

The Legislative Scholar

The Newsletter of the Legislative Studies Section of the American Political Science Association

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Passing on the Lessons of Legislative Scholars

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and
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Welcome to our Fall 2016 issue of *The Legislative Scholar*! One of our central roles as scholars is to pass on what we've learned. This includes training the next generation of political scientists and passing on our passion and lessons to undergraduates and graduate students. Our current issue of *The Legislative Scholar* includes symposia on teaching, mentoring, and training graduate and undergraduate students, a special topic looking at the state budget situation in Illinois, and an overview on the automated coding of Congressional roll call votes.

Symposium I: Teaching, Mentoring and Training Students

Thanks to all the scholars who contributed to this symposium. They all have an excellent track record on training, advising, and mentoring students, and many have received awards for their teaching and mentoring of undergrads and graduate students. We posed a wide range of questions to our contributors: What would an ideal training program for graduate students look like? What skills or classes should they prioritize? When is it useful to conduct interviews with legislators or spend significant time on the Hill? How has data availability changed the research process? How can innovative activities enhance our undergraduate courses?

The first set of articles explores overarching questions of graduate training and how we can help our students succeed on the increasingly tight job market. Tom Carsey from UNC, David Rohde from Duke, and Wendy Schiller from Brown provide their views on the how to prepare young scholars to study the U.S. Congress and the legislatures of the 50 states. A common argument is that graduate training should have a holistic approach, with students learning advanced methods and also substance, but keeping in mind the causal and data generating process. An additional piece from Carol Mershon will follow in our next issue.

The next set of articles offer advice on making the most of interviews and legislative fieldwork, and the value of collecting original data. Stefanie Bailer from the University of Basel and Ronald Peters from the University of Oklahoma provide valuable information and specific advice on how to

ask questions and get legislators talking. Ross Baker from Rutgers reflects on the advantages of conducting field work on the Hill, and how scholars should approach this type of research. Mark Jones from Rice University extends this perspective to the international context, providing a view of fieldwork in legislative studies on "hills" around the world. Paulina Cossette of Jacksonville University discusses the value of spending time as an APSA Congressional Fellow and how to make the most of this opportunity. Finally, Jonathan Winburn of the University of Mississippi explores some of the pros and cons of collecting large-scale original data on state legislatures.

Symposium II: Engaging Undergraduate Students in the Classroom

The second set of articles focus on innovative approaches to undergraduate training. Heather Evans from San Houston State University focuses on the use of twitter and other social media in the classroom. John Wilkerson from University of Washington, and Larry Evans from William and Mary explain their work with undergraduates using simulations that mirror the legislative environment.

Current Events: The Budget Stalemate in Illinois

In this issue, we also expand the newsletter to encompass two other items that excited us in the original proposal. The first is a scholarly take on current events. For this issue, we asked Chris Mooney at IGPA and the University of Illinois to help us make sense of the budgetary stalemate facing the Illinois legislature; a microcosm of the gridlock facing many legislatures and the U.S. Congress.

Dataset: Automated Coding of Congressional Roll Call Voting

Finally, we include a new section about datasets in the sub-field. For this section, our goal is to invite scholars who are intimately involved in a new or revised, publicly available dataset to discuss the particular characteristics of the data and the ways that other scholars might be able to use it to answer novel research questions. For this issue, we asked Michael Crespin of the University of Oklahoma and Carl Albert Center to share about the new automated coding of Congressional roll call votes.

Conclusion

Hopefully you enjoy this issue of *The Legislative Scholar*. We welcome suggestions and ideas you may have for possible symposia and current events you'd like us to tackle in future issues (as well as offers to write for the newsletter). We also welcome offers to tell the legislative studies community about new datasets you've developed. You can reach us at l-harbridge@northwestern.edu or gsin@illinois.edu.

Gisela and Laurel

SYMPOSIUM I: TEACHING, MENTORING AND TRAINING GRADUATE STUDENTS

A. GENERAL GRADUATE TRAINING

Studying the Legislatures of the United States

by [Thomas M. Carsey](#)

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

In this essay, I offer some thoughts on preparing young scholars to study the U.S. Congress and the legislatures of the 50 states. New theories, data, and methods have revolutionized the legislative politics field. As a result, there is simply more to know now than a generation ago. There is no way around this – there are no shortcuts, magic formulas, or corners to cut. Hard work and commitment are the only options. You must read, think, analyze, write, and question a lot. Let's get started!

Separate Tables

Gabriel Almond (1988, 1990) lamented what he saw as political scientists divided into camps based on their approaches to scholarship. He used the metaphor of sitting at separate tables at a restaurant – where conversation and intellectual exchange takes place among those at the same table, but does not reach groups sitting at other tables. Good graduate training builds bridges across groups to make political science a more coherent and integrated endeavor. This holistic view guides the advice that follows.

Institutions versus Behavior

Many scholars, graduate programs, and individual courses implicitly or explicitly divide the field of American politics into the study of institutions and the study of behavior. I have never agreed with this. All of American politics consists of both – voters, legislators, and countless other political actors engage in behaviors of all types. In every circumstance, those behaviors are shaped by rules, norms, or other structures that we would call institutions. Thus, the study of legislative politics is the study of legislature of behavior that is influenced by the institutional structures within the legislature as well as the broader environment. Thus, legislative scholars need training in both institutions and behavior as typically defined.

Quantitative versus Qualitative

The use of quantitative methods to study legislative politics has grown with the development of new statistical methods, but more so with the explosion of available data. Election returns, committee assignments, roll call votes, campaign spending, and the like are increasingly available at both the national and state level. At the same time, legislative scholarship has a rich tradition of qualitative analyses. These should not be at odds – both quantitative and qualitative approaches can be systematic and empirical. Both produce data that can be used to reveal general patterns and identify unusual cases. Modern text mining approaches applied to bills, floor speeches, press releases, and tweets further blur the lines between quantitative and qualitative methods. Like any tools, quantitative and qualitative methods can be used well or poorly. In many circumstances, a holistic understanding of any political process requires the use of multiple methods applied to a range of data types. Modern training requires advanced quantitative methods, but that does not diminish the need for qualitative methods training.

Know The Rules

Quantitative data for the U.S. Congress and the state legislatures is now widely available. The benefits of this are obvious, but one downside is that researchers can begin analysis of such data with little or no substantive knowledge. This risks producing studies that are wrong and misleading. I once saw a very senior scholar's paper completely, though politely, undermined by a more junior scholar who pointed out a subtle but critical feature of the rules in the House of Representatives that had been ignored. Gaps in substantive knowledge can be magnified at the state level. States exhibit substantial variation on a host of institutional features. Some, like term limits and the level of professionalization, are well-known and widely studied. Others are much more obscure. For example, some states cap the number of bills a legislator can introduce, some states permit cosponsorship of bills across chambers, and some states have rules like germaneness for amendments embedded in their state constitutions rather than at the discretion of the members of the chamber. Failure to know and understand these details can turn even the most sophisticated formal model or statistical analysis into garbage.

Know The Actors

I routinely direct my students who study legislatures to go interview legislators, their staff members, reporters, lobbyists, and others who directly interact with legislators. There is no substitute for talking with the people whose behavior you seek to understand. Certainly political elites have incentives to misrepresent their motives and rationalize their behaviors. Still, conversations with legislators will help reveal how they understand legislative politics and their role in representative democracy. They will not use our academic jargon to describe what they do, but we as scholars should be able to translate from their language to ours. If your theory

of legislative politics cannot explain how legislators themselves speak to you, your theory is probably wrong.

Know the History

Political institutions evolve time. They are shaped by those within them as well as forces on the outside, but often change is slow. This creates some path dependence in institutions that affects how they behave. Knowing the history of institutions will help inform how we understand the impact of those institutions on current behavior.

Theory and the Data Generating Process

As a general rule, good scholarship rests on articulating and then testing a theory. A theory is an explanation of why some process works the way it does. Why do legislators vote the way they do, campaign the way they do, interact with the executive branch the way they do, etc.? When we begin to answer these questions with, “Because . . .”, everything after the “because” is a theoretical statement. Data analysis absent a guiding theory could hold some useful descriptive or exploratory value, but such analysis can never provide independent explanation of the process under study.

However, scholars often separate the development of theory from its quantitative evaluation. This can result in a mismatch between the assumptions guiding the theory and the assumptions guiding the statistical analysis. This can be avoided by focusing on what’s called the data generating process. To say that a theory explains why some process works the way it does is the same as saying what process leads an outcome variable interest to take on the values that it does. Statistical models like regression equations are formal representations of data generating processes. They require a delineation of all the variables involved, attention to how they are measured, the expression of how variables combine to produce the expected value of the outcome variable, and a description of the stochastic or random portion of the outcome variable of interest. Just like a theory rests on assumptions, a statistical model also rests on assumptions as does the method used estimate the parameters of the model. Making sure that your model of the data generating process is compatible with your theory ensures that your empirical analysis will be testing what you think it is testing. Thus, good graduate training should focus on the integration of rebuilding and theory testing. Treating both as linked by trying to understand a data generating process can help accomplish this goal.

Violating iid

Legislatures and legislators do not operate or exist in isolation. They influence and are influenced by voters, interest groups, the media, and the other branches of government. In the United States, this influence also flows between the national and subnational levels. Legislators are also likely influenced by other legislators in the chamber. In short, legislative politics should be understood as a relational process. This has both theoretical and methodological implications. From a theoretical standpoint, a significant challenge is to

determine the causal process that links legislative behavior to other phenomenon. Take the simple act of passing laws – if the legislature knows that a governor might veto a law, will the legislature change its behavior in anticipation of that possibility? More generally, this means legislative politics scholars should not develop theories limited only to legislatures themselves. Theories of legislative politics must consider voters, interest groups, and other institutions. They should also consider crosscutting factors like political parties. A theory about the role of parties within legislatures must also be consistent with a theory about parties in elections and what party means to voters.

From a methodological standpoint, the most commonly used statistical models assume that observations on the dependent variable, after controlling for the factors in the model, are independently and identically distributed, or iid. This assumption likely never holds in legislative data. For example, if legislators are influenced by each other in ways that are not captured by the statistical model, the observations are not independent. Similarly, if clusters of legislators behave similarly in ways that are not accounted for by the model, the observations will not be identically distributed. This kind of clustering might emerge among legislators who share the same party, committee assignment, or come from the same state. Anyone seeking to become an expert in legislative politics will need to learn methods designed for relational data. At the very least, this should include methods for multilevel/clustered data as well, including pooled time series data, as well as methods for social network analysis. Given the geographic basis of representation in the United States, students would also be well served to learn spatial statistics and some GIS/mapping skills.

We Are All Comparativists

Research focused on explanation and inference requires that we make comparisons. We might compare Democrats to Republicans, House members to Senators, or the Nebraska legislature to the Kansas legislature. We might compare the behavior of members of a legislature before and after a significant reform, or members that serve in multimember districts compared to single member districts, or members facing term limits compared to those who do not. We are always making comparisons. This is true even if we study one legislature, like the Congress, or just one chamber, like the U.S. Senate. However, with the explosion of data at the state level, the increased variance that states provide across legislative institutions, and the rapid maturing of scholarship at the state level, the expectation that scholars of American legislatures study more than one of them has grown substantially. Some of the most theoretically and methodologically integrated research being done in legislative politics focuses on the U.S. states. Useful and interesting work can still be done on single chambers, but building and testing generalizable theory requires extending the analysis to multiple legislatures. Students of legislators in the United States must be trained as comparativists.

What This Means for Training

The best training for budding legislative scholars will be holistic. Students should learn the details of the legislative chambers in question, but they must also understand how those legislatures fit into a broader context. They must learn to build theories that extend beyond single chambers or single legislatures. They must gain the statistical skills necessary to analyze complex clustered relational data, but they must also learn to talk to individual legislators. In my view, graduate seminars on the Congress should be replaced with more general seminars on legislative politics. Similarly, seminars on behavior should not be limited to mass behavior but also consider the behavior of political elites like legislators. Methods training should include advanced statistical training as well as elite interviewing. Substantial attention should be given to learning how to develop theories and especially on how to connect those theories to models of data generating process. This should begin in that initial scope and methods class that so many graduate programs have, and that so many graduate students despise. However, linking theories to data generating processes should also be part a more advanced substantive seminars and quantitative methods courses.

Ethics – With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility

All science must consider whether the act of studying or measuring something also changes it. Putting a thermometer in a glass of cold water changes the temperature of the water as the thermometer is cooled. Often such changes are trivial, but in the study legislatures, they could be substantial. When we interview or survey legislators, or when we publish papers about their behavior, we open the potential for changing their future behavior. Given that legislators make policies for us all, we should think carefully about how we structure these interactions. This is particularly evident when conducting survey-based or field experiments. Such experiments often include deception, and field experiments in particular can constitute significant interventions into the real political world. Graduate training in legislative politics should strongly consider adopting a noninterference norm.

Similarly, scholars should be trained to consider how conducting their study might influence the ability of themselves or others to perform future studies. Legislators may decline to participate in future projects if experience deception, embarrassment, or simply an overwhelming number of requests for surveys or interviews. Legislative politics scholars should consider the legislators they study as a common pool resource that should not be polluted or overused. The legislative politics field should look to Elinor Ostrom's Nobel prize-winning work on the self-governance of common pool resources for collective guidance.

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*I am the Pearsall Distinguished Professor of Political Science and the Director of the Odum Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I would like to thank all of my current and former graduate students for enduring my advice since 1995. I would particularly like to thank several former graduate students – all gainfully employed – who recently offered their thoughts on the question of what constitutes good graduate training for legislative politics students. Their ideas are featured prominently in this essay. All errors of commission and omission are mine alone.

Reflections on Graduate Training and the Future of the Discipline: An Interview with David Rohde

by [Andrew Ballard](#)
with
[David Rohde](#)
Duke University

Question: Today I am going to be interviewing Dave [Rohde] for the newsletter of the legislative studies section of APSA about how to train the next generation of scholars. Because Dave has been a faculty member longer than I have been alive, his perspective is a good one. So let's get right into it. First question, it's a pretty broad one: could you describe your philosophy of how to train graduate students?

Prof. Rohde: Sure. My philosophy is shaped a lot by my own experience as a graduate student at the University of Rochester, which was a career-shaping experience for me. And that experience had many plusses, and when I've thought about graduate training in general, I've thought about ways to incorporate those plusses, and ways to add some additional ones. The shortest characterization I could offer is that I decided a long time ago that I thought the best way to train graduate students to do research – and that's the main part of graduate training as far as I'm concerned, it's

the main contribution I can make – the best way to do that is to do research with them, with me and other faculty. And secondarily encouraging graduate students to do research with each other. Because in that setting, all kinds of questions and issues come up that students will face for the rest of their careers in building their own research agenda and repertoire. So there are almost an infinite number of teachable moments, thinking about how to pitch work, what your target audience is, what reviewers at journals want to hear, how the subfield will react, whether it will be received gladly or seen as a threat to the established order. All kinds of things like that come up in the course of a research project. And when I've done collaborative work with my students, I've tried to use it to talk about all of those things.

When you were at Rochester, you were one of the first generation of students studying the rational choice paradigm in political science. There was a lot of experimentation there in terms of how to train graduate students, so how much of your philosophy comes from your experience as a student versus your experience as a faculty member?

If I had to divide between them I would say disproportionately from my experience as a graduate student. I arrived at Rochester in 1967, which was just when the first PhD was awarded. The program was very small then, less than a dozen faculty, and it was very focused as you say on rational choice theory as a paradigm for the discipline. Bill Riker was the founder of the graduate program. Richard Fenno was there before Riker and was instrumental in attracting him to be the first department chair with the PhD program. It was my experience especially with those two people that helped to shape my thoughts. The other aspect of it was that I learned in graduate school is that no matter how good the faculty are, and no matter how giving of their time – and I was a great time eater of my professors I must say – in a really good graduate program you will learn more from your colleagues than you will from your professors, because you spend 10 or 15 times more time with them than faculty. And I was blessed with what is to the best of my knowledge the greatest cohort in the history of political science. It's mind-boggling just how many people were accidentally in the same place at the same time. And I learned so much from them; we interacted constantly, all during the workday and in meetings and whatnot.

