

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: DEEP BENCH: CONGRESSIONAL STAFF IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Casey Burgat, Doctor of Philosophy, 2019

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Capitol Hill is bustling with thousands of congressional staffers. Despite their numbers, and members readily admitting their reliance on these congressional aides, few scholars have turned their attention towards how lawmakers make use of their staffing resources or how these choices affect their subsequent legislative behavior and effectiveness. This dissertation seeks to quantify staff characteristics and impacts within both Representatives' personal offices and congressional committees using two authoritative, comprehensive staff databases. More specifically, this project analyzes three unverified assumptions regarding congressional aides, their use, and their impact on Capitol Hill. The first assumption is that expertise and influence is generated solely by years of experience within congressional offices. The second is that levels of

congressional staff turnover are concerningly high across House offices and that lawmakers who experience higher levels of turnover are less legislatively active and successful. The final assumption tested within this dissertation is that policy-focused aides within congressional committees are the driving forces behind various committee outputs such as facilitating committee hearings, reporting out substantive legislation, and getting it passed by the chamber. While I find that while these presumptions regarding congressional staff are generally true, they are incomplete. When assigning the most important issue portfolios to policy aides, members value higher levels of staff networking in addition to, and often above, longer tenures on the Hill; alarmingly high aide turnover is not as systemic as many observers fear, but offices that do experience comparatively high proportions of staffers departing the office are less active and successful lawmakers; and finally, committee policy staff are key in producing and getting important legislation reported out of committee, but it is more connected senior staffers who are essential in getting bills passed by the chamber. In sum, this dissertation sheds new light on how the behind-the-scenes work of congressional aides contributes to congressional behavior and legislation.

DEEP BENCH: CONGRESSIONAL STAFF IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

By Casey Burgat

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Dedication

To my family. All y'all.

Acknowledgements

Sara, Charlie, and forthcoming baby boy: you know.

To my committee: it goes without saying that no graduate student would finish without help from their faculty committee all along the way. I am no different. But, each of my committee members had a very specific role in ushering me along.

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Table of Contents

DEDICATION.....	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	III
LIST OF FIGURES	V
LIST OF TABLES.....	VI
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 APPROACH AND METHODS	9
1.2 PROJECT MOTIVATION.....	12
1.3 DISSERTATION OUTLINE	14
CHAPTER TWO: CONGRESSIONAL STAFFING, PAST AND PRESENT	17
2.1 EVOLUTION OF STAFF RESOURCES IN CONGRESS.....	18
2.2 PRESENT DAY STAFFING IN THE HOUSE	25
2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CONGRESSIONAL STAFF.....	35
2.4 UNANSWERED QUESTIONS.....	44
CHAPTER THREE: LINKED GOVERNMENT—THE POWER OF NETWORKING ON CAPITOL HILL.....	47
3.1 THE ROLE OF LEGISLATIVE STAFFERS.....	50
3.2 TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF EXPERTISE	52
3.3 LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES AND MEASURES OF EXPERTISE.....	61
3.4 MODELING TYPES OF EXPERTISE ON INDIVIDUAL ISSUE ASSIGNMENTS.....	69
3.5 CONCLUSION	75
CHAPTER FOUR: DEPARTURE FALLOUT—CONGRESSIONAL STAFFER TURNOVER AND LEGISLATIVE EFFECTIVENESS	78
4.1 LINKING TURNOVER TO CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES	81
4.2 COLLECTIVE STAFF TURNOVER AND LEGISLATIVE PRODUCTIVITY	84
4.3 DATA AND METHODS.....	89
4.4 RESULTS.....	100
4.5 CONCLUSION	114
CHAPTER FIVE: HOW COMMITTEE STAFFERS CLEAR THE RUNWAY FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION IN CONGRESS	117
5.1 THE LEGISLATIVE IMPACT OF COMMITTEE STAFF	119
5.2 THE “RIGHT STAFF” AT THE RIGHT TIME.....	124
5.3 DATA AND METHODS.....	130
5.4 RESULTS.....	139
5.5 DISCUSSION.....	147
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS.....	150
6.1 LONGER TENURES ISN’T THE ONLY VALUED FORM OF STAFFER EXPERTISE	152
6.2 TURNOVER ISN’T AS SYSTEMIC AS FEARED, BUT WHERE IT EXISTS IT HAS NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES	153
6.3 MORE THAN POLICY STAFF IS NEEDED TO GET COMMITTEE BILLS REPORTED AND PASSED	156
6.4 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.....	157
APPENDIX	160
REFERENCES.....	172

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Individual staffer issue portfolios from the Spring, 2016 Congressional Yellowbook.....	10
Figure 1.2: Itemized payments from the 2018, Q1 Statement of Disbursements.....	11
Figure 2.1. Number of congressional staff within personal offices and committees, House and Senate, 1930-2015.....	24
Figure 2.2. Average spending as a percentage of a Members' Representational Allowance, 2009-2017....	27
Figure 2.3. Average percent of House staff in Washington, D.C., and district offices, 1976-2016.....	31
Figure 2.4. Average percent of staff allocated to various position groupings, 2016.....	33
Figure 3.1. Hill tenures and office counts of various legislative responsibilities.....	68
Figure 3.2. Marginal effects of Hill tenure and office count on Prestige Issues.....	70
Figure 3.3. Marginal effects of Hill tenure and office count on Policy Issues.....	73
Figure 3.4. Marginal effects of Hill tenure and office count on Constituent Service Issues.....	74
Figure 4.1. Density plot of <i>Salary Weighted Turnover</i>	94
Figure 4.2. <i>Salary Weighted Turnover</i> by party, 107th - 114th Congresses.....	95
Figure 4.3. Predicted counts of legislative activity variables.....	104
Figure 4.4. Discrete changes of legislative activity variables.....	105
Figure 4.5. Predicted counts of legislative effectiveness variables.....	109
Figure 4.6. Discrete changes of legislative effectiveness variables.....	110
Figure 5.1. Committee staffer types as percentage of total, 2001-2017.....	135
Figure 5.2. House committee staffer types over time, percent change, percent change from 2001 totals.....	136
Figure 5.3. Effects of 50% increase in committee staff support on committee outputs.....	142
Figure 5.4. Effects of 50% increase in staff support by position groupings on committee outputs.....	145

List of Tables

Table 3.1. Classification of common House legislative responsibilities.....	65
Table 3.2. Average tenures and office counts by legislative responsibility.....	67
Table 4.1. Summary statistics of legislative activity and effectiveness variables, 107th - 114th Congresses.....	97
Table 4.2. Summary statistics of variables, 107th - 114th Congresses.....	99
Table 4.3. Effect of <i>Salary Weighted Turnover</i> on legislative activity, 107th-114th Congresses.....	102
Table 4.4. Effect of <i>salary weighted turnover</i> on legislative effectiveness, 107th-114th Congresses.....	107
Table 4.5. Percent changes from mean in legislative activity and productivity variables, 107th - 114th Congresses.....	112
Table 4.6. Case studies: Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R-KS), Baron Hill (D-IN), and Elton Gallegly (R-CA).....	113
Table 5.1. Descriptive statistics for key variables.....	139
Table 5.2. Effects of staff support on committee outputs, 2001-2016.....	140
Table 5.3. Effects of specific types of staff support on committee outputs, 2001-2016.....	143

Chapter One: Introduction

On January 18, 2017 the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held its nomination hearing for Representative Tom Price (R-GA), President Trump's nominee to be Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. During the hearing, Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) poignantly questioned Rep. Price about a potential conflict of interest for the Congressman. Senator Murphy's line of questioning was as follows:

Sen. MURPHY: On March 8th of 2016, earlier last year, CMS announced a demonstration project to lower Medicare reimbursements for Part D drugs. That would've decreased incentives for physicians to prescribe expensive brand name medications, and drug companies that were affected by this immediately organized a resistance campaign. Two days later, you announced your opposition to this demonstration project. One week later, you invested as much as \$90,000 in a total of six pharmaceutical companies. Not five, not seven, six. All six, amazingly, made drugs that would've been impacted by this demonstration project. There are a lot of drug companies that wouldn't have been affected, but you didn't invest in any of those, you invested in six specific companies that would be harmed by the demonstration project. You submitted financial disclosures indicating that you knew that you owned these stocks, and then two weeks after that, you became the leader in the United States Congress in opposition to this demonstration project.¹

Congressman Price responded with a simple, yet extremely telling, reply:

Rep. PRICE: That's good staff work, Senator.

¹ Nomination hearing of Rep. Tom Price to be Health and Human Services Secretary, Jan. 18, 2017, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, available at <http://www.cq.com/doc/congressionaltranscripts-5023201?1>

That's it. Senator Murphy quickly moved on in his questioning. He never acknowledged his uncomfortable pressing of a fellow member of the United States Congress was, in fact, founded on the detailed research carried out by his anonymous staffer. Though Sen. Murphy was the one on camera receiving the attention—and credit or blame, depending on the viewer—for the questioning of Rep. Price, this interaction highlights a reality largely unknown to more passive observers of Congress: much of the work done on Capitol Hill is conducted by the staff on behalf of the members. Representative Price's facetious reply was a recognition of this truth, from one member of Congress to another.

For those more familiar with Congress, including journalists, lobbyists, and academics, the importance of congressional staff is far better known and acknowledged. Through close observation, interviews, and even personal experience, these observers recognize that congressional aides are an influential and necessary resource for lawmakers to carry out the detailed work required of them as lawmakers.

And most vitally, members themselves readily admit much of their productivity in Congress is dependent on their hired hands. In the Congressional Management Foundation (2015a) report *Life in Congress: The Member Perspective*, members of Congress were asked to rate how important particular aspects of their job were to their satisfaction and effectiveness as a Representative. Unsurprisingly, 'Staying in touch with your constituents' was voted the most important aspect with 95 percent of members agreeing it is very important.

Second place, however, is a bit less predictable. Eighty-nine percent of members agreed that ‘Having a high-performing staff’ was very important, beating out the importance of ‘Feeling that you are performing an important public service’ and ‘Feeling invested in the work you are doing’ (with 84 percent of members agreeing these aspects were very important). In fact, more members (85 percent) agreed “Effective communication between you and your staff” was more critical to their being a satisfied, effective lawmaker. In the eyes of members, more agreed that an effective, high-performing staff meant more to their job performance than either a personal investment in their work or the significance associated with being a public servant.

As articulated by an eight-term House member, “Having an intelligent, creative, and conscientious staff to address matters ranging from constituent concerns or needs to policy issues is critical if a Member intends to be effective” (26). This quote highlights two implicit features regarding congressional aides from the member perspective. First, staffers are largely responsible for executing the varied day-to-day tasks expected of every lawmaker, from constituent service to creation and advancement of policy. And second, without their hired staff, members have little chance of being effective lawmakers.

Intuitively, political scientists and congressional observers—members included—know staff matter. As the workloads of members of Congress have steadily increased, their reliance on personal staffs has followed suit (Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler 2017; Hall 1998; Hammond 1984, 1996; Leal and Hess 2004; Malbin 1980). Due to a seemingly endless list of tasks associated with holding elected office, Representatives

are subject to harsh time constraints and turn to their aides to help manage their responsibilities. Among other duties, each member's office is responsible for drafting legislative bills and amendments, tracking floor and committee happenings, generating and executing a media strategy, responding to constituent requests, district casework, fundraising, and managing a busy schedule of public appearances. "The simple fact that members have more to do than time in which to do it," (Malbin 1980, 4) has resulted in an increased member reliance on their staffs to carry out a wide variety of functions that culminate in running a successful legislative office (Romzek and Utter 1997).

Though members recognize and readily admit their reliance on congressional aides, too few scholars have turned their attention towards how members make use of their staffing resources and how these choices affect their subsequent legislative behavior and effectiveness. Put directly, despite lawmakers regularly telling journalists and scholars they couldn't adequately perform the duties expected of them except for their staff, most studies overlook the important role of aides and instead focus on the member as the sole, unitary actor executing each and every action done in his or her name.

This gap in scholarship is particularly surprising given the number of studies that pinpoint the factors that affect congressional behavior and lawmaking effectiveness (e.g. (Volden and Wiseman 2014). Academics quantify the varying degrees to which Members are successful in generating cosponsors on bills or getting legislation signed into law (Bernhard and Sulkin 2013; Fowler 2006; Harbridge 2015; Schiller 1995; Wawro 2001), for example, but they do so despite a fairly general acceptance that the members

aren't always the ones actually doing the work. More fundamentally, much of the congressional literature contends that a lawmaker's individual goals and priorities help explain much of their subsequent behaviors in Congress (Adler and Lapinski 1997; Barber 1965; Clapp 1980; Fenno 1973; Fiorina 1989; Mayhew 1974, 2000), yet rarely give more than passing attention to the aides hired to help them do so.

In order to better understand legislative behavior in the congressional context, it is imperative that the personal employees tasked with executing many of the day-to-day operations of their legislative office merit intense study. Just as it makes sense to look at the roles, responsibilities, and experience levels of employees within a small business to explain the successes or failures of a private enterprise, the same can be said for staffers within congressional offices. Staff matter. How they are used, the positions they hold, the duties they execute, and their levels of turnover and experience logically are all likely to profoundly affect the results of individual lawmaker offices, as well as Congress as an institution.

I contend this gap in scholarship in staffing is the result of two main miscalculations. First, the vast majority of congressional behavior literature treats Representatives as unitary actors (e.g. Schiller 1995; Wawro 2001). The unitary model implicitly assumes that the member is responsible for all work conducted in her name, from legislative research to organizing town halls to booking radio interviews that help connect the lawmaker to constituents. This is assuredly not the case.

It is true that many actions and results are correctly attributed to each lawmaker as an individual. After all, the member is the one giving the speech and casting the vote

on the House floor. But, these are often culminating events following many staff-hours devoted to preparing for execution on those final actions done by the member. As Rep. Price's response in the opening dialogue of this chapter acknowledges, it is likely that a congressional employee conducted the research and had a large part in writing the speech and in poring over the legislative and political implications of the members' vote prior to any final action taken by the lawmaker.

What's more, an enormous amount of labor done within legislative offices involves no real involvement by the member. Tasks such as constituent service responses or background research on the economic costs of a legislative proposal are executed in the member's name, often at their urging, but without their direct input. They have been delegated. The unitary model of congressional behavior largely ignores this behind-the-scenes work of aides in preparation for member action and all but dismisses the tasks completed in which the Representative is not involved. Doing so neglects much of what is done on behalf of our lawmakers and in assessing their effectiveness and decision-making in executing the responsibilities of their office. Thus, in order to more fully explain congressional behavior and decisions ultimately made by individual lawmakers, more attention should be paid to the aides that support and influence those processes.

The second miscalculation is the degree to which the relevant sub-literatures exploring congressional behaviors and outcomes are too strictly siloed, particularly in regards to congressional staffing. The sub-literature that does acknowledge and highlight the vital role performed by congressional aides typically does not link the

actions or characteristics of staff as explanations of pursuing member policy goals or in assessing their representational or legislative actions or effectiveness. This is particularly surprising given that most observers agree the purpose of staff is to execute work that benefits the lawmaker. Instead, and as explained in more detail within the literature review found in Chapter 2, early scholarly staffing studies have primarily been descriptive and have not been linked to outcomes for lawmakers. These works largely show common demographic or occupational attributes of aides, such as gender and education levels, across the two chambers or provide detailed descriptions of the common responsibilities of aides based on their job titles (Fox and Hammond 1975, 1977; Hammond 1975; Kammerer 1949, 1951a, 1951b; Kofmehl 1962, 1977; Malbin 1980). The staffing literature has yet to focus on the importance of how members use aides, let alone how their turnover, experience levels, or compensation differences can affect congressional outcomes in systematic ways.²

A second sub-literature that highlights instances in which aides actually affect the legislative process and influence members and their policy attention, even their policy decisions. These studies, however, are few in number, and typically rely heavily on anecdotal evidence or single case studies where the author follows a proposed piece of legislation through the legislative process (e.g., DeGregorio 2010; Hammond 1996;

² A number of working papers have begun to delve into these questions. For example, Joshua McCrain's working paper "Legislative Staff and Policymaking" finds that members who devote a higher proportion of staff resources to policy positions and employ longer serving policy staff and ultimately sponsor more bills and are more effective at advancing them. The working paper can be found at http://joshuamccrain.com/McCrain_Staff_Paper.pdf.

Malbin 1980; Price 1971, 1978).³ Thus, these studies offer little generalization as to which types of staffers garner influential status, how many of them exist in Congress, which members or committees they work for, or even how their influence has been engendered. Such works are meant to highlight that select staffers effectively serve as ‘Unelected Representatives’ (Malbin 1980) or ‘unelected issue leaders’ (DeGregorio 2010; Hammond 1990, 1996), but stop short of empirically and systematically studying these aides that so clearly affect legislative activity and outcomes on Capitol Hill.

This dissertation speaks to these gaps. More specifically, this dissertation seeks to better understand how members make use of their staffing resources as well as to quantify staff impacts on legislative behavior and success within both Representatives’ personal offices and congressional committees. I ask, What characteristics do members look for in assigning staff to cover their most important issue areas? Is issue area expertise on the part of aides gained solely by longer tenures in Congress? Are certain staffers more valuable in authoring legislation while other aides are more essential in generating passage coalitions within members’ personal offices and committees? What are the effects when members lose higher proportions of their staff to turnover?

³ Montgomery and Nyhan (2017) is a rare exception in that it provides one of the first empirically grounded instances in pinpointing effects of legislative staffers. The authors find that members who hire senior staff from other House offices tend to be more similar in both their voting patterns and measures of effectiveness than those who do not exchange senior aides.

1.1 Approach and methods

To answer these questions I rely on two novel, comprehensive, and authoritative datasets of congressional staff. The first database was constructed using the Spring 2016 *Congressional Yellow Book* directory. The directory maintains self-reported information on each member of Congress such as committee assignments and caucus memberships. Vitally for this project, the *Yellow Book* also provides details for all staffers employed within each office, including their title, location of employment—district office or Capitol Hill—employment histories, and the policy issues covered by policy staff. **Figure 1.1** provides a snapshot of Rep. Jared Polis’ (D-CO) D.C. office staff directory. Issue portfolios and career histories of each offices’ policy staff collected from the directory are the focuses of Chapter 3.

Figure 1.1: Individual staffer issue portfolios from the Spring, 2016 Congressional Yellowbook

	Jared Polis (D-CO) Representative
	Began Service: 2009 Next Election: 2016 Date of Birth: May 12, 1975 Education: Princeton 1996 AB Home: Boulder Religion: Jewish
Key Staff Aides	
Chief of Staff	Eve Lieberman (202) 225-2161 E-mail: eve.lieberman@mail.house.gov Legislative Responsibilities: Digital Communications, Innovation, Israel/Palestine, Telecommunications
Press Secretary	Michael Sparks (202) 225-2161 E-mail: michael.sparks@mail.house.gov
Scheduler	Katerina Davies-Lazarte (202) 225-2161 E-mail: katerina.davies-lazarte@mail.house.gov
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Legislative Assistant	Jennifer "Jen" George-Nichol (202) 225-2161 E-mail: jennifer.george-nichol@mail.house.gov Legislative Responsibilities: Aerospace, Energy, Environment, Homeland Security (FEMA), Native American Affairs, Public Lands, Science/Technology, Transportation
Legislative Assistant	Blaine W. Miller-McFeeley (202) 225-2161 E-mail: blaine.miller-mcfeeley@mail.house.gov Twitter: twitter.com/blainemcfeeley Legislative Responsibilities: Agriculture, Crime, Housing Issues, Judiciary Issues, Labor/Workforce, Pensions, Postal Issues, Veterans Affairs, Welfare Education: Muhlenberg 2008
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The second database is drawn from the House Statement of Disbursements (SOD) compiled and recorded by the Chief Administrative Officer of the Committee on House Administration. The public quarterly SOD document reports all receipts and expenditures for each member, committee, and office within the House of Representatives, including monies spent on franked mail, travel, and personnel. Of

particular importance for this dissertation, the SOD itemizes payments made to each individual staffer, the title held by the aide, the dates in which the payment was associated, and the office in which the payment originated. LegiStorm, a private data firm, digitizes, cleans, and verifies the SOD submissions. **Figure 1.2** presents a sample of payments made by the Office of the Majority Leader, Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), reported within the 2018 Quarter 1 SOD. Various SOD data from the 107-115th congresses (2001-2017)—the longest period available to date—are used in Chapters 4 and 5.

Figure 1.2: Itemized payments from the 2018, Q1 Statement of Disbursements

STATEMENT OF DISBURSEMENTS						
DATE	VOUCHER NO.	PAYEE	SERVICE DATES	DESCRIPTION	YTD AMOUNT	QUARTERLY AMOUNT
HOUSE LEADERSHIP—Con.						
2018 OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER—Con.						
		MURRY,LUKE A	01/03/18	03/31/18 NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR		32,266.67
		PERRINE,ERIN M	01/03/18	03/31/18 PRESS SECRETARY		20,533.33
		PICOZZI,JOSEPH S	01/03/18	03/31/18 STAFF ASSISTANT		7,333.33
		SPARKS, MATTHEW E	01/03/18	03/31/18 DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS		29,333.33
		SPECHT,BRITTAN G	01/03/18	03/31/18 SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR		27,866.67
		STIPICEVIC, KRISTIN	01/03/18	03/31/18 EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT		12,466.67
		TORRES,ALEC C	01/03/18	02/28/18 DEPUTY PRESS SECRETARY/WRITER		11,600.00
		TORRES,ALEC C	03/01/18	03/31/18 SPEECHWRITER & CONSERVATIVE CO		6,000.00
PERSONNEL COMPENSATION TOTALS:						464,422.25

Congressional staff are likely to have broad-ranging effects on individual members, congressional committees, and the institution as a whole. As such, I do not present a single unifying theoretical framework that applies across to each chapter empirical test that is to follow. Instead, each chapter will advance separate arguments about the roles and member uses of staff, including relevant theoretical underpinnings specific to its specific topic, data, and methodological test. Though relatively independent, each chapter will offer a different perspective on how members use their aides and what effects staffing decisions have for representation and lawmaking. For example, Chapter 3 relies on the established ‘U.S. Congressman as Enterprise’ (Salisbury

and Shepsle 1981a, 1981b; Shepsle 1989) framework to show that staffer expertise is not solely the function of longer tenures on the Hill, but also a byproduct of being more connected to other member offices. In Chapter 4, however, I make use of a turnover concept and metric found within the economics and business management literatures to show the negative consequences on levels of legislative productivity and effectiveness for Representatives who experience higher levels of staff turnover within their personal offices. These chapters both speak to the use and importance of staff in Congress, but do so using different literatures, theories, data sources, and quantitative methods. I contend that these varied data and theories founding each empirical chapter—in addition to the study of staff within both House personal and committee offices—provide strong evidence for the use and impact of congressional staff that has largely gone overlooked in the study of congressional behavior and outcomes.

1.2 Project motivation

Despite limited scholarly interest in congressional staffing, particularly in recent years, there is a growing body of aide-focused research being conducted outside of academia, largely by think-tanks writing through a lens of good government initiatives. The work almost uniformly draws attention to the real normative concerns that stem from troubling staffing patterns highlighted from private organization surveys (e.g., Congressional Management Foundation 2015b).

Their claims are simple and uniform. In recent decades, lawmakers have experienced dramatic growths in both the populations they represent and in the

number of policy domains they are expected to address (Davidson et al. 2013; Sinclair 1990), all while staff levels have remained stagnant in the Senate and declining in the House (Brookings Institution). As a result, many fear Congress, as an institution, cannot possibly be expected to perform all of its required duties given current staffing resources (Kramer 2017). What's more, the aides that members do employ are argued to maintain strikingly short congressional tenures and turnover at an alarmingly fast rate. Multiple surveys point to the relatively low salaries offered to congressional aides, particularly compared to private consulting and lobbying firms, as the main culprit for why staffers find employment outside of Congress (Drutman 2016).

