to follow the decision making (or “cue-taking”) of individual members (see Kingdon 1973; Matthews and Stimson 1975).

Two books by David Mayhew (Harvard Ph.D., 1964) illustrate the expansion of the possibilities for study during the postwar era. His first book was his doctoral dissertation, Party Loyalty among Congressmen: The Difference between Democrats and Republicans, 1947–1962 (Matthews 1966), a highly creative roll-call study. Mayhew demonstrated that Democrats and Republicans behave differently toward the interest groups that make up their core constituencies. Democrats, he found, always vote to sustain their constituent interests; Republicans tend to vote on principled grounds even against their constituents and allies.

Later, in Congress: The Electoral Connection (1974), Mayhew executed one of the first—and still one of the best—rational choice studies of Congress, parsimoniously asking how members would logically behave if they were obsessed only with the goal of assuring their reelection. He deduces that in such
circumstances, members would do a lot of what we observe them doing: position-taking, credit-claiming, and advertising. The assumption of pure reelection-mindedness yields less-good predictions of congressional organization, but the exercise was by any reasonable standard a tremendous success. Because of the compactness of the argument, Mayhew’s landmark has not really been superseded, even though it was thoughtfully amended by Fenno’s addition of more motives for members— influence in Congress, good public policy, ambition for further office—in connection with his study of variations in committee organization and behavior (Fenno 1973).

These contributions of Fenno and Mayhew marked a transition in congressional scholarship. The sociological style characteristic of most work in the 1950s and 1960s (including Fenno’s own early work) gave way to a focus on individual members’ goal-oriented behavior. Three themes have emerged as particularly significant in the ensuing decades. First, scholars have devoted considerable energy to understanding the major reforms adopted by Congress in the 1970s. Both the reform era itself and the contours of the so-called postreform Congress have been major topics of debate. Second, the rise of rational choice approaches in the discipline at large has sparked a new focus on the design and effects of legislative institutions. Scholars ask to what extent congressional organization serves the interests of three sorts of aggregated actors: cross-party distributive coalitions, the majority party, and floor majorities. A major animating issue has been whether the majority party is able to use its agenda control to pull policy outcomes toward the party median and away from the median of the whole House. Third, historically oriented scholars have traced changes in congressional institutions over time, using history both as a source of data to test existing theories and as a source of new theories. Beyond these three substantive themes, a fourth important development has been the emergence of several extensive datasets on congressional behavior and history that have provided a windfall for Congress scholars.

The Influence of Congressional Reform

The 1970s reforms of Congress instigated the sort of broad-scale institutional change that comes at most once in a generation. As a result, many leading congressional scholars focused their attention on uncovering the sources, short-term effects, and long-term implications of these changes. In contrast to the early scholarship on the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, which tended to measure reform by the yardstick of whether it would bring about responsible party government (see, e.g., Galloway 1946), this new scholarship was more interested in understanding the goals of the reformers themselves and in assessing the complicated factional politics that shaped their prospects for success. On
Capitol Hill (1972), by John Bibby (Wisconsin Ph.D., 1963) and Roger Davidson, a detailed account of the passage of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, highlighted how disaffected liberal Democrats and backbench Republicans were able to coalesce behind a set of reforms intended to challenge the power of conservative southern chairmen (see also Schickler et al. 2001). Davidson went on to conduct careful studies of many of the key reforms of the 1970s and, working with Walter Oleszek, offered a theoretical model that distinguished between “adaptive” innovations that respond to pressures from the environment and “consolidative” changes that are prompted by internal conflicts (Davidson and Oleszek 1976, 1977).

But Davidson and his coauthors were by no means alone in examining these reforms. In a series of papers written in the 1970s, David Rohde and Norman Ornstein analyzed the Reorganization Act of 1970, the subcommittee bill of rights, and the attack on seniority, among other changes (Ornstein 1975; Ornstein and Rohde 1974, 1977, 1978; Rohde 1974). Rohde’s efforts were helped, no doubt, by his APSA Congressional Fellowship, which placed him in the office of one of the Democratic reformers and afforded him an unusually close view of the maneuvering that entered into adoption of the subcommittee bill of rights. Ornstein, who began his Washington career as an APSA Fellow, has carved out a nearly unique specialty as a locally based authority on trends in congressional politics, and as an explainer of these trends to the national press corps, founded on a thorough grounding in political science research.