One of the things that you're part of here at Duke is the Political Institutions and Public Choice program, or PIPC, which you started at Michigan State. As I understand it, PIPC directly follows from this vision of yours about how to train graduate students through research. Could you tell us a bit about how PIPC was created and how your philosophy is enacted through it?

You're right that PIPC is a direct reflection of what we've been talking about. When I talk about the program to prospective students, what I usually say is that each of you will come to a point as professionals when you say "if I had

enough money, I know how this [graduate training] should be done". I was fortunate enough that Michigan State was willing to provide resources that gave me the opportunity to create this program. It was a little different than it is here in terms of the number of students and it was much more individually focused on me, whereas here there is a lot more collaboration with my colleague John Aldrich. PIPC was

"...in a really good graduate program you will learn more from your colleagues than you will from your professors..."

designed as an opportunity to put into practice the collaborative research between me and graduate students. It worked extraordinarily well, I think, and I don't feel too much hubris in saying that because of the record we've established. At Michigan State, every single student in PIPC got a job at a PhD granting institution and every single one of them got tenure. I don't know of any other program that can make that claim. Here we don't have as much of a long time-frame, but the same sort of success seems to be exhibited. The students develop research agendas, they publish, and that makes them attractive relative to their competitors. The comparative advantage is less great now than it was at the beginning of the program. Then it was so rare for graduate students to establish such a record and it has become more common now. And some of that may be a reflection of PIPC's success, as other places have done things like what we have done in order to advance the cause of their students as well.

Speaking of the job market, what advice would you give potential students going onto the job market? Is there anything other than "publish papers" that matters?

I would say there's more than that, although that's a good thing. Just to take that aspect first: departments, especially good departments, don't want to waste their hiring decisions. That is, they want to hire people that they hope will succeed, succeed being defined as establishing a record which is sufficient to grant tenure. That revolves around research, so the more a job candidate is able to demonstrate their capacity to generate high-quality research in reasonable volumes, the more likely it is for the hiring department to hire them. Other aspects in terms of getting ready revolve around what to do in training. Especially here at Duke, we place strong emphasis on methodological training, and over my time here that emphasis has monotonically increased in importance. Part of that reflects the demands of the market, as it is much more difficult to get "tooled up", as we say, today than when I was a job candidate. One of the reasons we place so much emphasis on it is that it is extraordinarily difficult to make a big leap in technical capability once you're already out because the other demands on you are so great. The time to get as much methods training as you can is when you're a graduate student. And then there's the teaching side; it's not the principal emphasis in PIPC but it

is training that most of our students get. John and I try to help students to rise to those responsibilities and grow as teachers as well.

So methods training and collaborative research are two important aspects of graduate training. What do you see as the value of non-methodological, substantive coursework in graduate school? How does that function in training?

It serves a variety of purposes. One is to give students a sense of what the both previous and current major issues in a subfield are. And that can be broad, as you might do in a core seminar in American politics where you spend no more than a week or on any given topic, but also in more focused settings like the seminar I teach on Congress, which is designed to show students where the current conflicts came from, what they are, and what is still unsettled. Those are the types of questions that students would want to focus on as opportunistic researchers, helping subfields along and raising the likelihood that a journal will want to publish what they have to say. It's not an easy thing to do, especially in Congress, because the literature is just so vast, and such high quality I think. In my seminar I can only introduce students to a small fraction of all they have to look at. So it's more in the way of high quality examples, or important examples.

My interpretation of that is that the utility students get out of substantive coursework is learning how to frame their work and what questions to ask.

I think that's right. The other thing I was going to mention is helping to develop critical faculties, which is part of looking at previous research and seeing whatever its merits were, how it might have fallen short of addressing the important questions, or how it might have missed some aspects. One of the best avenues to getting published is to be able to look at a subfield, find a question that other people regard as settled, and to be able to assert that that understanding is incorrect, and to be able to make it stick. That's almost a sure path to success.

With that in mind, if you could recommend three books for all legislative studies graduate students to read, what would they be?

You showed me the potential questions, and that was by far the hardest question. If this were 50 books maybe — I'll stick with three — but as I say the literature is vast and as you know I recommend that people constantly read. So if I have to pick only 3, they will reflect to some degree my background and the bifurcation of the Congressional subfield. My three picks are, first, the book by one of my colleagues [at Duke], Mat McCubbins and Gary Cox, *Setting the Agenda*. I think it's a terrific book following on their earlier terrific book, *Legislative Leviathan*, which contributes a great deal to our understanding of Congress in general and the House of Representatives in particular. It is a mix of high-level quantitative work, originally gathered data which I think is a great thing that you know I place emphasis on.

It also has historical perspective and a strong base in formal theory. That is a book that everybody should read and many people should emulate. The second is also sticking with the House, Dick Fenno's book on Congressmen and their constituencies, *Homestyle*. I emphasize that because it shows first how much of a contribution one can make with qualitative data, in this case interview-based, but there are also types of archival research and things like that one can do that aren't quantitative. I think that book also shows us, because I think very highly of the findings in it, how much we would miss if we didn't have this perspective. That is, it's hard for me to imagine how one could tap the same kinds of perspectives and information with only quantitative analysis on the subject, so that is a big plus. The third is a bit harder,

"One of the best avenues to getting published is to be able to look at a subfield, find a question that other people regard as settled, and to be able to assert that that understanding is incorrect, and to be able to make it stick."

because I decided I wanted to pick something on the Senate, and I wanted to pick something that has contributed a great deal to our current understanding on the Senate. So I thought of three books and went with the most recent, which is Steve Smith's book on the *Senate Syndrome*. The others would be Barbara Sinclair's *Party Wars* and Frances Lee's *Beyond Ideology*. What Steve does in this book is—again, it has a historical perspective, it has a strong quantitative perspective, it has a lot of observations from his experience as a close student of the Senate, and shows us how tremendously the Senate has changed over the course of my career, and offers strong explanations for why. So those would be my three.

I would also recommend that everyone read *Parties and Leaders in the Post-Reform House*, by somebody sitting in this room. How do you find yourself coming up with ideas for research? I mean in your day-to-day life. Is it in the shower, when you're working, when you're not working, all over the place?

Actually, over the years, it tends to be all over the place. But it usually has the characteristic of something I mentioned earlier: seeing things that either are regarded as settled in the subfield that I think are not settled or not right, or questions that have been left hanging in the subfield, when something occurs to me to make contributions to the subfield. In addition, increasingly over the second half of my career a very large part of my research agenda has been writing about further elaboration and testing of theoretical ideas that I developed earlier, the principal among these is conditional party government, which is the book that you mentioned. That was formulated and published a quarter of a century ago, and the root ideas go back even further. The ideas articulated in that became the place for the expansion and elaboration

and further testing that John Aldrich and I did once the Republicans took control in 1994, and that we've been engaged in ever since. It tends to be a mix of elaboration and extension coupled with some new ideas that are often the result of the way that the context has changed, that the environment has changed. The work that you and I and others are doing on the role of campaign finance and parties in Congress is a reflection of the way that landscape has changed. When I started out, parties played essentially no role in the financing of elections, and now they play an important role.

There can be a tendency I think, from talking to people, that there can be all these ideas that you might be working on even you're not sitting at a computer or in a classroom. So the balance or demarcation between work and non-work is pretty fuzzy for many of us. How can you advise graduate students in terms of that work-life balance?

Again, as you know, something that I say to virtually every student I've worked closely with is that no matter how important your professional life is to you, it can't be your whole life. Even from the point of view of your own health, I believe it's extraordinarily important to have other things in your life that occupy you and that you derive joy from. This is advice that I didn't have and didn't come to the realization until a few years into my career that I observed this, when my professional activity was all-consuming, and it turned out to be not very good for me. Luckily this happened early enough that it was easy to make an adjustment. Maybe I have gone too far in the other direction, but I have a host of hobbies that occupy me that have absolutely nothing to do with political science. Board gaming and fantasy baseball are two of those. I am a reader of fiction, especially science fiction, and I spend a good amount of time doing that. That plus my family has permitted me to retain a good balance between work and life. It often doesn't leave enough time for sleep; I've been blessed that for most of my life I've found I could get by on relatively little sleep, so it might be harder for other people. But regardless of how, having the balance is extremely important.

This is an interesting subject for me to bring up with someone who evaluates my work on a consistent basis, but sometimes it is difficult as a graduate student to get a true sense of your advisors' appraisals of your work, either because they fear they'll be too harsh, or not harsh enough, or what have you. What can students and faculty do to decrease that uncertainty about how faculty feel about students' work?

I'm smiling because I remember being in this position. I had a relatively brief graduate experience, but when I was getting ready to go out on the job market—the job market was very different then than it is today, there wasn't a publication that had a list of all the job openings, job openings were spread by word of mouth and faculty would tout their students to other departments regardless of whether they had an opening—I went to one of my professors and said “Where

do you think I should try to go? What do you think I'm suited for?” These days, students have more information I hope, especially in a fairly interactive environment like ours. But as you say, there is often uncertainty. The first thing I would say is for students to engage seriously with the faculty members they trust on exactly that question. If the graduate experience is operating well, there will be a lot of opportunities for interaction from which students can draw good inferences: collaborative research projects or courses provide some information, personal interactions provide additional information. Some of it comes automatically and some of it comes when it's sought. I think that's sort of the best I can do as a general characterization.

That comes a lot from the side of the students trying to seek out feedback. Do you see that there's anything faculty can do?

Faculty members have different styles with regard to this. Some people are extremely critical and they're revealing ways in which the student has fallen short in their estimation. That's not my style, I must say, but I've certainly observed it in others. My efforts are to foster development, encourage people, but not in ways that build a false picture. So I don't tell students I think things are good unless I think they're good, but I do try to let students know that we all face these issues. That is, we don't stop being evaluated once you finish your graduate education, you don't ever stop being evaluated even once you have tenure, even once you have a distinguished professorship. My old friend John Ferrejohn said that every academic must realize that somewhere out there is a graduate student with your name on them. As I said earlier, a great avenue to academic success is to find weakness in other peoples' work. Because of that, there's always somebody out there looking for weaknesses in your work. I find that while it is possible for graduate students to get an inflated, unjustified view of their own worth, that is pretty rare. The problems tend in the opposite direction, so I try to make clear how—especially when you start trying to publish and you get rejects back, that in the top journals the acceptance rates are about 8%, so 11 chances out of 12 you're likely to be turned down. If people start trying to publish early, and they're doing good work, and you can engineer situations for them to be successful, they start to see that there is a chance they can be make it in this and to avoid the major pitfalls in this process. I've watched more junior faculty fail because they couldn't let go of their work. They didn't want to send it out until it's perfect, and it's never going to be perfect. I had the good fortune to work with a few of the giants in the profession—Riker and Fenno—and I remember one time with Fenno in exactly this exchange, he said about a manuscript of this “this is not the best work I can do; this is the best work I can do right now and it's going out”.

Shifting gears a slight amount here. During graduate school, especially as the academic job market hasn't recovered from the recession in the way that many would like, there are fewer faculty lines in a lot of places, people are retiring later, but the size of cohorts hasn't changed so there are fewer jobs for lots of people. So many graduate students find—either of their own willingness or not—that there is not an academic career in their future. How do you think faculty can help, and how have you helped, prepare students for non-academic careers?

If I have a particular benefit to provide for students it's mostly in terms of academic training. I have certainly had students that decided either that an academic career is not something that they want to pursue or that they don't want to have an academic career in a high-intensity research environment. One thing I try to do is to be supportive of students who come to that conclusion, to say there's nothing wrong with that. Especially when I talk to my undergraduates, some of whom might be thinking about graduate school, I tell them this is not a life for everybody. You have to be able to tolerate certain things, the most important of which is to spend a very large amount of time alone. If you are not a person who thrives on solitude, the academic career is probably not for you, that's just my judgment. In the same vein, a policy job or a job in business, or a job at a teaching college rather than a PhD granting institution, are all perfectly fine. If that's what a student wants to do, I'll do everything I can to increase their chances of pursuing that and being successful.

Speaking of undergraduates, there is a large difference in political science, perhaps larger than in other fields, in the way the discipline is taught at the undergraduate versus graduate level. 1) How do you think that manifests as a potential problem in graduate training? and 2) What advice do you offer undergraduates thinking of a career as an academic?

Those two questions go right together, I think. You're absolutely correct that the type of coursework that undergraduate students do is very different from graduate work because of the technical side, the methodological side. A very large portion of graduate training is about methods courses, only a very small portion of undergraduate training is. When undergraduates come to me and say they're thinking of an academic career, my advice is principally that they get as much methodological training as they can, and what I mean by that is math and statistics, things that will give them the tools to take the work in graduate school. You don't need to come out of undergraduate as an expert in methods, but you need the skills and tools that will allow you to thrive in graduate school. I'm forever recommending among the small number of students I get that are thinking of this, telling them to take more math and at least early statistics classes. Some of them, at least the really smart students we get around here, are quickly ready for more advanced methods training and take some of our graduate methods classes. Not everybody can do that, but some number of them do. That's the way

in which they could improve their chances of being successful. They don't have to know the substance before graduate school, they don't even necessarily have to get the substance in graduate school, because you can pick up a lot of that later on, at least that's what Bill Riker used to tell us. Even when I was a graduate student we took statistics and formal theory and had virtually no substantive coursework in the first year of graduate school. And then only a mix of the two in our second or third years.

What types of challenges do you envision the next generation of legislative scholars facing. Particularly, because topics of study go through phases of popularity, what do you see as the hot topics in the next few years?

We were just talking about that in a department meeting, about what kinds of things we should be looking for. For the last half century or so the biggest topic in the institutional side of political science, bridging over to the behavior side, has been polarization. The existence of it, the relationship between mass polarization and elite polarization, etc. I think maybe it's just because of what I do that it's going to remain a big topic, especially because it appears to me that the landscape is constantly changing, and in particular the mass side of polarization is changing, in that it is increasing. As you know, there is a consensus that there has been polarization of the elites, the question is how much of that is reflected in polarization in the masses, and there has been a bifurcation of that in the field between Fiorina and his allies and Abramowitz and his allies. It appears that while mass polarization may not have been anywhere near as great as elite polarization, it appears to be increasing. So the question remains, why the elites? Why the elites more initially, and then why is it changing? Is it some sort of continuous feedback loop between the two? I think that's a plausible thing, but there is still a large amount of work to be done. And some great work has been done recently. Mark Hetherington has a book that just came out that's won a prize. This is the way it goes. There are questions that people choose to focus on, and really smart people do really good work to help us understand those things. So that's one thing. And then again because of the continually changing context, all of the old questions have to be continually revisited. What drives congressional elections, for example? Well it's a different thing than it was when I first started studying it, because of the role of money and where money comes from, the relative role of money raised by candidates and their allies, money raised by independent groups or parties, all that sort of stuff.

Graduate Students and U.S. Legislative Politics: The Road Ahead

by [Wendy Schiller](#)
Brown University

Looking back in the academic rear-view mirror to the time when I was a graduate student studying legislative politics at the University of Rochester, I cannot help but marvel at how far graduate research and methods has come in this part of the political science discipline. From my current perch, as Chair of the Department of Political Science at Brown, I now consider it a responsibility to encourage a broad range of research agendas among graduate students who are interested in legislative politics. But I have grown increasingly concerned that the lure of American legislative politics, especially in Congress, has been slowly dimming with the intensification of partisan polarization over the past decade. It is after all hard to produce new theoretical or empirical findings about legislative politics when there is so strikingly little legislation being considered or enacted by Congress. And the overwhelming dominance of partisanship, combined with the restriction of floor activity (especially in the Senate) leaves literally little to study or explain for the traditional Congress scholar.

In contrast, legislative studies at the state level has become in some ways a richer field of study precisely because states are more active in many arenas through a combination of federal mandates, responses to judicial decisions, and compensating where necessary for the failure of the federal government to act. And global changes around the world since the end of the Cold War have given rise to a great many more democracies with viable legislative institutions to study than when I was a graduate student which has given rise to a greater emphasis in comparative work on legislative institutions and behavior. In turn, departments that are

"There is in fact such a thing as too much training and not enough immersion in politics itself."

searching for candidates in legislative politics are no longer focusing their energy primarily on the U.S. Congress, and are rightly demanding a broader perspective from all job candidates to consider how their arguments about legislative behavior might fare in other legislative systems.