Such a constantly high required rate of replacement decreases levels of institutional memory as fewer long-serving aides generate experience levels that translate into true policy expertise that previous studies show members have traditionally relied on. Instead, more junior aides, and their member-bosses, more regularly turn to congressional leaders—one of the few legislative branch operations that have enjoyed increased staff—to craft and advance legislation behind closed doors (Curry 2015). Or, members and staff defer to the comparably well-resourced executive branch⁴ and its agencies to enforce, even write, policy, and increasingly rely on lobbyists and ideologically consistent think-tanks to make up for the informational disadvantages

⁴ In 2015, Congress employed a total of—including both House and Senate and committees within each chamber—17,522 full-time staff (Brookings Institution). In comparison, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) reports the total number of full-time employees employed by executive branch cabinet agencies in FY2017 was 1,848,495, over 10 times more than professional staff in Congress. OPM data available at, <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/data-analysis-documentation/federal-employment-reports/reports-publications/sizing-up-the-executive-branch-2016.pdf>

they face (Drutman and Teles 2015; LaPira and Thomas 2017). Put simply, from the vantage point of these non-academic observers, too few employees, paid too little, who turnover far too often, ultimately result in a concerning decrease in Congress' capacity to do its own work.

This project is largely motivated by these normative concerns. Informed evaluations to normative questions depend heavily on empirical pursuits, many of which have yet to be fully executed. In other words, despite general acceptance from many who know Congress well, assumptions regarding congressional staff, including member use of their aides, remain unsubstantiated. This study provides important quantitative work in an effort to connect the normative concerns largely found outside of academia and scholarly theoretical work focusing on why Congress works the way it does. Some of the findings presented in this dissertation—such as the fear that congressional staffer turnover is a systemic problem across most lawmaker offices—goes against conventional congressional capacity expectations. Most, however, support the notion that congressional aides are a primary resource to members and Congress as an institution and matter a great deal to fulfilling the many roles expected of the First Branch.

1.3 Dissertation outline

The next chapter provides a brief discussion of the evolution of staffing resources in Congress, including the major legislative initiatives which provided increased aides to members and summary trends and changes regarding their numbers.

It also provides a present-day look at common staffing patterns within personal House offices. Finally, Chapter 2 includes a review of the relevant congressional staffing literature, focusing on previous works that have detailed instances in which aides have had influenced the legislative process and the policy decisions of their boss.

Chapter 3 focuses on the characteristics members seek in assignment of legislative issue portfolios to their policy aides. Congressional observers assume that members logically assign the most prestigious and intricate issues to the aides who have more years of congressional experience. I find this to be generally true, but incomplete. In addition to longer tenures on the Hill, I show congressional staffers who have more extensive Hill networks—operationalized by higher counts of different lawmaker offices worked in—are most likely to be assigned important legislative issues even after controlling for the number of years in which the aide has worked on the Hill. These findings suggest that issue area expertise and influence are not solely a function of longer staff tenures, but also the degrees to which aides are able to generate coalitions because of their connectedness to other congressional offices and outside stakeholders.

Chapter 4 shows the importance of congressional staff by measuring the negative consequences resulting from an office losing its employees to turnover. In this chapter, I detail how and why Representatives are less successful in authoring and advancing policy when experiencing high levels of staff turnover within their personal offices and present the first empirical tests of the effects of staffer turnover on their legislative activity and effectiveness as lawmakers. Relying on a unique metric of staff turnover found within the economics and business management literatures, I show that

Representatives who experience higher proportions of salaries that depart their legislative enterprise subsequently sponsor and cosponsor fewer policy proposals and are less successful at advancing substantive legislation through the various stages of the legislative process.

Chapter 5 turns to staffing resources housed within congressional committees. This chapter assesses the extent to which increases in staff drive legislative productivity in committees, and which types of staffers are most consequential at various stages of the legislative process. I argue and find committee staffers are crucial drivers of legislative productivity for the committees in which they work and that certain staffers are better-positioned than others to make a legislative impact in committees. The findings suggest that policy staffers are crucial to the early legislative process of producing quality legislation out of committee but that well-connected senior staffers are the necessary forces behind their successful passage out of the chamber.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by discussing broader implications of the project's findings as well as its contributions to the studies of congressional behavior and legislative productivity. The chapter also details potential avenues of research on the topic of congressional staff and capacity. Finally, I discuss several normative questions and concerns regarding congressional staffing using this dissertation's findings to better inform the growing number of congressional capacity conversations taking place.

Chapter Two: Congressional Staffing, Past and Present

Capitol Hill used to look far different. It used to be much quieter. The mass of white marble House and Senate office buildings filling out the modern U.S. Capitol complex weren't yet constructed. Until 1933, the House and Senate only had one office building each. Prior to then, all member offices were housed within the Capitol building itself. During this time, lawmakers had few, if any, staff to assist them in running their offices. Lawmakers were the office.

In fact, it wasn't until 1893 that House members were appropriated congressional funds towards hiring staff help, and even then, each lawmaker was authorized only one clerk. During this era Representatives regularly relied on unpaid assistance, often from family or dedicated friends, to help with their representational duties. Or members hired a secretary out of their own pockets to aid members in drafting and sending constituent correspondence. Clearly, things have changed.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the major reform and legislative initiatives that produced the present-day Capitol Hill environment bustling with the quick-paced, well dressed aides with which congressional observers are now familiar. Next, I describe the appropriated allowance members receive that funds the salaries for their hired employees, and detail congressional staffing patterns and modern office

structures found within the House of Representatives. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of the congressional staff literature to outline what scholarly inquiries to-date have taught us in regards to the roles and influence of congressional aides.

2.1 Evolution of staff resources in Congress

2.1.1 Legislative Reorganization Acts of 1946 and 1970

1946 LRA

In response to criticisms that Congress was failing to live up to its designated role as a coequal branch in our system of government, the institution sought to reform and modernize itself. In that effort, H. Con. Res. 18 was passed on February 19, 1945, establishing the bipartisan Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress (JCOC). Made up of three Democrats and three Republicans from each chamber, chaired by Sen. Robert M. LaFollette (R-WI), the JCOC was directed to study various aspects of House and Senate organization and procedures. The committee's directive was quite broad:

“The committee shall make a full and complete study of the organization and operation of the Congress of the United States and shall recommend improvements in such organization and operation with a view toward strengthening the Congress, simplifying its operations, improving its relations with other branches of the United States Government, and enabling it better to meet its responsibilities under the Constitution.”⁵

⁵ H. Con. Res. 18. 70th Cong., 1st Sess. (February 19, 1945). Sec. 2.

Between March 13 and June 29, 1945, the committee held four executive sessions, 39 public hearings, heard testimony from 102 witnesses— 45 of whom were members of Congress—and reviewed dozens of submitted written statements from interested private citizens. The JCOC explained, “To all these proposals we have applied the simple test: Will they strengthen Congress and enable it to do a better job?”⁶

On March 4, 1946 the JCOC submitted its final report recommending a wide array of changes for Congress. Among others, the JCOC recommendations included: reducing the number, and reorganizing the jurisdictions, of congressional committees in both chambers; granting committees subpoena power in order to perform more effective oversight; changes to the congressional schedule; and the requirement that all bills passed out of committee be brought to the floor for consideration.

But surprising to many, “The lack of skilled staffs for the committee work-shops of Congress was more complained of than perhaps any other matter before” the committee.⁷ The JCOC report cautioned, “The shocking lack of adequate congressional fact-finding services and skilled staffs sometimes reaches such ridiculous proportions as to make Congress dependent upon “hand-outs” from Government departments and private groups or newspaper stories for its basic fund of information on which to base legislative decisions.”⁸

⁶ H. Rept. 1675. 79th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1946), p. 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

To that end, the JCOC recommended several changes in regards to congressional staffing, particularly within committees, which were later codified upon President Truman's signing of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946⁹ on August 2, 1946. More specifically, the 1946 LRA authorized the hiring of four professional staff for each committee, and granted each chamber's Appropriations Committee to set their own staffing levels. These "staff experts" were to be hired based on merit rather than patronage, paid a salary "large enough to command a high level of technical skill," work solely on committee business, and were expected to perform their duties on a nonpartisan basis and for all committee members. Additionally, the 1946 LRA authorized the hiring of up to six clerical workers per committee and allowed for the temporary employment of additional investigatory staff. In granting these increased staff resources, Congress took the first step to institutionalize permanent in-house staff in order to provide for "a pure and unbiased stream of information... necessary for the making of sound decisions."¹⁰ The JCOC and subsequent 1946 LRA made it clear: in order for members, and Congress, to adequately respond to the demands of their office, they needed more staff assistance.

1970 LRA

In spite of the many changes resulting from the 1946 LRA, calls for further congressional reforms and modernizations continued with many themes from the 1940s being echoed

⁹ P.L. 79-601.

¹⁰ H. Rept. 1675. 79th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1946), p. 14.

into the mid 1960s. Most notable was the fear that Congress remained ill-equipped and unable to adequately perform the duties expected of it and was increasingly ceding power and legislating authority to the Executive Branch. Reformers charged that the institution remained poorly organized, inaccessible, and lacked vital resources, all while populations and the number of issue areas under congressional purview were surging.¹¹ As put by Sen. Michael Monroney (D-OK) in 1965, Congress was attempting to operate the country's biggest business "with machinery as obsolete as a quill pen, a slanting bookkeeper's desk, and an old-fashioned high stool."¹²

Thus, on March 11, 1965, Congress established a second bipartisan Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress. The 1965 JCOC was modeled explicitly after the first, both in membership structure—12 members, six from each chamber, equally divided by party— and in mandate—the committee was to "Make a full and complete study of the organization and operation of the Congress of the United States and shall recommend improvements in such organization and operation with a view toward strengthening the Congress."¹³

Over 40 days of hearings from March 10 to September 23, 1965, the second JCOC heard testimony from 199 witnesses, many of whom were sitting members of

¹¹ Vitally, reform efforts were also instigated by frustrations with Southern Democratic committee chairman who stymied legislative action favored by more progressive members, including some liberal Republicans. Rep. Richard Bolling (D-MO) highlighted such procedural and institutional roadblocks, as well as offered recommendations for congressional reform in his two books *House Out of Order* (1965) and *Power in the House* (1968).

¹² Joe Hall, "Congress to Try Again to 'Modernize'". *Gettysburg Times*. April 30, 1965. Available at, https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=siwmAAAAIBAJ&sjid=H_4FAAAAIBAJ&pg=7.

¹³ S. Con. Res. 2, 89th Cong, 1st Sess. (March 11, 1965).

Congress. On July 28 of the following year, the committee issued its final report containing over 120 recommendations.¹⁴ Though the recommendations were put to legislative language in 1966, it took until 1970—and several more hearings and testimonies from sitting members—to pass the House with amendments. On October 8, 1970, President Nixon signed the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 into law.¹⁵

Similar to 1945 JCOC and 1946 LRA, the changes resulting from the 1970 LRA were wide-ranging, but many changes from the latter were intended to curtail the power of Southern Democratic committee chairman. Among others, suggested reforms included: the mandate that business meetings of House and Senate standing committees be open to the public unless a majority of members voted for privacy; the requirement that committees set regular meeting schedules; the requirement for committees to publish roll call votes; an amendment to House Rules to allow recorded roll call votes within the Committee of the Whole; and major alterations to the congressional budget process, such as the requirement that the President's budget submission include five fiscal years instead of one.

And just like in 1945 staffing resources were addressed. Specifically, the 1970 LRA provided an increase from four to six professional staffers for each committee, and authorized committees to hire additional consultants, investigators, as well as other contract or temporary workers. Notably, though the mandate that committee staff be nonpartisan in their work continued, the 1970 LRA allotted one-third of the committee's

¹⁴ S. Rept. 1414, 89th Cong. 2nd Sess. (July 28, 1966).

¹⁵ P.L. 91-510.

employees to the minority party, the first such instance in delineating staffing resources by party on committees.

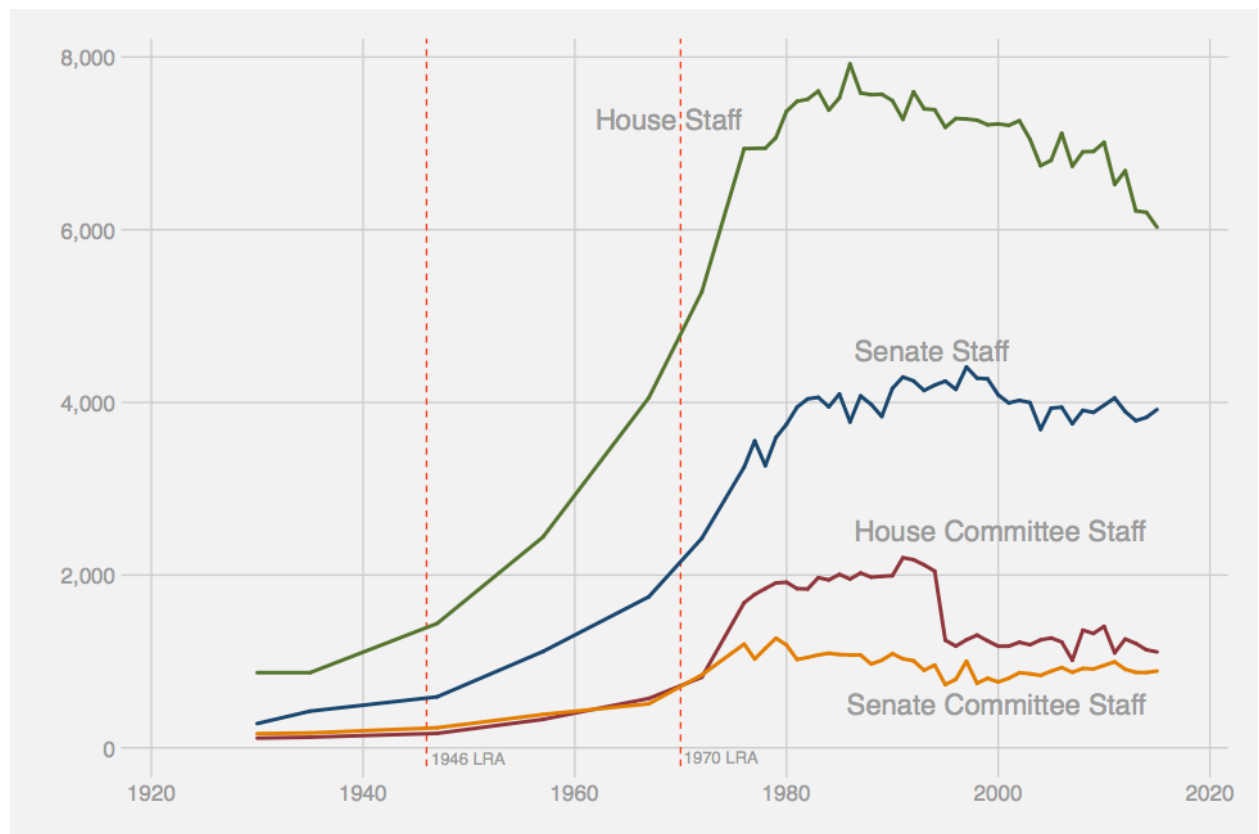
2.1.2 Staff within House and Senate Personal Offices

During this same period lawmakers in both chambers argued that it wasn't just committees that needed increased staffing resources; Representatives' and Senators' personal offices were also struggling to keep up with their growing workloads and demands. Prior to the 1940s, member personal staff resources were minimal. Only in 1893 was each member of the House appropriated funds for a single clerk; prior to then, any staff assistance was paid for out of the lawmaker's pocket. Staff authorizations for Representatives increased to two per lawmaker in 1919 where they remained until a third staffer was authorized in 1940 (1975, 115). In the Senate, personal staff were authorized in 1885, and in 1910 each non-chairman Senator was authorized two staff. In 1914, the number was upped to three per Senator, and grew to an average of five staff per senator in 1940.

Beginning in 1945—as the first JCOC was recommending committee staff increases—House and Senate personal offices were regularly authorized more staff with appropriations independent of the 1946 LRA. In 1945, each House member's personal staff allowance doubled from three to six, was increased to eight in 1955, and upped to 10 by 1965 (115-116). In 1975, the House approved its final staff authorization increase to a maximum of 18 full-time employees, where it has remained since. Personal offices within the Senate followed a similar trajectory. In 1910, each senator was allotted two

staff, three in 1914, five by 1940, and eight staff per senator in 1947. Starting in 1948, the Senate transitioned from limiting the number of authorized staff per senator to a provided allowance, or limit on amount of funds spent on staff, a practice that continues today.

Figure 2.1. Number of congressional staff within personal offices and committees, House and Senate, 1930-2015



Data Source: Brookings Institution, *Vital Statistics on Congress*, Chapter 5

Figure 2.1 plots the number of staffers in House and Senate personal offices and committees from 1930 through 2015. The two years in which the LRAs were signed into law are identified with dotted vertical lines. The figure shows the modest staff increases across all offices prior to the reform efforts beginning in 1945, after which a sharp

increase—particularly within personal offices—occurs as lawmakers were authorized staff increases throughout the two decades. Even sharper increases occurred in the years immediately following the 1970 LRA. The House of Representatives enjoyed the largest increases in raw number of staff, surging from 870 staffers in 1935 to 1,440 in 1947, to 7,067 in 1979 (*Vital Statistics on Congress Data on the U.S. Congress* 2018). The number of House staff peaked in 1989 at 7,920 and has since decreased to a 2015 total of 6,030, nearly a 24% drop during the period.¹⁶ Such sudden growth in congressional staff was found to alter traditional member-to-member interactions on the Hill. As observed by Kenneth Shepsle, “The rubbing of elbows [by members] was replaced by liaisons between legislative corporate enterprises, usually at the staff level. Surrounded or protected by a bevy of clerks and assistants, members met other members only occasionally and briefly on the chamber floor or in committee work” (1989, 242).

2.2 Present day staffing in the House

2.2.1 The Members’ Representational Allowance

In order to operate their personal offices, each member of the House is granted an annual appropriation known as the Members’ Representational Allowance (MRA). The MRA was first authorized in 1996 and consolidated member allowances— such as the

¹⁶ Though staffing decreases in the House began in the late 1980s, declines are more prominent, particularly within House Committees, as a result of Speaker Newt Gingrich’s (R-GA) “Contract With America.” After Republicans won a House majority in 1994, Speaker Gingrich led efforts to cut the number of House committees by one third as well as eliminate the same proportion of committee staff as a means of shrinking the “permanent staff” bureaucracy in Congress (Gingrich, et al. 1994).

official mail and personal office expenses allowances—that were previously independent.¹⁷ According to the *Members’ Congressional Handbook*, the MRA is “available to support the conduct of official and representational duties to the district from which he or she is elected.”

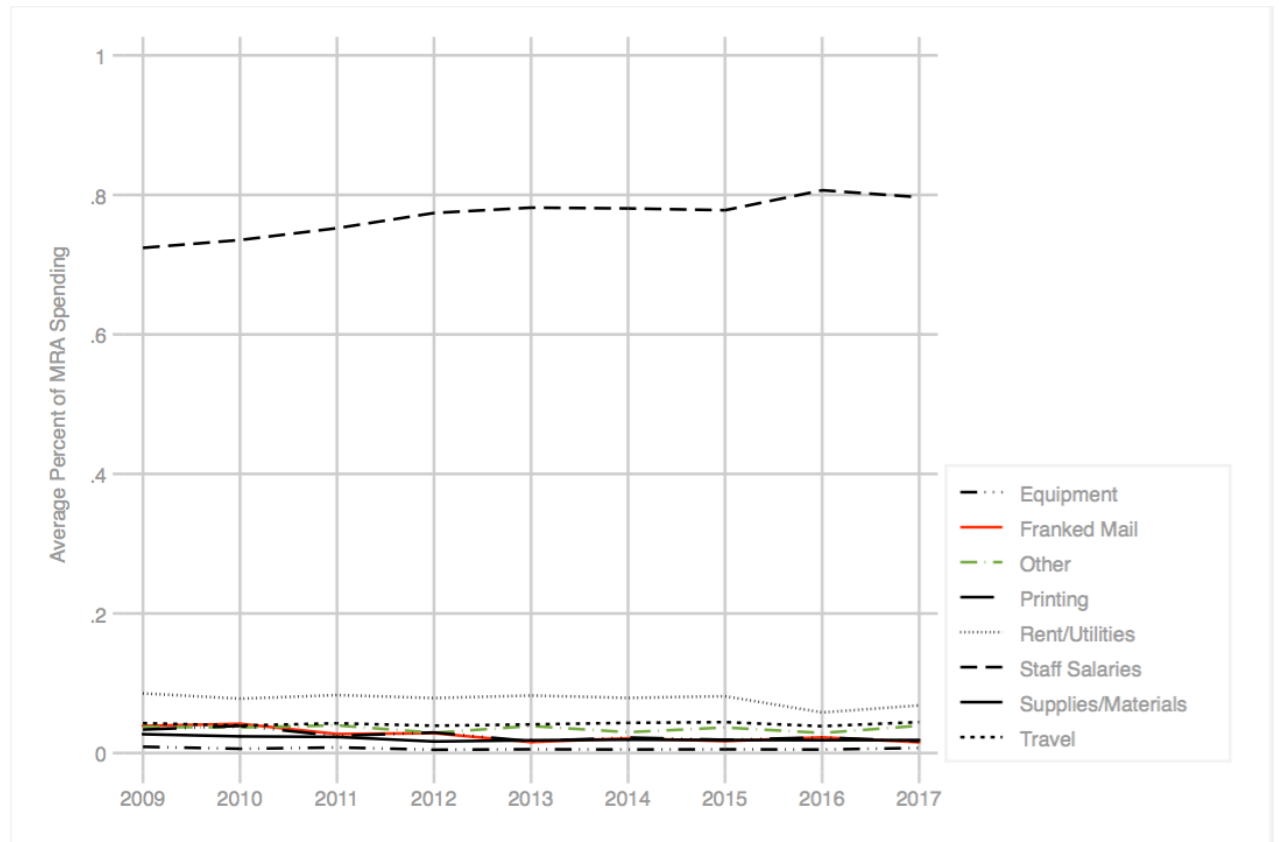
As such, the MRA is used to pay for official office expenses including personnel salaries and benefits, office supplies, travel, and district office rental, among other items. MRA funds cannot be used for social or campaign activities, and the member is personally responsible for repayment of any expenditures in excess of those appropriated to his or her office. The appropriated amount granted to each member depends on the distance of the district from Washington—to account for greater travel costs—and the number of non-business addresses within the district—to account for increased costs in sending official mail. For Fiscal Year 2017, the average MRA was \$1,315,213 (Brudnick 2017).

The MRA system grants lawmakers great flexibility in how to structure and operate their offices, both on Capitol Hill and in the district. With few limitations, choices as to how to spend their appropriated funds, such as how many district offices to open or how many caseworkers are necessary to respond to constituent requests, rest with the member. It is up to the lawmaker to decide how many flights are necessary or how much to spend on official mail back to the district. This spending discretion has led some scholars to view each member as the CEO of their personal office, where

¹⁷ P.L. 104-53 (November 19, 1995).

members are the final arbiter of spending decisions within their individualized legislative enterprise (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981a, 1981b; Shepsle 1989). Moreover, scholars have viewed the variation in member spending decisions via their individualized MRA as a means of explaining their priorities and different representational styles (Fenno 1973; Loomis and Schiller 2018; Mayhew 1974; Parker and Goodman 2009) and as an explanation for the incumbency advantage of sitting members (Cox and Katz 1996).

Figure 2.2. Average spending as a percentage of a Members' Representational Allowance, 2009-2017



Data Source: House Statement of Disbursements

How then do members spend their MRA? **Figure 2.2** plots the average percentage of MRA spending on various categories from 2009 through 2017. The figure

makes clear that the vast majority of Representatives' MRA spending—77.7 percent during the time period—is put towards their staff, with very little variation year over year. The category with the second highest average of MRA monies spent is on rent and utilities for district offices at seven percent. All other categories each represent less than five percent of MRA fund expenditures.

2.2.2 How do Representatives staff their offices?

The flexibility Representatives enjoy in deciding *what* to spend MRA funds on also extends on *who* they choose to spend them on. Members hire and fire aides at their own volition; they choose to hire in district offices or on Capitol Hill; they have the freedom to assign job titles and specific legislative portfolios to their employees, as well as the ability to change them without cause or justification; and Representatives are authorized to set the salaries of staffers in their office at their discretion so long as individual salaries do not exceed the \$168,411 maximum. Under the MRA, Members face two main constraints by statute: they may not employ more than 18 full-time aides and up to four part-time employees at any one time, and they may not spend more than allotted to their personal offices through the MRA each calendar year. Beyond these restrictions, staffing decisions are completely under the direction of the Representative.