Among the reforms, the overthrow of the seniority system for selection of chairmen prompted extensive studies. One of the first, by Barbara Hinckley, explored why Democrats deposed three barons in 1975. Hinckley argued that three characteristics made these chairmen inviting targets to newly assertive liberal Democrats: their advanced age, “southernness,” and the presence of an acceptable challenger (Hinkley 1976). Other studies focused on how the challenge to seniority affected internal committee operations, often finding that the effects, at least in the short term, were not great (Rieselbach and Unekis 1981/1982). A third wave of studies focused on how the seniority overthrow affected the party system, typically finding that the reforms increased the loyalty of the remaining chairmen and therefore enhanced the strength of the Democratic majority (Crook and Hibbing 1985; Rohde 1991).

The reforms of the 1970s also fostered new efforts at synthesis, notably Dodd and Oppenheimer’s Congress Reconsidered (1977), which brought together a series of chapters by many hands probing the meaning of the recent transformation. Now in its seventh edition, this series continues to promote the cumulation and spread of knowledge by serving as an easily accessible and lively compendium of research that addresses both recent changes and longer-term trends.
The initial literature on the 1970s reforms tended to emphasize decentralizing trends: the empowering of subcommittees, the opening of committee deliberations to the public, and challenges to the seniority system. These early accounts also noted the party-building potential of such reforms as granting to the Speaker control of assignments to the House Rules Committee and making chairmen more accountable to the majority party caucus (see, e.g., Dodd 1977, 1979; Oppenheimer 1977; Ornstein and Rohde 1978; Sundquist 1981). In the 1980s, as the decline in the number of southern Democrats helped the majority party to become more internally unified and as party leaders began to use their powers more aggressively, these party-building changes became more prominent in accounts of the lasting implications of the reform era. The “postreform” Congress was not the wide-open, fragmented, individualistic world depicted by Mayhew in 1974; rather, it was characterized by increasingly active parties, a surprisingly centralized budget process (Schick 1980; Gilmour 1990), and omnibus bills that placed a premium on coordination (Krutz 2001). Once again, Davidson, Rohde, and Dodd and Oppenheimer were among the first to chart the development of the postreform Congress (Davidson 1988, 1992; Dodd and Oppenheimer 1989; Rohde 1991). They were joined by, among others, Barbara Sinclair, who drew upon her extraordinary access to House Democratic leader Jim Wright’s office to offer an array of new data and new insights into leadership strategies and activities (see especially Sinclair 1983, 1995).

In studying both the 1970s reforms and the transition to the postreform Congress, one of the key moves was to focus on House rules and procedures as indicators that could be used to reveal important changes. One of the pioneers of this approach was Steven S. Smith of the University of Minnesota. Working with Stanley Bach, Smith traced the development of the restrictive rules that have increasingly come to structure the consideration of legislation on the House floor (Bach and Smith 1988; see also Bach 1990). The details of such “special rules,” once an obscure subject even to most scholars, have in recent years become a major topic of empirical and theoretical work (see Sinclair 1994; Dion and Huber 1996; Krehbiel 1997). Smith has also influenced the field through his Ph.D. students, who have demonstrated a keen interest in the intersection of partisan calculations, congressional rules and procedures, and committee organization. The result has been several noteworthy studies of congressional institutions, including an analysis of rules concerning minority rights in the House (Binder 1997), a study of committee politics (Maltzman 1997), and an exploration of Speaker Joe Cannon’s committee assignments (Lawrence et al. 2001).

Rational Choice and the “New Institutionalism”

The classic studies by Mayhew and Fenno in the mid-1970s were partly inspired
by the shift in the discipline at large toward rational choice models of politics. The success of these studies and the Rochester-led dissemination of new skills, adapting for political science a style of work that had proved so effective in economics, led to one of the main growth areas in congressional scholarship over the past twenty-five years.