In both the theoretical and empirical contexts, these developments have put PhD candidates in the field of Congress at a disadvantage. Polarization and partisanship have reduced the theoretical space in which graduate students can operate and make new contributions to our understanding of Congressional politics. The descriptive term "Congress scholar" needs far more unpacking today than it did two decades ago, and given the rise of a wide range of other legislative venues to study, students of the U.S. Congress are

under enormous pressure to justify their choice of study especially given the near total dysfunction exhibited in the recent Congresses. Old topics such as the committee system, individual entrepreneurship and representation (my personal favorite), party leadership strength and strategy, and legislative activity on the floor, are harder to make the case for in an age where little gets done, and opportunities are more constricted than ever before.

And yet I am not yet prepared to abandon ship.

To my mind, there are several ways in which the next generation of Congressional scholars can emerge stronger and more valuable to a political science department in its entirety. I offer a few brief suggestions below:

Use Multiple Methods of Analysis and Political Context: The singular advantage that graduate students in the Congress field have traditionally held over other students is that they are trained to ask theoretical questions about the impact of institutional structure on individual and collective behavior, and collect both qualitative and quantitative empirical data to make their case. Long before other fields began demanding quantitative analysis, it was literally required of students of Congress. But in recent years, some of that emphasis has pushed students into forgetting about the "proper nouns" (as one of my dissertation advisors admonished me not to do years ago). Too much of the current work produced in this field emphasizes big data, massive web and social media content scraping, and natural experiments without putting all that advanced analysis into the context of legislator motivation, ambition, and action. There is in fact such a thing as too much training and not enough immersion in politics itself.

Take Advantage of Time Series and Congressional History: This moment in time in political science yields an extraordinary opportunity to take advantage of time series approaches to Congress, both theoretically and empirically. The sheer enormity of the data that is available (with relative ease) to PhD students in the field of legislative politics is a blessing and a bit of a curse because it produces much greater expectations about the empirical scope of research than existed twenty years ago. I would direct graduate students today to use this power to draw contrasts with current day Congressional politics and to shape their theoretical frameworks to be able to explain changes over time, rather than just focusing on current conditions. For example, constructing a big think question about representation in Congress and delving into several U.S. states to study their congressional delegation behavior (House & Senate) in Congress and at home over twenty years can yield fascinating conclusions about the impact of changing economic, social, and political conditions in a geographic space, the role of money, changing communications in politics, and the nationalization of political parties more generally. That type of project allows for comparisons across states within the U.S. as well as legislative institutions around the world, and allows for more expansive conclusions about legislative politics. In other words, it is not enough simply to say things

have changed over time; congressional scholars now have the tools at their disposal - which previous generations did not - to demonstrate how and why congressional behavior and responsiveness have changed.

Know Your Audience for publication, conference papers, hiring: When a job market candidate is facing not just the American subfield group, but an entire department, she or he must be able to convey the importance of their work to all the other political scientists in the room. Some of those faculty members may be quite excited about quantitative methodological developments in and of themselves, but in my experience that is still not quite a majority of faculty in most small or medium sized department sufficient to swing a hiring preference. The best congressional scholars across generations have been able to take their readers and students on an interesting journey to navigate the specific aspect of Congress they study, and they do so by linking their macro findings to individual legislators, or cohorts of legislators, or specific legislation, or specific key votes. Today's Congress students tend to do that in very brief spurts, using a reference here and there that seems on the surface to dip into the real world of politics, but does not adequately shore up their argument. I am not advocating lengthy case studies, multiple personal staff and member interviews, or newspaper coverage analysis for every Congress scholar; but having done the deeper research into the political actors you are studying comes through in a job interview and it is also glaringly clear when a candidate has failed to do that.

Younger scholars should also pay attention to the legacy of literature in the Congress field because Congress scholars are intensely loyal to those who have come before them. There are many past and present legislative scholarly giants who are increasingly left out of the reference pages of the work of newly minted PhDs, in dissertations, conference papers, and refereed articles. It is not the sheer act of referencing these works that is important but rather recognizing that there are elements of this work that resonate quite strongly today. And when a younger scholar is making a claim of exploring previously understudied territory, it is best to make sure to read earlier work to know that claim is true. The worst case scenario in a job talk or a publication review is to read "[famous congress scholar] said this ten, twenty, (or thirty) years ago, what's new here?" To avoid that, it is imperative for younger scholars to place their work in the long continuum of Congress scholarship to make sure to appeal to the widest audience as possible. This is especially important for hiring because many political science departments are now run by, or dominated by, a 40-50 year old cohort that still appreciates the literature legacy in Congress and will want to see - at the very least - acknowledgment of it.

Make Connections between Legislative Politics and Public Policy: For students choosing a dissertation topic or going on the job market, it is crucial to recognize the rising interest in public policy at both the federal and state levels as manifest in the spread of advanced degree programs in public policy. There are a number of political science

departments that are making joint hires with policy institutes and schools so where there is an opportunity to showcase how the study of legislative politics pertains to specific public policy outcomes, students of Congress should take it. In a competitive job market in American politics, being able to speak both to legislative institutions and the policies that are produced therein will be an increasingly significant advantage. The second advantage that comes with choosing "crossover" topics that converge at the intersection of Congress and public policy is that mainstream and digital media are more likely to give the research coverage, which can help build a profile for an emerging graduate student or new assistant professor.

In conclusion, I would also cautiously suggest that the election of 2016 may be a turning point in congressional behavior. We have already seen a number of Republican incumbents turn to their local "home style" to connect with constituents as a bulwark against potentially negative Trump down ballot effects. However, to employ that strategy successfully, a member of Congress needs the opportunity to craft a legislative agenda and a record of individual accomplishment which has not been present in recent Congresses. Should the GOP lose the Senate, and suffer big enough losses in the House, it may prompt individual members in both chambers to demand more opportunity to showcase actual legislative activity in committees and on the chamber floors. Some of this discussion happened among Democratic Senate incumbents after they lost control of it in the elections of 2014; if the same fate befalls the Republicans in 2016 it may actually prompt a bipartisan attempt to restore some power to individual members. It may be overly optimistic, but I believe as opportunity expands for individual and collective legislative behavior in the U.S. Congress, so will it expand for the hopeful scholars who study it.

B. INTERVIEWING LEGISLATORS

The Nuts and Bolts of Interviewing Legislators: An Interview with Stefanie Bailer

by [Kelly Senters](#)

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
with

[Stefanie Bailer](#)

University of Basel

Question: How did you become interested and/or involved in interview research? What are the benefits of interview research, and when/why should scholars make use of this research method?

Prof. Bailer: I became involved in interview research as I wrote my master's thesis that aimed to understand whether parliamentarians changed their preferences throughout their tenures in parliament. I wanted to learn about the motivations of parliamentarians, particularly in the European parliament, and to assess whether these motivations changed throughout the course of their careers. As a part of this project, I compared the parliamentarians' responses to interview questions to their actual voting behavior to assess the (mis)alignment between preferences and behavior. In later projects, I investigated parliamentarians' career motivations and the use and extent of disciplinary measures in party groups.

Interviews are incredibly valuable research tools because they provide insight into the inner-thoughts and experiences of experts and allow scholars to obtain information that is, otherwise, inaccessible. They prove particularly useful research methods to understand motivations and to learn about concealed processes (party group meetings, negotiations, selections of career paths, and policy making). Several fledgling areas of research inherently lend themselves to be studied using interview methods. A topic that I have recently studied, party group discipline, is one such area ripe for the application of interview research methods since we only have anecdotal evidence on disciplinary measures used in party groups. Interviews should be used when existing data or information is nonexistent or insufficient for answering research questions. Interviews are quite useful for cross-national research but are more limited in studying situations or events that occurred several years prior to the interview due to memory gaps.

How do you see interviews and surveys complementing or supplementing alternative research designs?

Though interviews are particularly powerful research tools in and of themselves, they can and should be fruitfully combined with other quantitative research methods. Specifically, interviews can be used to confirm or build upon quantitative research findings. For example, if quantitative analyses support the hypothesis that female legislators succeed other female legislators, suggesting that female legislators inspire other women to compete for office, scholars can make use of interview strategies to ask women whether other female parliamentarians in actuality inspired them to run for election. In this sense, interviews need not serve solely exploratory or inductive research purposes; scholars can also engage in deductive research with interviews. Whether interviews confirm or negate the findings from quantitative research, the results reveal an interesting discovery. In my research, I tend to use a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

As you mention in "Interviews and Surveys in Legislative Research," interviewees want to look good and are skillful in changing questions. Evidently, this makes comparisons across interviews difficult. Do you have any recommendations for comparing open-ended interview questions across elites/experts/legislators?

Scholars should use a combination of open- and closed-ended questions. For especially difficult questions, I have found that it is beneficial to start with an open-ended question/prompt (such as, *tell me about your experience as a newcomer in parliament*) and to, then, let the interviewee freely divulge information. If the interviewee diverges from the posed question, it is useful for the interviewer to have and use several prompts to redirect the focus of the conversation. By continuing to use prompts, rephrasing and repeating questions, and complementing open-ended questions with closed-ended ones, scholars set themselves up well to better compare the responses they receive across interviewees.

Relatedly, what are the best ways to present the results of information obtained from interviews?

After speaking with a number of interview partners, it is important to begin comparing answers. Because I often combine qualitative and quantitative findings, I often look to see what percentage of interview responses lend credence to the results obtained from empirical analyses. In addition, I often ask interviewees to give some kind of quantitative judgment by asking, for example, how powerful was a certain legislative actor in that process on a scale from 0-100? In this sense, I am able to quantify qualitative information in a way that is easily presentable. Moreover, I also present insightful quotes from interviewees to illustrate my findings and use their citations to help interpreting quantitative findings (for an example, see Bailer, Stefanie, "To use the whip or not: Whether and when party group leaders use disciplinary measures," accepted in *International Political Science Review*). By combining quantitative estimates and qualitative descriptive information, both in this way and in others, scholars can obtain an optimal mix of results to publish.

What are some pitfalls of interview research that graduate students should be aware of?

Interviews are time intensive, and much of the work on the part of the scholar occurs outside of the interview session itself. That said, in order to get the most out of the interview, scholars need to be quite focused and concentrated during the interview session so that they can prompt, insist, and reiterate questions depending on the behavior and responses of the interviewee. Due to the immense concentration and focus that interviews require, no more than two or three expert interviews should be conducted in a single day. Scholars should also factor in sufficient time for transcribing and evaluating the interviews (e.g. with software such as atlas.ti).

In addition, scholars should not ask experts questions that can be easily obtained through mediums other than the interviews themselves. For example, parliamentarians are incredibly pressed for time and, therefore, do not have time to answer questions with answers that easily be obtained elsewhere. Instead, scholars should take advantage of the duration of the interview to obtain rich and abundant information from legislators that cannot be obtained from other sources.

What are some questions emerging on the legislative research agenda that you see requiring or benefiting from interview strategies?

Personally, I have found interviews to be quite beneficial for research on party discipline as interviews can provide insight into the exciting conversations and negotiations that take place behind closed doors. In addition to research on

"Due to the immense concentration and focus that interviews require, no more than two or three expert interviews should be conducted in a single day."

party discipline, interview research methods are ripe for research on political careers and on the motivations for politicians pursuing said careers and on legislative politics in authoritarian regimes, a developing area of research in which there is presently a growing literature. Interviews also hold great promise in areas with newly abundant quantitative data; in such areas, interviews can be used to validate the results of quantitative analyses such as text analyses.

Given declining response rates, you suggest in "Interviews and Surveys in Legislative Research" that scholars and researchers should collaborate in their interview/survey research and embrace the culture of data sharing. Do you have any specific recommendations for scholars on how to be more transparent in publicizing their research projects while also protecting the ownerships of and unique ideas in their specific projects?

Balancing data protection and data sharing and collaboration is challenging. I think that scholars should be transparent about what they are working on but should, at the same

time, protect the originality of their own projects. The latter is particularly true for PhD students whose projects have not yet been accepted for publication. After publication, though, scholars (including the younger ones) can make the transcripts of their interviews available online with the necessary precautions concerning the identity of the interviewees or send them to interested researchers if requested. To my knowledge, there are not presently many interview transcripts that are publicly available online (with the exception of John Carey's transcripts). Making more of these interview transcripts easily accessible or at least available upon request are fruitful actions that scholars can take moving forward.

Do you have any general advice for young schools embarking on research projects using interviews and surveys in legislative research?

Interviews are extremely promising research tools in comparison to frequently used online surveys that suffer from extremely low response rates. In my experience, parliamentarians have been quite willing and able to lend their time to speak with me and have provided me with rich information that I would not have otherwise been able to acquire. Interviews are inspiring and prove to be incredibly valuable if conducted appropriately.

I outline specific advice for scholars pursuing projects involving interviews in my Oxford Handbook article, "Interviews and Surveys in Legislative Research." Most importantly, in order to get the most out of interview research, scholars should stress that the parliamentarians' participation in interview methods provides the only way for them to deeply understand operations within legislative chambers and the insights of parliamentarians. Interviewers should only ask one question at a time and should also be sufficiently insistent to ensure that the posed questions are responded to as best as possible. Interviews should begin with one or two simple warm-up questions, and these questions should lead into the most important questions. The prioritized questions should be posed in the middle of the interview; this way, even if the interview is cut short (which can feasibly happen due to the busyness of legislators' schedules), the most important questions are answered.

Sitting Around on the Couch

by [Ronald M. Peters, Jr.](#)
University of Oklahoma

Nelson Polsby, contemplating trends toward formal models in congressional studies, once characterized qualitative interviewing as "sitting around on the couch." What rigor could be brought to such a sedentary research design? For those who, like myself, rely extensively on chatting it up

with policy makers, the question is apt; and perhaps answered best in a negative way: what are the pitfalls to be avoided?

Since 1979 I have interviewed hundreds of current and former members of the House of Representatives, current and former staff members, lobbyists, reporters, and other observers of the congressional process. My focus has almost always been on the House speakership, and I have had the privilege of interviewing every speaker from John McCormack to Nancy Pelosi. What lessons have I learned from these experiences that might be of use to rising scholars today?

First, you have to get on the couch. While House members remain more accessible than senators, it still requires real effort to gain access to members and their staffs. (Former members and staff members are far more accessible.) My method has been to seek patrons who could help me gain access. Dan Rostenkowski used to quote a Chicago ward heeler who would say that “I don’t want to talk to nobody that nobody sent.” So I have sought to be sent. Speaker Albert made my first round of introductions. Speaker O’Neill provided me with a cover letter that I used to approach dozens of members. During the Republican era, Congressmen J.C. Watts and Tom Cole helped me obtain interviews. And there have been a wide range of other contacts who have helped me gain interviews with members.

This method of gaining access has the obvious advantage of getting in the door. It has the potential disadvantage of putting the interviewee on guard. In 1982, when the Republicans were running national advertisements labeling O’Neill as overweight and out of control (just like the federal government), I could find no Republican who had a bad word to say about him other than that they disagreed with his policies. There was, I thought, an element of truth in this; they respected him and often liked him, even as they saw in him the embodiment of the welfare state they despised. But I often found myself having to tickle out their real views by taking a more indirect approach. They certainly complained about how the Democrats ran the House. Thirty years later, I had interviewed Democrats about Speakers Gingrich (he flew too close to the sun I was told) and Hastert (a shill for Tom Delay they said), and Republicans about Speaker Pelosi (a liberal fanatic who, they claimed, had no interest in compromise). Yet there were many fewer indications of a grudging respect for a partisan opponent. Either O’Neill was different or the House had changed. Maybe both.