With such a heavy concentration of MRA spending on congressional staff salaries, questions as to how members actually decide to staff their personal offices quickly follow. The short answer to questions as to how members staff their offices: it

varies. Some members choose to commit much of their resources to policy positions within their D.C. office while others make district-based positions a top priority.

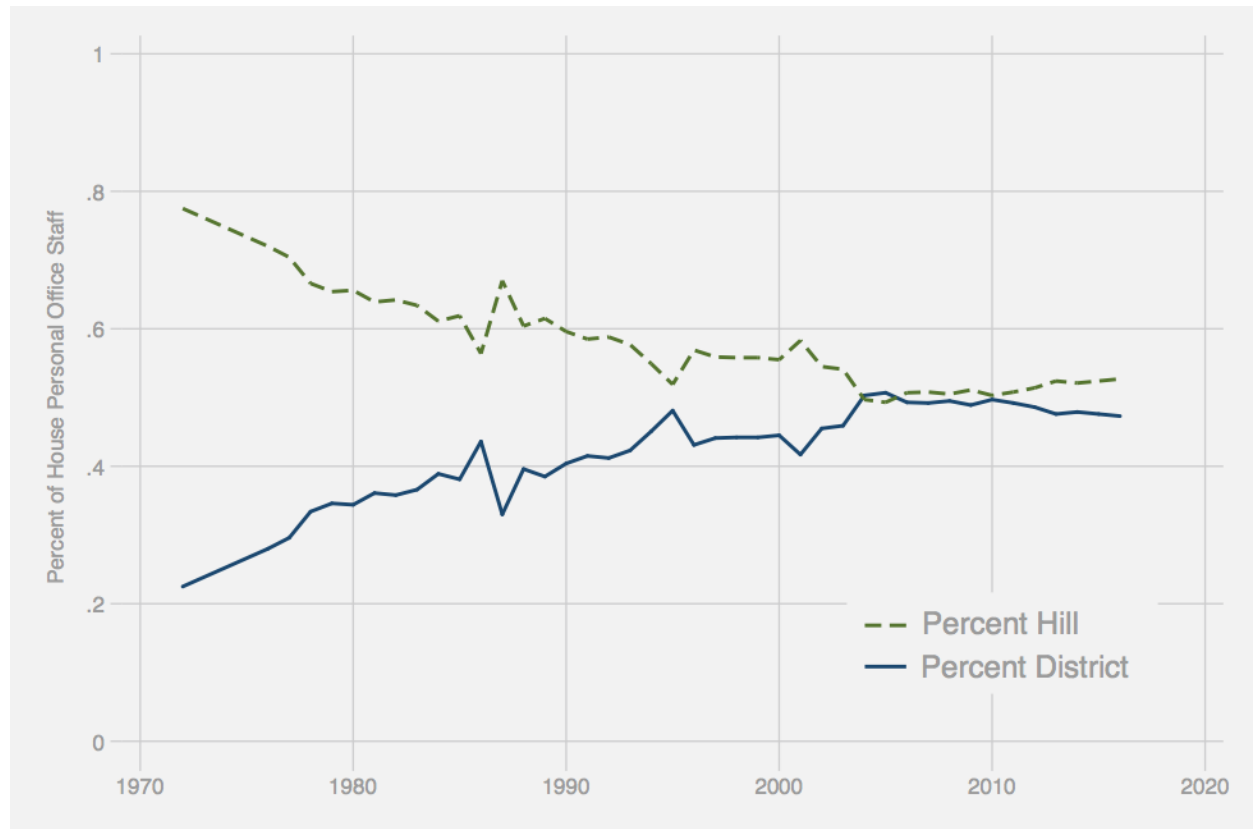
Table 2.1. Variance in staffing allocations of two members as of Spring, 2016 (114th Cong.)

Rep. Bennie Thompson (MS-02)		Rep. Bobby Scott (VA-03)	
Leadership Staff	Staff Director	Leadership Staff	Chief of Staff Senior Advisor/Scheduler
Policy Staff	Legislative Director Counsel/Legislative Assistant	Policy Staff	Counsel Legislative Assistant Legislative Assistant Legislative Assistant Legislative Assistant Legislative Assistant Legislative Assistant
Constituent Service Staff	Field Representative/Caseworker Field Representative/Caseworker Field Representative/Caseworker Field Representative/Caseworker Field Representative/Caseworker Field Representative/Caseworker Field Representative/Caseworker Community Development Coordinator	Constituent Service Staff	
Communications Staff		Communications Staff	Communications Director /Legislative Director
Administrative Staff	Office Administrator	Administrative Staff	District Scheduler

Scheduler District Scheduler Staff Assistant Staff Assistant Financial Administrator/Executive Assistant	Staff Assistant Special Assistant
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Consider the two personal offices of Representatives Bennie Thompson (D-MS) and Bobby Scott (D-VA), for example. **Table 2.1** presents the position titles for all staffers within each office taken from the Spring 2016 *Congressional Yellowbook*. Several distinct differences are clear. First, Rep. Scott employs only 13 aides while Rep. Thompson has 17. Second, Rep. Scott employs seven policy staffers, with a Legislative Director as a seventh, though the role is split as Communications Director. Conversely, Rep. Thompson only has two aides dedicated to policy, and one of them concurrently serves as Counsel. Finally, Rep. Thompson employs eight constituent service staffers while Rep. Scott has zero. This comparison makes clear that Reps. Thompson and Scott make wildly different use of their staffing resources, Thompson valuing constituent service in his office, Scott policy work in his. No matter their reasonings, the two lawmakers have made use of their MRA funds available for staff salaries in markedly different manners.

Figure 2.3. Average percent of House staff in Washington, D.C., and district offices, 1976-2016



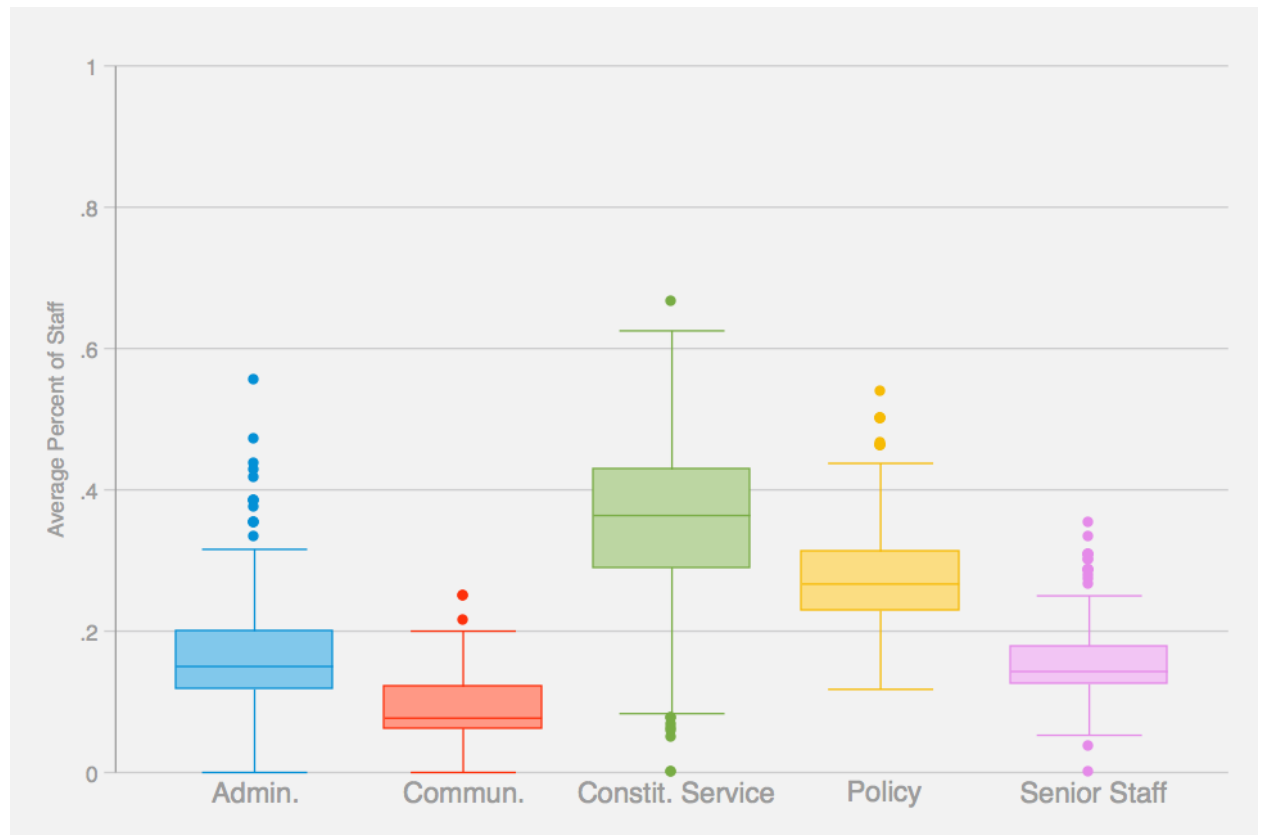
Data Source: Brookings Institution, *Vital Statistics on Congress 2018*, Chapter 5

Though variation exists between members in the number and job responsibilities assigned to staff, trends and averages are valuable in understanding the evolution and current patterns of staff employment within the House. For example, **Figure 2.3** plots the average percent of House personal staff working in D.C. and district offices from 1976 to 2016. The figure makes clear that since the mid 1970s lawmakers have shifted more of their staffing resources off of Capitol Hill to district offices. In 1976, 28 percent of congressional aides worked in the district. By 1985 that percentage had grown to 38 percent and in 2004 over half of congressional aides were employed in offices outside of

D.C. for the first time, peaking in 2005 with 50.7 percent. In 2016, 47 percent of staff were employed off of Capitol Hill.

What is the breakdown of staff responsible for the varied job duties within a current House office? In other words, of the maximum 18 full-time staff allowed, how many staff are devoted to essential House personal office functions, such as policy or communications? **Figure 2.4** provides box plots of the proportions of staff resources allocated to various position groupings within House offices. These data were generated by collecting each staffer's job title listed in every Representative's office within the Spring 2016 *Congressional Yellowbook*. Based on these titles, staffers were grouped into one of five categories: administrative; communications; constituent service; policy; or senior staff. The proportions were created by dividing the sum of the number of staffers in each category by the total number of staffers employed by the lawmaker's office.

Figure 2.4. Average percent of staff allocated to various position groupings, 2016



Data Source: *Congressional Yellowbook*, Spring 2016

Figure 2.4 shows job titles carrying constituent service responsibilities (e.g., caseworker or constituent service representative) represent the position grouping with the highest median proportion of staff devoted to such tasks with 35.5 percent. Policy positions (e.g., legislative assistant) represent 27 percent of staff positions, and communications titles (e.g., press secretary and communications director) make up nine percent of staff in the House offices. Administrative (e.g., secretary and staff assistant) and leadership positions (e.g., chief of staff) each represent 15 percent of staff allocations.

By extrapolating these proportions to the number of individuals assigned to the five common position groupings, the representative 2016 House office is staffed in the following manner:

- Two to three leadership staffers; typically a Chief of Staff and a District Director
- Five to six constituent staffers; typically several Caseworkers, a Field Representative, and a Grants Coordinator
- Four to five policy staffers; typically a Legislative Director and three Legislative Assistants
- One to two communications staffers; typically a Communications Director and a Press Secretary
- Two to three administrative staffers; typically a Scheduler, a Staff Assistant, and an Office Manager

As the staffing differences between Reps. Bobby Scott and Bennie Thompson in **Table 2.1** highlight, lawmakers vary in their staffing priorities across position types. **Figure 2.4** plots these differences in member staffing choices by showing each position grouping distribution and variation. Each position group's box within the figure shows the interquartile range in proportion devoted to such duties, indicating the respective proportions half of all Representatives devote to each group. Consider policy positions, for example. Half of members devote between 22 percent and 32 percent of their staff positions with constituent service responsibilities. But, as shown by the whiskers extending in either direction from the box dots indicating statistical outliers¹⁸, legislative proportions range from a minimum of 12.5 percent to a maximum of 54 percent. The figure highlights that while there are fairly average office structures within the House,

¹⁸ A statistical outlier is defined by 1.5 times the interquartile range.

lawmakers do vary, sometimes considerably, from their colleagues in what position groups receive the bulk of their MRA funds.

2.3 Literature review: What we know about congressional staff

Surprisingly, this level of detailed descriptive understanding of how members allocate their staffing resources, is not commonly found in academic works on congressional staff. Despite their large numbers and acknowledged importance in the day-to-day operation of congressional offices, congressional scholars have not devoted much attention to congressional aides, particularly in recent decades. Instead, nearly all scholarly congressional staffing inquiries fit into two broad categories of explanation. These two categories are: (1) discussion of the personal characteristics of staffers and describing their job responsibilities, and (2) explaining the role of staff in the policy process. These two perspectives merit separate review because they make up the bulk of the congressional staffing literature.

2.3.1 Who are congressional staffers?

Much of the early work studying congressional aides from the 1940s through the 1970s highlights the characteristics of the behind-the-scenes actors on Capitol Hill, using staffers as the units of analysis. Such descriptive work was necessary. At the time, Congress had recently seen an explosion in the number of aides available to Members and committees, yet no scholarly inquiry had attempted to discern the types of people that filled the relatively new roles. Several studies published soon after the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (LRA) proved valuable because they offered some of the first

counts of total staffers serving in each chamber and as committee aides. These studies also provided the staff titles held and wages earned at the time (Galloway 1946, 1951, 1953).

Other early studies focused on their common demographic attributes, backgrounds, and career paths to offer explanations of how Congress worked from the inside. Using staff interviews predominantly of committee aides, Kammerer (Kammerer 1949, 1951a, 1951b) gave early insight into staffer demographics and hiring and turnover patterns within Congress. Similar to other early works on staff demographics and characteristics, Kammerer makes sweeping claims based on her research. For example, she writes, “The ‘Hill’ career employee, who has usually served his apprenticeship as a secretary in a Representative’s or Senator’s office, adjusts best to the peculiar atmosphere of committee administration. Often he has studied law at night during his period of apprenticeship” (1951b, 1131). Moreover, Kammerer (1951b) does not shy away from suggesting that committees vary greatly in the competency of committee staffers. She urges all committees to value expertise, education, and experience in committee aides far above any consideration of partisan affiliation of their potential employees.

Kofmehl’s *Professional Staffs of Congress* (1962) examines the three congresses immediately following the 1946 LRA and provides the first thorough look at the roles and backgrounds of staffs of senators and congressional committees. Kofmehl updated his book twice, with the latest version (1977) including developments in staffing stemming from the 1970 LRA. Through systematic interviews, the author provides one

of the first detailed reviews of the education and professional backgrounds of Senate personal and committee staffers. For example, he gathered data on the number of aides with various college degrees or counts of staffers previously serving in the executive branch and in the same field as handled by their committee. Perhaps more illuminating, Kofmehl asserts that “neither educational nor experience backgrounds are as important...as the possession of certain abilities and other characteristics” (1977, 88). In this vein, he itemizes the ‘essential attributes’ of capable aides, suggesting that a successful staffer “must be fundamentally a generalist,” have the “ability to see interrelationships,” “a suitable temperament,” and “must be able to operate well under pressure” (88-91).

The next wave of scholarly research centered on identifying variation among staff demographics and characteristics, most often using job titles as the differentiator. Using responses from interviews with House staffers serving in the 92nd Congress, Hammond (1975) begins to highlight discrete differences in educational attainment, ages, and tenures based on specific positions within legislative offices. For example, Hammond states, “Administrative assistants are older than other personal staff professionals; their average tenure is nine years, in contrast for 2.3 years for legislative aides” (Hammond 1984, 278). Her work was foundational in presenting early typologies of congressional staffers, as well as stating that variation in staffer characteristics and talents ultimately leads to variation in the legislative productivity within lawmakers. Kofmehl (1977) conducts a similar analysis of congressional committee staff

demographics, Walsh (1976) on Senate aides, and Balutis (1975) details variation in state level aides using New York state as a case study.

Fox and Hammond's *Congressional Staffs: The Invisible Force in American Lawmaking* made one of the first systematic efforts "to delineate salient attributes and to sketch a "profile" of staff aides" (1977, 33). Based on over 1,000 responses to a survey of House, Senate, and committee staffs, the authors make broad characterizations of the typical legislative aide by position. For example, "The average Senate personal office professional staff member maintains his legal residence in his Senator's home state; earns over \$24,000 a year; is male, 38.5 years old; and has a college degree with some graduate work" (33). Additionally, the survey was one of the first to detail the partisan leanings of staffers. Fox and Hammond find that over 75% of House, Senate, and committee aides held 'strong' or 'very strong' party preferences (Table 7, 174), and the vast majority of staffers share the same political leanings as their member of Congress boss. Malbin (1980) similarly offers profiles of personal and committee staffers, in addition to focusing on the goals of staffers in pursuing work on Capitol Hill and subsequent career options that result from their legislative service. Herrnson (1994) argues the training staffers receive as congressional aides results in a head start towards becoming elected Members of the House themselves.

After the 1970s, though with a few exceptions that spoke to hiring imbalances on the basis of sex and race, descriptive studies became sparse. Friedman and Nakamura (1991) provide quantitative support to the normative concern that women were not assuming influential positions within congressional committees at the same

rates of men. The authors found that while women had made gains since the studies of Fox and Hammond (1977) in the number of women hired, the tenures of females on committees were shorter than males. Moreover, men still held a far disproportionate number of top posts, such as chief of staff and legislative director.

Turning to questions of minority hiring, Grose, Mangum, and Martin (2007) show that Members representing majority-minority districts mainly staff their district offices with African-American staffers. Relatedly, Ziniel (2009) finds that African-American aides are more likely to hold positions in Member districts rather than Capitol Hill offices. Thus, their focus is on constituent service rather than on policy and procedural matters associated with work on Capitol Hill.

2.3.2 Roles, duties, and influence

For scholars interested in congressional staffing, a logical evolution took place in the literature from descriptive works on *who* staffers are to those describing *what* they do. Due in part to the previously-noted expansion of Congress's issue portfolio and number of policy responsibilities, most scholars came to agree on "the simple fact that members have more to do than time in which to do it" and that aides increasingly were hired to help Members deal with the litany of responsibilities that came with their elected positions (Malbin 1980, 4). Political observers noted that the increase in staff functions and responsibilities has had direct impact on the lawmakers' ability to manage their heavy workload given increases in constituency populations, the size and role of government, and other factors (Hall, 1998; Hammond, 1984, 1996; Leal and Hess 2004;

Malbin, 1980). However, whether or how staffers helped lighten the workload of their member-bosses provoked varying opinions and observations.

These differences in observations were largely based on when the studies took place, with the earliest works maintaining that staffer assistance largely concerned clerical duties and constituent service. For example, based on a series of bipartisan panels from the 1959 Brookings Institution Round Table Conference on Congress and subsequent Member and staffer interviews, Clapp (1963) found that House members turned to congressional aides predominantly for assistance with enormous amounts of correspondence and administrative functions. Malbin (1980) found similar general usage of staff, though he did note that the increased numbers of staffers per office provided by the 1970 LRA corresponded with an increased reliance on aides for district offices and constituent services. He writes, “Most personal staff aides do not work on legislation” (14), adding further that “From the numbers it seems obvious that most of the members’ new personal staff aides do constituency-related work that may help an incumbent win reelection but that has little to do with the legislative process” (14). Ornstein (1975) draws similar conclusions.

As the size of government and districts continually grew larger, along with increased issue and institutional complexity (see, Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler 2017; Polsby 1968; Wilson 1989), Members turned to aides to help with all aspects of their representative duties, including legislation. “Congressmen have come to view staff assistance as important to policy formation, to constituent service, and to the power acquisition that is central to congressional activity” (Fox and Hammond 1997, 1). In

other words, Members increasingly rely on staffers as their principal institutional resource to assist in far more than constituent casework. They want their top aides to take leadership roles in legislative and communications activities on behalf of their boss.

The increase in staff allocations and Member reliance on their assistance has led some scholars to argue that every individual member of Congress is the leader of a legislative enterprise consisting of numerous support staff -- today, upwards of 22 professional and clerical staff, as well as any number of interns, legislative fellows, and volunteers (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981a, 1981b; Shepsle 1989). In this view, Members act as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of their personal offices, retain hiring and firing powers, maintain full discretion on employee compensation, assign responsibilities to individuals, and provide overall direction to the staff to promote his representative and policy goals (Loomis 1979). In the view of Whiteman (1995), "An enterprise perspective on congressional decision making begins with the recognition that each enterprise has goals, has resources to pursue those goals, and exists in an environment shaped primarily by the flow of legislative activity and by the demands of constituents and interest groups" (6).

As divisions of labor became more defined in congressional offices, staff became more specialized in the tasks in which they were hired to perform. In this vein, Fox and Hammond (1975b) create five staffer typologies based, not on demographics or titles, but on the activities and job duties of aides. The authors parse out which staffers execute certain aspects of the Members' official responsibilities: 'Interactors' cover constituent work, 'supporters' handle legislative activities, 'corresponders' draft

informational materials, ‘advertisers’ handle press operations, and ‘investigators’ conduct oversight. More broadly, Romzek and Utter (1997) find that because many staffers enjoy “high status, expertise, substantial but qualified autonomy, commitment to the political enterprise and public service” they are more aptly described as political professionals rather than clerks simply providing administrative support.

It is important to note that while there is consensus acknowledgement that a large portion—that is, nearly 65%—of congressional aides are devoted to district, constituent, and administrative work, scholars became fixated on legislative aides because of their close proximity to the production of public policies. They believed that these policy-focused aides provided a way of offering deeper explanations of how Congress works and how members behave. Put simply, after establishing numerical counts by staff roles and descriptions of common office duties, researchers turned their attention to aides responsible for assisting Representatives in creating and passing public policy. Close observers Congress, often using case studies of how legislation made its way through the House and Senate (e.g. Malbin 1980), highlighted the significant role of staff policy professionals in lawmaking. Based on personal observations and interviews, the predominant assumption within the literature is that members often delegated important policy responsibilities to aides for the same simple reason lawmakers previously delegated correspondence or constituent service in previous decades: the shortage of time for the member to do it themselves.

Given the high levels of delegation to policy aides, it should come as little surprise that the congressional staffing literature regularly finds that aides have an

impact on the policy focuses and decisions made by their member-boss (DeGregorio 1995; DeGregorio and Snider 1995; Fox and Hammond 1977; Hammond 1990, 1996; Malbin 1980; Montgomery and Nyhan 2017; Patterson 1970; Price 1971). As articulated by Polsby (1990), congressional aides have “extraordinary opportunities to affect public policy.”

2.3.3 Influential staffers

Not wasn't all aides, however, acquired such influence. It quickly became clear that although many aides held the exact same title, such as 'Legislative Assistant' or 'Legislative Director,' the amount of latitude or freedom granted by their Member to act on his or her behalf varied greatly. Not all policy aides are 'unelected issue leaders' (DeGregorio 1996; Hammond 1996; 1990) or 'unelected Representatives' (Malbin 1980). The challenge for scholars, then, became determining how the policy aides that enjoyed influence on policy creation differed from those that didn't.

After observing the Senate Commerce, Finance, and Labor and Public Welfare Committees in the 88th Congress, Price (1971, 1972) makes an important distinction between 'policy entrepreneurs' and 'policy professionals' and their differing impact on legislative outcomes. Price argues that while both sets of staffers maintain expertise in their respective legislative areas, the entrepreneur is a policy activist in “continual search for policy gaps and opportunities,” particularly on legislation that fits with their partisan leanings (1971, 335). Conversely, the policy professional sees his or her role as offering policy expertise to all committee members in a more responsive rather than activist manner.