Three main branches of this work are worth distinguishing. One branch explores a question raised but not fully answered by Mayhew: In a world of self-interested, reelection-seeking members, each of whom has incentives to spend time on casework, particularistic credit claiming, and position taking, how does it happen that Congress actually produces major legislation that offers general, rather than particularistic, benefits? More broadly, under what conditions will self-interested legislators have incentives to work hard to produce broad legislation? Mayhew’s student at Yale, R. Douglas Arnold, offers the most thorough treatment of the first question in *The Logic of Congressional Action* (Arnold 1992). Arnold focuses on members’ need to respond to voters’ “potential preferences” (which often place value on general benefits) and on coalition leaders’ ability to manipulate the visibility of member actions such that these potential preferences become more salient. Richard L. Hall at the University of Michigan has offered one of the key analyses of the second issue; *Participation in Congress* (Hall 1996) combines a wealth of new data on committee operations with a theoretical exploration of the conditions under which members will have incentives to participate in legislative work (see also Wawro 2000). Hall finds that the division of labor in Congress is not “authoritatively imposed” but rather “bubbles up” from individual choices about how to allocate one’s time (Hall 1996, 10). Even within specialized subcommittees, the set of active participants is rarely more than half the members, and this set shifts dramatically across bills.

Closely related to the scholarship on members’ incentives to perform legislative work, another stream of rational choice work has explored the extent to which Congress influences policy implementation by the bureaucracy. This enduring theme in congressional studies dates back to the post–World War II studies by Hyneman (1950), Harris (1964), and Ogul (1976), with important elaborations in the work of Dodd and Schott (1979), Arnold (1979), and most recently Aberbach (1990). Morris Fiorina’s *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment* (1977) was an early rational choice work to consider the question of Congress’s relationship to the bureaucracy. In the tradition of studies describing “iron triangles,” “subgovernments,” or “policy networks” (see, e.g., Freeman 1955; Heclo 1978), Fiorina argues that members of Congress and bureaucrats enjoy a symbiotic relationship. In his account, members pass vague laws that delegate tremendous discretion to federal agencies. The agencies then draft extensive rules and regulations to put the laws into practice, which inevitably annoy some groups of citizens, who routinely turn to their
representative in Congress for help. The member gains political credit for intervening on behalf of his constituents, even as the bureaucracy continues to enjoy considerable discretion. The result is not necessarily good or coherent policy, but it does promote the electoral interests of members and the career interests of bureaucrats. Numerous studies have ensued modeling mechanisms by which Congress influences bureaucratic decision making and debating the extent to which Congress and the president control the bureaucracy (see, e.g., Fiorina 1981; Weingast and Moran 1983; McCubbins and Schwarz 1984; McCubbins et al. 1987; Moe 1987, 1990; Ferejohn and Shpian 1990; Wood and Waterman 1991).

The third branch of rational choice work is commonly assigned to a genre called “new institutionalism.” Though it draws upon earlier congressional scholarship, this literature owes a good deal to social choice theory. This theory suggests that when individuals or institutions must make complicated choices involving policy options that cannot be placed along a single evaluative dimension, the probability that any single policy proposal will be able to defeat all other alternatives in pairwise majority voting becomes vanishingly small (Plott 1967). In the absence of a single equilibrium point, political outcomes may be expected to wander chaotically or to “cycle” uncertainly among alternative possibilities (McKelvey 1976). Yet observers had seldom criticized congressional politics for giving rise to ever-shifting outcomes; to the contrary, excessive policy stability had far more often been the concern (Tullock 1981).

Kenneth Shepsle and Barry Weingast argued that congressional institutions could resolve the puzzle of theoretical instability juxtaposed with real-world policy stability (Shepsle 1979; Shepsle and Weingast 1981). The basic claim was that the committee system restricts policy making to a single issue dimension at a time. This cuts off the lifeblood of cycling. The principal mechanisms, built into congressional rules, were committees’ monopoly proposal powers, plus House germaneness rules restricting floor amendments.

This work led scholars to explore further effects of congressional institutions. The main claim emerging from the Shepsle-Weingast approach is that committees tend to consist of members with a high demand for the policies in their jurisdiction and that congressional rules and procedures give such committees dominance over policy making within their domain. This claim tracks well with earlier committee studies that had come to much the same conclusion (e.g., Jones 1961). A further implication explored by the newer literature is that the committee system provides an enforcement mechanism for a giant institutional “logroll” in which members trade influence with one another, gaining power in the policy area they care most about (which, by assumption, is the jurisdiction covered by their committee), while sacrificing the ability to determine policy in areas less salient to them (see Weingast and Marshall 1988).
This line of argument (called a distributive model) has given rise to a spirited debate over whether committees are, in fact, composed of high demanders (see, e.g., Krehbiel 1991 and Adler and Lapinski 1997) and whether congressional rules do, in fact, grant committees monopoly proposal power. In recent years, two major theoretical perspectives within the “new institutionalism” genre have challenged distributive models: informational theory and majority-party government models.