I always assured interviewees that they would not be quoted in my writing without their prior express approval, and as it turned out I have never quoted a source by name. I’m not sure if this made any difference in what they have shared with me, but I assumed that they might be more forthcoming if they were assured confidentiality. When the “human subject” police came on duty it proved useful for me to send letters so stating. Given that the members of Congress, at least, were public personages, and that I had assured them

that they would not be quoted, I was able to say that this satisfied concerns for human subject involvement. I thus ignored the process and have gotten away with it so far. I observe, however, that our graduate students are asked to comply with the process in order to get approval of their research designs. I am unsure whether they have been required to obtain signed waivers; I can say that I think that this would have been very detrimental to the prospect of gaining access to members and their staffs.

Over the past two decades (I mark it when the GOP took over in 1995) we have seen the widespread employment of communications directors in every congressional office. My practice had been to send my letter plus a cover letter from my advocate to the member’s scheduler, and then follow up with a phone call. When I was seeking Republican interviews seeking perspectives on Speaker Pelosi, I had a cover

"It is important not to 'lead the witness' by asking questions in such a way as to suggest an answer..."

letter from my congressman, Tom Cole, and followed my established practice. I found myself getting turned down surprisingly often. When I checked with Cole’s communications director, he pointed out that I had made a fundamental mistake. All requests have to go through the communications directors. He got on the phone and got me in to see some members whose staff had previously turned me down.

Related to this is the practice of most House members to have both a tape recorder running and the communications staffer in the room while the interview is taking place. I have always eschewed tape recorders, fearing that it would lead to diffidence, but had to wonder why I continued to be reluctant when, on one occasion, there were two recorders sitting on the coffee table and neither of them was mine. Absent a tape recorder, my practice has been to sit down immediately after the interview and write up my scratchy handwritten notes. I got pretty good at this, but it was time consuming. On occasion, I would have to schedule back-to-back interviews and that made it a good deal more difficult to sort out the notes once I had the free time. So, if I were starting out now, I would plan to use a tape recorder.

This brings to mind my first experience encountering a tape recorder all the way back in 1979 or 1980. I was in Japan on a teaching gig for my university and Speaker Albert had arranged for me to interview Ambassador Mike Mansfield, the long-time Senate majority leader, at the American Embassy. I was eager to learn about Mansfield’s relationship with Albert and about House-Senate leadership processes more generally. I was ushered into his office by his press secretary, and I naively began by stating that this was an off the record interview. Immediately the press secretary plunked his tape recorder (in those days a pretty large one) on the coffee table. I then asked Mansfield to tell me about his relationship with Speaker Albert. Mansfield was

notoriously terse. “He had his job, I had mine,” Mansfield stated. The interview proceeded downhill from there.

This raises the question, what can and should one hope to obtain from “qualitative” or “elite” interviews of this type? The objectives are different than would be the case if one were operating from a structured research design in which it would be important to ask each respondent the same questions. Instead, the goal is to draw out the respondent in a more general way. It is important not to “lead the witness” by asking questions in such a way as to suggest an answer, or even to ask questions that might direct the respondent in one way or another. The goal is to get them talking.

I must say that I always felt that this was my major deficiency as an interviewer. Wanting to establish a conversational tone in hopes that the respondent would be more forthcoming, I typically fell prey to my tendency to like to talk. In this respect I think that young researchers would be best served to follow the Dick Fenno model: be a fly on the wall, listen, and ask as few questions as necessary. You should always have in mind the key questions your research design promotes, but you should not try to dictate the flow of the interview. You are not learning anything when you are talking.

What can you learn? To begin, why are you interviewing this particular person? Who is he or she? What position does the person hold? Where does he or she reside on the political spectrum? What, then, do you hope to learn about? To take one example, I decided in the mid-1990s to interview Democratic members who had switched to become Republicans after the GOP takeover in 1995. I seem to recall that there were five of them, and they included Mike Parker (who later became Republican governor of Mississippi), Nathan Deal (Republican governor of Georgia) and Billy Tauzin (a powerful GOP committee chair). They were all Blue Dogs. Of course I already knew why they had switched: they wanted to stay in Congress or to advance their subsequent careers (which they did quite nicely). But what could they tell me about the differences in being Republican members, as opposed to their experience as Democrats? I thought that it was revealing that, to a person, they said that there was more openness and tolerance in the GOP Conference than in the Democratic Caucus. As one put it, “when you squeeze a yellow dog Democrat, he turns blue; keep squeezing him, and he becomes a Republican.” As Democrats, they were marginalized; as Republicans, they were valued. This, I thought, had less to do with party culture than the fact that the Republicans needed their votes more than the Democrats had due to their smaller majority.

So, it is important to have a strategy, to know what you are interested in knowing, and to give the respondent enough lead to allow him or her to volunteer information, not just in response to your direct questions, but discursively, as they chat along. In general, the most informative interviews are among present and former staff members. These people are

very interested in what is going on, have valuable perspectives, and are less prone to political spin. Member interviews vary considerably in terms of usefulness. It is always the case that one can learn something from a good member interview, but some members are more thoughtful and more forthcoming than others. If you want to know what members think, you need to talk to members; if you want to know what is really going on, talk to staff.

My most interesting interview day was July 4, 1996. J.C. Watts, then the GOP Conference Chair, arranged for me to spend that day with Speaker Gingrich as he travelled his district to various Fourth of July celebrations. This was my chance to play Dick Fenno, and I sought to take advantage of the opportunity. I donned a “Newt” t-shirt, handed out flyers with his staff and volunteers, walked in a couple of parades, and attended the parade in downtown Atlanta. During the interstices, I spoke with Gingrich off and on during the entire day. He, of course, likes to talk, and regards himself as an institutional builder and political analyst. One could observe in his public presentations that day and in my private conversations with him, the qualities that brought him to the speakership and shaped his political persona. I would not say that I learned anything in particular that day that caused me to have a new or different perspective on him than I had going in or later developed in writing about him. But I did have a feel for the person that I would not have got otherwise.

And I would say the same thing about every speaker I have interviewed. It is not so much that one comes to a different view than one would have by other means; it is that one gets a tangible feeling for what each of these leaders is like. And I think this is a caution to those who might think that an adequate understanding of congressional leaders can be obtained by applying general leadership or party theories. Political leadership is inherently personal. This is one reason why we do not have “principal-agent” or “conditional party leadership” theories of the presidency; that office is inherently personal. House leaders are institutional officers and so there is, I think, more purchase in seeking institutional explanations of their behavior than is the case with presidents. But political leadership remains a deeply personal phenomenon and I do not think that one can have the best understanding of it without direct interaction with those who practice it. There are only two ways to obtain this exposure: you have to work there or you have to spend a lot of time talking to those who do, on the couch.

C. CONDUCTING FIELDWORK IN THE U.S. AND AROUND THE WORLD

Earning Trust and Respect on the Hill: Ten Questions with Ross Baker

by [Eric Radezky](#)
Independent Scholar
with
[Ross Baker](#)
Rutgers University

Question: Is it necessary for a congressional scholar to spend time on the Hill to have a successful career?

Prof. Baker: I think it is certainly desirable but by no means necessary for an aspiring congressional scholar to spend time on Capitol Hill. Personally, I think understanding Congress requires a certain amount of observation. If one is going to teach American Government or Congress, some practical, personal contact with the institution is a good thing, especially at the beginning of a career. That being said, it is entirely possible to teach those courses based upon the literature and datasets. I was just reviewing the catalog of publications from the University of Michigan Press and there are some impressive quantitative and analytical work being done by young congressional scholars, and I doubt that many of them needed to spend time on Capitol Hill when there are so many rich databases and document sources available to scholars.

I happen to be a fan of a more intimate relationship with Congress in terms of understanding it and explaining it better to students. First-hand experience, I think, is most valuable in enriching the classroom experience for undergraduates. Congress is a great source of anecdotes. Just getting in there and getting a feel for how Congress works is beneficial, at any stage of your career. I've talked to many academics that have done this and the experience has a lifetime effect. Sure, there is turnover in Congress and the people you meet there today may not be there in 10 or 20 years, but the essence of the organization, the qualities of the institution, the archetypal ways in which members and their staffs act add a depth and a flavor that you cannot get anywhere else. Certainly, in terms of teaching it just makes you so much more confident as an educator because you have an enriched understanding of the material. But lay it down as a requirement to be an effective and productive congressional scholar? Never.

Candidly, I backed into it because I was re-tooling and making the transition from Comparative Politics to American Government as a young faculty member and felt that a total immersion experience would augment my crash course

in the classics of the field. It was something I felt I had to do professionally. It was only after I had spent a sabbatical leave in the offices of three U.S. Senators that I convinced myself that continuous personal exposure to Congress would enable me to be the congressional scholar I'd hoped to become. Getting "on the inside" also dictated the approach I would take to my research over the next forty years, which has been conducting interviews with members of the House and Senate using the access I have gotten by actually having worked in Congress. I found that members were more willing to speak to me if they knew I had been "one of the family."

How do you earn the trust and respect of Senators and Representatives and become, as you put it, "one of the family"?

It takes time. When you enter a congressional office as a scholar you are initially perceived as an unknown quantity. You may be a congressional fellow with the American Political Science Association or you may come recommended by a Senator or Representative, which are good testaments to your character. But at the same time you're an outsider, and some of the people you meet in congressional offices are just naturally suspicious of outsiders, particularly academics. There is nothing so withering as hearing over and over a staffer or member say snidely, "And what does the professor think about this?"

The point is it takes a little time. Politicians want to make sure that the people in their inner circles are people who can be trusted. Once they see that you are trustworthy, dependable, and, most importantly, not indiscreet, you will earn their trust. Eventually, they will want to talk to you. Obviously, you don't have years to invest, but it strikes me as remarkable that in a relatively short amount of time members and their staff will open up to you and accept you as part of the family as long as you approach the experience with a seriousness of purpose, a desire to learn and a willingness to participate in the activities of the office. That more than anything else allows you to get inside, probe a little bit deeper and become more than just an outsider.

Once that trust is earned, how free is a congressional scholar to speak and write about these experiences?

There are no hard and fast rules about this but I think it requires a certain amount of discretion. In my time with Senator Reid's office, in 2008, 2012 and 2016, I was present at all senior staff meetings. A lot of sensitive material was discussed at these meetings and it's very tempting to want to share that kind of juicy gossip with people. But you have to resist that temptation, especially if you want to go back later. You need to ask yourself, "Is this something that should be shared?" That has always been in the back of my mind when I am on the Hill and informs how I govern my own conduct. I don't want to poison the well for myself or for other scholars. I want to be trusted and I want people in these offices to speak candidly without worrying about me as an outsider and what I might do with the information I see and hear.

There's a certain amount of common sense involved. If you feel something is too sensitive, just keep it under your hat. And remember, when you write up your experiences you can usually describe a situation or an interaction without using names or identifying details and still capture the essence of your experience. That way you don't betray any confidences.

For what projects do you recommend fieldwork on the Hill?

If the media coverage of something that you are interested in has not been good, or when something intrigues you but the standard sources of information are for whatever reason insufficient and you want a deeper understanding of what is going on, those are situations in which fieldwork on the Hill makes a lot of sense. Another would be if you are interested in an aspect of Congress that you do not know anything about at all, for example, what actually goes on in a particular committee. If you can embed yourself in that committee you'll learn exactly what they do and how they function. But it also depends on what you want to study. You can certainly study Congress from afar. I imagine that the majority of work done on Congress is based on analysis of roll call voting. There are also surveys of the policy stances of members. It really depends on your research question.

At what stage in a research project is fieldwork on the Hill most beneficial? Is it when you are first getting a sense of a topic or when you want to confirm what you think is true?

That's a really tough question. On one hand, when you are forming hypotheses you really want to know if the hypotheses you have in mind are realistic in terms of what the institution is really all about. So that would seem to argue for early exposure. On the other hand, scholars who formulate propositions over long periods of time might want to come in at a later stage to test their propositions to see whether or not they pan out. So either end of the experiential process can be fruitful.

Qualitative research is often hard to quantify and I sometimes think some scholars are suspicious of such work precisely because it defies easy quantification. What do you think?

This type of work is very impressionistic, and it relies heavily on interviews with the principals. In a sense I am at their mercy. If they are willing to level with me I get good responses. If they are not willing to level with me, or if they are suspicious of me, I do not get good responses. It's a messy and inefficient process what I do. I take what people give me. I take them at their word. If a member tells me that they took a particular action for a particular reason, I accept that at face value. As a result, this kind of work is suspect. I can have three senators tell me a similar story about what happened on a particular bill and come to a conclusion based on their similar perspectives. But there are

also 97 other senators, and if I had the time to interview all of them I might get a different picture. One way to mitigate that is to try to get a balanced sample – interview Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives. I use the connections I made at Senator Reid's office to get interviews with other senators.

Do you worry about selection bias?

To be sure, the senators that I speak to are ones that want to talk to me. Others do not want to talk to me, and there's nothing I can do to change their minds. Still others are willing to talk to me but are very guarded. One senator comes to mind that granted me an interview but was very cautious in everything he said. So that interview was not as good as I had hoped. But other senators have been surprisingly candid. And that's the thing that strikes me after so many years of doing this work. Sometimes I have to ask these members, do you really want me to quote you on this? Because I have so often been surprised and impressed by their level of candor, I am inclined to accept what they say. I'll grant it that might be naïve, but I believe you develop a gut feeling, an instinct, as to whether someone is feeding you a line or really opening up to you.

What should young scholars know before pursuing this type of Hill experience?

You have to do your homework. That's true of everything in this profession, but certainly all the more so when you will be in the office of a Senator or Representative. You want to find out as much as you can from sources such as the *Almanac of American Politics*, *The Hill*, *Roll Call*, and *The Washington Post* before you go. With those sources you can get a good idea of who the member is as a person, and depending on what you find you might decide to try somebody else. You also really need to like the person. I don't necessarily have to be of the same political mind as my subjects. I've spent time with both Democrats and Republicans. To me, the personality of the member is much more important than the ideology. I've had some wonderful conversations with people who are politically quite distant from me but are nonetheless remarkably candid. The best possible situation is when you find a member that you respect as a person. At the same time you have to maintain objectivity and it's hard because you end up liking these people. I will freely confess that this approach has its own built-in biases. For one, you actually get to like these politicians, especially the ones who agree to be interviewed. They are charmers; it's part of their profession, and even the most introverted members are very good actors. So sometimes you really need to resist the temptation to become a fan, both of the individual member and of the institution as a whole. That's one of the principle perils of this kind of work – you find yourself seduced by people whose job it is to seduce. You've got to be able to perceive the good and the bad in your subjects. They're people just like the rest of us, and like the rest of us they have their imperfections. You need to be able to record your observations in as balanced and clear-minded a way as

possible. I would also say that there is nothing fundamentally more seductive to an academic than having an office in the U.S. Capitol, so you need to take care not to let that cloud your judgment either.

What are some of the pitfalls that young scholars pursuing this type of work need to watch out for?

For starters, don't be too pushy. Take your time. Learn from the people around you. Don't think that you're there because you're a person of towering intellect and everyone should heed what you say or listen to what you think. Listen more than you talk. Observe more than you participate. Develop a tactical sense and learn the terrain, very much like an infantry soldier. See who is on the high ground and who is not. Examine the power structure in an office. What's the relationship between the member and the staff? What's the relationship between the chief of staff and the member? What's the morale of the office like? Are staff members generally happy? Basically, listen and watch. Take it all in. That's what I would urge young scholars to do.

Can you share an amusing anecdote from your experiences on the Hill?

Sure. Senator Harry Reid, with whom I spent a total of nine months over three one-semester sabbaticals, is a man easily misunderstood. He lacks the oratorical skills that most people believe should be associated with leadership. He barely speaks above a whisper and seems hard and flinty. Make no mistake, he is as tough as nails and a strong partisan, but he is also a very kindly and considerate person who really hates to say 'no' to people. For example, a wealthy constituent contacted him a number of times in recent years because the constituent had composed a song that he thought was superior to "The Star-Spangled Banner." Reid intimated that the constituent had been encouraged in this by opportunistic record producers and Las Vegas performers who had produced or recorded versions of the song.