Kingdon (1981) finds that simply being immersed in the writing of particular bills often generates influence by staffers. He writes that “committee staffs and personal aides to congressmen who are actively involved in particular pieces of legislation are quite important in shaping legislative outcomes” (207-208). Kingdon’s conclusion is supported by Maisel (1981) and Hall (1998). Whiteman (1995) argues that the policy influence enjoyed by some staffers is the result of both gathering and synthesizing policy information, and subsequently mobilizing support for passage across legislative offices and outside organizations. Romzek (2000) observes that some staffers are granted increased autonomy, even decision-making authority, to act on behalf of their Member. Others question whether such authority is granted through issue expertise or a proven loyalty to a single member, or both (DeGregorio 1994, 1995; Hammond 1996; Jensen 2011).

2.4 Unanswered questions

Many such questions regarding member use and the impacts of congressional staffers remain largely unanswered, particularly in the modern congressional environment. Political observers know staff matter and many qualitative works and case studies have highlighted specific instances of staff influence and impact. Yet, modern empirically grounded treatments of congressional aides, their roles, and their effects are too few in number (Montgomery and Nyhan (2017) being a rare exception). The remainder of this dissertation speaks to these questions in a quantitative effort to better understand not only how members lead their respective legislative enterprises,

but how and how much congressional aides influence the policy making process within Congress.

This dissertation contributes to the existing staffing literature in two principal ways. The first is a data and empirical contribution. By using two novel and comprehensive datasets of congressional staff employment generated directly from member-submitted disbursement records and from the *Congressional Yellowbook*, this project studies staff patterns and effects for a longer period of time—and at a much more granular level—than any study to date. Few staff studies have been written in the recent past, and even fewer do so using data for longer than one or two congresses at a time. Much of this project uses staffer level data going back to the 107th Congress (2001-2002), providing both a broad and deep scope through which we can examine the importance of congressional staff.

The second major contribution is to update our theoretical understanding of congressional staffing and congressional behavior generally. In part thanks to the quantitative leap this project makes, this dissertation places staffers into new contexts of the modern Congress. In doing so, we will be better able to understand not just that staffers matter generally, but when, where, and how much they matter. Specifically, this dissertation tackles three unverified assumptions regarding congressional aides, their use, and their impact on Capitol Hill. The first assumption is that expertise and influence is generated solely by years of experience within congressional offices. The second is that levels congressional staff turnover is concerningly high across House offices and that lawmakers who experience higher levels of turnover are less legislatively active and

successful. The final assumption tested within this dissertation is that policy-focused aides within congressional committees are the driving forces behind various committee outputs such as facilitating committee hearings, reporting out substantive legislation, and getting it passed by the chamber.

While I find that while these presumptions regarding congressional staff are generally true, they are incomplete. Turnover is not as systematic as many think it is and not all committee staffers affect committee outputs in the same way nor at the same time. And as the following chapter shows, longer tenures on the Hill is not the reliable indicator of issue area expertise for House policy aides. Instead, I find that members also value a different type of expertise when deciding which staffers are to be responsible for handling the member's most prioritized issue portfolios.

Chapter Three: Linked Government—The power of networking on Capitol Hill

While there seems to be a solid, growing consensus within the staffing literature that aides can and do exert influence on their bosses and specific legislative matters, very little attention, particularly in recent decades, has been paid to the characteristics of those staffers who garner such influential status or in how members vary in their hiring of the ones who do. Academics and journalists alike have highlighted instances in which key congressional aides have earned the monikers of “unelected issue leaders” (Hammond 1996), “Unelected Representatives” (Malbin 1980), or the “101st Senator”¹⁹, but surprisingly few efforts have been made to quantify the types or levels of expertise among staffers who have done so.

For many observers, staff influence and impact, and thus value to members in serving their legislative interests, is assumed to come from longer tenures on the Hill. Several superb qualitative works (e.g., Malbin 1980), and much of the congressional capacity writings found outside of academia, have produced a narrative that it is longer-serving aides who are most valuable to lawmakers. This is thought to be particularly true

¹⁹ Kizzia, Tom. 2010. “Obama's likely new staff chief was known as '101st senator.'” Anchorage Daily News. June 15, 2015. Available at <https://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/article24595465.html>.

when considering legislative staffers responsible for handling specific issue areas in support of their member-boss. Policy aides with more experience on the job are believed to have developed policy-specific expertise from their years of service that translate into a deeper mastery of the issues, their histories and intricate details, and a better appreciation of the political landscape and development process.

Though empirically untested to date, this assumption is likely to be true. Just as in other industries, employees generally become more knowledgeable, efficient, and proficient in carrying out their duties as they gain experience. One becomes better the more one does the job. The industry of legislating is no different. In fact, because the language, rules, and customs of the Hill are an environment all of their own with no practical training programs prior to becoming an employee, the value of years of experience may be even more acute in the business of legislating when compared with many other industries.

I suggest, however, that this tenure narrative misses another essential component of the Capitol Hill and policy-making environment: the importance of collaborative networks. This chapter empirically establishes that members of Congress value two different types of expertise in the policy aides to whom they delegate their most important policy portfolios. The first type of expertise is the most widely accepted form: longer tenures on Capitol Hill. The second form is an indicator of staff networking that is so vital to building political and policy coalitions within and outside of Congress: the number of different member offices in which an aide has served.

Within this chapter, I argue that instead of only looking for the longest-serving staffers as a proxy for true policy expertise—as much of the literature and anecdotal evidence suggests—members also recognize that effective policy management requires coalitions of support and access to multiple sources of information. Thus, members assign the most complicated, prestigious, and important legislative issue areas to the staffers who have developed the necessary Hill and interest group relationships that issue advancement depends upon. Specifically, I ask how much do members of Congress value Hill experience, both in the number of years served and number of congressional offices worked, in their calculations when assigning legislative portfolios to their legislative staffers? Is it true that “Staffs are hired in a haphazard fashion, without any formal standards” (Mann and Ornstein 1992, 69)? Or, are members more tactical in that they hire and assign more experienced and networked staffers to legislative responsibilities where expertise, technical knowledge, and the opportunity for policy impact are most valued? Which of these types of experience and expertise matter more and on which issues areas? Though some of influence of each of the two measures undoubtedly overlap, the methodological approach taken in this chapter allows the independent effects of each to be explored.

To address these lingering questions, I contend that an overlooked line of investigation entails identifying the characteristics and experience members value in deciding which of their policy aides are to cover their most prioritized issue areas in their name. Doing so will help zero in on not only who these ‘unelected issue leaders’ are, but also on what issues they lead, and how members take advantage of their levels

of experience and networking for their own legislative purposes. Using a novel dataset of all personal staff employees of the 114th Congress' House of Representatives, including the legislative issue areas assigned to each, I find that members hire and strategically assign their most important policy areas to staffers both with longer tenures and those who have proven to be Hill operators by working more legislative offices within Congress. In fact, I find that members often care about the number of offices policy aides have worked in independently of the staffer's tenure on the Hill, an emphasis that is even more pronounced than tenure for many of the most prestigious and policy-laden legislative responsibilities in Congress.

3.1 The role of legislative staffers

Delegation of policy attention and action from members to their hired legislative aides has become a necessary norm on Capitol Hill. Members have much else to do. Their days while in session in D.C. are packed with caucus matters, briefings, meetings with constituents and interest groups, media interviews, committee work, fundraising, and a litany of other intra-office matters that continually demand their attention (Grim and Siddiqui 2013). Thus, lawmakers hire policy staffers to maintain attention to legislative developments because they are unable to consistently do so themselves.

And policy aides²⁰ are tasked with a litany of responsibilities that go far beyond monitoring pertinent legislation related to their assigned issue areas or informing their

²⁰ 'Legislative staffers' or 'policy aides' are those that have official legislative responsibilities/issues assigned as outlined in the Congressional Directory database used within this chapter. Most commonly,

member of what issues are on the legislative calendars in the coming days.

“Increasingly, the members want aides who will dream up new bills and amendments bearing their bosses’ names instead of helping the bosses understand what is already on the agenda” (Malbin 1980, 7). Legislative staffers are responsible for generating policy ideas, drafting legislative language and amendments, briefing the member on the legislative history and importance of the issue, preparing committee hearing questioning and testimony of called witnesses, and assembling a coalition of other supportive members and relevant interest groups (Petersen 2012). Ultimately, the most valuable legislative staffers are those who are successfully proactive in identifying and promoting legislative opportunities in their member’s name.

Given the high levels of delegation to policy aides, it should come as little surprise that the Congressional staffing literature has regularly found that aides have an impact on the policy agendas and decisions made by their member boss (DeGregorio 1996; DeGregorio and Snider 1995; Fox and Hammond, 1977; Hammond 1996; Malbin 1980; Montgomery and Nyhan 2017; Patterson 1970; Price 1971). Importantly, this transference of legislative responsibilities to policy staffers by the member does not decrease his or her reputation of ability. In fact, it can enhance it. “That the individual member may not always personally perform each and every function does not diminish the impact of the work, or the member’s ultimate responsibility for what is done in his

these are those that hold the title of Legislative Assistant, though often Legislative Directors, Legislative Correspondents, and even Chiefs of Staff are assigned policy responsibilities. See **Table A.3.1** within the Appendix for a breakdown of the titles most commonly responsible for policy management.

or her name” (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981b, 565). DeGregorio and Snider (1995) and DeGregorio (1996) find that experienced staffers put in charge of the most controversial issues of the 100th Congress had an undeniable impact on the leadership reputation of the members they worked for. “In both articles the authors suggest that members who share work on major legislation with competent staffers enhance their own leadership recognition” (Hammond 1996).

In this pursuit, members make tactical efforts to “professionalize” their staffs “thereby increasing the efficiency of their explicit analytical activities and enhancing their own knowledge and power” (Polsby 1969, 70-71). Put another way, staffers have indeed been found to effectively manage the most politically delicate and complicated issue areas for, and somewhat independently of, their members. But additionally, when they are successful, these policy staffers directly cultivate a more favorable opinion of their bosses’ ability to lead on such tough issues. The more effective the staffers are at their jobs, the higher the likelihood the member is thought to be at hers.

3.2 Two different kinds of expertise

I suggest that while the literature consistently finds that certain legislative staffers influence their bosses’ participation, information levels, even voting decisions, scholars to date have made little effort to detail what characteristics members value in assigning various legislative issue areas to their hired policy staffers. I attempt to do so, both theoretically and empirically, in this chapter. This study departs from past analyses of congressional staffing in that it leverages legislative portfolios and two different types of

staffer expertise in an attempt to quantify how members assign legislative duties to their policy aides. As CEOs of their office, legislators ultimately decide which staffers are responsible for which individual policy areas (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981b). I disagree with the notion that little thought is given to which staffers warrant the House's most prestigious and policy-heavy legislative responsibilities. Instead, I argue that members strategically assign more complicated, intricate, and important responsibilities to staffers most capable to handle them.

In other words, I attempt to quantify Hall's (1998) observation that "The capacity and experience of the staff is crucial to a member's ability to acquire, assimilate, and deploy the issue-specific information needed to participate on particular bills" (93). The next sections outline the potential motivations for members of Congress in assigning certain legislative portfolios to their policy aides, as well as provides empirical tests of whether members value certain kinds of experience from their legislative staffers in hopes of generating a more effective policy operation within their offices.

3.2.1 Tenures and office counts

Overwhelmingly, the staffing literature hypothesizes that members attempt to hire—and are best served—by policy aides with a policy-specific expertise. The hiring of the most capable of policy staffers benefits the lawmaker in at least two ways. First, the member is better able to pursue his or her legislative outputs (McCrain 2018b). Effective policy aides are able to track, initiate, and mobilize policy solutions at opportune moments to satisfy the policy demands of the member and interested stakeholders

(Kingdon 1981). Second, the reputation of the member can be enhanced by the employment of such aides (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981b). The office and the lawmaker, then, become known for in-house issue area expertise in house, thus becoming a source of information—a true comparative advantage in the legislative context (Curry 2015)—to other offices in search of background and counsel, often under serious time constraints.

Relying almost singularly on observational and qualitative analyses, scholars find that members are more willing to bestow judgment and authority in their name to staffers with more in-depth knowledge of a given issue (DeGregorio 1996; DeGregorio and Snider 1995; Hammond 1988). As a point of fact, scholars have found that aides with longer tenures are more likely to be granted increased autonomy, even decision-making authority, to act on behalf of their boss (Romzek 2000). The story is rather simple: Aides with more experience handling an issue are more valuable to members where that issue is a legislative priority.

In the legislative context, issue expertise doesn't necessarily come from an educational or vocational background on the topic, but rather from years of experience within Hill offices dealing with legislative proposals. For this reason, many observers argue that a reliable proxy for issue expertise is the number of years spent on the Hill (e.g. DeGregorio 1996; DeGregorio and Snider 1995). As observed by Hammond (1996), "The autonomy of staff issue leaders is linked to their seniority" (547). In its crudest characterization, tenure equals experience, and experience equals expertise. In their years on the Hill, staffers acquire knowledge of the legislative history of their

responsibility, including insight on previous successful and unsuccessful attempts at policy change (Malbin 1980; Romzek and Utter 1997). They become familiar with obstacles to passage, the types of legislative language necessary for support, and whose backing is most influential and necessary for advancement. As written by Romzek and Utter, experienced staffers are viewed by members to “represent a thread of continuity, institutional memory, and expertise within the institution” (1997, 1252).

Because many of the legislative responsibilities assigned to policy staffers are intricate and complex, members rightfully will value those with a proven track record of doing so and will purposefully attempt to assign more complicated, prestigious responsibilities to staffers with greater legislative experience. Put differently, because “personal professional aides are hired for ideas, judgment and counsel” (Fox and Hammond 1977, 25), staffers with histories of handling policy duties are assumed to have developed these qualities and, thus, generally are more valuable to members’ legislative interests. This is as far as scholars have progressed in determining how members ultimately staff their legislative portfolios: Staffers with more years of experience are assumed to have developed more policy expertise and, thus, are more likely to receive more complicated, policy-laden, prestigious legislative responsibilities. Though unquantified to date in studies of congressional staffing, this explanation of how responsibilities are assigned is assuredly the case. It only makes sense that longer serving aides gain trust from their employer that is reflected in their legislative portfolios.

But, I argue it is not the whole story. In fact, proxying expertise with number of years on the Hill, particularly in regards to policy-making, is problematic for a variety of reasons. For one, congressional year counts ignore any previous educational or private-sector occupational experience where aides develop deep interest and knowledge in specific policy areas, such as earning advanced degrees in education policy or a previous career as an accountant. In many instances, aides can register as brand new to Capitol Hill with zero years of experience—a context in which the literature would cast them as novices in terms of policy expertise—when in actuality they may be bringing a wealth of experience with them on day one. For another, Hill tenures fail to take into account any service within special interest organizations or executive branch agencies where developing political relationships are essential to success. An aide with a thick rolodex of established political connections is well positioned to handle a legislative portfolio on behalf of his or her member-boss even with no previous Hill experience on their resume.

Thus, I argue members also seek and value a second form of expertise in their most valued policy aides: the ability to build coalitions. I posit that members recognize that the policy effectiveness they seek is benefited from hiring Hill operators more plugged into social networks within and outside of the institution. In addition to issue-specific technical expertise, policy aides must be able to initiate and develop coalitions for passage, synthesize information networks from a variety of offices and sources, and maintain strong and far-reaching relationships to effectively impact policy and serve her boss. The ‘unelected issue leaders’ described within the staffing literature are those with considerable impact on defining legislative language to interested parties, fostering

communication networks, and facilitating bargaining and negotiation sessions between members (DeGregorio 1996; Hammond 1988; 1996). In short, the most effective policy aides and those who are likely to be most valued by members and receive the most sought after legislative assignments, are the staffers most networked on the Hill and with interest groups.²¹

The demands of a legislative assistant position are such that policy proficiency and Hill experience are simply not enough by themselves, especially for the most important policy issues. That is, a multitude of years in a single office is not sufficient. While it is clearly advantageous to a member to employ a legislative aide who knows the minutia of a particular subject—that is, owns an unquestioned policy expertise—more than technical knowledge is needed to effectively manage a legislative portfolio.

Consider the duties and responsibilities for a policy aide in a House office, for example. The Congressional Management Foundation (2016) includes the following items in its job description for Legislative Assistants:

- Formulates legislative initiatives for assigned issue areas which include:
 - devising a legislative plan;
 - drafting the plan into legislative form;
 - *planning, coordinating and scheduling introduction of legislation in the House (or offering it on an appropriate vehicle if it is in an amendment)*
 - *gathering support for a bill or amendment from other Members, as well as appropriate interest groups;*
 - *working with committees on legislation;*

²¹ McCrain (2018b) finds that the best-connected staffers ultimately become more valuable in terms of revenue generated for their lobbying firms after leaving Congress. I posit a similar argument in that a staffer's increased connectedness is valuable to members while they are in Congress.

– *coordinating legislative support to get the bill passed in the House.*

- Tracks legislation and other developments in his or her assigned issue areas and briefs the Member for floor work, committee work, work in the district, and outside House-related activities;
- Monitors legislative developments within committees;
- *Plans and coordinates co-sponsorship and support of other legislation;*
- Monitors legislation on the House floor, providing the Member with information on each vote;
- Writes Floor speeches for the Member;
- *If assigned to issues pending before a specific committee, prepares for and attends committee meetings and hearings with or without the Member (i.e., keeps in contact with committee staff and meets with interest groups and constituents with interests in such meetings);*
- *Acts as a liaison with committee and agency staffs;*
- *Meets with constituents and interest groups;*

Many of these responsibilities for policy aides itemized, especially those italicized in the job description above, demand high levels of coordination with many players on and off the Hill. Simply put, legislative success requires large coalitions, both within and outside the chamber. Staffers with wider networks of other professional legislative staffers, interest groups, private sector policy advocates, and committee aides are likely far more able to facilitate the necessary coalitions that policy advancement requires. The time constraints on members means that drafting legislative language acceptable to other members, lining up cosponsors across offices, and aligning interest group support are largely executed at the staff level (Malbin 1980).

Collaborative relationships are essential.

Maintaining far-reaching networks becomes even more vital for policy staffers, given that House policy aides are assigned more than eight individual legislative

responsibilities on average.²² Such a large number of issue areas puts incredible time constraints on policy aides and creates a context where staffers who are able to synthesize information and cultivate support from a variety of sources by being plugged in with other Hill operators are better able to serve their member's policy goals more effectively (Whiteman 1995). Staffers with more extended networks to other staffers, member offices, and outside organizations face lower costs to assembling coalitions, and are consequently more valuable to their member bosses. Thus, members will value staffers they know to have broader networks, and reward the most connected aides with the most complicated, prestigious legislative portfolios because they recognize that their increased coordination capabilities lead to more effective policy management in the member's name.²³

I suggest that wider networks are achieved by having operated in a greater number of different legislative offices on the Hill. Experience in multiple member offices allows staffers to enhance their skill sets on a variety of important responsibilities, from bill drafting best practices to soliciting cosponsors that other members respect and take

²² This average is calculated from the author's staffer database referenced within the following section.

²³ It is important to note that members do not try to advance policy on all, or even many issues. Whether because of district demands or needs, personal policy interests, or committee assignments, members are typically focused on a few areas of where they attempt to carve out a legislative reputation. Members cannot be, and are not expected to be, experts on all legislative issues. However, every Representative "engages in public policy formation" (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981, 565) and at a minimum, is responsible for maintaining some level of attention to policy issues across the chamber. Additionally, many issues have a direct constituent service component, such as Social Security requests from constituents looking for claim assistance from their elected Representative. Thus, lawmakers recognize that in order to best serve their reelection and constituent service interests, they must commit some level of staff attention to the legislative happenings across many issue areas to remain adequately responsive. In either case, I argue that members will greatly value more networked staffers to handle their policy portfolios.

cues from. Moreover, experience working for other members in different offices, even if in different roles, is a clear signal that an aide has developed a working network of contacts and is well versed in the institutional processes necessary to advancing the legislative portfolios to which they are assigned. Policy staffers with career histories in more member offices are, by definition, Hill operators, more plugged into the do's and don'ts of legislative processes, and better able to effectively manage the legislative portfolios assigned to them by their member. Additionally, networked staffers are more keyed in to the political and partisan dynamics of other offices and the chamber, as well as more likely to enjoy essential connections with leadership and executive branch agencies. These relationships allow for better informed perspectives as to what policies are being discussed and developed, as well as keener insights as to how various policy proposals are likely to be received by other offices and relevant agencies.

Importantly, members and their senior leadership staffers are in tune to the staffers they have seen competently advance an issue agenda for other members. Members know, or can readily find, staffers who are known to be issue operators and advancers on the Hill. As observed by Romzek and Utter (1997), "The work culture of Congress is fairly intimate; it is a relatively small-scale work setting where individuals are able to develop networks, working relationships, and opinions about staff and members based on first-hand experience" (1257). Staffers who develop such networks are those whose reputations warrant different legislative responsibility assignments when compared to staffers of the same title but of narrower legislative networks.

3.3 Legislative responsibilities and measures of expertise

3.3.1 Prestige, policy, and constituent service legislative responsibilities

Of course, not all issue areas are created equal. The literature has long detailed that certain congressional committees attract different types of members (Fenno 1973). Similarly for policy aides, to handle *Budget* matters requires a much different set of procedural and governmental knowhow than to cover *Postal Issues*, for example, and we should expect members to have different aides with different experience levels handle the two issues.

The key thrust of my argument is that members will value the two types of expertise—often independently of each other—on issues that members themselves prioritize (Bullock 1976; Deering and Smith 1997; Fenno 1973; Mayhew 1974). They will assign their most capable staffers the complex and most intricate issues knowing their expertise is needed and will best serve the lawmaker. Their longer tenures and wider networks allow for the generation of better crafted policies and stronger connections with stakeholders and relevant committees. For issue areas with a constituent service rather than policy bent, however, members will care less about assigning their most seasoned aides to their coverage. In fact, for constituent service issues members will likely value staffers who have worked only in their office, and thus have fewer unique offices in which they have worked, because they will maintain a stronger connection to that lawmaker's personal district. Far less is to be gained by having wider networks for constituent service issues when compared to prestigious or policy legislative responsibilities. Moreover, when an aide gains increased Hill experience and office

counts, members will see them as too experienced for constituent legislative issues and will likely try to capitalize on their expertise on more important, complicated matters.

To test the independent effects of the two types of expertise outlined above—number of years on the Hill and number of different member offices worked in—on being assigned certain legislative issues, I constructed a dataset of all personal staffers employed by members of the House of Representatives for the 114th Congress using the *Congressional Yellow Book* staff directories.²⁴ For each listed staffer employed in all House personal offices, the directory itemizes the specific legislative responsibilities of those assigned a legislative portfolio within each office. In all, the database contains records on nearly 6,700 congressional staffers, of which 2,018 are assigned at least one legislative responsibility by their member. Staffers with at least one assigned issue area are operationalized as policy aides within this analysis.

Incredibly, there are 1,242 unique legislative issue areas assigned to policy aides in the House and within the dataset. Nearly half (594) of the issue areas are assigned to one aide each (i.e., one staffer within the entire House is assigned one of the 594 issues), and the maximum number of issue areas assigned to a single aide is 35. The legislative responsibilities used within this analysis are those in which at least one-third of all House offices assign at least one staffer, a clear signal that the issue is important to such a large number of legislative enterprises so that a member is likely to assign it to a staffer with sufficient expertise. Thirty-four legislative responsibilities meet this criteria.

²⁴ During the time of collecting staffers by office, former Speaker John Boehner's (R-OH) seat was vacated by his resignation. Thus, there were no staff members associated with vacated district's office.

After narrowing down to these most commonly assigned legislative responsibilities to 34, I extended the Deering and Smith (1997, 80)²⁵ classification scheme of *prestigious*, *policy*, and *constituent service* issue areas. In their work, the authors use the legislative jurisdictions of each congressional committee and expressed member views on the various committees to classify committees into groups. I extend the classification schema from congressional committees to individual issues largely based on the described legislative jurisdictions of specific policy areas, as well as which congressional committee is responsible for the legislative responsibility, matching as closely as possible to the groupings provided by Deering and Smith (1997). Prestigious committee assignments and issue areas are those with budget and agenda-setting responsibilities. Because “these committees impact every member of the House” they grant members a certain degree of authority or comparative influence over their colleagues (63). Policy issues are those that deal largely with salient national political issues—such as energy or taxes—and are regularly characterized as “important” and “complex” (72). Finally, constituent service committees and issues are seen as “extensions of their districts” in that their jurisdictions allow members a strong connection to their constituents, such as in providing any legislative assistance to Social Security or Medicaid claims (75). By distinguishing the types of legislative responsibilities

²⁵ Deering and Smith (1997) extended the schema generated by interviews of freshman members of the 92nd Congress as towards their committee preferences. Fenno (1973) constructed similar interviews in classifying member motivations for joining particular congressional committees.

in this manner, I am able to directly test how levels of expertise affect the likelihood that a policy aide is assigned a particular issue area.