Whereas distributive models focus on members’ gains from trade, informational models suggest that legislative institutions are designed to help members reap gains from specialization. The foundation for the informational approach emerged from a series of papers by Keith Krehbiel and Thomas Gilligan in the late 1980s, but the theory’s most definitive statement and empirical assessment is in Krehbiel’s *Information and Legislative Organization* (1991; see also Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987, 1989, 1990; King 1997). Krehbiel argues that committees are not autonomous entities but agents of the institution as a collective entity, supplying information that reduces individual legislators’ uncertainty about the consequences of diverse proposed bills. The institution creates committees that are representative of its own policy preferences, because representative committees are most likely to specialize and to transmit their information to the whole House. Krehbiel finds that committees are in general ideologically representative of the whole, and that representative, specialized committees are more likely to be granted protection from amendments when legislation is considered on the floor. Krehbiel’s second book, *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking* (1998), builds upon the majoritarian logic of the first, but adds supermajority institutions (i.e., the Senate cloture rule, presidential veto) and shows that several broad patterns in U.S. lawmaking can be accounted for through a nonpartisan model incorporating these features.

A third branch of the new institutionalism shifts the focus from committees to parties. In the formulation of Cox and McCubbins (1993), majority party members are united by their stake in the value of their common party label. To safeguard that label, the majority party establishes House institutions that provide it with built-in advantages throughout the legislative process. The majority party constitutes a “cartel” that uses the rule-making power of the House to bias the legislative process in its favor. Hence, committees are agents of the party.

In contrast to Cox and McCubbins’s portrayal of a consistent, strong bias in favor of the majority party, Rohde’s conditional party government model emphasizes variations over time in party strength. Rohde (1991) argues that party government depends on the degree of majority party unity on the major agenda items confronting Congress, and on the level of polarization between the majority and minority parties. Subsequent studies have both challenged and refined the conditional party government approach, fostering one of the more spirited
sets of debates in congressional studies. One key issue is how to measure party unity (referred to as homogeneity) and polarization without resorting to the same roll-call votes that are themselves measures of the dependent variable, party strength. Another is how to distinguish the effects of members’ preferences from the effects of their party affiliation, given that partisan theory suggests that preference measures are themselves contaminated by party effects (see Krehbiel 2000; McCarty et al. 2001; Snyder and Groseclose 2000).

In addition to focusing attention on the effects of congressional institutions, new institutionalist works raise important questions concerning the sources of congressional organization. These questions are perhaps most pressing for distributive theory, given its assumption of a multidimensional policy space. Why does the House abide by a specific allocation of agenda power to committees when there will generally be a majority of members who would benefit, at least in the short run, by reneging—for example, by changing committee jurisdictions or by overturning committee gatekeeping? (For one effort to tackle this problem, see Shepsle 1986.) At a broader level, under what conditions will distributive, partisan, or informational rationales take on a predominant role in influencing institutional design? Although such issues have been addressed through different types of work, they are particularly suited to historical approaches, which examine variations in institutions across time.

**Congressional History**

The volume of congressional scholarship that adopts a historical approach has increased dramatically in recent years. This trend does not imply that earlier scholarship ignored history. Indeed, congressional scholarship of the 1960s and 1970s contains numerous historical works that have had a lasting impact on the field. Jones (1968) used historical evidence concerning the Cannon speakership (1903–1911) to illuminate the battle to limit Howard Smith’s power as Rules Committee chairman in the early 1960s. This comparison provided an early foundation for the conditional party government literature that became prominent two decades later. Polsby (1968) traced changes in a diverse array of indicators showing increased organizational boundedness, internal complexity, and universalistic internal decision making across nearly two centuries of congressional history. The finding that many of these indicators of institutionalization “took off” in the 1890–1910 period helped make that era one of the most studied by scholars of congressional history.