It is unclear whether Reid actually introduced an amendment on this man's behalf but whatever Reid was able to do for this constituent was not enough and the constituent began to beseech Reid to get a copy of the CD of his song to President Obama during one of his periodic meetings with

"That's one of the principle perils of this kind of work - you find yourself seduced by people whose job it is to seduce."

the president. He became so persistent that Reid began simply including the CD in the daily shipments of floor statements and press conference materials that were sent to the White House. In this mass of material the CD of the song was easily overlooked, but Reid was able to avoid saying 'no' to the constituent.

Eventually, the man became more aggressive in pressing his cause and finally Reid said to him, "What's wrong with

the Star-Spangled Banner that makes you think it needs to be replaced?"

"Simple," the man said, "You can't dance to it!"

Legislative Fieldwork Abroad: An Interview with Mark Jones

by [Santiago Alles](#)
and
[Carolina Tchintian](#)
with
[Mark Jones](#)
Rice University

Question: When did you first conduct intensive fieldwork in a legislature outside of the United States?

Prof. Jones: My first intensive fieldwork took place in the spring of 1993 during my fourth year of graduate school at the University of Michigan, and then again during the spring and summer of 1994 after I had defended my dissertation.

Where did you conduct the fieldwork?

I spent most of my time in the Argentine National Congress in Buenos Aires but also conducted fieldwork in the Salta Provincial Legislature in Northwest Argentina.

When was your most recent fieldwork in another country?

My most recent fieldwork was over the past year in both Buenos Aires and Austin. The latter is of course not in another country, but Texas is about as close as you can get to being in another country and still be in the United States. And, in regard to fieldwork, U.S. state legislatures share some similarities with legislatures in many other countries in that there often has been only a limited amount of scholarly attention paid to them (and hence only a small existing literature to rely on) and many records are still not available on-line (though that situation is getting better and better with each passing year).

What are the biggest differences between conducting fieldwork when you were in graduate school and conducting fieldwork today?

I was in graduate school between 1989 and 1994. Back then, as recounted by Ritchie (2007), in Michigan, Northern and Southern, summertime and wintertime, we didn't have no Internet; at least, nothing akin to the Internet of today. As a result, the only way to get pretty much all legislative and electoral information was to travel to a country and visit the legislative archives or reference library of the country's congress, its national elections institute and other archives and government/party offices.

Also, at that time, most legislative records were only available in print. And, even in the rare event there were some limited electronic records, they were on a mainframe with very restricted access and not in a format that was especially amenable to dataset creation or analysis.

Today, much of this information is available on-line and is very amenable to dataset creation and analysis via some relatively straightforward programming. Thus the days of having to comb through paper legislative journals, files and committee documents, then obtain low quality, often really low quality, photocopies of all pertinent information, and, finally, create datasets by hand using those photocopies, is, thankfully, primarily a thing of the past. Much of the data that used to be collected by hand inside the legislature abroad can now be automatically downloaded and converted into a dataset from the comfort of one's office or home.

What are the major benefits of conducting fieldwork in a legislature in another country?

A first benefit of fieldwork is the ability to acquire data that cannot be obtained any other way other than through fieldwork. In days of yore when I and other members of my generation of comparative legislative scholars began to study

"...fieldwork can aid in fleshing out different potential topics and determining if they actually make sense given political reality in a country and if the data needed to properly carry out the project actually exist, and, if they do exist, if they are obtainable."

legislatures in Latin America, the only way to obtain most data, be it roll call votes, committee rosters, information on bill introduction and sponsorship, party lists or detailed electoral data, was to conduct extensive and time consuming fieldwork. Today, for many, though not all, legislatures, this is no longer a principal motivation to conduct fieldwork, since so much of this information is now available on-line.

However, even in 2016 there continues to be some material that due to political sensitivity, limited legislative resources or simple institutional obliviousness, is not available anywhere other than inside the legislature. And, just because records and data exist and by law should be publicly available does not mean that they are on a country's congressional website or free for the asking via a "cold-call" e-mail, and that's where fieldwork can still be invaluable in terms of making personal contacts that facilitate access to data that would otherwise be impossible to obtain. But, all together, one explanation for the decline in intensive legislative fieldwork over the past decade or so is that it is no longer necessary to collect much of the data scholars need for their research.

A second benefit of intensive fieldwork is that it allows you to gain invaluable knowledge and insights about how

a legislature actually functions in practice in those cases where there does not exist a large and well-developed legislative literature. In contrast to the thousands of books, edited volume chapters and journal articles on the modern U.S. Congress, the number of relatively current and useful publications on the national congress (let alone specific state or provincial legislatures) in some countries can even today at times number only in the single digits or teens. Thus one crucial contribution of fieldwork can be learning (through formal interviews and informal conversations) basic foundational information about process, procedure, norms, careers, elections and culture in a legislative body, knowledge that in some other countries would be obtained primarily from the extant scholarly literature (or in the case of a few select legislatures from specialized congress-specific journalistic publications).

A third benefit of doing intensive fieldwork is that it helps you gain a much deeper and more complete understanding of the broader political system in which the legislature is located and within which legislative politics occurs. This fieldwork is also invaluable in developing the long-lasting personal friendships and professional network that will allow you (if you so desire) to become an expert on that country's politics. The latter point may not be beneficial for everyone, since while some in the discipline view the development of country expertise in a positive light, others tend to view it more negatively. Lastly, if you're the type of person who likes to add a little color to your presentations, intensive fieldwork should provide you with some very colorful stories about legislators and the legislature.

I, for one, owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to a former Argentine member of congress who befriended me back in 1994 when I was conducting research on Argentina's novel (at the time) adoption and use of gender quotas for the election of Chamber deputies. We've been great friends ever since, and much of what of what I know about how the Argentine political system actually works (especially Peronism) has been learned from her, her extended (and very political) family and friends and colleagues I have met through her and her family and friends over the past 22 years. You don't build those types of meaningful personal and professional relationships downloading files on the Internet or breezing into a country for a few days over Spring Break.

At which stages of a project can fieldwork be most beneficial?

Fieldwork is probably most beneficial at two stages. The first is the exploratory stage where fieldwork can aid in fleshing out different potential topics and determining if they actually make sense given political reality in a country and if the data needed to properly carry out the project actually exist, and, if they do exist, if they are obtainable. Many times a great idea drawn from general theory or another country case (e.g., the U.S. case) ends up not making sense within the specific context of a country or only makes sense with considerable modification, something that it is at times

not possible to know without conducting some exploratory fieldwork.

The second stage is the main research and data gathering phase where the focus is on collecting the necessary data and information. Ideally I find it very helpful to try to conduct some initial exploratory data analysis while you are in the field so that you can run the preliminary findings past local experts and politicians and, if you realize that you need additional data or assistance with interpretation you can do so while you are still in the field rather than having to schedule a new trip.

What are the problems or pitfalls of legislative fieldwork that graduate students should be aware of?

This type of intensive fieldwork represents a significant time and financial commitment. Depending on the project and location you are looking at an initial time investment of several months, and, most likely, multiple trips (the duration of which can decrease progressively as your network and country-level knowledge improve). And at least in Latin America, realistically you need to possess a reasonable level of fluency in Spanish or Portuguese (Brazil) in order to carry out proper legislative fieldwork in a country. For graduate students, to be able to conduct intensive fieldwork requires either access to significant intramural funding or external funding (such as a National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant).

Initially arranging interviews with legislators and other key informants can be a very difficult and very time consuming task, with many appointments cancelled at the last minute, many hours spent waiting for interviews that never take place and many hours wasted conducting interviews that provide little useful information. In some countries it may even take you as long as a couple of weeks to obtain the official credentials needed to pass through security to access areas such as archives or certain congressional offices.

The same often holds true for access to archives or “sensitive” data, where multiple attempts via different routes are often needed in order to be successful. Note also, that the very fact that you “want” some data or information can convert it from innocuous to sensitive, based on the logic that if someone wants it, it must have some strategic value, in which case it may not be wise to give it to them. And, at times, there is the agony of discovering after weeks of concerted effort to obtain access to a set of files that was rumored to contain your legislative data Holy Grail, that it was all just a rumor and the files (or, in my case in one instance, magnetic tapes) are useless, or, that in spite of your best efforts, you can never obtain the required permission (so you’ll always have doubt).

That said, this is all part of the process and experience, and in many instances you can learn much more sitting in a waiting room chatting with the receptionist, legislative assistants and other visitors than from a more guarded legislator in a formal interview. And, likewise, sometimes access to

data comes via powerful legislative leaders ordering previously intransigent lower ranking officials to provide it. But, at other times, it comes from a staffer who is a close friend and has a “Radar O’Reilly” relationship in regard to signatures with her very high ranking “Henry Blake”, an assistant with the key and access to the right office where certain files are kept, a mid-level congressional staffer with a heart of gold who goes out of his way to help you (as long as you come in during the night shift when his superior isn’t there), or a print shop employee who over time you’ve developed a good relationship with even though he’s a Communist who firmly believes you’re a CIA agent.

In the end, while often no longer needed to obtain many primary materials, intensive legislative fieldwork still can provide tremendous intellectual and scholarly benefits. It does so however at the cost of a considerable time and financial commitment, in some cases a one-time cost, but in many others a recurring cost and a medium to long-term commitment to a country and its legislature.

Studying Congress from the Inside: Why You Should Consider an APSA Congressional Fellowship

by **Paulina S. Cossette**
Jacksonville University

Every year since 1953, the American Political Science Association has selected political scientists, journalists, executive branch employees, health policy specialists, and international scholars to spend nine months working on Capitol Hill as participants in the Congressional Fellowship Program (CFP). Beginning in November, APSA Congressional Fellows participate in a month-long orientation session, set up meetings with members of Congress to interview for a position, and work until August as a legislative assistant in a congressional office. The work is fast-paced, challenging, and provides Fellows with a deep understanding of the workings of the institution that can only be gained by being there and living the congressional experience. In a time when the widespread availability of large datasets and sophisticated computer software make it easy for political scientists to devise hypotheses, crunch the numbers, and report results that attempt to explain the inner-workings of the U.S. Congress without ever having set foot inside a legislator’s office, the APSA Congressional Fellowship Program provides junior scholars with an exceptional opportunity to learn how the legislative process really works.

As a 2014-2015 Congressional Fellow working as a Legislative Assistant to U.S. Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), I expanded my knowledge of legislative procedure as well as energy and environmental policy, observed the practice of

informal norms that are not easily (if at all) visible to people outside the institution, and was able to ask questions of my colleagues in order to better understand how the process works and why certain decisions were made. The Fellowship was an invaluable experience that has greatly enriched my research and teaching skills and which I recommend highly to junior scholars of Congress and legislative politics.

Why Should We Study Congress from the Inside?

With the abundant research on legislative politics and having received extensive training in a graduate program, why do young scholars need to spend a year studying Congress from the inside? There are many excellent answers to this question, but the motivation which drove me to pursue the Fellowship was my desire to better understand the human dimension of the U.S. House and Senate. As scholarship

"Choose a House or Senate office in which you will be able to achieve your research goals, but which is run by a legislator who has policy interests similar to your own."

on Congress has developed over recent decades, many of us have relied increasingly on the analysis of large, readily available datasets to test our hypotheses about everything from the development of party polarization to the influence of money in congressional campaigns. There's nothing wrong with this; in fact, I have utilized data on bill cosponsorship in my own work (Rippere 2016). However, we limit ourselves and our ability to truly understand, explain, and make predictions about the institution when we rely so heavily on this quantitative approach without also considering the informal and more personal interactions that take place within Congress day to day, even though these exchanges can be more difficult to observe, measure, and quantify.

By providing young scholars with the opportunity to see Congress for themselves, the CFP opens doors to new ideas and research agendas that students of legislative politics might not have pursued otherwise. For me, the Fellowship experience confirmed that the House and Senate are human-driven institutions. Legislators are individual political actors who seek to achieve their specific goals, but they are also people: diverse, fallible, with imperfect information, sometimes unsure of themselves, often seeking acceptance from their colleagues, and each with their own unique personality and view of the world. The everyday interactions which take place among legislators shape their beliefs about and attitudes toward their colleagues and, by extension, their preferences for collaborating and compromising with some legislators over others. However, this reality—like human behavior, generally—is messy. It is nearly impossible to observe from outside the institution, and it most certainly is difficult to quantify.

No matter your research question, scholars who serve as APSA Congressional Fellows can benefit from the in-depth understanding gleaned from a year spent working on the Hill. By combining our academic training with nine months of "fieldwork" inside a congressional office, we are no longer restricted to allowing the available data to dictate our research questions. Instead, we can use the observations we make during the Fellowship to develop richer theories of legislative behavior and to discover potential new data sources that have not yet been examined.

The Fellowship experience can also enhance your teaching. Prior to serving as a Fellow, and as a new Assistant Professor fresh out of graduate school, it was a challenge for me to describe the institution about which I was so passionate in a way that intrigued and excited my students. While I was fascinated by the historical development of Congress and could talk for hours about the transition from the Committee Government Era to the Party Government Era, the material just didn't have the same appeal to my students.

Upon returning from my year in Washington, I brought home several examples of legislation I had worked on, speeches and press releases I had written, and countless anecdotes involving members of Congress my students had seen on TV or read about online. These were materials my students could understand and connect with. By painting a picture of life inside the Senate, I was able to make the institution real to them. I showed them C-SPAN videos of committee hearings I attended, and I described the work that went into preparing a senator for meetings with constituents. While my students' eyes still sometimes glaze over when I bring up details about Senate rules and procedures or campaign finance law, they complete the course feeling like the legislative branch is a living, breathing institution that they can understand and with which they can interact. (Some of my students even started following C-SPAN on Twitter, a fact of which I am especially proud.)

Getting the Most Out of Your Time as a Fellow

In addition to the countless benefits of serving as a Congressional Fellow, there is also a steep learning curve. One of the most challenging aspects of interviewing with congressional offices before you choose your placement is being able to translate the skills you learned as a graduate student into qualities that will help you do your job as a Legislative Assistant. What may be most helpful is having expertise in an area of public policy. Choose a House or Senate office in which you will be able to achieve your research goals, but which is run by a legislator who has policy interests similar to your own. If you haven't done research on any particular policy topics, think about the issues that matter to you or are relevant to the state or region where you are from. Speak intelligently about policy problems and why you care about them. The more your interests overlap with those of the legislator, the better. The Legislative Director or Chief of Staff interviewing you wants to see that you know something about the policy area, have ideas about how to solve

problems for their constituents, and will work hard on behalf of their boss.

Likewise, being able to write clearly and concisely is a skill we academics work on continuously; however, most of us don't have a lot of practice researching an issue and drafting a policy memo and remarks in a matter of hours. Furthermore, we're used to writing in our own voice. When you work for a Senator or House member, you have to learn the way that your boss speaks and write using phrases and terms your boss will feel comfortable saying. As you prepare for meetings with each office, research the legislator's policy positions and read newspaper articles about events she attended. Watch YouTube or C-SPAN videos of the legislator delivering remarks on the floor or at events in the district, and try to get a sense of their personal style. In your interview, give examples of appearances the legislator made that you think are notable and convey to the office that you would enjoy contributing by writing memos and remarks. To the typical staffer, this work is mundane and tedious. It will be a relief to them if you are willing to help carry the workload and free them up to work on other projects and legislation.

Finally, when you begin working in an office, understand that your presence in the office is as new to your colleagues as they and the environment are to you. They know you're there to study the institution (and them), so they may feel a bit like they are being put under a microscope. Show them that you want to be part of the team, that you can be discreet, and that, as long as you are there, your responsibilities to the office come before your research. Most importantly, never stop offering to help. The job of a House or Senate staffer is intense, highly stressful, and extremely time-consuming. They are under a lot of pressure to get each job done correctly the first time. If you are supposed to work alongside another staffer and help them with their projects, it may be difficult for them to trust you until you prove yourself. This isn't about you; it comes from the fact that their job could be on the line if they mess up. Offer to do the grunt work and show them that you can help them, rather than cost them more of their valuable time. Once you build trust with them, the floodgates will open and you'll be a full-fledged member of the team.