Of course, not all issue areas provide a clean classification. Many, if not most, policy areas have both a policy focus and a constituent service component. *Welfare issues* are a prime example. Clearly there are legislative demands to covering this issue area as assistance programs are extremely technical and often part of proposed policy changes. But there is clearly a huge constituent service demand on the issue as well, and members rely on policy aides to explain program details, eligibility requirements, and changes to constituents directly and to district staffers responsible for assisting claims. For these tough to delineate issue areas it is imperative to remember that the classification scheme is based on members' own views of the particular topics. It is how they have vocalized how they perceive the issues and the committees that handle them, and how they explain their motivations of whether to seek a committee or not. For example, for issues such as *Medicaid* and *Medicare*, of which there are certainly strong policy demands, only a small number of lawmakers take a policy interest in the topics, primarily members on Ways and Means and those who hope to be. But every member represents constituents who will need assistance on Medicare or Medicaid issues. Thus, lawmakers view these issues as requiring more of a constituent service responsibility rather than offering opportunities for public policy changes. The legislative responsibility groupings for the issue areas in which at least one third of House offices assign a policy aide can be found in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1. Classification of common House legislative responsibilities

<i>Prestige Issues</i>	<i>Constituent Service Issues</i>
Appropriations	Agriculture
Budget	Animals
<i>Policy Issues</i>	Armed Services
Commerce	Defense
Education	Homeland Security
Energy	Housing
Environment	Immigration
Financial Services	LGBTQ Issues
Foreign Affairs	Medicaid
Healthcare	Medicare
Intelligence	Natural Resources
Judiciary	Postal Issues
Labor	Social Security
Science/Technology	Telecommunications
Small Business	Veterans' Affairs
Taxes	Welfare
Trade	Women's Issues
Transportation/Infrastructure	

3.3.2 Hill tenures and office counts

In order to create the two measures of expertise—Hill tenures and office counts—for each policy staffer employed in House personal offices, I collected the following from the same *Congressional Yellow Book* staff directory: the staffers' names, titles, start dates, member employer, and career histories of those that had held previous titles

with their current Representative or within other Hill offices, including dates of service for each position. Using these dates and unique offices, I was able to create tenure lengths of service on the Hill as well as counts of the number of distinct legislative offices worked in for each policy staffer.

Table 3.2 displays the average tenures in years—*Hill Tenure*—and the average number of offices in which staffers have worked—*Office Count*—across the various legislative responsibilities assigned to House policy staffers, as well as the number of legislative staffers within the chamber assigned to that particular issue.

Table 3.2. Average tenures and office counts by legislative responsibility

Legislative Responsibility	# of Aides Assigned	Hill Tenure	Office Count	Legislative Responsibility	# of Aides Assigned	Hill Tenure	Office Count
Agriculture	418	6.93	1.68	Judiciary Issues	380	6.88	1.78
Animals	206	5.44	1.37	Labor	375	7.26	1.76
Appropriations	316	9.93	2.22	LGBTQ Issues	179	7.22	1.67
Armed Services	164	6.58	1.67	Medicaid	314	7.86	1.82
Budget	377	8.48	2.07	Medicare	322	7.91	1.8
Commerce	162	8.06	1.98	Natural Resources	218	7.11	1.8
Defense	376	7.52	1.80	Postal Issues	348	5.81	1.45
Education	429	6.27	1.58	Science/Technology	331	6.46	1.63
Energy	438	7.72	1.89	Small Business Issues	302	6.82	1.74
Environment	438	7.34	1.77	Social Security	353	7.3	1.64
Financial Services	277	7.26	1.85	Taxes	381	8.22	1.99
Foreign Affairs	389	7.22	1.84	Telecommunications	378	7.1	1.75
Healthcare	447	7.66	1.82	Trade	363	8.05	1.92
Homeland Security	380	6.79	1.76	Transportation/Infrastructure	415	7.84	1.9
Housing	330	6.51	1.73	Veterans' Affairs	434	6.61	1.65
Immigration	394	7.05	1.72	Welfare	348	6.3	1.55
Intelligence	150	7.13	1.8	Women's Issues	173	6.99	1.7
Average	333	6.82	1.77	Average	333	6.82	1.77

Of the 34 issue areas used in this analysis, the fewest number of policy aides explicitly assigned the responsibility is *Intelligence* with 150 staffers assigned the issue.

There are 447 different legislative staffers assigned to handle *Healthcare* issues,

highlighting the importance of committing staffing resources to at least monitoring health-related bills and matters for nearly all legislative offices. Five issues, ranging from *Agriculture* to *Veterans' Affairs*, have over 400 staffers assigned to their coverage. The average tenure of aides assigned the listed issue areas is 6.82 years and the average number of different offices worked in is 1.77.

Figure 3.1. Hill tenures and office counts of various legislative responsibilities

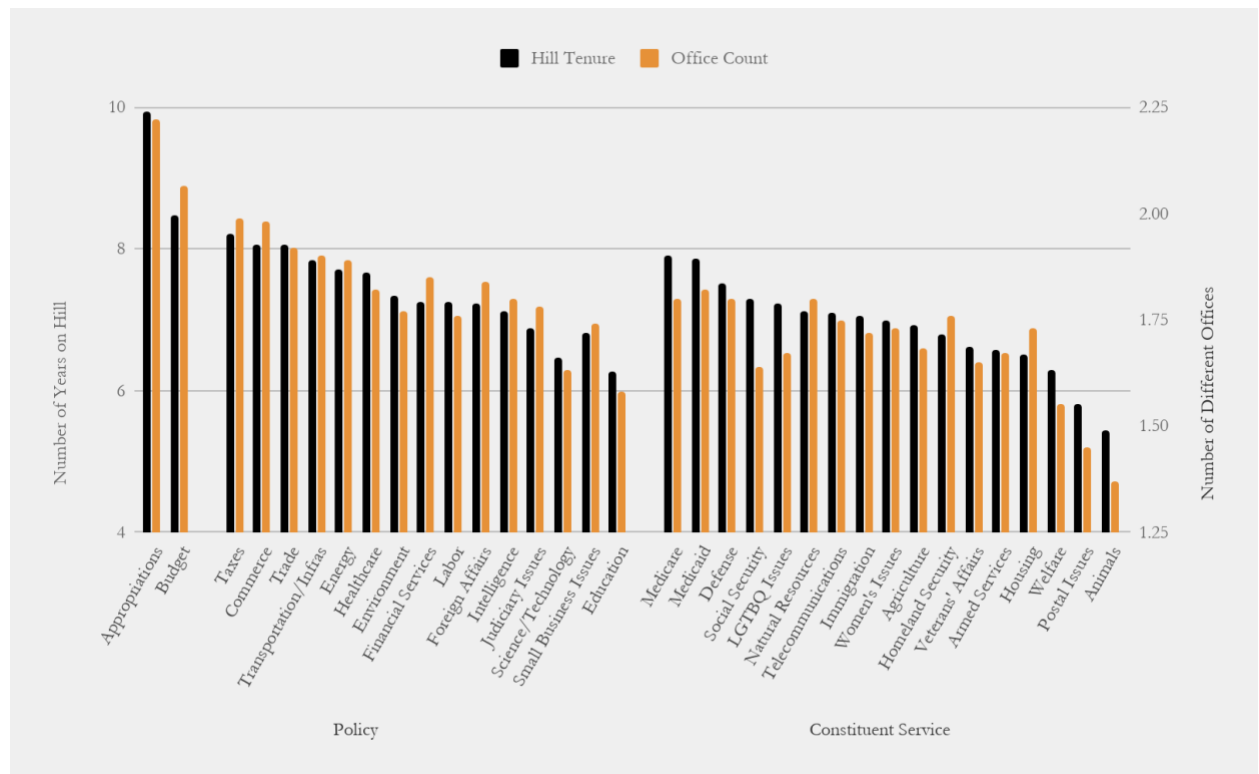


Figure 3.1 plots the two forms of experience sorted by the number of years of experience, with Hill tenures on the left y-axis and office counts on the right y-axis. The issue areas are grouped by the classification scheme described previously. The figure shows the noticeable variation across issues areas and groups, with staffers assigned *Appropriations* issues maintaining the highest number of years on the Hill (9.93) and the highest number of different offices worked in (2.22). Staffers covering *Animal* issues

maintain the shortest Hill tenures (5.44 years) and lowest office counts (1.37). In terms of groupings, staffers assigned either of the two *prestige issues* have both significantly higher average *hill tenures* (10.05 years) and *office counts* (2.22) when compared to aides assigned *policy issues* (7.04 years; 1.74 offices) or *constituent service* issue areas (6.86 years; 1.70 offices). Clearly, differences in staffer expertise, in both forms, exist across issue groupings. But, which form matters more in the eyes of members in their decision to assign individual issue responsibilities?

3.4 Modeling types of expertise on individual issue assignments

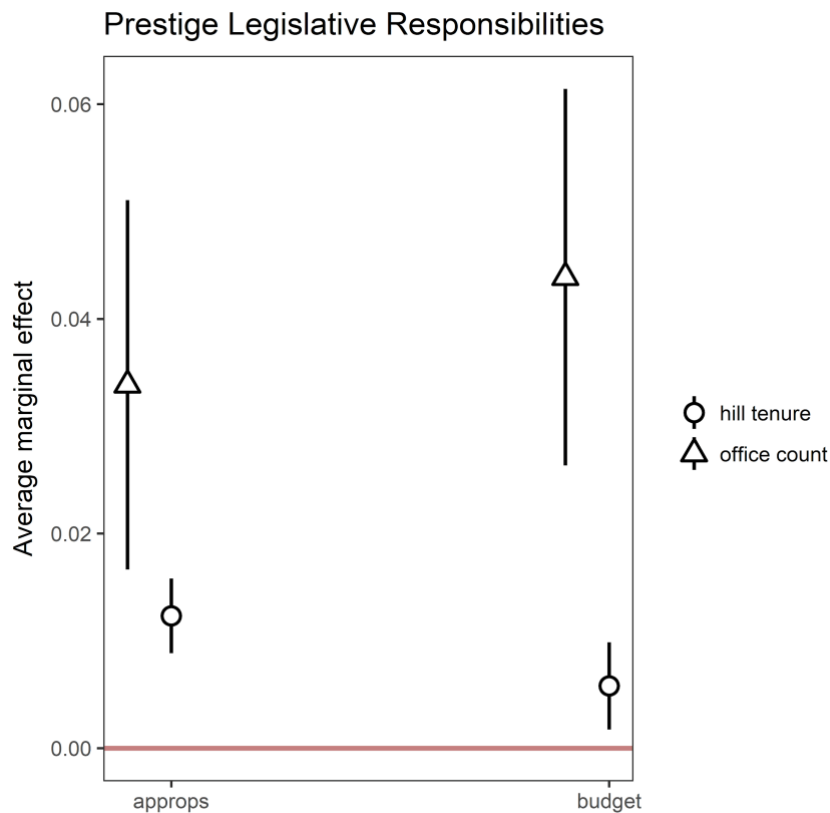
In order to test the isolated effects of the two types of expertise on whether or not a policy aide is assigned a particular issue area²⁶, I estimated a series of logistic regressions, one for each of the 34 common legislative responsibilities. The primary independent variables of interest are the two forms of expertise: number of years on the Hill—*Hill Tenure*—and the number of different legislative offices in which a staffer has worked—*Office Count*. Each model includes a control variable for the tenure length of each member of Congress to account for the likelihood that longer serving lawmakers may employ longer serving aides. All regressions include all standard errors clustered at the member level. Full regression results can be found in **Table A.3.3** in the Appendix.

To interpret these models, I rely on the average marginal effects of *Hill Tenure* and *Office Count*. Here, a one-year increase in *Hill Tenure* and a one office increase in

²⁶ The dependent variable is whether an individual staffer is assigned the legislative issue area, coded 1 if yes, 0 if not.

Office Count imply an average increase in the probability that a policy aide is assigned a particular legislative responsibility, respectively.²⁷ For ease of comparison across legislative issues, average marginal effects are grouped using the issue area classification scheme outlined previously and plotted with 95 percent confidence intervals to visualize uncertainty. Confidence intervals that do not cross zero can be interpreted as statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Figure 3.2. Marginal effects of Hill tenure and office count on Prestige Issues



²⁷ All average marginal effects are estimated in Stata. It should be noted that average marginal effects differ from marginal effects at the means. In the latter, the mean value of each independent variable is used to generate marginal effects given the logistic coefficients from a model. Average marginal effects, by contrast, rely on the observed data to generate marginal effects for each individual observation, the mean of which is the average marginal effect.

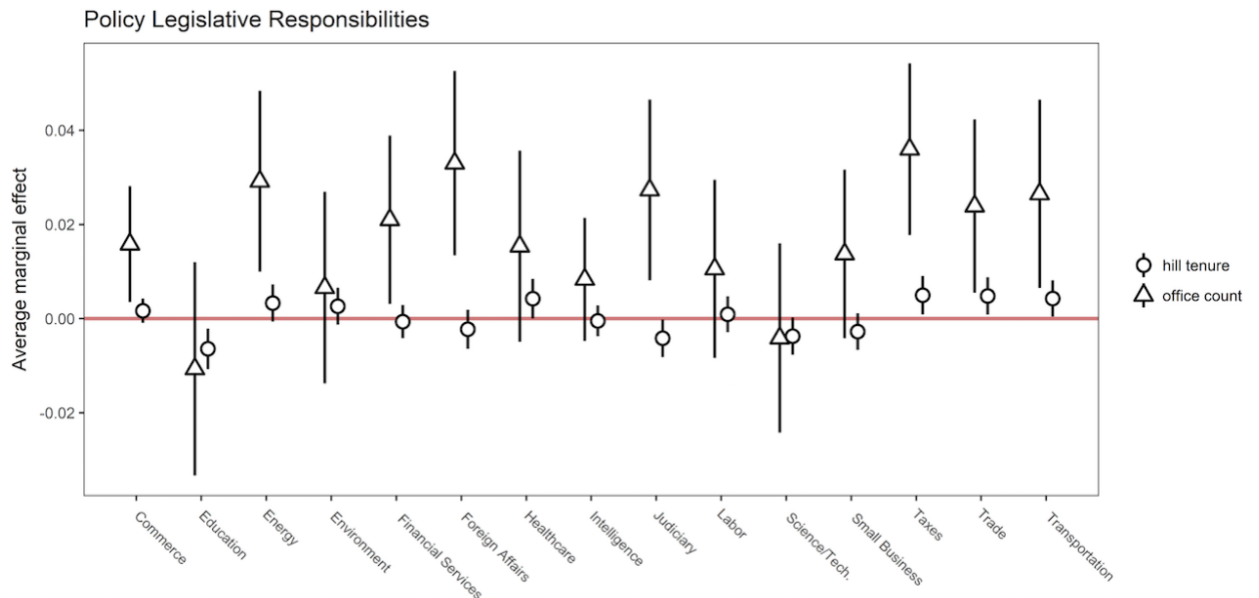
Figure 3.2 plots the average marginal effects for the two *prestige* issue areas—appropriations and budget—that were assigned to policy aides in at least one third of House offices. For both issue areas a one unit increase in each of the two types of expertise were statistically significant at the 0.05 level while holding all independent variables at their observed values. An increase in one-year of tenure for policy aides results in a 1.3 percentage point increase in the likelihood a staffer is assigned *appropriations*, while an increase of one office count results in a 3.5 percentage point increase. For *budget* issues, one more year on the Hill translates into a 0.7 percentage point increase and one more office worked in gains an additional 4.2 percentage points increase in the probability of an aide being assigned the issue area.

Of course, because the two measures of expertise exist on two different scales—years versus office counts—we should expect marginal effects for office counts to be higher than for Hill tenures; that is, one unit increases in office counts should register as a more pronounced increase when compared to a one unit increase in Hill tenure because staffers serve a greater number of years than the count of offices in which they’ve worked. Thus, a substantively direct comparison of the marginal effects for each type of expertise requires dividing the marginal effect of office count by the marginal effect of Hill tenure. Doing so equates the number of years served required to equal a one unit increase in the number of offices worked in. Therefore, for an aide being assigned *budget* issues, the staffer would need to work six additional years on the Hill to equal the marginal effect gained from working in one additional office. Because the mean tenure for *budget* aides is 8.48 years (see **Table 3.2**), the marginal effect in gaining

one additional office suggests that members potentially value wider networks relative to additional Hill experience for the issue. For *appropriations*, 2.69 more years of Hill tenure equal one additional office, a smaller yet significant increase in the likelihood of being assigned the issue. Generally, as theorized for *prestige* issues, members value both longer tenures and wider networks when deciding which staffers merit such prestigious assignments, but higher office counts prove to provide an additional form of expertise in handling such important issues for their member-bosses.

Moving on to *policy* legislative responsibilities, and as depicted in **Figure 3.3**, we begin to see differences in the marginal effects of the two measures of expertise for the 15 policy issues within the sample. These results provide strong support for the hypotheses that the two types of background confer different expertise, and that while members can value them simultaneously on a single issue, they often value one over the other on many. Increases in *hill tenures* are positive for seven of the policy issue areas, but only three of the issues reach statistical significance at the 0.05 level. For office counts, however, the marginal effects are much more pronounced. One unit increases in office count increase the probability of being assigned the issue in thirteen of the 15 issue areas, eight of which reach statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). Longer Hill tenures were associated with lower probabilities of being assigned an issue for seven policy issues, and higher office counts only two issue areas with neither reaching statistical significance.

Figure 3.3. Marginal effects of Hill tenure and office count on Policy Issues



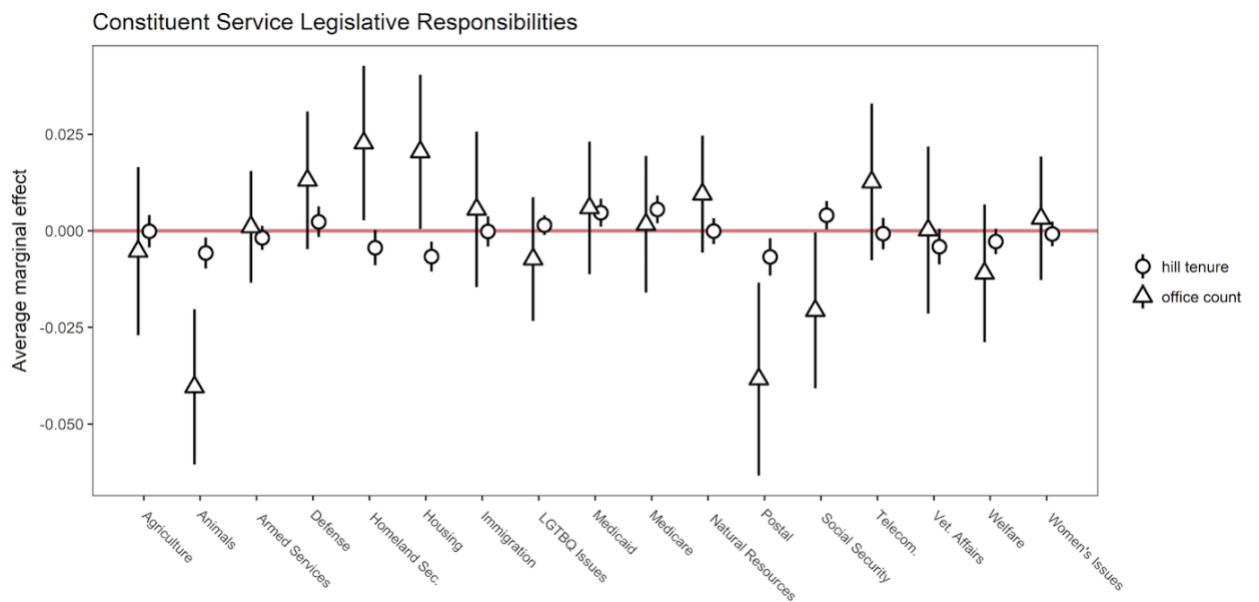
The largest marginal effects for *policy* issues is found on *taxes*: a gain of one office produces a 3.8 percentage point increase in probability of being assigned the issue and a one-year increase in Hill tenure results in a 0.4 percentage increase. Thus, to be assigned *taxes* an aide would need to work an additional 9.5 years on the Hill to equal the marginal effect gained from working in one additional office. *Commerce*, *energy*, *trade*, and *transportation* issues all have similar marginal effect ratios when both measures of expertise are positive, highlighting numerous instances when *Office Count* appears to be the more valued form of expertise.

Five *policy* legislative responsibilities produce positive marginal effects in *Office Count* and negative marginal effects in *Hill Tenure*. For *judiciary* issues, for example one additional office produces a 3.1 percentage point increase in being assigned the issue while a one-year increase in Hill tenure results in a 0.6 percentage point decrease. Both measures are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) but in opposite directions. Substantively, this suggests that members view increased Hill tenure as a potential waste of

experience and expertise on certain issues and instead see more networked staffers as better fits to handle the legislative responsibility.

Interestingly, *education* issues, thought to be an intricate policy area where wonks with deep histories on the subject are vital, registers negative marginal effects on both forms of expertise. One potential explanation is that the complicated legislative matters are handled outside of House personal offices and within the Education and Workforce committee and its staff devoted to the topic. *Science/technology* has a similar relationship though both expertise measures are imperfectly estimated.

Figure 3.4. Marginal effects of Hill tenure and office count on Constituent Service Issues



Finally, **Figure 3.4** plots the average marginal effects for *constituent service issues* and shows strong support for the hypothesis that members care far less about either form of expertise on such issues. Of the 17 constituent service issues only five produce positive marginal effects for *Hill Tenure* with three reaching statistical significance; increased tenure on the Hill results in lower probabilities of being assigned

the responsibility on 12 issues, five of which are significant. Eight issues produce positive marginal effects for *Office Count* though only *Homeland Security* and *housing* are significant. Such findings can possibly be explained by the fact that both issues require constant contact with their respective federal agencies (Departments of Homeland Security and Housing and Urban Development, respectively) and increased office counts result in wider networks that facilitate information sharing and agency contacts.

Three constituent service areas (*animals*, *postal*, and *welfare*) see negative marginal effects on both measures indicating that more expertise in any form leaves aides less likely to be assigned these issues. Generally, these results confirm the expectation that *constituent service issues* are viewed as entry level issue assignments given to newer policy aides and those with more limited networks. As policy staffers gain expertise in both tenures and network building they graduate from such district-focused issues and are more likely to gain more prestigious and policy-laden issue assignments.

3.5 Conclusion

Legislative aides are often identified as vital, even influential, resources to members in assisting them with their policy duties as Representatives. The staffing literature, and much of the increasing writings on congressional capacity, have long assumed that the most effective aides responsible for important and difficult legislative portfolios are those with the Hill experience to warrant their assignment. Though empirically unquantified to date, the assumption has been that their higher levels of experience result in a deeper understanding of the particular issue area and the often insular and

convoluted ways of Congress. Using a novel dataset leveraging issue portfolios and career histories of all legislative staffers in the House I find this assumption to generally be true—longer tenured aides typically receive the most coveted issue assignments in the House. Yet, I argue that the inference in the assumption that tenure always confers expertise is incomplete.

Within this chapter, I theorize that members also value and seek policy aides that have a different form of expertise that better situates them to advance the policy interests of their member-bosses: wider networks due to their having worked in a greater number of different legislative offices. Recognizing that the effective coverage of many issue areas demands collaboration from many congressional, governmental, and private sector players, members seek and employ staffers who have proven to be capable aides within other legislative offices. It is these networked staffers, and not necessarily those with longer tenures on Capitol Hill, who members strategically assign their most important legislative portfolios.