The literature on party leadership in the 1960s and 1970s includes such historically oriented work as Jones’s classic, *The Minority Party in Congress* (1970; see also Ripley 1969, the companion work from the *Study of Congress* series). A major component in the literature on congressional committees was a
lively discussion concerning the origins of legislative professionalism and sen-iority (see Abram and Cooper 1968; Polsby et al. 1969; Price 1975; Budgor et al. 1981). Even the reforms of the 1970s led some scholars, most notably Larry Dodd, to consider recent developments within a broader historical framework. Dodd (1977) offered a cyclical model of congressional change rooted in the tension between individual members’ drive to exercise power and the institution’s policy-making capacity.

Joseph Cooper’s 1960 doctoral dissertation, published as Congress and Its Committees (1988), was a far-reaching investigation of the origins and development of the House committee system that not only supplied a rich information base for subsequent studies but also provided an institutionalist perspective that anticipated important elements of the informational theory of committees. (Several other articles and monographs grew out of the research; see, e.g., Cooper 1970.) Cooper’s dissertation previewed his approach in subsequent research on Congress, combining meticulous study of the historical record with insights derived from organization theory, and later rational choice theory, to gain a better understanding of institutional capacity and performance. A particularly nice example is Cooper and Young (1989), which provides a nuanced analysis of the origins of the modern bill introduction process.

David W. Brady, in his published dissertation Congressional Voting in a Partisan Era (1973), adopted the literature on institutionalization as his point of departure. In sharp contrast to the individualistic 1970s, Brady found considerable evidence that the two Congresses of the McKinley era (1897–1901) were characterized by party government. Althoff and Brady (1974) extended the analysis to cover the 1890–1910 period, finding once again considerable evidence that parties dominated the congressional scene. Brady’s early work hearkened back to the earlier literature on party government by providing a glimpse into what a system of “responsible party government” actually looks like. Brady et al. (1979) traced the decline in party voting from its height at the turn of the century to its low levels in the contemporary era. Brady’s later book, Critical Elections and Congressional Policy-Making (1988), draws upon realignment theory in offering a broad-scale account of the (rare) conditions under which both party government and major policy changes happen.

The article “Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn” (Cooper and Brady 1981a) did much to set the agenda for historically oriented scholarship over the next two decades. Cooper and Brady outlined a “contextual” theory of party leadership that highlighted the role of constituency characteristics and electoral institutions (e.g., partisan control of nominations) in explaining party strength in Congress. Using census data on manufacturing and agriculture from the 1880s to the 1910s, they showed that aggregate levels of party voting in Congress tracked changes in party polarization at
the constituency level. The centralization of power under Speakers Thomas Reed and Joseph Cannon in the 1890–1910 era thus reflected constituency cleavages more than the personal characteristics of the leaders themselves. The relative weakness of party leaders in more recent times reflects the huge gap between southern and northern Democrats’ constituencies, and parties’ weakness in the nominations process, rather than the failings of individual leaders. In addition to presaging later research described as conditional party government, this article suggested the potential for using historical data to illuminate the interplay between individual leadership and congressional institutions.

Recent work on congressional history is distinguished by its engagement with emerging literature on other American political institutions that flies the banner of “American political development” (APD). Among the best examples of APD research that focus on Congress are Hansen’s (1991) exploration of the development of the close relationship between congressional committees and farm interest groups, Kernell and MacDonald’s (1999) analysis of Congress’s role in initiating changes in the postal service, Sanders’s (1999) study of how congressional agrarians drove state development in the progressive era, and Stewart’s (1989) innovative analysis of budget reform politics. With these and a few other notable exceptions, Congress scholars have for the most part focused on the internal dynamics of congressional institutions, but they have not linked those developments to the major transformations in the scale of the national government or the powers of the other branches.

Recent work on congressional history also differs from earlier research in its emphasis on testing rational choice theories of congressional institutions. Books by Stewart (1989), Dion (1997), and Binder (1997), as well as Jenkins’s (1999) comparison of the U.S. and Confederate Congress, each used historical data as a new basis to evaluate and refine rational choice models that had been developed with the contemporary Congress in mind. This was not the sole goal of any of these studies, but it nonetheless was a contribution of each (see also Schickler 2000, 2001a and b; Jillson and Wilson 1994).

Earlier historical work on Congress also engaged in theoretical debates; but the theories at issue have changed from those derived from sociology and organization theory to those rooted in assumptions about individual maximizing. The turn to rational choice is less a distinctive feature of recent historical research than an outgrowth of broader currents in the field. Just as analyses of the present-day Congress are often framed in terms of rational choice models, so is much of the historically oriented research.