Ultimately, serving as an APSA Congressional Fellow is a priceless experience. Many Fellows love it so much that they stay on in a Hill office or take a position at the Congressional Research Service or with a D.C. think tank. For those of us who return to academia, the benefit to our teaching and research of spending a year learning about Congress from the inside cannot be understated. The drama and surprises of the 2016 presidential race underscore the reality that times are changing; the political system today is not the same as it was 20 or 30 years ago. Because of this, traditional theories of politics and congressional change may not describe the current political era as well as they once did. Observing these developments from the vantage point of a

congressional office will give you a unique perspective and spark new ideas that can produce a research agenda from which you can benefit for years to come.

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D. COLLECTING STATE DATA

The Promises and Pitfalls of State Legislative Data

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Entering graduate school at Indiana University in the fall of 2000, I had only a vague notion of wanting to study state legislatures and had no idea I was entering into the beginning of a massive legislative roll call data project. I was fortunate enough to get involved on the ground floor of Jerry Wright's newly funded National Science Foundation grant to collect roll call data from all 50 states. In the 16 years since, changes in data availability and advances in computing power and techniques has made our effort one of the first steps in the ever growing endeavor to collect the data necessary for advancing state legislative studies. Having experienced the process of collecting data from all 50 states along with witnessing data collection advancements, in this essay I address the promises and pitfalls for graduate students and beginning scholars entering into the study of state legislatures.

Advances in Data Availability

State legislative studies traditionally used data from "particular states at particular points in time" that were "highly fragmentary" without the ability to offer any longitudinal elements to the research design (Collie 1984: 8-9). In most cases, scholars presented results from individual states or a handful of states, at best, from one point in time often relying on survey data with only a limited use of roll call or other legislative output data. To the extent scholars were able to utilize legislative output data, it was most often from a small sample of bills within a chamber.

By the time I started graduate school, there was a clear need for more comprehensive data collection efforts to

help move state legislative studies forward. This coincided with a growth in computer power and the rise of the internet to make such an effort feasible. As we collected data for the 1999-2000 sessions, we found nearly a quarter of the 99 chambers still only had paper roll calls and legislative journals available. For the states that had electronic files, we used some web scraping, a now more common technique, but also had to deal with a variety of electronic formats (see Clark, Osborn, Winburn, and Wright 2009 for more details on our process and http://www.indiana.edu/~ral/data_9900.html for access to the data). Since that time, all states have moved to some form of online bill posting and tracking and computer programs for web scraping and other bulk downloading options have greatly improved. However, the basic concepts remain the same: taking information from 99 distinct legislative chambers and creating a consistent and common data format for understanding the legislative process. Even with the advances discussed below, this remains no small undertaking regardless of the format and source of the data.

Since our data collection efforts, two major sources have emerged for those looking to collect state legislative data. The most comprehensive source to date is the Sunlight Foundation's Open States project (<http://openstates.org/>). Relying on open source coding and web scraping techniques along with crowd sourced data collection efforts, the Open States data is free of charge and available, for the less tech savvy, as bulk downloads in a comma delimited format and, for the more tech savvy, in an application programming interface (API) for all 50 states. The API option provides the most flexible access to the data; however, it requires some programming skills or familiarity. The Open States project offers great promise as it centralizes much of the data required for advancing the field of state legislative studies. Specifically, it goes beyond simply reporting roll call votes by providing bill summaries and histories, committee details, and legislator information. While this data captures much of what happens during a legislative session it should not be misconstrued as the definitive record of the process. Overall, the availability of the Open States data is a leap forward in access to legislative data across the states.

However, this is not "ready to use" data and is essentially the first step in the data collection process. For any new collection effort, this is a great place to start as it provides much of the raw data produced during a legislative session. The Open States project provides a foundation for developing data sets for a variety of research questions and gives scholars the potential to delve more into the complexities of the lawmaking process and to gain a better foothold on the promise of expanding theories of the legislative process beyond Congress.

For those interested in legislator ideology and looking for more "ready to use" data, Nolan McCarty and Boris Shor's Measuring American Legislatures (<https://americanlegislatures.com>) project is an excellent source. This is particularly true for tracking changes in

ideology over time as it helps fill some of the gaps in the dearth of longitudinal legislative data. Offering both aggregate and individual legislator common space scores, the McCarty and Shor data provides the ability to test theories that have generally been limited to Congress due to data availability.

Potential Pitfalls

Even with these new data collections, creating and managing state legislative data can still be a daunting and time intensive task. Here I address three potential pitfalls to be aware when collecting and working with state legislative data. The first is the 50-state trap. These new data sources make it possible to include all 99 chambers in a collection effort, but this is still not practical in many projects especially those that may require additional original data collection. It is time consuming and remains difficult to collect information from all the states or even to manage all the data available from a source like Open States. Good theory along with research question development and design are important in making decisions regarding which states to include in a research design. Given the time and resources, data from all applicable states for a research question is a laudable goal. However, this is not always feasible or even necessary. For students and assistant professors at universities with fewer resources, this may be an even more important issue to consider.

The second potential pitfall is data management. Data management is a skill that many graduate programs often overlook or take for granted when training graduate students. When dealing with potentially 99 chambers and millions of observations including, for example, roll calls votes, bill histories, and sponsorships being able to efficiently manage data from collection to producing an analyzable data set is a time consuming and often frustrating process. Even with the availability of the Open States data, scholars should not expect to simply be able to point and click and be ready to test their hypotheses. This data may mitigate some of the issues related to finding the data but still requires an up-front time commitment to become familiar with the data and creating the variables necessary for analysis. Going from raw legislative output to an analyzable data set takes time, attention to detail, and can be a computing intensive process.

A third potential pitfall is understanding the state political context that produces these outputs. The great allure of studying state legislatures is they offer the variation necessary within a similar framework to improve our theories on legislative politics. However, this variation means producing good research is not as simple as having the capacity to collect the necessary data. Scholars should avoid the temptation of jumping into state legislative studies without first understanding the many differences between the states. Sometimes these differences are obvious (i.e. Nebraska's unicameral and nonpartisan legislature), but more often they are subtle and require some local knowledge of both the formal rules and informal norms that operate within a state

capitol. For example, Massachusetts usually ranks in the top 5 for number of bills introduced by session. There may be several reasonable explanations: number of legislators, length of session, and/or legislative professionalism, all of which Massachusetts ranks highly on. However, there is another factor that few people know about: citizens can introduce bills with their legislator listed as the sponsor. In another example, 18 states require committees to refer out all bills sent to them (NCSL 2010). This means any attempt to measure, say, gridlock based on some measure of bill passage rates needs to take this into account. Of course, many of these procedural nuances may not be relevant for any given research question, but the point is scholars must have some understanding of the inner workings of the legislatures before utilizing any data set in front of them. Luckily, there are some good sources available to help with this effort. Most notably are the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and the Book of the States. Scholars do not have to be experts on all 50 states but need to know where to look and what to look for before collecting and utilizing state legislative data.

Using Lynda Powell's "Goldilocks" analogy from the Spring 2016 Legislative Scholar, the legislative similarities and differences across the states makes them "just right" for analysis (Powell 2016). This ideal is great for developing theories about the legislative process, but properly accounting for these differences in data collection and empirical analysis becomes more difficult. No amount of legislative data is useful without a proper understanding and context of the source of that data.

The data sources discussed above allow scholars a great starting point for data collection efforts. It is easier now than ever before to conduct research on the state legislatures and to build upon existing data collections. While these offer new promises, scholars should be aware of several potential pitfalls along the way. Overall, these new data advances allow scholars the opportunities to collect the data necessary for greater development of theories on legislative politics theory and empirical understanding of the complexities and nuances across the states.

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SYMPOSIUM II: ENGAGING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Hands-on Research in Class with Twitter

by Heather K. Evans
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Each semester in my upper level courses in American politics, I try to find some hands-on group project that my students and I can engage in together. Instead of focusing only on exams and papers, my students get experiences collecting data, analyzing it, and testing hypotheses. In this way, they are learning about what we, as political scientists, do when we aren't teaching class. Many of the students who have taken these courses with me end up going on to graduate school and have a better appreciation for research methods, which tends to be one of those courses that students dislike. I do these types of activities so often with my classes that one of my colleagues a few years ago wanted to adopt something similar in her upper level course and decided to refer to the process as "Evanizing" her syllabus.

Here is one example:

Back in the fall of 2012, I taught a Media & Politics course at Sam Houston State University that had 38 students. It was a wonderful time to be teaching anything related to American politics since an election was underway. Since the presidential election was overshadowing the congressional elections, I decided to pursue a project with my class that would make media and the congressional elections come alive. In 2012, most people running for the U.S. House had a Twitter account, but no one had really sat down, collected all of the tweets from everyone running for the U.S. House (including third parties) and figured out what these people were talking about.

Each student in class was assigned five congressional races to keep track of on Twitter. They had to find the Twitter pages for each person running (Ballotpedia became their friends), and then code the tweets that were sent. Tweets were coded into a few different categories based on tone and content. The first two weeks of the semester was spent training the students how to code, and then they began coding on September 6th. Every two weeks, they would send me their coding sheets (which were in Excel) and I would check their

work. The coding ended on the November 5th, the night before the election.

Students were graded throughout this assignment in a couple different ways. First, students received grades for turning in their coding sheets on time. Students were also assigned to come up with a research question they would like to have answered about how candidates for the U.S. House use Twitter (For example: Do women and men tweet differently? Are Republicans more negative on Twitter?). They then had to turn their research questions into workable hypotheses (competitive races will be more negative on Twitter). When the data collection was finished, students then wrote a research paper incorporating all of the data from the class and testing their hypotheses.

There are so many positives that came from this project. First, these students became very excited about seeing politics actually in action. They wanted to talk daily about what was happening in the races they were following. They became more engaged with the materials we were reading in class, and made connections between what they were reading and the Twitter project. We read a few books on campaign advertising that semester, and many students began to see tweets, and social media use generally, as a form of free advertising. A few students presented the findings of their papers at our undergraduate research symposium. A couple others continued working with me on a paper related to Twitter and elections, which was published in a peer reviewed journal. I've taken various undergraduate students to the SPSA and MPSA conferences to present our work. This project was so successful that I have repeated it three times in different classes (two sections on Congress, and an Honors Seminar). This also was the beginning of a wonderful line of research that I continue to the present day. I've received two internal grants related to this research, and I've published four articles and four book chapters from the data I've collected since that initial class project in 2012, with three other papers in progress. Having my students collect and analyze tweets is the best academic and teaching decision I ever made.

Reflections on 15 Years of Developing a Web-Based Legislative Simulation

by [John Wilkerson](#)
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LegSim

At a teaching retreat many years ago (2000), I sketched out a web-based mock Congress. I thought that the web would be a more convenient way to manage the paperwork of the in-class simulation that was the capstone of my U.S. Congress

course. The result was LegSim (www.legsim.org), which is now used by college and high school instructors across the country. LegSim is a product of its users. My early students responded positively to the experiment and made suggestions for improvement. Why not also have student research and post legislator profiles on line? How about communication tools so that they could interact on-line and outside of class? How about on-line hearings, debates and voting? Their enthusiasm was infectious and LegSim morphed into a collaborative software development project that continues to this day with input from instructors and students.

I also came to appreciate that time is the main enemy of a simulation and that more features are not always better. Instructors still have to cover content and students have other responsibilities to fulfill over the course of a semester. So why include a simulation? What do they offer pedagogically that is distinct from other forms of instruction? How can a web-based simulation motivate student learning? What are the most essential aspects of lawmaking that students need to appreciate and that a simulation should emphasize? Answering these questions has been a central pre-occupation of the project.

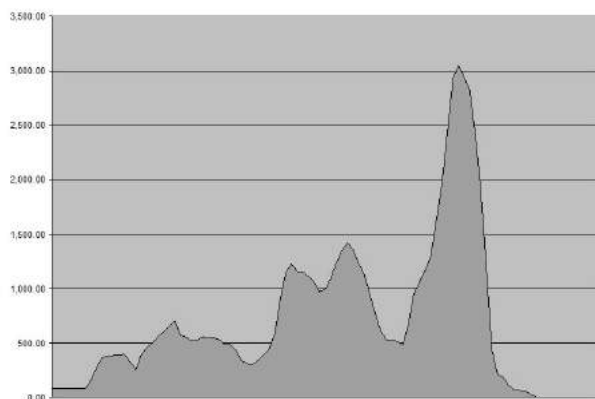
What simulations offer

Systems learning research distinguishes between three types of knowledge: conceptual, procedural and operational (Kauffman, 1980; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). In the context of a US Congress course, conceptual knowledge refers to what students need to know about the general structure of government. Procedural knowledge refers to the rules and norms that are central to the functioning of legislative bodies. Operational knowledge refers to what they need to know about the goals and orientations of other actors, and how to use that information to effectively advance their own goals (Bransford et. al., 2000).

"...the unique contribution of a simulation is operational knowledge. A well designed simulation promotes lessons about politics that are difficult to convey in lectures."

Conceptual and procedural knowledge are central to any lecture-based American Government or Legislative Politics course. Simulations can help to reinforce such lessons. But the unique contribution of a simulation is operational knowledge. A well designed simulation promotes lessons about politics that are difficult to convey in lectures. As President Clinton's chief legislative staffer (John Hilley) put it, "*to get anything done in Congress, one has to understand the players and what motivates them, as well as who can deliver and who can be trusted. No expert can teach those things; they have to be learned and practiced on the job.*" Such adaptive skills are valued in all professions, but tend to receive little

Figure 1. Activity on the LegSim website across a 10 week semester (smoothed)



Note: Y axis refers to the number of daily posts and views in a 100 student course

attention in social science education. Simulations are one potential solution.

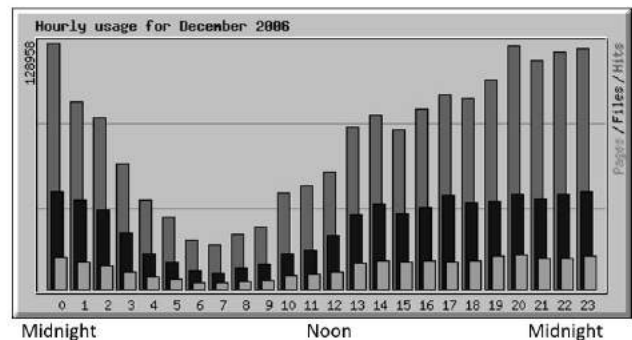
Student ownership as a path to learning

The most delightful part of a legislative simulation, most instructors will attest, is when students begin to treat it as “their” legislature. What other students think and a desire to demonstrate their skills motivate many students as much as course credit. Ownership is a theme of my course evaluations: *“I know that I’m not a real representative, but I have gotten myself so into this class that I feel like I have become one! It’s really frustrating to put your heart into something you feel so passionate about and have no ability to help it, but I guess it’s all part of the game.”*

The benefit from the instructor’s perspective is that this passion produces “communities of learning” (Brown & Campione, 1996). Students *unintentionally* instruct each other about constitutional principles, institutional design, and legislative behavior and strategy. A conservative student questions whether a bill proposed by another student violates the constitutional principle of federalism. Another objects that a relevant bill was not referred to her committee. A particularly well researched floor speech alters the momentum of a debate and changes the outcome. Such events have an impact of everyone who observes them and constitute valuable teaching moments for the instructor.

Communities of learning do not just happen, especially in large classes of strangers. In my 100 student course, however, they always form. In most years, the tipping point is a simulation event where a significant number of students end up losing a close decision. It might be the election of the Speaker, an amendment, or a bill. One indicator of this transition is an increase in peer to peer activity on the LegSim website (Figures 1 and 2).¹ Another is that I find it increasingly difficult to hold students’ attention during lectures and must try to connect them to the things that students are now thinking about. Competition is also key. Commercial video

Figure 2. Hours of the day when students are most active on LegSim



game developers are fond of arguing that the harder it is to reach a goal, the more rewarding the accomplishment. I have found that this also applies to legislative simulations. Students invest a lot in their bills and they care what others think about their ideas. But deadlines are what create the interesting dynamics. As in Congress, there is a flurry of intense activity during the final days of the session that leads to many valuable learning experiences (Figure 2).