Using a modeling strategy that isolates the effects from both types of expertise—tenures and office counts—I find that members value policy aides who are most capable in cultivating relationships that lessen the burdens of information gathering and policy advancement for many of the chamber’s most prestigious, technical, and policy-heavy legislative responsibilities. For more constituent service responsibilities, such as *postal* and *livestock* issues, members require far less of either form of expertise. Instead, these issues are assigned to policy aides who have comparatively short Hill tenures and have worked for fewer different members. In

addition to better understanding the intra-office policy environment from the member perspective, these findings contribute to our understanding of which staffers—and which characteristics members seek—ultimately become those in which the congressional staffing literature have previously labeled as ‘unelected issue leaders’ (Hammond 1996) and ‘Unelected Representatives’ (Malbin 1980).

While this chapter better defines and quantifies the levels of expertise that members seek when assigning coverage of issue areas in their name, it does little to link staffers to affecting measures of office productivity. In other words, if staff are as essential as I and others argue they are to lawmaker’s executing the responsibilities of their office, it should follow that when members lose their hired aides to turnover, the legislative enterprise should be less productive and successful because of their departures. As the next chapter will show, that is exactly the case.

Chapter Four: Departure Fallout—Congressional Staffer Turnover and Legislative Effectiveness

For many, the turnover of members of Congress is cause for concern. The impending exodus of lawmakers, no matter their reasoning, has caused many journalists and congressional observers to warn of the coming loss of institutional memory on account of departing members, particularly during an era of heightened partisanship and decreased legislative capacity (Lee 2009). These accounts reason that lawmakers who have become knowledgeable in the ways of the Hill are soon to be replaced by less-experienced members that have no such know-how, ultimately culminating in a ‘brain drain’ on the chamber and the institution.²⁸

Receiving far less consideration are the consequences of the comparatively high rates of turnover of the thousands of behind-the-scenes staffers who members themselves acknowledge are responsible for much of the work done in their names (Leal and Hess 2004; Malbin 1980; Whiteman 1995). While increasing evidence has shown congressional aides are essential institutional resources to legislative productivity (Curry 2015; Volden and Wiseman 2014), and staffers’ Hill legislative experience and

²⁸ Hawkins, David. “Inside the House Republican Brain Drain.” *Roll Call*, 11 Jan. 2018.

relationships are of considerable value to private sector lobbying firms (LaPira and Thomas 2014), surprisingly minimal scholarly attention, and no empirical study to date, has been devoted to detailing how losing congressional staffers in the form of turnover affects the legislative productivity and success of the Representative for which they work.

This gap in political science scholarship is particularly surprising given the number of studies focused on pinpointing the factors that affect congressional and member productivity and effectiveness (Bernhard and Sulkin 2018; Binder 1999; Clinton and Lapinski 2006; Mayhew 2005), including the varying degrees to which lawmakers are successful in crafting legislative proposals and ushering them through the various stages of the legislative process (Volden and Wiseman 2014). These studies understandably concentrate heavily on member-level involvement in negotiating, crafting, and advancing policy. But, in doing so, they under-emphasize the role of congressional aides in carrying out these tasks while the lawmaker is busy with other duties of their job, and fail to consider how losing valued employees impacts the legislative outputs executed in their name. More specifically, no existing empirical work has focused on the degrees to which the departures of congressional aides affect members' ability to successfully fulfill a primary requirement of their elected office: creating and passing public policies.²⁹

²⁹ Montgomery and Nyhan (2017) show that members who hire aides from another lawmaker office are more similar in their voting behavior and legislative effectiveness. Though this study is predicated on staffers who turnover—that is, leave one office to join another—it is not focused on outlining the effects of turnover specifically, as done in this chapter.

This analysis looks to close these important gaps in our understanding of congressional behavior and effectiveness by drawing on the negative consequences of firm employee turnover consistently found within economics and organizational management literatures and applying them to the congressional context. In this chapter, I detail how and why members of Congress are far less successful in crafting and advancing policy when experiencing high levels of staffer turnover within their offices, and present the first empirical tests of the effects of staffer turnover on their legislative productivity and success as lawmakers. Using a unique dataset of congressional staffer employment and salary histories from the 107th through the 114th Congresses (2001-2017), I estimate the effects of a staffer turnover within Representatives' personal legislative offices. Employing member and Congress fixed effects, as well as other potentially confounding variables, two primary findings result: first, lawmakers with a higher proportion of staff salaries that depart the office experience less legislative activity than members with lower turnover; second, higher turnover members are generally less effective at advancing substantive bills through the legislative process.

Just as congressional observers have predicted a 'brain drain' in the legislative branch as a result of members taking their experience and expertise with them as they depart Congress, I extend this logic and find tangible decreases in policy activity and effectiveness within a member's individual legislative enterprise when a higher proportion of office salaries turn over. These results suggest that the negative consequences of employee turnover found in economics literatures are found in the congressional context, with several important implications such as decreased

policymaking activity and success for members who experience the highest levels of staff turnover.

More generally, these findings increase our understanding of policy-making in Congress, and reinforce the growing congressional capacity literature detailing that a Representative's legislative activity and success is conditioned on the work of his or her more anonymous aides. Such findings contribute to a more complete view of Representatives' role as managers of their own legislative enterprise, including the serious human resources considerations that go beyond more conventional aspects of their jobs as lawmakers.

4.1 Linking Turnover to Congressional Offices

Largely stemming from March and Simon's (1958) theory of organizational equilibrium, economics literatures, particularly those devoted to management, human resources, and even employee psychology, have a rich history of studying the root causes and individual motivations of employees who choose to quit their jobs (Griffeth, Hom, and Gaertner 2000; Hom and Griffeth 1995; Maertz and Campion 1998). In the past twenty years, however, economists and organizational management researchers have shifted their focus from the individual to the aggregated broader impacts of employee turnover on work units, a concept known as *collective turnover*.

4.1.1 Collective Turnover and its Consequences

Collective turnover is defined as “the aggregate levels of employee departures that occur within groups, work units, or organizations” (Hausknecht and Trevor 2010, 353).³⁰

At its core, collective turnover leaves behind the individual-level motivations and career choices of employees and employers, and instead focuses on the consequences of an organization’s aggregated turnover at the firm-level (Morgeson and Hofmann 1999). By aggregating to the organizational-level, collective turnover analyses allow more intuitive comparison across firms of similar structure (Johns 2006) and easier transitions into studies of organization performance and productivity (Batt 2002; Huselid 1995) .

Of course, some level of turnover is unavoidable and can even increase firm processes and outputs with the infusing of new people and ideas. Empirical analyses, however, have regularly found that higher rates of collective turnover often negatively affect organizations because employee turnover is consistently linked to a decrease in social capital and experience within the enterprise (Bluedorn 1982; Dess and Shaw 2001; Mobley 1982; Price 1977), and increasing production burdens felt by the employees remaining in the office (Staw 1980). Disruptions within a work unit’s lines of communication and production processes are also commonly found with increases in collective turnover (Mueller and Price 1989; Staw 1980), as are increased costs associated with the hiring and training of replacement employees (Osterman 1987).

³⁰ Within the literature, collective turnover is also referred to as ‘team turnover’ and ‘organizational turnover.’

In addition to impairing office processes and threatening internal dynamics, higher rates of collective turnover are also commonly associated with production decreases across a variety of firm outputs and performance measures. Higher rates of organizational turnover have found to decrease firm profits (Morrow and McElroy 2007; Peterson and Luthans 2006), lead to slower revenue growth (Batt 2002), less efficient manufacturing (Shaw, Gupta, and Delery 2005), and a decrease in firm sales (Shaw, Gupta, and Delery 2005; Siebert and Zubanov 2009). High collective turnover has also been shown to hurt more than a organization's bottom line, as more turnover is linked to inferior customer service (Hausknecht, Trevor, and Howard 2009) and longer customer wait times (Kacmar, Andrews, Van Rooy, Steilberg, et al. 2006). I suggest high turnover legislative enterprises will see similar declines in productivity and effectiveness.

Importantly, collective turnover and its consequences are not dependent on whether or not employee departures are voluntary or involuntary. Even with employees who leave involuntarily—that is, they were let go ostensibly because the position was no longer necessary or management would be able to find more capable and efficient replacements—their departures have been found to negatively impact performance largely because of the loss of specialized experience and replacement training demands on remaining employees (Hausknecht and Trevor 2010). No matter the impetus for employee departures, the effects of their loss are felt by the remaining work unit, often with measurable negative consequences.

4.2 Collective Staff Turnover and Legislative Productivity

Following the findings of the negative impacts of collective turnover within offices found in the economics subfield literatures, this study focuses on the consequences of collective congressional staffer turnover in the 435 individual legislative firms within the House of Representatives. This chapter adopts this legislator-as-CEO framework (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981b) in its effort to quantify the effects of staffer turnover on the legislative success of each Representative's legislative enterprise. The primary contention of this chapter is that offices that experience higher rates of collective turnover within a member's office—that is a higher proportion of salaries that depart—will have tangible negative consequences for the legislative activity and effectiveness executed in the member's name. This is likely true for three primary reasons: office-wide loss of staffer experience and capacity; disruptions of office division of labor; and dispirited work environments affecting collective staff motivations.

First, departing staffers, no matter their motivations for leaving, take with them their earned levels of experience, process knowledge, and expertise in their given job responsibilities. As a result of their departures, the aggregated capabilities of the legislative work unit are depleted due to the loss of those skills and abilities (Nyberg and Ployhart 2013). This reduction of unit-wide capacity by departing aides is particularly relevant in the legislative context because of its integrated, fast-paced, and convoluted processes that are best learned by active practice. Staffers experienced in the ways of the Hill, legislative histories, common obstacles, pivotal players, and who have well-developed networks reduce the barriers to legislative success in Congress. When the

legislative enterprise loses what was previously an internal resource, the remaining unit has to find and develop supplemental information sources in order to maintain previous levels of productivity.

Thus, the enterprise, particularly in the periods immediately following the departures of individual staffers, is faced with few good options to make up for the loss of office capacity. Remaining aides can look externally, within other legislative offices, support agencies, or special interest groups, for ancillary guidance or expertise (LaPira and Thomas 2014, 2017), take the time to rebuild the loss of capacity internally through training, or neglect the duties that were previously the responsibility of the departed staffer(s). In each instance, this loss of attention and expertise logically leads to less efficient, experienced, robust policy development and advancement processes in the member's name.

The second reason staffer turnover results in decreased legislative productivity is a result of disruptions to internal office divisions of labor and workflow. Legislative success is inherently a collective effort that occurs over sometimes lengthy periods of time and requires multiple levels of aide attention and effort at various stages (Malbin 1980). After all, policy creation involves detailed research, relationships and discussions with affected stakeholders, effective communications strategies, and often even a specific voiced constituent need. Staffer turnover, particularly within the policy and senior staffer levels, creates productivity shortages that demand attention be pulled from elsewhere. Quickly reworking previously understood divisions of labor typically results in less efficient production, as the duties of the departing staffer are likely to be

carried out by an aide less experienced and less familiar with the intricacies of the issue area, if attention is able to be supplied at all. As a result, the aggregate costs of production on the office-unit increase, as do the likelihoods of mistakes, delays, and tasks being overlooked (Nishii and Mayer 2009; Ton and Huckman 2008).

Turnover also affects office divisions of labor for the simple fact that attention must be devoted to interviewing, hiring, and training their replacements, often by those in the office, member included, with the longest list of responsibilities, harshest time constraints, and deepest involvement in policy development. Time devoted to hiring and training replacement staffers detract attention from responsibilities devoted to production levels, particularly for positions with policy responsibilities. As put by Hausknecht (2017), “[in] highly complex environments that require greater coordination, communication, and interdependence, turnover would be more damaging to unit performance because of the disruptions to unit function” (531).

The third reason higher levels of turnover likely lessens policy productivity in legislative enterprises is the deleterious effects of high turnover on the remaining collective work environment. Legislative enterprises are small work units in which success, failures, and stresses are felt by all under its employ, a condition that has been shown to exacerbate the effects of collective turnover, including lessened productivity (Nyberg and Ployhart 2013). What’s more, congressional staffers notoriously operate in extremely demanding, high stress environments, replete with comparatively low compensation, long hours, and relatively little opportunity for advancement (Congressional Management Foundation 2017; Romzek and Utter 1997). These staffer

frustrations are heightened under conditions of increased office turnover as employees are subsequently asked to increase their work responsibilities, often across positions in which they are less familiar with no increase in compensation, until replacements are hired and up to speed. In these instances, morale and employee motivation often declines, with depressed collective production and success as a direct result.

Though turnover rates are commonly linked to negative firm consequences, it is important to distinguish between expected, healthy even, levels of employee turnover and extraordinary levels of staff departures where the negative implications are more likely to manifest themselves. Several studies have shown that collective turnover can often stimulate an organization's productivity and increase efficiency in operations (Abelson and Baysinger 1984; Staw 1980). Inefficient or unhappy employees being replaced by more experienced or ambitious aides can logically increase firm production. Additionally, economics scholars have shown that turnover effects can be non-linear in that at certain levels and collective turnover can result in net-positive outcomes (Abelson and Baysinger 1984; Shaw, Gupta, and Delery 2005).

Vitality, however, gains resulting from employee turnover do not last when turnover rates continue to increase to extraordinary levels. While some members are likely to be able to sustain production levels when a moderate percentage of staff salaries turn over, doing so gets increasingly difficult at severe levels where more, and more valued, aides depart. Thus, the most dramatic and negative effects of collective turnover can be expected at the most extreme levels, or in instances far above and below median levels. This expectation is directly applicable within the congressional

context given the steadiness of staffer turnover over time and the concentration of observations surrounding the mean level. It is at these more extreme levels where remaining aides are forced to cover for their departed colleagues, often on topics in which they have limited experience, and where more office-level attention is spent on finding and training replacements. Moreover, these effects at higher levels of turnover will be more pronounced on tasks where established experience, expertise, and relationships are most valuable: ushering substantive policy through the various stages of the legislative process.

I formalize the application of the effects of collective turnover in the legislative enterprise context by the following hypothesis:

H1: Members who experience higher staff turnover within their personal offices will experience lower levels of legislative activity.

Although legislative activity of any kind undoubtedly requires significant staff attention, successfully advancing the most substantive of those proposals assuredly demands prolonged and more effective staffer involvement throughout the legislative process. Whereas more ceremonial and less significant proposals typically require less aide attention, time, and expertise for success, more substantive measures demand greater staffer savvy and expertise to anticipate and overcome inevitable obstacles to their advancement. For the same theoretical reasons cited above, increased levels of collective turnover within an office will negatively affect a lawmaker's success at advancing substantive and significant policy proposals through the legislative process and into law. This expectation is formalized as:

H2: Members who experience higher staff turnover within their personal offices will produce less substantive legislation and be less successful advancing these bills through the legislative process.

4.3 Data and Methods

The proposed theoretical framework and empirical expectation suggest that higher levels of collective staffer turnover within individual Representative's personal offices should depress the level of legislative success within the legislative enterprise, particularly when collective turnover is at the highest levels. This section describes the data and empirical strategy for testing these hypotheses.

4.3.1 Congressional Staff Turnover

Data on congressional staff employment histories, including compensation records used in this paper, are drawn from Legistorm, a non-partisan company that cleans, verifies, and maintains information about members of Congress and congressional staff.³¹ In order to create the congressional staff employment and salary data tables used within this analysis, Legistorm makes use of the publicly available Statement of Disbursements (SOD) compiled by the House's Chief Administrative Officer.³² The SOD is a collection of all itemized payments submitted quarterly by each congressional office, personal and committee, to the Clerk of the House. Each payment includes: all payment amounts

³¹ Available at, <https://www.legistorm.com/index/about.html>

³² Available at, <https://www.house.gov/the-house-explained/open-government/statement-of-disbursements>

made to individual staffers; the staffer's title; the office in which the payment originated; and the dates associated with each payment.

Using the publicly available SODs, Legistorm verifies the employment dates of each individual staffer and standardizes inconsistencies found within the submitted compensation records, such as different spellings of a staffer's first name or use of a middle initial. Using these records, I create a working history of the dates and offices in which each staffer has worked based on which offices have submitted payments to each aide and the dates of payment. For this study, I collapse these standardized staffer-level records to the member-Congress level. Specifically, I create counts of the total number of aides an individual lawmaker employs in each Congress, the number of those aides that departed during that same period, and crucially for this analysis, the amount in salary that departed the office versus total salaries paid to staff within each Congress.³³

4.3.2 Use of Salary Weighted Turnover

Following recommendations within the empirical economic collective turnover literature (Nyberg and Ployhart 2013; Siebert and Zubanov 2009), this study constructs a weighted turnover measure rather than a simple ratio of the number of departed aides to the number of total number of employed staffers in a given time period. The weighted measure employed in this analysis uses the proportion of total salaries paid to departing staffers to the total salaries paid within each individual office for each

³³ Temporary employees and interns, though receiving reported compensation, were excluded from the data and subsequent analysis due to the structurally transitory nature of their employment.

Congress from the 107th through the 114th (2001-2017). This proportion is shown below:

$$\textit{Salary Weighted Turnover} = \frac{\textit{Total Salaries Paid to Departing Staffers}}{\textit{Total Annual Salaries Paid by Lawmaker Office}}$$

The weighted measure is used for several reasons. First, effects of employee turnover are most likely to manifest in instances in which (1) a large proportion of employees depart, and (2) fewer high valued, longer-serving aides turnover. The former scenario results in a loss of coverage across various office responsibilities and detracts leadership attention towards their replacement; the latter a loss of institutional memory and experience. Effects stemming from both instances are effectively captured by using *Salary Weighted Turnover*.

Second, and relatedly, though legislative offices are a collective enterprise, not all staffers affect the legislative activity and success levels at equal rates (Romzek and Utter 1997). Policy-specific staffers, and especially more senior staffers, such as legislative directors, are more effective at introducing and advancing legislation, and are compensated better than many positions without policy responsibilities, such as staff assistant and scheduler (Petersen 2012). Thus, using the salary weighted turnover proportion better estimates the effect of losing more valuable aides who are more likely

to be regularly involved in the policy process versus strict headcounts that equate lower value staffers to the most valuable.³⁴

Third, headcount turnover ratios have been found to miss important staffer-level characteristics, such as experience and value of the departing aide, that logically affect the output of the collective work (Hausknecht and Holwerda 2012; Heavey, Holwerda, and Hausknecht 2013). Though value and experience levels are not immediately captured by salary received, compensation serves as a reasonable proxy for relative value within the office as longer-serving, more experienced staff members are likely to earn higher salaries. Finally, evidence suggests that simple aggregations of counts are not representative of effects in more collective environments (Morgeson and Hofmann 1999), or in work units in which successes and failures are generally shared across the entire office climate (Nyberg and Ployhart 2013). Both of these features are true within legislative offices. The work demands within personal House offices are such that very few tasks are carried out without some level of involvement or assistance from fellow staffers within the enterprise. This mutual-dependence for task completion at the staff level, particularly in regards to crafting and advancing policy where research, legislative, and communications aides often play a role, effectively make each lawmaker's office a

³⁴ Due to data limitations on staffer locations, *Salary Weighted Turnover*, however, does not explicitly distinguish between positions or rank within the office, the locations of where the staffers work (district or D.C. office), or the likelihood of affecting policy. This means the components of weighted turnover includes salaries paid to staffers working in district offices, many of whom, such as District Director and District Chief of Staff, are among the best compensated positions of all House staffers (Petersen, Eckman, and Chausow 2016). On the positive side, it is not uncommon for senior district staffers to be responsible for district-focused policy issues such as agriculture and welfare. Thus, their turning over is likely to impact legislative productivity on these topics, though not at levels comparable to policy-focused D.C. policy aides.

relatively collaborative effort with shared stakes in outcomes. As such, a value-weighted measure of turnover is more appropriate to approximate effects of departing aides.³⁵

To match the time period of the dependent variables, the turnover calculations for each member-year were aggregated to the two-year Congress level where the average proportions of the two years was used. Importantly, in an effort to avoid overestimating a lawmaker's weighted turnover and its effects, a member's last year in office is eliminated from the sample. This is done for two reasons. First, facing a closing legislative enterprise, a vacating member's aides are incentivized to secure employment outside of the departing lawmaker's office, driving up turnover. Second, a departing member may become less invested in drafting, introducing and advancing legislative measures, ultimately lowering the levels of legislative productivity that are the main focus of this analyses. Dropping the last year of a lawmaker's House career from the sample ensures the results are less influenced by either likelihood.

³⁵ Admittedly, this analysis, and the available data, do not integrate a standard temporal argument that staffing turnover directly leads to decreased legislative activity and effectiveness. For both the compensation records used to create salary weighted turnover and the counts of all legislative dependent variables, final dates ignore the often long and fluid processes involved in crafting and advancing policy and discerning impacts of staffing changes. As such, this analysis follows the recommended standards within the business management literature (see, (Hausknecht and Trevor 2010), particularly for highly dependent and collective work environments such as legislative offices.