Another feature of today’s scholarship is explicit awareness of the goal of introducing a historical dimension in understanding congressional politics. One result has been an outpouring of conferences and panels at political science conventions that address historical themes.

Another is that cumulation of
knowledge is facilitated, as scholars with different methodological skills (quantitative, game theoretic, and qualitative) and different theoretical assumptions (rational choice, historical institutionalist, etc.) are reading one another’s work and learning from it.

The Infrastructure of Research

A final development that has contributed to the cumulation of knowledge has been the expansion in the infrastructure of research. As described above, the APSA congressional fellowship and “Study of Congress” were critical early innovations fostering a research community. Another significant development occurred with the founding of Legislative Studies Quarterly, which for more than a quarter century has served as a valuable outlet for research on Congress. Perhaps the most striking aspect of this expanding infrastructure has been the compilation and distribution of new datasets that measure theoretically relevant variables across an extensive time span. Congressional Quarterly has played an important role in compiling and promoting the dissemination of data, including measures of party unity, presidential support, lists of key votes, and so on. This journal has provided a consistent information base for scholars since the 1950s. The vast range of information presented in the Almanac of American Politics (since 1972), Politics in America (since 1999), and Vital Statistics on Congress (since 1980) has also been enormously useful for scholars. One of the most widely used of the new datasets has been Poole and Rosenthal’s (1991, 1997) NOMINATE scores, which estimate Congress members’ ideal points in a two-dimensional space. Poole & Rosenthal have computed these scores (and several variants thereof) for all Congresses from 1789 to the present. It is especially noteworthy that Poole and Rosenthal have freely distributed the scores to all interested scholars and have developed and distributed the VOTEVIEW software to make it especially easy for scholars to examine how individual roll calls map onto the two NOMINATE dimensions. The result has been an outpouring of studies that share a common set of measures and assumptions.  

In addition to Poole and Rosenthal, several other scholars have contributed major data-collection efforts to the field. Mayhew’s (1991) compilation of major laws enacted in the post–World War II era not only served as the dependent variable in his study of the effects of divided government, but also served as a linchpin of numerous subsequent studies of the same and related issues (e.g., this dataset is one of the main dependent variables in Krehbiel 1998). Another important example is the congressional hearings project undertaken by Bryan Jones, Frank Baumgartner, Valerie Hunt, and Michael Rosensteihl. Jones and his colleagues have constructed an impressive dataset with information on all hearings from 1947 through the mid-1990s and have made these data available to the
Conclusion

In this essay, we have concentrated on contributions made to the study of Congress by professional political scientists since 1945 and on the evolution of this literature over half a century. We are conscious, however, that the political science literature exists side by side with—and in many respects draws nourishment from—biographies, memoirs, and journalistic accounts of Congress and its members. There is no way to make a satisfactory short list of examples, but they would include Barry (1989), Biggs and Foley (1999), Bolling (1965), Cohen (1999), Evans and Novak (1966), Farrell (2001), Hardeman and Bacon (1987), Jacobs (1995), MacNeil (1963), Miller (1972), Patterson (1972), D. E. Price (1992), Voorhis (1948), White (1957), and Zelizer (1998). In addition, important contributions to congressional news and congressional lore are now available twice weekly from the Capitol Hill newspapers Roll Call and the Hill. More than a few of these works are of very high quality and deserve extended consideration in their own right, as does the formidable literature on congressional elections, to which so many of our colleagues have contributed significantly.

This survey of work over a protracted period has given us an opportunity to appreciate the development of clusters of activity, especially at Harvard in the immediate postwar era, then at Wisconsin over most of the span covered in this report, and later at Rochester. In political science, a discipline in which communication among scholars is not tightly articulated, a casual examination of the scholarly enterprise at any given time might well miss the extent to which forward movement has been provided by such mentors as Ralph K. Huitt at Wisconsin or William Y. Elliott at Harvard, by such organizational innovations as the two APSA projects or the creation, principally by William Riker, of the Rochester political science department. Our historical survey demonstrates the profound impact of exemplary scholarship, not only for its individual virtues but also as it resonates through the later work of students and successors. In the study of Congress, an academic community, though loosely bounded, does exist, providing good conversation, intellectual standards, problems, solutions, and suggestions for further inquiry.
An exercise of this sort can also teach us how political scientists find and shape their research agendas. The literature on Congress was for many years deeply influenced by the discipline-wide preoccupation with responsible parties on the British model. In the next stage, congressional research reflected wider concerns with the study of political behavior and social organization. More recently, rational choice approaches have entered the picture. Clearly, what happens in political science at large has guided the study of Congress.