The essentials of a US Congress course: One opinion

In my curriculum, early lectures and activities emphasize the same conceptual and procedural knowledge that is emphasized in most courses (constitutional foundations, concepts of representation, congressional elections etc.). But legislatures are fundamentally human institutions. To be sure, procedures are important constraints, but human interactions drive outcomes. Student-run simulations are effective means for conveying such lessons. Students experience the temptations and costs of partisanship. They learn through personal experience that attention to detail matters. They discover that bills do not advance solely on their merits and that little happens without compromise. As the quarter progresses, the focus gradually shifts toward this kind of operational knowledge. I lecture less and set aside more class time for simulation-related activities (at students’ request). In addition, students read at least one book that emphasizes the interpersonal dynamics of lawmaking. For example, Robert Kaiser’s *Act of Congress: How America’s Essential Institution Works* is an inside look at lawmaking (warts and all) that chronicles the enactment of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010.

A “master challenge” connects the activities. We review this final written paper in the first week and refer to it throughout the course. In it, each student reflects on their legislative accomplishments and vulnerabilities and develops a reelection strategy. The assignments throughout the course pose “scaffolding” questions that help to prepare them for this final assignment. For example, in the

first section (*Getting started*), we study representation, students research the politics of their district or state, and lay out a legislative agenda that reflects their electoral and personal priorities. In the second section (*Organizing the legislature*), among other things, they make and defend their committee assignment requests. An appropriate response to this assignment has them reviewing the roles of committees in the legislative process, before explaining how their own requests will help to advance their agenda. In the third section (*Legislating*), students draft bills, explain their purpose, why they are effective solutions, and who will support or oppose them. Completing the master challenge is then the central activity of the fourth section (*Wrapping up*). Additional information can be found at the LegSim website (www.legsim.org).

Yes, but do simulations promote learning?

One of the criticisms directed at project-based approaches to learning – and educational simulations and games in particular – is that there is limited evidence to back up the hype. Sure, simulations can be engaging, but they consume valuable time that would otherwise be devoted to content coverage. Is there a net positive learning benefit? We tested this question in a controlled experiment that compared high school student performance on the national AP Government exam (Parker et al. 2011). (LegSim was one of three project based learning (PBL) exercises at the treatment schools, but it was also the one students discussed most in the debriefs.) Each student wrote pre-post essay responses to questions designed to assess their ability to apply what they had learned to a new context.² This “deep learning” is one of the claimed advantages of project-based approaches (National Research Council 2002, 1).

The deep learning essays were then anonymously scored by political science graduate students. Students’ subsequent performance on the national AP exam were also compared. The initial expectation was that the PBL AP Government students would do better on the “deep learning” assessment. The surprise was that the treatment group also performed significantly better on the AP exam (see Table 1 of Parker et al. 2011). This was a surprise because the projects left less time for the instructor to cover content. The explanation seems to be that students were more likely to absorb what was covered. Subsequent research has confirmed these benefits, and also finds that PBL approaches are particularly effective for non-traditional students.

Final reflections

A student’s comment that “*education is something you do, not something you get*” has stuck with me over the years. Students value the knowledge they acquire in courses, but they value it even more when they have to apply it. Social science simulations can be effective vehicles for promoting such operational knowledge. Successfully implementing a simulation within the constraints of a course can be challenging however. They assume a shared base of conceptual and procedural knowledge, yet they consume scarce time

that might otherwise be used to cover such topics. They also depend on student engagement. Many students are not used to playing an active role in the classroom so some students inevitably are more involved and get more from the experience. Instructors also have different teaching goals and interests that make incorporating a simulation more or less appealing.

Nevertheless, most of the instructors who try LegSim continue to use it. Their assessments mirror my own. I was forced to cede some control over what happened in my classroom and that is always unnerving. I also had to work harder to make connections between the subjects of my lectures and what mattered to students. But the benefit was that student ownership has made my class much more interesting – for me and for my students. Every semester ends differently. I have seen very interesting changes in student issue priorities over the years, and have seen students take the simulation well beyond what I expected on several occasions.³ But the most rewarding moments are when students who go on to careers in politics tell me that the course was the best of their college careers.

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Notes

1. The figures are from 2006 because we no longer use Google Analytics to collect information about the students using LegSim on different campuses.
2. These scenarios were based on real world events that were not discussed in class. For example, one placed the student in the role of an advisor to a group opposing an effort by a local government to sell its water rights to a middle-eastern country.
3. Two examples come to mind. The first was when students voted to start each in-class session with a non-denominational prayer and one student (anonymously) complained to the University President that I was promoting religion in the classroom. This led to an interesting meeting with the Provost and attorneys for the university. Another was when a student filed a fictitious legal motion to extend the session for one more day at the end of the quarter. Student teams on both sides of the question prepared impressive legal briefs that night and an (actual) attorney then reviewed the arguments and rendered a decision the following day.

Playing Games: Simulation Ideas for the Undergraduate Congress Class

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When I began teaching undergraduate classes about legislatures nearly thirty years ago, I relied on three main graded assignments – a midterm, a final exam, and a research paper. For the paper, students typically were asked to crank off 10-15 pages on any topic related to the U.S. Congress. After reading a few hundred papers with titles like, “The House Commerce Committee: A Study in Conflict,” it was abundantly clear that my students hated writing these papers almost as much as I hated reading them. I kept the exams, but for reasons of pedagogy and our collective mental health, I dropped the term paper and turned to a succession of simulation exercises.

Fortunately, courses about the legislative process naturally lend themselves to assignments that incorporate real-world characteristics of campaigning and lawmaking. Ideally, such exercises are meaningful and enjoyable for students because they expose them to the substantive and strategic richness of legislatures and also highlight important normative questions about representation. Many solid simulation packages for legislative courses are available online, but

I generally design my own, oriented around four main characteristics.

First, the goal is to make the exercises as realistic as possible. Students are asked to work with primary source materials and the kinds of information that staffers generally use. Almost always, they are assigned concrete roles as members, congressional staff, or campaign professionals. The assigned tasks are designed to mimic the duties they would complete if they actually were on the job. As much as possible, I try to get students to consider the electoral and legislative processes from the perspective of participants, rather than as apprentice academics.

Second, the exercises I design are collaborative. Typically, I assign roles to groups of two or more students and force them to work together throughout the assignment. Often, there is a group deliberation or presentation of some kind that forces them to work with still more students assigned to different teams. Students tend to enjoy the social aspects of the collaborative work, the required collaborations reduce the stress on students who otherwise might be uncomfortable with the assignment, and of course employers inside and outside the halls of Congress want to hire people who are collaborative problem solvers.

Third, my strong preference is for simulations that essentially “run themselves.” Once I set up the ground rules and structure the tasks, the goal is for me to essentially disappear until grading time comes around. I observe the class in action, but try to stay in the background. For this to be feasible, it is critical to provide student participants with elaborate and very specific instructions for each part of the simulation game and to anticipate at the planning stage the mistakes and omissions likely to occur with a classroom full of 20-year-olds.

Fourth, as part of the simulation, my students are always required to produce one or more short written assignments, typically framed as memos to me or other student participants. These memos are formally integrated into the role-playing process and usually are read by other students as part of the exercise. The purpose is to expose them to the sorts of shorter, written work that is common in legislative workplaces, as opposed to more traditional scholarly writing. My faculty colleagues give our students plenty of other opportunities to write quasi-academic papers and other analogs of “The House Commerce Committee: A Study in Conflict,” so students do not seem all that disadvantaged by my avoidance of such assignments.

These are the four benchmarks I use in devising simulation exercises, but probably the best way to capture how they actually work in practice is to briefly summarize three examples, basically in order of increasing complexity and the investment of an instructor’s time.¹

1. Campaign Commercial Simulation

This assignment usually is placed in the first half of a course focusing on the Congress. Students are assigned to three-person groups based on their ideological/partisan leanings

as revealed by a brief survey. So some groups are comprised of Bernie supporters, others with pretty right-wing conservatives, and there usually are even a few comprised of ideological moderates. As part of the survey, students also are asked about their background with simple video production software like iMovie, Final Cut Pro, and Adobe Premier. You would be surprised how many 18-20-year-olds were exposed to such software as high school students, or are interested in picking up a basic competency that can be mentioned on resumes. Moreover, these software packages are generally very assessable if the goal is only to produce a basic, short video commercial for a campaign, which is the focus here.

Within each three-person group, students are assigned to one of three roles based on their backgrounds and interests: researcher, scriptwriter/videographer, and editor. The first few times I ran this simulation, I included four roles and had different students “playing” scriptwriter and videographer, but the exercise seems to work better when these two functions combined.

First, students are asked to meet with their group colleagues and pick a candidate who is actually running for the House or Senate and for whom they will devise and produce a 30-second campaign spot. I teach the course in the spring semester, and for even-numbered years the task is not very difficult. For odd-numbered years, I typically ask the students to select an incumbent House member or Senator likely to be running for reelection that cycle (they can craft a positive ad in favor of that legislator or a negative ad on behalf of whoever might emerge as the main challenger).

Next, the “researcher” takes the lead in producing a three-page, single-spaced memo to me on behalf of the group that summarizes the relevant constituency and the kinds of issues and traits that might be good fodder for a campaign ad. The memo needs to explore whether positive or negative themes would be more effective and relate the overall exercise to the core themes of the course – e.g., the electoral connection, presentation of self and other aspects of “home style,” the decision-making practices of ordinary voters, and so on. The researcher memos are submitted to me, but I do not grade them at this time and instead their primary function is to guide the ad production process that follows.

After the researchers turn in their memos, the scriptwriter takes the lead in drafting a short script that covers all aspects of the commercial, including audio content, the visuals, and from where the components will be drawn. As is the case with all parts of the exercise, although one member of the group is taking the lead, I ask that the others help out and be integrated as much as possible. Again, the goal is to make the assignment fully collaborative. As is the case with researcher memos, these scripts are submitted to me, but I do not grade them. Further, the groups can make any changes in the scripts that they want during the production phase.

After the scripts have been produced, the editor takes over, with significant assistance from the other group mem-

bers. Here, we rely on a media lab located in our university library. The lab includes the equipment necessary to make first-rate audio recordings and videos and some staff with whom interested students can consult if necessary. My sense is that most colleges and universities have an analogous facility. Indeed, many students will have what they need to produce a short video spot on their own laptops. In any event, during this part of the exercise, the groups do what is necessary to produce 30-second campaign commercials, which are submitted to me electronically to be graded.

Over the years, I have been stunned by the quality of most of the campaign ads that have been created and at the minimal demands on my time as part of the production process. Of course, some of the ads are pretty basic, but others are very close to the kind of work produced by campaign professionals. The realism of these student work products probably says something about the mixed quality of campaign discourse in real world campaigns, but I think it also reflects the basic structure of the assignment and the digital media dexterity of current college students. Typically, I do a public showing of all the campaign ads produced for a class and invite a campaign professional or consultant to sit in and critique them. Large quantities of pizza are provided, courtesy of the commonwealth of Virginia. The visiting campaign consultants always comment on the high quality of the student ads, and a number of the students have followed up with internships and full time jobs in political communication after graduation. In grading the exercise, I generally focus on the overall quality of the end product, but do put some weight on the specific contributions of individual students (e.g., the quality of the researcher memos for the researchers, the effectiveness of the scripts for the scriptwriter/videographers, and so on).

2. Committee Markup Simulation

The purpose of this exercise is to expose students to all aspects of committee deliberations over legislation. As is the case with the campaign commercial simulation, students are first assigned to groups. Here, the groups include only two members and I create them semi-randomly. So it is common to have groups comprised of students who have very different partisan and ideological leaning. In preparing the simulation, I chose a committee and legislative vehicle that will structure the assignment. Some years, I asked them to reform U.S. welfare policy or revamp Medicare. Recently, I have focused more on congressional reform legislation, including campaign finance and lobbying, as well as internal House and Senate procedures. If the selected issue falls neatly within the jurisdiction of a House or Senate committee, the member roles reflect the makeup of that panel. So when Medicare was the focus, member roles were drawn from the House Commerce Committee or the Senate Finance. For congressional reform, I pick a sample of House members and Senators to create a bipartisan and bicameral joint committee along the lines of the three Joint Committees on the Organization of Congress that operated during the 1940s, 1960s, and 1990s.

The simulation begins with the students researching their assigned lawmaker, his or her constituency and legislative agenda, and the substance of the issue that has been selected. Working together, each two-person group produces a “proposal memo” that summarizes what they have found and outlines at least one serious legislative proposal that the member conceivably might champion in that issue area. If the students want to essentially borrow a legislative proposal that the relevant lawmaker actually introduced or offered in previous years, that’s fine – the more realism the better.

After the proposal memos have been produced, the students caucus separately by party, with the students playing the role of the relevant chair or ranking member running these sessions. I ask that each party caucus come up with four or five proposals (from among the items featured on the aforementioned proposal memos) that will constitute the party list and will be prioritized during the markup stage of the simulation process. After the two party lists are submitted to me, I construct and share the agenda for the committee. The caucus stage usually requires one full class period.

A couple of points should be emphasized here. I require that the students not craft their proposals in real or (even worse) quasi-real legislative language, and instead adopt a more informal approach. The use of such informal, as opposed to explicitly legislative, language is actually pretty common in real-world legislatures. Within the Congress, for example, the Ways and Means panel has occasionally adopted something like this approach because of the highly technical nature of tax legislation. In addition, I do not provide a base bill for them to “mark up” via their amendments. Instead, we proceed as though the committee has original jurisdiction and the content of the legislation essentially emerges piecemeal, as they consider individual proposals in sequence.

Next, the students meet in a formal markup session, with them physically arrayed by group around a horseshoe design of tables, including name cards identifying their legislative roles. The chair selects a proposal from the majority party list, which is debated and put to a vote subject to the five-minute rule. Next, the ranking minority member chooses a proposal from the minority party list, which is then debated, and so on until all of the items on the two party lists are considered. Each member group casts a single vote – If there are internal group disagreements, I suggest they take the dispute to the hallway and duke it out. To simplify matters, I also serve as the nonpartisan, neutral parliamentarian/clerk and recognize students to speak, albeit with lots of input from the students in leadership roles. Generally, two full class periods are devoted to the markup stage of the exercise, so there is time to consider most of the remaining proposals produced by individual student groups that were not selected for the party lists. After all of the amendments have been considered, the adopted amendments are considered once again, en bloc, and if that vote is successful, the legislation is reported to the full chamber and the simulation ends. There is no floor stage. If the en bloc vote fails, the

result is gridlock and the students have some explaining to do for the folks back home.

The final part of the exercise is a constituent letter that the students – working alone as individuals and not with their group partner – write to the people in the relevant district or state, summarizing what happened during the markup and framing their actions to build support among constituents. In assigning grades, I weight the realism of their individual participation during the caucus and markup stages the most, the quality of their letters somewhat, and the jointly written proposal memos the least.

3. Senate Staff Simulation

Of all the class simulations I have conducted, this one is by far my favorite and also the most challenging.² The first step is for me to convince six or seven top Senate staff (usually chiefs of staff, legislative directors, or other senior aides) to visit the class in person at some point during the last two months of the course for the purpose of meeting with my students. As much as possible, these guest sessions are conducted during the normal class periods, but if necessary they are scheduled for evenings or even weekends.³ Still, the roles that students play in this simulation are determined in part by which Senate offices have staff that have agreed to participate.

Early in the class, students are randomly placed in five- or six-person groups and then assigned one of the Senate offices participating in the assignment. Within each office group, individual students function as legislative assistants and are assigned concrete issue responsibilities that make sense for that particular member. I ask the students to identify a legislative vehicle relevant to their issue assignment that likely will surface on the Senate floor agenda sometime during that session or Congress. Over the next few weeks, the students research the issue, identify which proposals or votes are likely candidates for floor action, and write a memo advising their “boss” how he or she should vote if such a bill or amendment comes to a decision. The memos are required to be professionally structured and no more than a page and a half, single-spaced. Although the writing assignment is short, I meet with each student individually several times to make the memos resemble the professional communications that are written and read in Senate offices. Getting these memos in first-rate shape usually requires many drafts and a lot of the instructor’s time and (frankly) patience.