Figure 4.1. Density plot of *Salary Weighted Turnover*

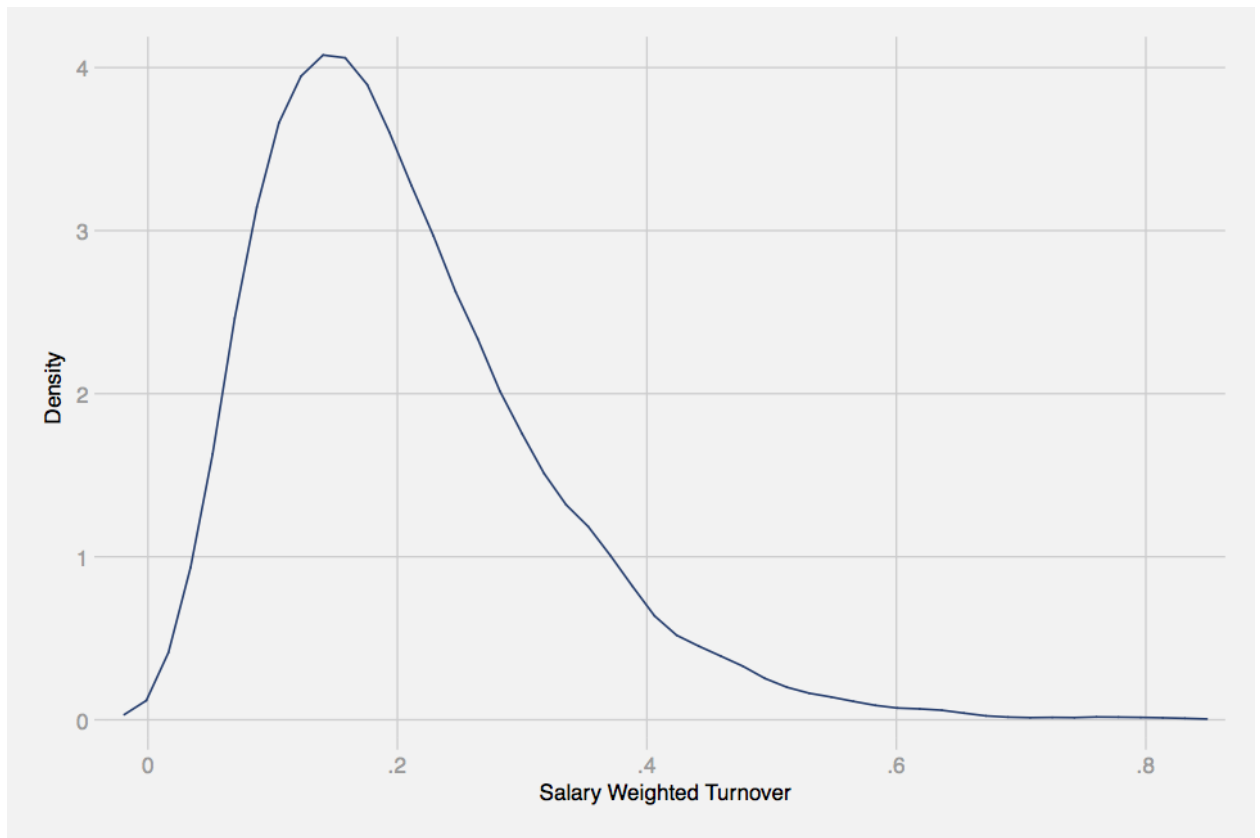
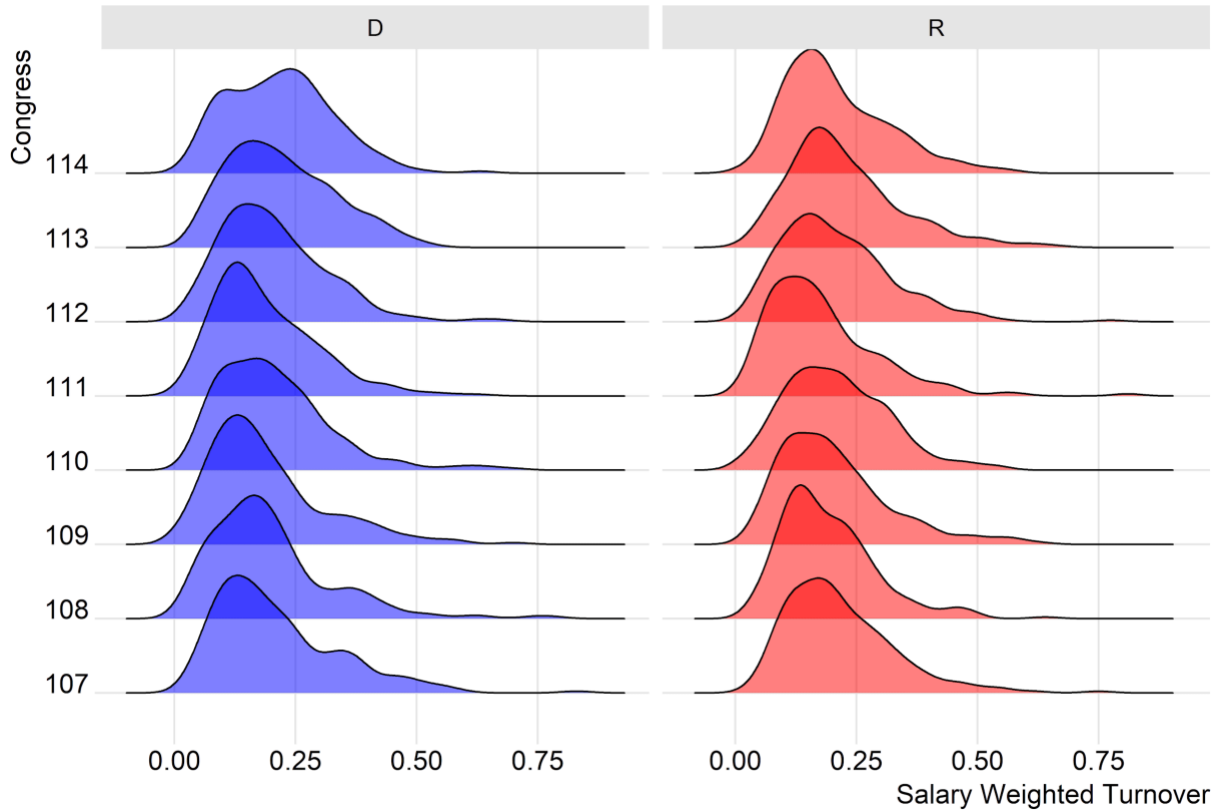


Figure 4.1 plots the density curve of *Salary Weighted Turnover*. There is a clear concentration around the mean (0.205), indicating that an average Representative's office is expected to have a fairly stable staffer attrition rate of about 20% of its paid office salaries in each Congress. Despite the concentration around the mean, the figure also shows that many offices experience a weighted turnover of at least 0.33 -- where one third of the salaries paid out in a given Congress were paid to staffers who vacated that office during the time period. The maximum weighted turnover in the sample is 0.83. **Figure 4.2** plots *Salary Weighted Turnover* for each party for every Congress in the sample. Though the distributions of each Congress vary, Figure 2 shows that salary

weighted turnover is remarkably stable over time and across parties, with means ranging from a low of 0.184 (111th Congress) to a high of 0.223 (113th Congress).

Figure 4.2. *Salary Weighted Turnover by party, 107th - 114th Congresses*



4.3.3 Measures of Legislative Activity and Effectiveness

In this analysis, legislative activity for *Hypothesis 1* is proxied by four dependent variables for each Representative in every Congress from the 107th through 114th:

number of *Bills Sponsored*, number of *Amendments Sponsored*, number of *Bills Cosponsored*, and number of bills for which the lawmaker was the *Original Cosponsor*.

Though each of these measures is a type of legislative activity in which lawmakers take part, they do differ in their difficulty in execution as well as the level of staffer attention required for their production. *Bill sponsorships*, for example, require a member's office

to research, author, and introduce a particular piece of legislation, whereas *bill cosponsorships* only require the member to add his or her name as second-order supporters to an already authored bill. The former generally demands more staff attention and expertise for success, while scholars have classified the cost in generating high numbers of the latter as comparatively minimal (Kessler and Krehbiel 1996). *Amendments sponsored* are also authored by an individual's office, though are generally more limited in their length and scope than sponsored bills. Finally, *original cosponsors* demand slightly more office involvement researching the details of the legislation than other bill cosponsorships because the office is the first one committing their name in support of the measure rather than following the lead of other offices that have already done so. Counts of each of these variables were obtained for every member of each Congress in the sample from Congress.gov.

The legislative effectiveness measures used for testing *Hypothesis 2* are key components of Volden and Wiseman's (2014) member Legislative Effectiveness Scores (LES). More specifically, this study uses Volden and Wiseman's counts for each lawmaker per Congress of the number of *substantive bills* at each of the five major stages of the legislative process: 1. introduced; 2. received action in committee; 3. passed out of committee and received floor action; 4. passed the House; and 5. became law. As theorized by the authors "not all bills are of equal importance, and thus might not be equally indicative of a member's overall lawmaking effectiveness" (20). Because of its greater impact and scope, substantive legislation requires more lawmaker and staffer effort, skill, and attention. By using only substantive legislation for this analysis

rather than including ceremonial or commemorative legislation, I am better able to ascertain the degrees to which weighted salary turnover impacts advancing more substantive legislation through the various stages of the political process on the types of policies in which staff involvement is likely to be most required.

Table 4.1 presents summary statistics of the legislative activity and effectiveness variables used in the analyses. **Table A.4.1** within the Appendix provides histograms of each of the dependent variables.

Table 4.1. Summary statistics of legislative activity and effectiveness variables, 107th - 114th Congresses

<i>N=3,441</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation.	Min	Max
Bills Sponsored	17.79	12.62	0	128
Amends. Sponsored	2.42	4.42	0	72
Bills Cosponsored	300.83	153.65	0	1238
Orig. Cosponsor	103.96	61.73	0	484
Substantive Bills Sponsored	13.5	10.33	0	119
Substantive Bills - Action in Committee	1.48	2.29	0	25
Substantive Bills - Action Beyond Committee	1.43	2.29	0	25
Substantive Bills - Passed	1.06	1.72	0	17
Substantive Bills - Law	0.34	0.84	0	12

4.3.4 Control Variables

A number of covariates are incorporated in the analysis to better isolate the effect of salary weighted turnover on legislative activity and success within an individual

lawmaker's office. First, dummy variables are included for members who serve in the majority party, and as committee chairs committee ranking members. These controls are included because the lawmakers in the listed positions maintain heightened influence in deciding legislative agendas and committee actions, as well as their increased access to staff resources (Berry and Fowler 2016; Krehbiel 2010).³⁶ Second, the length of tenure of the member is included to account for more senior lawmakers potentially being more effective at producing policy due to their increased experience and more established networks on and off Capitol Hill. Third, a dummy variable is included for members who serve in more vulnerable districts, which likely impacts staffer and member attention paid to electoral politics versus legislation productivity. A lawmaker is designated to serve in a vulnerable seat if the Cook Political Report competitiveness rating³⁷ classified the district as either a 'toss up' or 'leans Democratic/Republican' district for each election cycle. Conversely, members serving in 'likely democratic/republican' and 'safe' districts received a zero. **Table 4.2** presents summary statistics of *salary weighted turnover* and the independent variables used in the analysis

³⁶ Originally, the models included a control variable for lawmakers in leadership positions given the likelihood that their legislative success is benefited by their institutional and staffing advantages. However, given the extremely few numbers of shifts of members holding these positions, the models had trouble estimating the effects.

³⁷ Available at <https://www.cookpolitical.com/ratings>.

Table 4.2. Summary statistics of variables, 107th - 114th Congresses

<i>N</i> =3,441	Mean	Std. Deviation.	Min	Max
Salary Weighted Turnover	0.205	0.114	0	0.83
Majority	0.547	0.498	0	1
Member Tenure	12.3	8.37	1	44
Committee Chair	0.048	0.214	0	1
Comm. Ranking. Mem.	0.048	0.212	0	1
Vulnerable Seat	0.262	0.44	0	1

4.3.5 Modeling Strategy

Given the count nature of the dependent variables for both hypotheses, this analysis tests a series of negative binomial regression models (Long 1997).³⁸ Each hypothesis tests the effects of salary weighted turnover on the dependent variables of interest with Congress and member fixed effects. Critically, lawmaker fixed-effects effectively control for members who are, for any number of reasons, less competent as legislators. Such members would likely experience both higher levels of staff turnover and lower levels of legislative activity. The within-member models used in this analysis help account for this possibility.³⁹ Moreover, the inclusion of lawmaker fixed-effects rules out many member-

³⁸ Though other models are also equipped to handle count dependent variables like the poisson, the negative binomial is preferable in the presence of overdispersion. In my case, overdispersion would be present if the conditional variance of each dependent variable is greater than the conditional mean. Overdispersion was confirmed by using the regression-based tests recommended by Cameron and Trivedi (1990).

³⁹ While member-specific effects are important, and potentially even provide a more interesting journalistic account of staff turnover, the main goal of this analysis is to isolate the effect of aide turnover on common measures of legislative productivity. Put another way, non-random variation in Member characteristics (such as poor management, no previous experience, etc.) is also likely to influence legislative productivity, but the use of fixed effects controls for these within-member characteristics to

specific attributes—previous local or state political experience or occupational history in a given sector, for example—that do not vary throughout the sample period and could potentially affect an individual lawmaker’s legislative acumen and potential for legislative activity and success. The Congress fixed-effects used in each model specification remove the effects of Congress-specific shocks or differences. Each model also includes the previously discussed control variables in order to account for factors that may confound the effect of weighted collective turnover on legislative productivity and success.

4.4 Results

Hypothesis 1 predicts that members who experience higher levels of *salary weighted turnover* will be less effective in ushering substantive legislation through the legislative process. **Table 4.3** presents the negative binomial regression estimates for four dependent variables of legislative activity: number of *Bills Sponsored*, number of *Amendments Sponsored*, number of *Bills Cosponsored*, and number of bills in which the lawmaker was the *Original Cosponsor*. As indicated by the negative coefficient on *Salary Weighted Turnover*, as the proportion of salaries of departed staffer-salaries to total office salaries paid increases, each indicator of legislative activity variables decreases. Two of the four variables are statistically significant at the 0.05 level and a third, *Original*

better capture the effects of staff turnover on the array of productivity measures. This study does attempt to explain what member characteristics affects outputs but rather focuses on the effects of turnover itself.

Cosponsored, is statistically significant at the 0.10 level. Only *Amendments Sponsored* fails to reach statistical significance, but does follow the same negative relationship.

Turning to control variables, a few findings are of interest. First, members of the *majority* party sponsor more bills but fewer amendments and cosponsor fewer measures with higher rates of *salary weighted turnover*. Second, *Committee Chair* is expectedly positively related to the number of bills and amendments sponsored, but negatively to bill cosponsorships and original cosponsorships. This indicates that committee chairs focus their legislative clout and attention more on bill authoring rather than supportive outputs such as cosponsoring. Additionally, though lawmakers occupying a *Vulnerable Seat* are less legislatively active across all measures, only bill sponsorships reaches statistical significance indicating that vulnerable members sponsor a fewer number of bills than their more electorally secure colleagues.

Table 4.3. Effect of *Salary Weighted Turnover* on legislative activity, 107th-114th Congresses

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Bills Sponsored	Amends. Sponsored	Bills Cosponsors	Orig. Cosponsor
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Salary Weighted Turnover	-0.20** (.09)	-0.3 (.15)	-0.13** (.06)	-0.11* (.06)
Majority	0.23*** (.02)	-0.16*** (.05)	-0.07*** (.01)	-0.11*** (.01)
Committee Chair	0.36*** (.04)	0.28*** (.10)	-0.11*** (.03)	-0.11*** (.03)
Committee Ranking Mem.	0.10*** (.05)	-0.02 (.11)	-0.03 (.03)	-0.011 (.03)
Member Tenure	-0.005 (.001)	-0.01 (.007)	-0.006 (.05)	0.01 (.004)
Vulnerable Seat	-0.02** (.02)	-0.07 (.06)	-0.01 (.01)	-0.05 (.02)
108th Congress	-0.02 (.03)	0.24*** (.08)	-0.003 (.02)	-0.004 (.02)
109th Congress	0.15*** (.03)	0.58*** (.08)	0.07*** (.02)	0.007*** (.02)
110th Congress	0.32*** (.03)	0.52*** (.08)	0.30*** (.02)	0.17*** (.02)
111th Congress	0.22*** (.03)	-0.01 (.09)	0.24*** (.02)	0.16*** (.02)
112th Congress	0.19*** (.03)	0.60*** (.09)	-0.15*** (.02)	-0.27*** (.02)
113th Congress	0.07** (.04)	0.26*** (.09)	-0.10*** (.02)	-0.21*** (.02)
114th Congress	0.25*** (.04)	0.57*** (.09)	0.02 (.02)	0.05** (.02)
Constant	1.95*** (.01)	0.64*** (.15)	2.93*** (.06)	2.64*** (.06)

Observations	3,258	3,089	3,258	3,258
Log Likelihood	-7,843.59	-3,774.28	-13,774.99	-11,415.92

Note: Models included member fixed-effects.

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Because it's difficult to interpret the substantive significance of negative binomial coefficients, I rely on predicted counts of the four legislative activity variables.⁴⁰ **Figure 4.3** plots the predicted number of each legislative activity at various levels of *Salary Weighted Turnover*. All variables are held at the observed values as suggested by Hanmer and Kalkan (2013). Ninety-five percent confidence intervals are plotted around the estimated curves. As predicted by Hypothesis 1, as *Salary Weighted Turnover* increases, the predicted counts decrease for all measures of legislative activity. In regards to bills sponsored, lawmakers with a mean salary weighted turnover of 0.21 are predicted to sponsor 8.6 bills per Congress. As salary weighted turnover increases to 0.5, the predicted count falls to 8 bills per Congress, and at a maximum salary weighted turnover of 0.83 the predicted count decreases to 7.5 per Congress, roughly a 8% decrease in bill sponsorships. *Amendments sponsored* experiences the largest percent decrease based on predicted counts with a 19% drop as salary weighted turnover increases from the mean level of salary weighted turnover to the maximum.

⁴⁰ All FE models were estimated using the **negbin** function in the R package **pglm**, which implements a conditional negative binomial model. The individual fixed effects in this specification are modeled through the negative binomial's dispersion parameter and are therefore not factored in when generated predictions. Because of this, all predicted counts assume that the individual effect is zero, an assumption which makes the predictions scaled downward from the unconditional mean (Allison and Waterman 2002). This results in the predicted counts appearing to be smaller when compared to the summary statistics provided in **Table 4.1**.

Figure 4.3. Predicted counts of legislative activity variables

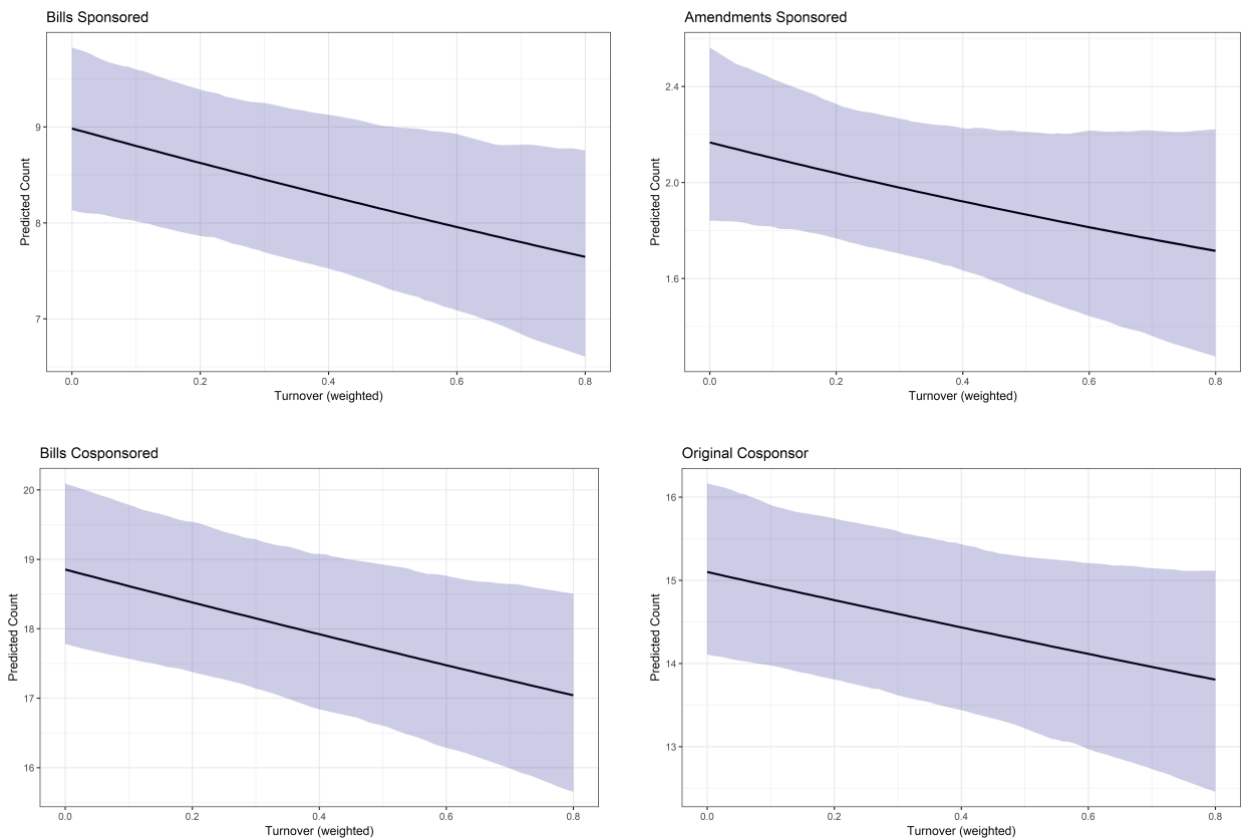
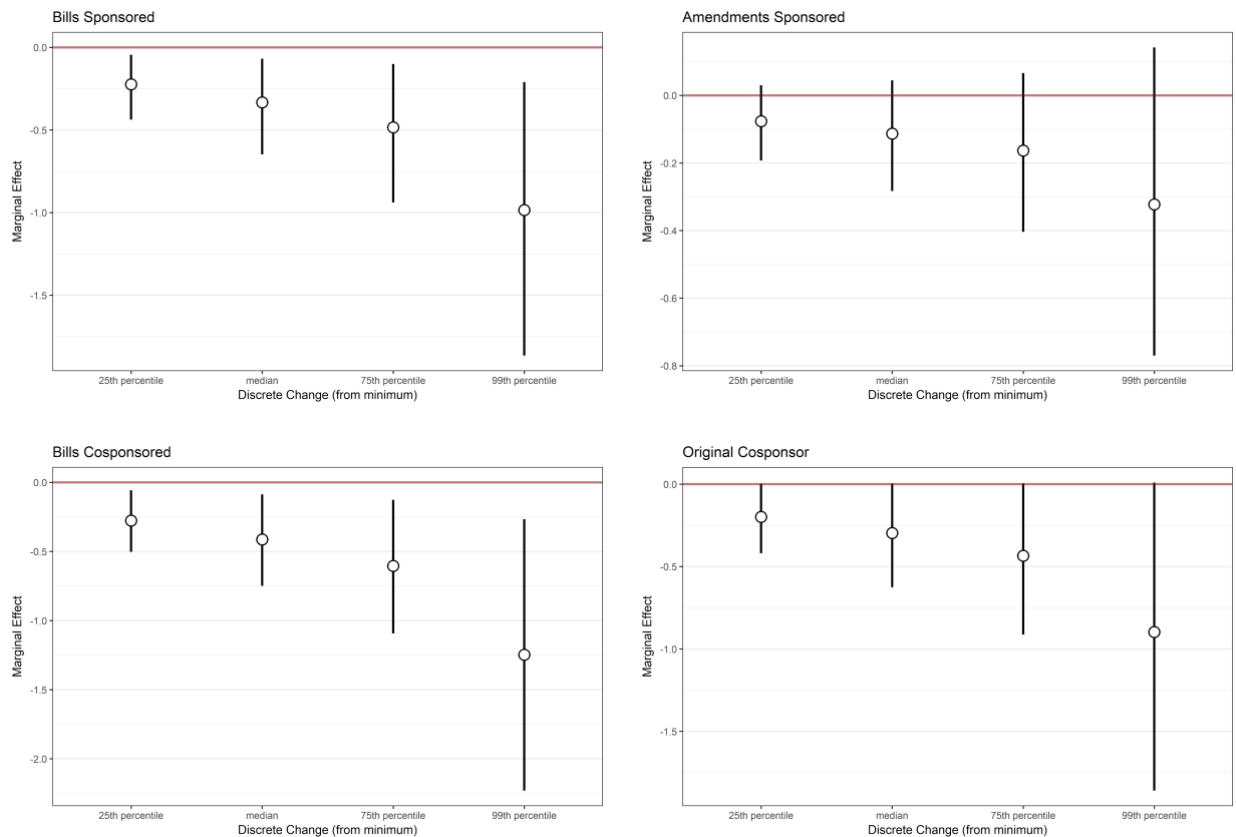


Figure 4.4 plots the marginal effects of discrete changes in *Salary Weighted*

Turnover across each of the four variables of legislative activity. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals are plotted around the estimated marginal effects and all intervals that do not cross the horizontal line at zero indicate a statistically significant estimate at the 0.05 level. Notably, and as previously theorized, the estimated marginal effects of increases in weighted turnover across each of the four measures grow more pronounced in the quartile increase from the 75th percentile to the 99th percentile where weighted turnover is likely having its most damaging effects on office

productivity, as compared to more common and expected levels of congressional turnover.

Figure 4.4. Discrete changes of legislative activity variables



Focusing on *bill sponsorships*, a one quartile increase in a Representative's weighted turnover from the minimum to the 25th percentile is estimated to result in 0.22 decrease in bills sponsored per Congress. A lawmaker with *salary weighted turnover* at the 75th percentile can expect an estimated decrease of 0.48 bills sponsored per Congress, and a discrete change to the maximum level of weighted turnover is estimated to decrease the number of bills sponsored per Congress by one bill. The marginal effects of quartile increases in weighted turnover across the other three

legislative activity variables are substantively similar. Figure 4 provides clear support to the expectation that the most dramatic effects of salary weighted turnover are found in the discrete changes from the 75th to the 99th percentiles where legislative offices have experienced extraordinary levels of staffer turnover.

Turning to measures of legislative effectiveness and substantive legislation, **Table 4.4** presents the negative binomial regression estimates for the five dependent variables of legislative effectiveness: number of *Substantive Bills Sponsored*, number of substantive bills receiving *Action in Committee*, number of substantive bills being receiving *Action Beyond Committee*, number of substantive bills *Passing the House*, and the number of substantive bills *Becoming Law*.