That is perhaps half the story. The other half recognizes the importance of political events in generating research questions. Right in the middle of the period covered in this survey, Congress undertook significant reform, and changed in other ways that attracted the attention of scholars. We suppose that disciplines seeking to cumulate knowledge follow the inner logic of their own literature more frequently than they respond to events, but we do not think that attentiveness to events in shaping a research agenda precludes cumulativeness in a discipline. In any case, this hybrid character, responding both to priorities emerging in the literature and to changes in the political world, is what we observe in the study of Congress over the past half century.

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Notes

1. Initially presented at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. In writing this essay, we have drawn freely on our earlier work (Polsby 1984, 1990, 1998; Schickler 2001a). This essay also appears in the Annual Review of Political V, and is reprinted here by agreement with Annual Reviews Inc.

2. Honorable exceptions include Hughes (1976) and Hyman (1962).

3. Good examples of the earlier style include Galloway (1946), Griffith (1951), Burns (1949), and Kefauver and Levin (1947).

4. See also Dahl (1950), which takes as its main problem the extent to which Congress is capable of pursuing a rational and responsible foreign policy.

5. Perhaps the work on Congress in this era most focused on legislative process as competition among groups was Gross (1953).

6. Huitt’s doctoral students at Wisconsin included Charles O. Jones, Samuel C. Patterson, John W. Kingdon, Charles Backstrom, Lawrence Pettit, John Bibby, and Dale Vineyard. Despite Huitt’s long absence from teaching (1965–1978) while he worked in
Washington as Assistant Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare and Executive Director of the National Association of Universities and Land Grant Colleges, he created something close to a Wisconsin dynasty in congressional studies. Consider his student Samuel C. Patterson, whose main impact as a scholar was in comparative legislative studies rather than as a specialist in Congress alone. Patterson was a founder of *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, the leading journal in the field; coauthor of an important text, *The Legislative Process in the United States* (Patterson and Jewell 1966); and, in a lengthy teaching career at the University of Iowa and Ohio State University, was himself mentor to several congressional scholars (Huitt’s academic grandchildren), notably David W. Brady, Garrison Nelson, John Alford, and John Hibbing. We mention below some of the contributions of Kingdon, Hibbing, Brady, and Jones.

7. His work on Congress, collected posthumously, makes a very interesting book (Huitt 1990). An earlier, less complete assembly of his work can be found in Huitt and Peabody (1969).

8. Three are discussed below; the fourth (Huitt 1957) addressed the politics behind the celebrated 1952–1953 controversy surrounding the decision of Sen. Wayne Morse to leave the Republican Party and seek committee assignments from the whole Senate.

9. Winner of APSA’s Woodrow Wilson Prize in 1950, Bailey (Harvard Ph.D., 1948) had also been a Rhodes Scholar at University College, Oxford, in 1939 and a tutee of, among others, Harold Wilson. At the time of publication, Bailey (1916–1982) was on the faculty of Wesleyan University, which had no graduate students in political science. While at Wesleyan, Bailey took a great interest in practical politics, and he served as Mayor of Middletown, Connecticut (1952–1954) before moving on to Princeton in 1954 and then to Syracuse in 1959, where he became Dean of the Maxwell School of Citizenship. Later he taught at the Harvard (graduate) School of Education.


11. Another early example of an empirical study of party voting is Julius Turner’s *Party and Constituency: Pressures on Congress* (1951). Turner analyzed party cohesion on roll-call voting in selected Congresses from 1921 to 1944. Like Truman, he found evidence of substantial partisanship, though with considerable variation across issue areas.

12. A condensed version was later incorporated into Bauer et al. (1963), which won the APSA Woodrow Wilson Prize in 1963 (see also Dexter 1969).