After the students have polished their memos, the relevant Senate staff visit the class individually and in sequence. During the visits, I have the students in that office group physically sitting around a table at the front of the classroom with the relevant chief of staff or legislative director, and the other students in the class form an audience. The students in the relevant office group hand the visitor their memos and verbally walk the aide through the contents, ending with a recommendation about how the Senator should vote. The

staffer then responds with questions, comments, and criticisms. Before these meetings, I emphasize to the visiting Senate aides that the purpose is not to provide the student participants with a “feel good” experience. I ask them to push the students as much as possible and hold them to the kinds of standard they would expect from junior staff or really smart interns. Each meeting generally requires an entire class period, and completing all of the sessions usually takes up two and a half weeks of class time.

Although the time investment throughout the exercise is higher than the other simulations I have used, the value added for students and for me personally is significant. In the seven or eight years that I relied on this assignment, dozens of the student participants ended up working as interns or congressional staff after leaving the class. Obviously, the simulation is logistically feasible in part because of the proximity of my institution, the College of William & Mary, to Washington D.C., but a similar exercise could be structured around state legislators, state legislative staff, county boards, or even a city council. Indeed, in one class about the policy-making process, I invited lobbyists and other policy professionals and asked students to write memos advising these principals on some aspect of their upcoming work agendas. So something along the lines of the Senate staff simulation can be conducted just about anywhere.

The bottom line? Simulation exercises can enrich an undergraduate course about legislatures, especially when they are designed to be realistic, collaborative, logistically coherent and freestanding, and feature writing assignments and other tasks that reinforce core class themes. In their course evaluations, my students invariably reference the simulation components as the best part of the class (even partially making up for all the boring lectures and unrealistic exam expectations). Simulations also make the teaching experience much more rewarding for the instructor. A Pareto superior move if ever there was one!

Notes

1. Instructors in need of more detailed descriptions of these simulation exercises should feel free to contact me at clewan@wm.edu.
2. I have used it seven or eight times, but not in the past few years.
3. It may be possible to conduct the sessions remotely with Skype, although I have not tried.

CURRENT EVENTS: THE BUDGET STALEMATE IN ILLINOIS

Whither Goest Thou, Springfield, In Thy Shiny Car in the Night? Illinois' Multi-Year Budget Nightmare

by [Christopher Z. Mooney](#)
University of Illinois

Last May, as I was preparing to discuss a paper at the State Politics and Policy Conference at UT-Dallas, I noted that the authors were using “days past budget deadline” as an indicator of state government gridlock. The maximum value for this variable in their decades-long dataset was 296 days. I emitted a heavy sigh. As I read the paper, Illinois had been without a comprehensive state budget for 320 days.

Illinois remains without a comprehensive state budget for either FY16 or FY17. On June 30, to much fanfare, the General Assembly passed and the governor signed a “stop-gap” spending measure designed to carry the state through the fall election. Aside from fully funding K-12 education, this “budget” allocates approximately 65 percent of FY15 spending for FY16 and the first half of FY17. And with less revenue than in FY15 and various court orders, consent decrees and continuing appropriations driving spending even without a budget, the state is spending more money than it takes in every day. The growing backlog of bills is about \$8B and expected to top \$10B by the end of 2016. The latter figure is approximately 30 percent of the full FY15 operating budget. Ouch, indeed.

Neither I nor anyone else can predict the outcome of this stalemate with accuracy. It is also tough for me, at this point, to draw from this episode any general lessons about political behavior or institutions that might be of interest to a wider audience. I am too close to the situation and too fed up with it. But I can provide a bit of description and explanation about why Illinois got into this predicament. Draw your own general lessons from this story.

Like most political stalemates, this one starts with a really difficult problem and is then inflamed by intractable and conflicting opinions about how to solve it.

First, the problem. It is, of course, complex and multifaceted, but there are two large and general components of it. First, decades of shorting state public pension systems have led to a nation-leading \$100B+ difference between what Illinois owes its current and former employees upon retirement and what it has stashed away to meet those obligations. The

state constitution contains ironclad language (recently reaffirmed by the Illinois Supreme Court) ruling out all options for eliminating that deficit except one—pay up.

Second, aside from pensions, Illinois state government's financial house has been in a shambles for some time. Years of smoke-and-mirror budgeting have yielded a severe and growing structural deficit and a severe and growing gap between public expectations for services and existing revenue streams. The state's leaders tried to address this in 2011 with significant budget cuts and a 30 percent "temporary" income tax increase. When that tax increase winked out in January 2015, it left a \$5-10B hole in the annual budget, and Illinois's structural budget deficit continues to increase.

Why was the temporary tax increase allowed to expire in January 2015? Two words—Bruce Rauner. In November 2014, the Republican financial whiz, mega-millionaire, and political neophyte was elected governor over the hapless Democratic incumbent, Pat Quinn, in response to a general dissatisfaction with state government. And the Democratic supermajorities in the General Assembly were not about to offer the gift of increased revenue to the new GOP governor who had just spent some \$70M bashing them on the campaign trail.

Rauner compounded his problems by beginning his term with strong labor policy demands that have been interpreted by public and private unions as right-to-work legislation. He traveled the state preaching this "Turnaround Agenda," taking every opportunity he could to bash unions—especially public unions, whom he blamed for most of the state's financial woes. Unions responded by rallying themselves and the Democratic Party more strongly than in living memory. As such, Rauner accomplished what the Democrats have been unable to do for a generation—bringing the union movement together solidly with the Democratic Party.

In the other corner is former bantamweight boxer and Illinois Speaker of the House, Michael J. Madigan. With a 32-year tenure, Madigan is the longest serving speaker in the country today, and the longest-serving ever in Illinois. A product of the old Richard J. Daley political machine and a consummate strategist and tactician, Madigan's primary motivation is, as it is for most legislative leaders, to return a majority in his chamber. A principle ally of Illinois Democrats is organized labor, and Madigan needs their help in staving off the promised and ongoing monetary onslaught of Rauner and his super-rich backers. Hence, the battle lines were drawn.

As a rookie governor, Rauner has thrown some wild cards into the mix that have made the budget stalemate even more intractable than even a budget problem of this magnitude normally would be. First, there is the campaign money—lots of campaign money. Between Rauner's personal fortune and those of a handful of other titans of industry, Rauner has virtually unlimited campaign resources at his disposal. And with Illinois's fairly loose campaign finance regulations, he has used those resources freely. For example,

just after his inauguration, he established an unprecedented \$ 20M legislative campaign fund, and he wasn't shy about declaring that he would use that money to help his legislative friends and hurt his legislative enemies. And just after his first legislative session in 2015, he spent millions of dollars in the expensive Chicago media market with a series of vague and confusing—but nasty—TV ads aimed at vilifying Madigan. All this stiffened the spine of legislative Republicans, who have walked virtually in lockstep with him for 18 months. It also alarmed and affirmed the resolve of labor and Democrats to unite and fight the governor's agenda. Both sides have backed themselves into a corner.

Another wild card from the governor is simply the fact that he has tied his substantive economic and political reform package to budget negotiations. He claims, rightly, that the only way he can possibly get Democrats to agree to many of his reforms is by holding hostage the programs that they prize. This, of course, has made the normal routine of compromise in budget negotiations very difficult.

Rauner also made an unusual tactical decision early on that has protracted the stalemate—he refused to declare a "crisis," as chief executives typically do in these situations. Whether it is closing parks or schools or locking out government workers, the regular script for governors and presidents facing a budget deadline is to declare an emergency and use his/her bully pulpit to browbeat the legislature into coming to an agreement. Rauner did the opposite, going to court to keep state workers' paychecks coming, signing the K-12 education appropriation to keep schools open, and so forth. And with the help of continuing appropriations, court orders, consent decrees and good management of the agencies, he has largely been able to keep state government limping along, albeit with ever-increasing deficits and gaping holes in vital human services and higher education spending.

While the story is much more subtle and complex than this, as time goes on, it appears more like a simple battle of wills between two hard-headed individuals with strong and opposing substantive agendas and strong egos—Rauner and Madigan.

What has been the result of this fight so far? For starters, Rauner has passed none of his Turnaround Agenda. Of course, this could still change, with the stalemate being resolved in his favor. But even if the stalemate ends tomorrow, serious damage has been done to the state's social safety net, state government programs and agencies (including state universities), and local governments. This is not to mention the likely knock-on effects on the economy, as budget uncertainty impacts personal and firms' financial decisions for the worse. And then there's the matter of the \$8B in unpaid bills that continues to grow—and the huge public pension debt that simply must be paid.

I make no predictions about how or when this battle will be resolved. Maybe after the 2016 general election. Maybe after the 2018 general election, when the governor promises

to run for re-election. But I do predict how it will be resolved—through a mix of cuts and tax hikes, with potentially a few minor wins for the governor on his Turnaround Agenda. I also predict that the long-term consequences of this battle will be substantial and negative—on the state budget, on the state’s economy, and on the level of political trust among Illinois voters, already at a low ebb with two governors having served federal prison time for corruption in the past 10 years.

As I often tell my students, Illinois politics is like a roller coaster—it’s really exciting if you don’t lose your lunch.

DATASET: AUTOMATED CODING OF CONGRESSIONAL ROLL CALL VOTING

PIPC Votes Roll-Call Dataset

by [Michael H. Crespin](#)
University of Oklahoma

Overview

The [PIPC Roll Call Dataset](#) is a database nearly 30,000 of roll-call votes from the U.S. House of Representatives. It starts with the 83rd Congress (1953) and is currently updated each day the House votes. The dataset might seem to only categorize the minutiae of congressional politics, but has proven to be useful when it comes to marshaling evidence for different theories of legislative organization and elsewhere.

The main purpose of the dataset is to code each roll-call vote for one of 59 procedural “types”. The vote types include various kinds of final passage votes such as bills and resolutions and denotes if they passed under suspension of the rules or under more regular order. We also code procedural motions such as moving the previous question or voting on a special rule. The largest category of votes falls under the amendments category.

Figure 1 provides a simple breakdown of the different types of votes over the course of the dataset. We see, for example, the increase in amendment roll calls following the introduction recorded teller votes in 1971. We can also observe the decrease in the proportion of regular final passage votes and the slow increase in votes taken under suspension of the rules. Partisan procedural votes are now the second most prevalent type of roll-call votes.

The dataset also records vote margins such as the number ayes and nays in total and also broken down by party. Since the dataset was started when the south still had a substantial number of Democrats, we also code ayes and nays for South and non-South. These data points allow us to create simple examples like Figure 2 that plots the growing proportion of party unity votes over time, for demonstrate the demise of the conservative coalition starting in the 92nd congress.

In addition, the dataset also codes each vote for issues types, although this coding stops in the 112th Congress. Unlike other datasets that will code issues based on the bill, we try to code here on the vote level. For instance we categorize a vote on abortion taken up in the context of the Defense Appropriations bill as an abortion vote. Finally, we also provide information about the bill types and numbers as well as some information about amendments.

Coding Methods

The original version of the dataset was started by David Rohde and largely hand coded by a team of graduate students first at Michigan State and then at Duke. This usually entailed waiting for the yearly Congressional Roll Call books to arrive and parsing the necessary information from the paragraph describing each vote. Since we waited for

Figure 1: Proportion of Votetypes by Congress

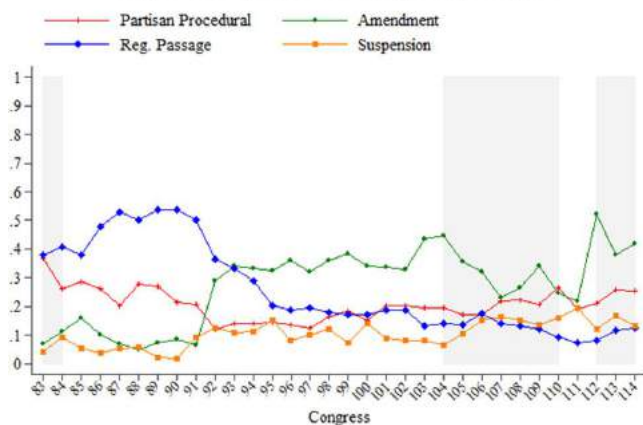
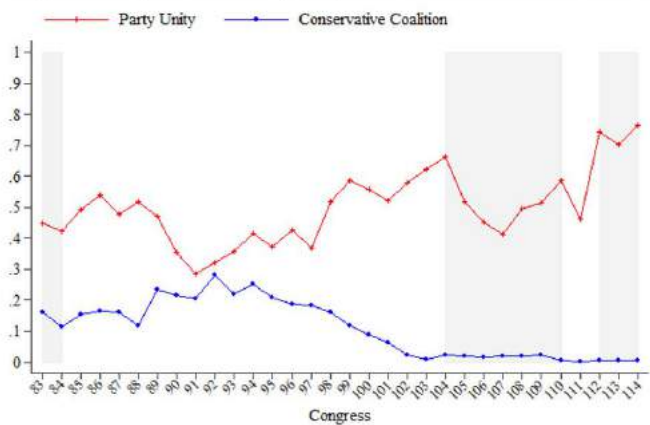


Figure 2: Proportion of Party Unity and Conservative Coalition Votes



the publication of the Roll Call books, the dataset was frequently one year or even a full congress behind.

Hand coding had some difficulties. Occasionally the clerks would change how they described certain types of votes and that would make coding tricky. One change made it especially difficult to differentiate between substitute amendments and amendments in the nature of a substitute. While hand coding allowed for parsing nuances, it could introduce the potential for mistakes in the dataset.

The newest version now scrapes information from the [Clerk of the House](#) each night and codes the “vote type” variable based on a [python script](#) written by Austin Clemens. For the first time, the dataset will now always include the most recent votes and vote type codes. We code all the votes from the 101st Congress to the present using the computer program while data from the 83rd-100th Congress are the original hand coded votes. Unfortunately, our program is not able to code for “Issue Type” so this variable stops in the 112th Congress.

Since we are using automated rules, this means the coding should be much more consistent but also means we will repeat any potential mistakes until someone catches them. It also means there will be occasional votes that our computer code cannot classify based off of the information available. Finally, our code will not work if the Clerk decides to make changes to her web page. Thankfully we survived the recent demise of [thomas.loc.gov](#).

In order to get the code to work properly, we used the hand-coded votes from previous dataset as a “training set” beginning with the first votes available on the Clerk’s web page for the 101st Congress. We then matched the computer coded votes with the hand-coded votes and looked for any discrepancies. A human (me!) decided on the correct vote type and then we updated the computer code until the two datasets matched.

This iterative method allowed us to find mistakes in the previous dataset. For example, we found that many motions to order the previous question should have been coded motion to order the previous question on a special rule. We were also forced to make a decision on how to code motions to waive the same day rule. Since these motions were usually part of a special rule, we opted to code them as special rules rather than motions to waive. This additional language was not available in the roll call books and the coding of this type of motion was inconsistent.

Using the Data

The most prominent use of the dataset was in David Rohde’s 1991 *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Here, Rohde used the data to examine variation in the level of consensus on certain types of votes over time. Many others use it to identify certain issues, types of votes, or explore vote margins (See e.g. Finocchiaro and Rohde 2008; Harbridge and Malhotra 2011) or variations in the roll-call agenda over time (Crespin, Rohde, Vander Wielen 2011).

With some simple manipulation, scholars can also match the dataset with roll-call matrices to calculate individual member level measures for different subsets of votes. Keith Poole provides NOMINATE “ideal points” for broad vote type categories over on his [voteview](#) page. Rohde and I estimated NOMINATE scores for members based off of their votes on appropriations bills to show that voting is not always one dimensional (Crespin and Rohde 2010). Similar techniques can be used to calculate individual level roll rates and party unity scores for varying subsets of votes.

Moving Forward

Now that the House code is working well, Austin and I will work with Jason Roberts to create a similar dataset for the U.S. Senate. Typical of our bicameral system, the underlying code is different enough that we cannot just replicate the script for the upper chamber. There are, of course, different procedural votes so the set of rules must be updated and changed as well. We will post the new dataset when it is finished.

You can download the data and complete codebook here (<http://pipcvotes.cacexplore.org/>). Please cite the dataset as:

Crespin, Michael H. and David Rohde. [Date Accessed] Political Institutions and Public Choice Roll-Call Database. Retrieved from <http://cacexplore.org/pipcvotes/>

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