13. Although Masters’s article was clearly influenced by Huitt’s approach to the study of Congress, he wrote his Ph.D. thesis at Wisconsin with David Fellman. Later in his career, Masters became a senior staff member on the House Budget Committee and the key access point for John Gilmour’s book *Reconcilable Differences? Congress, the Budget Process, and the Deficit* (1990).

14. Fenno’s paradox raises the topic of public distrust, and the study of public disapproval of Congress has been a recent growth area (see Hibbing and Thiess-Morse 1995; Cooper 1999; Uslaner 1993).


16. Peterson (1990) is an excellent companion to Jones’s study. Peterson uses a random sample of 299 presidential domestic legislative proposals to investigate the institutional
and political conditions under which Congress accepts, modifies, or rejects presidential initiatives.


18. This book grew directly out of Mayhew's experience as an APSA Congressional Fellow. In neither this book nor his first, as it happens, did Mayhew employ the highly individual and labor-intensive technique of investigation that became his hallmark: framing a big issue and then creating a dataset designed expressly to resolve the issue by ransacking the library for newspaper and textbook coverage of relevant historical examples. *Divided We Govern* (Mayhew 1991) shows that national government divided between the major parties is roughly as productive as government united under the leadership of a single party. *Placing Parties in American Politics: Organization, Electoral Settings, and Government Activity in the Twentieth Century* (Mayhew 1986) assesses each state's level of party organization, tracing variation to geographically rooted traditions and showing that states with a high level of party organization tend to have lower state expenditures relative to their income level. *America's Congress: Actions in the Public Sphere, James Madison through Newt Gingrich* (Mayhew 2000) shows the distribution of “significant” member actions throughout American history and relates the propensity to perform such actions to several theoretically relevant variables (party, seniority, and so on).

19. Davidson (Columbia Ph.D., 1963) moved from academic political science to the Library of Congress and back to academia again. Oleszek (SUNY, Albany, Ph.D., 1968) is one of a significant corps of congressional scholars who have made their careers at the Library and made the Library an important resource for the entire discipline. Others include Louis Fisher, Ronald Moe, Stanley Bach, Richard Beth, and the late Walter Kravitz.

20. Another stream of literature considered the major expansion in committee and personal staff that coincided with the reform era (Fox and Hammond 1977; Kofmehl 1977; Malbin 1980). The increase in committee staffing began with the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 but picked up steam once again in the 1970s.

21. This article’s findings were anticipated by Polsby et al. (1969).


23. Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991) argue that the House Appropriations Committee is the agent of the majority party caucus.

24. Krehbiel (1993, 1998) has been the most forceful critic. For refinements and elaborations on the conditional party government perspective, see Aldrich and Rohde (1998, 2000).

25. A second article (Cooper and Brady 1981b) calls for increased attention to the study of congressional history and suggests several ways to make such studies more systematic and theoretically informed. See also the comments on this article by Patterson (1981) and Polsby (1981).

26. Brady had focused on constituency characteristics in his earlier work, and he has built upon this argument in subsequent research on the House and Senate (see, e.g., Brady
et al. 1989; Brady and Epstein 1997). For a somewhat different account of the Reed-Cannon era, see Schickler (2001b, chap. 2).

27. Swift’s (1996) book on the Senate, though focused on internal dynamics, links with broader themes of democratization in the APD literature, as does Rothman (1966). Bensel’s (1984, 2000) ongoing research on sectionalism is a further example of APD research that has also contributed to our understanding of Congress. Poole and Rosenthal (1997) have related internal institutional politics to broader political outcomes. Mayhew (2000) also offers an innovative approach to linking congressional politics to American political development, broadly construed.

28. In 1985–1986, shortly before the increase in the volume of work on congressional history, the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences hosted a yearlong congressional history working group that consisted of Allan G. Bogue, David W. Brady, Nelson W. Polsby, and Joel H. Silbey. This group produced one joint product (Bogue et al. 1986) and three individually authored books (Brady 1988; Bogue 1989; Silbey 1991).

29. This is not to say that NOMINATE scores are without critics. For an alternative methodology for estimating ideal points, see Heckman and Snyder (1997). The summer 2001 special issue of Political Analysis offers an extremely useful set of articles that indicate the present state of the art of estimation of legislators’ preferences.

30. Although Fenno has been the leading congressional scholar in the Rochester department over the past forty years, Riker (e.g., 1962, 1986) has also had a lively interest in Congress and its history.