Table 4.4. Effect of *salary weighted turnover* on legislative effectiveness, 107th-114th Congresses

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Substantive Bill Spons.	Subs. Action in Comm.	Sub. Action Beyond Comm.	Sub. Bill Passed	Sub. Bill Law
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Salary Weighted Turnover	-0.14 (.10)	-0.36* (.22)	-0.46** (.21)	-0.49** (.24)	0.19 (.07)
Majority	0.22*** (.02)	1.10*** (.05)	1.12*** (.05)	1.04*** (.06)	1.11*** (.11)
Committee Chair	0.21*** (.05)	0.70*** (.08)	0.97*** (.08)	0.98*** (.09)	1.26*** (.14)
Committee Ranking Mem.	0.1 (.05)	0.24** (.12)	0.31*** (.12)	0.34*** (.13)	0.22 (.23)
Member Tenure	-0.008 (.006)	0.001 (.02)	-0.004 (.02)	-0.004 (.03)	-0.02 (.03)
Vulnerable Seat	-0.08*** (.03)	-0.04 (.06)	-0.14** (.06)	-0.11* (.07)	0.15 (.12)
108th Congress	-0.07 (.04)	0.11 (.08)	0.12 (.08)	0.15* (.09)	0.25** (.12)
109th Congress	0.13*** (.04)	0.05 (.08)	0.20*** (.08)	0.22** (.09)	0.14 (.13)
110th Congress	0.29*** (.04)	0.55*** (.08)	0.69*** (.08)	0.83*** (.09)	-0.07 (.15)
111th Congress	0.17*** (.04)	0.23*** (.09)	0.45*** (.08)	0.56*** (.09)	-0.2 (.16)
112th Congress	0.28*** (.04)	0.32*** (.08)	0.19** (.09)	-0.06 (.10)	-0.1 (.16)
113th Congress	0.13*** (.04)	0.31*** (.09)	0.40*** (.09)	0.30*** (.10)	0.03 (.16)
114th Congress	0.31*** (.04)	0.54*** (.09)	0.66*** (.09)	0.59*** (.10)	-0.08 (.17)

Constant	1.93*** (.10)	0.77*** (.27)	1.12*** (.36)	1.26*** (.36)	0.74 (.70)
Observations	3,258	3,026	3,017	2,937	2,117
Log Likelihood	-7,265.38	-2,764.23	-2,652.24	-2,250.23	-1,068.50

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

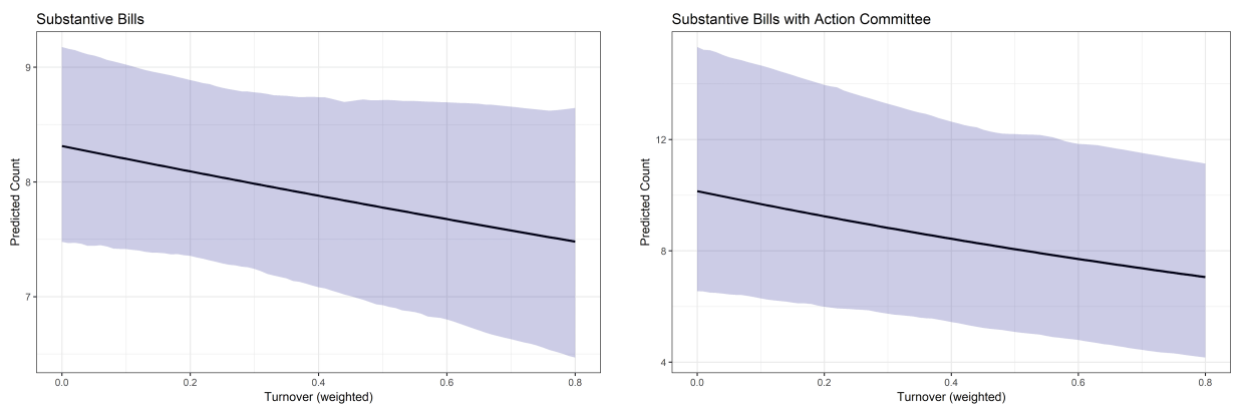
Models included member fixed-effects.

As previously theorized, the impact of salary weighted turnover is most likely to be felt dealing with more substantive policies at more advanced stages of the policy process due to their likelihood in being handled by more experienced, expertised aides earning higher salaries. **Table 4.4**, and corresponding **Figures 4.5** and **4.6** provide relatively strong support for this expectation. While a negative relationship does exist between salary weighted turnover and *substantive bills sponsored*, the relationship is not statistically significant. At later policy stages, however, *action in committee*, *action beyond committee*, and *passed the House*, the relationship reaches statistical significance. Interestingly, the relationship turns positive when a substantive bill is *signed into law*, suggesting that staff turnover matters less with legislation that ultimately passes both chambers. This supports previous findings that legislation, particularly of substantive importance, is increasingly written with limited involvement from rank-and-file members and their staffs (Curry 2015).

Figures 4.5 and **4.6** plot the predicted counts and discrete changes of the five legislative effectiveness variables across different levels of *Salary Weighted Turnover*. As predicted, as *Salary Weighted Turnover* increases, the predicted counts decrease for all measures of legislative effectiveness, save *becoming law*. In regards to *substantive bills*

sponsored, lawmakers with a mean salary weighted turnover of 0.21 are predicted to sponsor 8.2 substantive bills per Congress. As salary weighted turnover increases to 0.5, the predicted count falls to 7.75 bills per Congress, and at a maximum salary weighted turnover of 0.83 the predicted count decreases to 7.5 per Congress, a 5.5 percent decrease. Far more substantive drops are predicted when salary weighted turnover increases from the mean to maximum levels at subsequent steps within the legislative process. Predicted counts of substantive bills *receiving action in committee* fall 26 percent, *receiving action beyond committee* 19 percent, and *passing the House* decreasing 26 percent as salary weighted turnover increases from the mean level to the maximum.

Figure 4.5. Predicted counts of legislative effectiveness variables



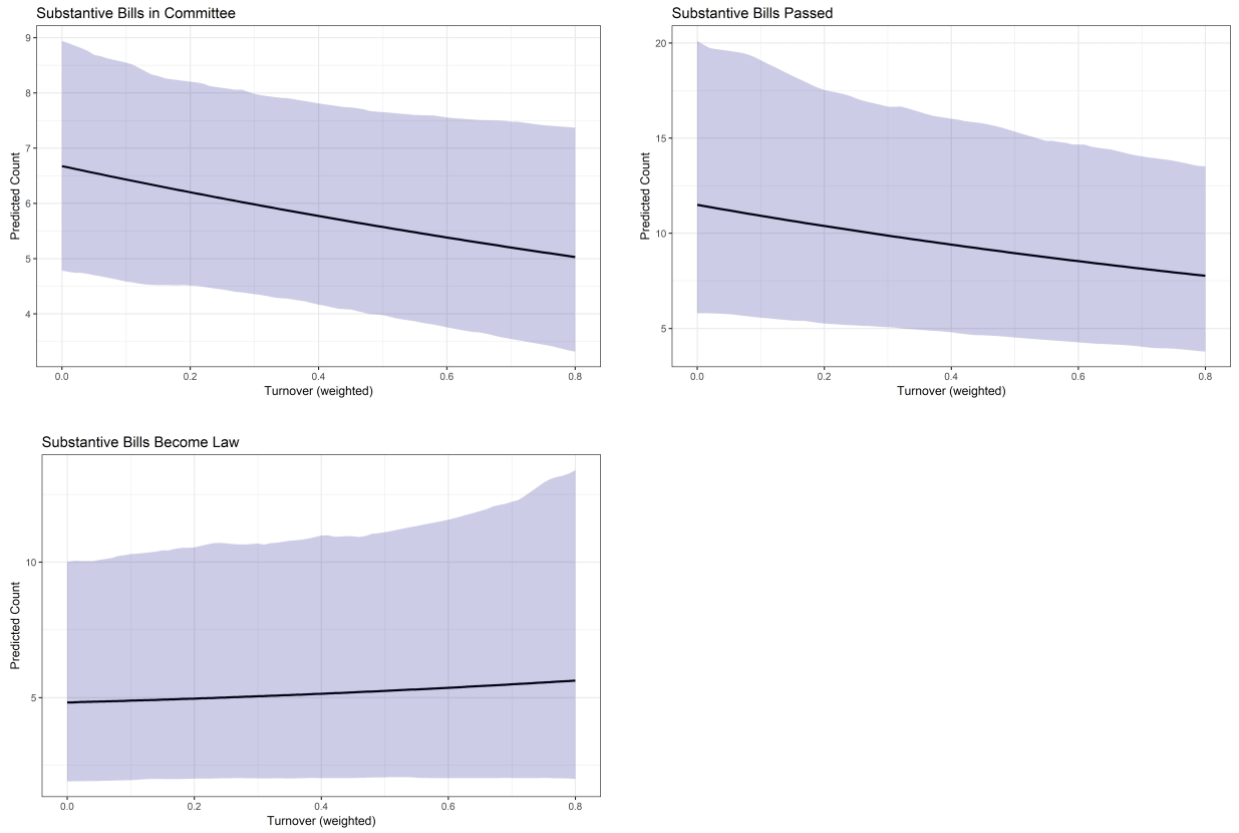
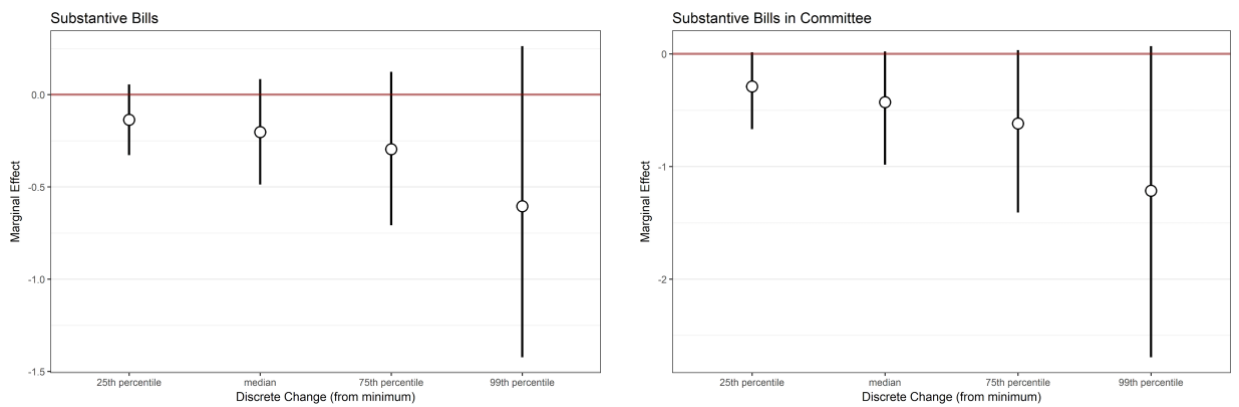
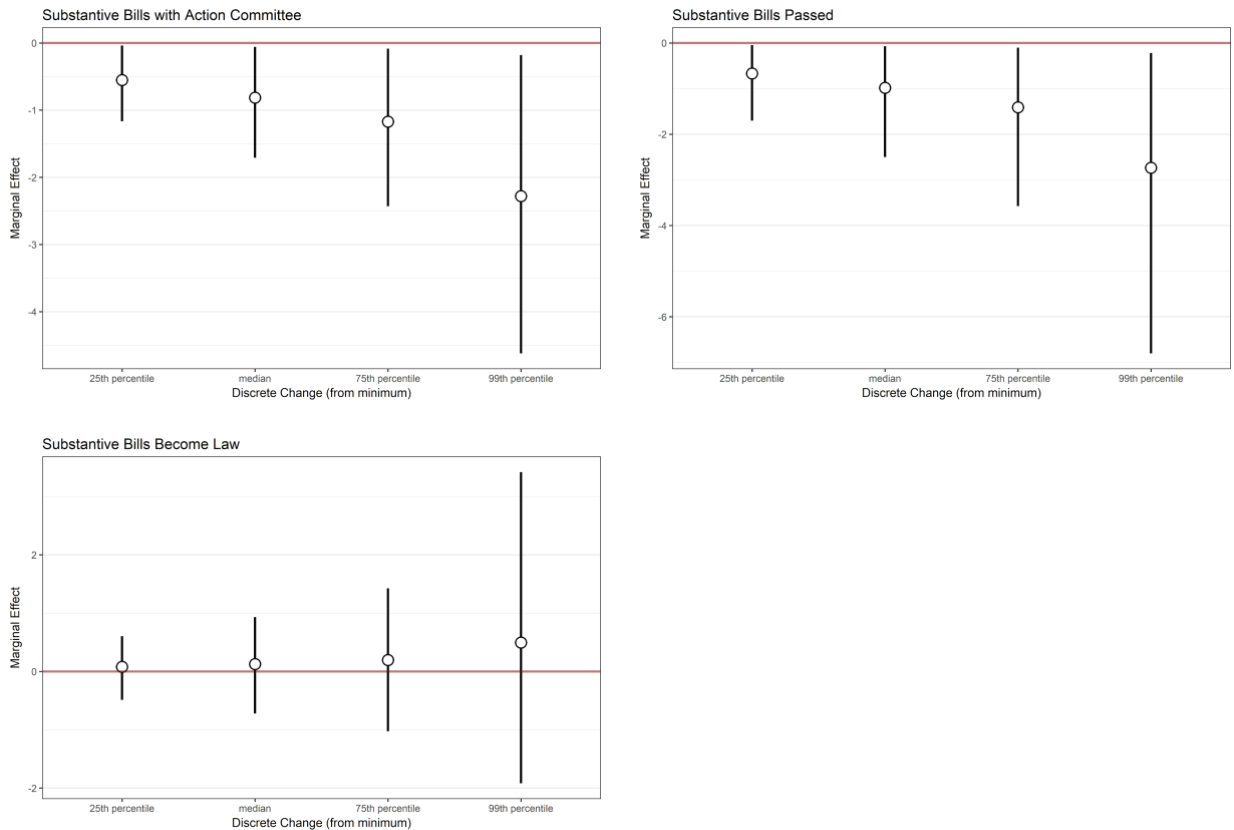


Figure 4.6. Discrete changes of legislative effectiveness variables





To make better sense of the substantive significance of these estimates, **Table 4.5** provides the mean values for legislative activity and effectiveness variable found within the sample, as well as the percent changes for moves to the 75th and 99th percentile of salary weighted turnover compared to those means. Increases in salary weighted turnover do result in decreased productivity across all measures of legislative productivity, with the biggest decrease occurring with *amendments sponsored*. However, as **Table 4.5** makes clear, a much stronger substantive case can be made on measures of legislative effectiveness. Of particular substantive significance, an increase from the the median level of salary weighted turnover to the 3rd quartile predicts a decrease of 0.62 substantive bills with action in committee and a decrease of 1.17

substantive bills receiving action on the House floor after committee consideration.

These moves represent decreases of 42 percent and 82 percent, respectively compared to mean levels of effectiveness on these measures. A similar jump from the mean to 3rd quartile of salary weighted turnover equates to a drop of 133 percent of substantive bills that pass the the chamber.

Table 4.5. Percent changes from mean in legislative activity and productivity variables, 107th - 114th Congresses

		75th Percentile: Salary Weighted Turnover	% Change - Mean to 75%	99th Percentile: Salary Weighted Turnover	% Change - Mean to 99%
	Mean				
Bills Sponsored	17.79	17.31	-2.72%	16.81	-5.54%
Amends. Sponsored	2.42	2.26	-6.75%	2.10	-13.34%
Bills Cosponsored	300.83	300.23	-0.20%	299.58	-0.41%
Orig. Cosponsor	103.96	103.53	-0.42%	103.06	-0.86%
Substantive Bills Sponsored	13.5	13.20	-2.19%	12.90	-4.48%
Substantive Bills - Action in Committee	1.48	0.86	-41.76%	0.26	-82.13%
Substantive Bills - Action Beyond Committee	1.43	0.26	-81.91%	-0.85	-159.44%
Substantive Bills - Passed	1.06	-0.35	-133.26%	-1.68	-258.11%
Substantive Bills - Law	0.34	0.54	57.54%	0.83	145.38%

These tangible impact effects can also be illustrated with a few real-life observed effects for individual legislator offices. **Table 4.6** presents examples of how salary weighted turnover impacted key legislative activities of lawmakers within three different scenarios: low to high salary weighted turnover in successive congresses for both a

Republican and a Democratic Representative, and an instance in which salary weighted turnover transitioned from high to low back to high over several congresses. Vitally, no member listed in Table 6 experienced shifts in important confounding variables, such as gaining a committee chairship or changing from a safe to vulnerable seat, though Rep. Gallegly did transition from the majority to the minority for the 110th Congress. In each case, the member generally produced far less across each of the measures of legislative activity during congresses with high salary weighted turnover, and was comparably far more active during congresses in which salary weighted turnover was low.

Table 4.6. Case studies: Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R-KS), Baron Hill (D-IN), and Elton Gallegly (R-CA)

	Bills Spons.	Amends. Spons.	Bill Cospons.	Orig. Cospons.	Sub. Bills
Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R-KS)					
112th Congress - Low Turnover					
Salary Weighted Turnover = .12	32	4	236	74	32
113th Congress - High Turnover					
Salary Weighted Turnover = .335	8	2	216	71	4
Rep. Baron Hill (D-IN)					
110th Congress - Low Turnover					
Salary Weighted Turnover = .045	24	1	317	83	21
111th Congress - High Turnover					
Salary Weighted Turnover = .215	14	3	226	65	13
Rep. Elton Gallegly (R-CA)					
109th Congress - High Turnover					
Salary Weighted Turnover = .205	12	0	195	57	5
110th Congress - Low Turnover					
Salary Weighted Turnover = .02	28	0	332	118	21

112th Congress - High Turnover

Salary Weighted Turnover = .31	17	1	213	74	15
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4.5 Conclusion

Too often the House of Representatives is characterized as a body consisting of 435 voting members who are merely supported in their duties by legislative aides. More accurately, the chamber is made up of 435 fairly independent personal legislative enterprises, each one consisting of upwards of 22 employees, and a bevy of organizational, productivity, and human relations issues found in private firms.

This chapter has provided the first empirical test of the impact of congressional staffer turnover within lawmakers' offices. The evidence presented shows that members who lose higher proportions of staffer salaries in a given Congress experience declines in legislative effectiveness across common variables of lawmaker policy activity and effectiveness, even after controlling for potential confounding factors such as holding a committee chairmanship and serving in an electorally secure seat. This research and its findings contribute to the growing literature on the importance and influence of congressional staff, and give strong evidence of members' reliance on staffers for the execution of their legislative duties.

This chapter produces two important implications. First, lawmakers experiencing high levels of staffer turnover are at a resource disadvantage in fulfilling the many and varied responsibilities of their elected office compared to their colleagues with more stable employment environments. As a result, lawmakers are likely less effective and efficient in serving their constituents, from policymaking to constituent service. Second,

high turnover offices are less able to steadily participate in, and ultimately influence, the policy process in Congress due to office attention being spent on maintaining minimal levels of production and replacing departing aides. Thus, low turnover lawmakers, and his or her aides, are in a comparatively favorable position to impact policy throughout the legislative process.

Though an important first step, this analysis provides but only a preliminary look into the effects of turnover within legislative offices. Its strong findings of tangible negative consequences on productivity levels should prompt several fruitful avenues of research. Most notably, and following lines of research within the organizational management literature, future analyses should zero in on the positions and experience levels of staffers who drive the declines in legislative productivity and success. After all, in using a measure of collective turnover, this study did not distinguish between staffers with job titles and duties responsible for the development of policy. Theoretically, one would expect that legislative offices who experience higher rates of turnover within policy positions will experience more drastic declines in legislative productivity when compared to offices who face higher rates of turnover in communications and constituent service related positions. The same is likely for offices losing more experienced and tenured aides relative to staffers who have only served a short period in the office and in Congress.

Additionally, future research should explore the variance in staffing choices in freshman members, as well as the conditions or contexts under which members choose to reallocate their staffing resources once in office. For example, do freshman members

with previous political experience see lower levels of aide turnover in their first terms because they are better prepared for the legislative work environment and hire accordingly? Future work should look to levels of staffer turnover as indicators of impending changes on behalf of the lawmaker, such as running for higher office or leaving the chamber altogether. Answering these questions can better explain congressional behavior, using staff, lawmakers' primary institutional resources, as a key explanatory factor.

Thus far this project has focused on member use and impacts of staffers within a member's personal office. The following chapter turns to aides who serve congressional committees. It is these staffers who are thought to possess deeper levels of issue area expertise, both from their longer tenures on the Hill and because of their more committee-focused issue portfolios. Because of this more substantive knowledge of issues and Congress as an institution, committee aides are often characterized as true drivers of committee and congressional productivity. But as the next chapter makes clear, not all committee aides affect committee outputs equally.

Chapter Five: How Committee Staffers Clear the Runway for Legislative Action in Congress⁴¹

"...so my chief counsel...he's a lawyer, and he'd been doing it for a long while, so he was an expert on that whole process. How do you choose the issues in your [inaudible 00:10:48] that you want to investigate how do you bring witnesses in and how do you interrogate, so to speak, before they testify? What documents do you gather, and all that sort of stuff....and he's the guy who would be sitting next to me through all those hearings whispering in my ear, passing me notes, and because he knew the political process, he knew the legislative process, and he [inaudible 00:11:34] spent a ton of time developing expertise and knowledge on each one of these issues, and we usually had several investigations going at once, so we have, I don't remember how many staff we had, but I probably had 5 or 6, 7 staff that were just helping me with an investigation."

---- Former Member of Congress

Much of the scholarship on policymaking and legislative productivity in Congress in recent years has focused primarily on partisanship (i.e., Lee 2009, 2016), the centralization of policy crafting in congressional leaders (Curry 2015), and their

⁴¹ Note: An early version of this chapter was co-authored with Charles Hunt and presented to The State of Congressional Capacity Conference on March 1-2, 2018 in Washington, D.C. The earlier chapter has been submitted for peer review as part of an edited volume on congressional capacity. While there is some overlap with the earlier chapter, this chapter included in this dissertation includes significant improvements of the data, theory, and results, including new robustness checks. The text, however, still refers to both authors, such as in writing 'we' and to other chapters submitted for the edited volume.

multifaceted effects on who dictates the policymaking process and legislative outcomes. While not misplaced, this focus can shortchange some of the many important ways in which Congress can improve the quality and quantity of their legislative output, particularly within the committee process by which Congress is supposed to develop policy and push it through the chambers.

Congressional committees and the legislative outcomes they produce remain relevant in a number of important ways. From a policymaking perspective, committees are known as the places where issue expertise resides and where most deliberation on policy alternatives occurs. This is most often researched from the perspective of lawmakers and the expertise, experience, and policy interests they possess. Membership on committees is often purposeful, where members are assigned based on educational, occupational, or geographic interest in a particular policy area, in part because this matching is likely to lead to legislative productivity (Francis and Bramlett 2017). Committees delineate these jurisdictions in order to provide increased attention to specific issue areas. In doing so, the chambers achieve a division of labor that allows lawmaker specialization across the vast number of government issues, ultimately resulting in a more efficient use of member time and more reasoned, thoughtful policy.

To further define the potential benefits of the division of labor provided by committee jurisdictions, we argue that the advantages committees provide by cultivating issue specialization and efficiency are every bit as relevant in the composition of committee staff. We show not only that committees produce more meaningful legislation when staffed at higher capacity, but perhaps more importantly, that

committees are demonstrably more productive when equipped with the right staff to execute the appropriate legislative function. We define the “right staff” as those whose job descriptions and expertise match the nature of the legislative function being performed. Even when controlling for specific committee, chairperson attributes, majority status in both chambers, and other political and committee-level variables, we find that committee legislative productivity is best facilitated by a robust staff presence—in particular, staff whose experience is best-suited to each of three distinct types of legislative output we measure in this work.

This research closes a critical gap in our understanding of how committees operate. It extends to congressional staff the nuances of policy specialization we apply to lawmakers, and it shows that committees not only take these staffer-level characteristics into account, but that they are wise to do so due to the resulting boost in certain types of legislative productivity. Our results should induce congressional scholars to rethink how staffers can be used to increase capacity in the committee process, and how staffers with different substantive expertise and experience might be more effectively applied to specific types of legislative output to increase legislative productivity, efficiency, and quality.

5.1 The Legislative Impact of Committee Staff

Though they often remain nameless to the general public, and even to other legislative offices, much of the day-to-day work done on specific issue areas and policy proposals is executed by committee staffers. Thus, it is not surprising that congressional studies and

lawmakers themselves regularly contend that congressional staffers increase the capacity of lawmakers and the institution (Malbin 1980). Despite this acknowledged reliance on congressional aides, the staffer and increased capacity relationship is often overlooked, particularly in recent decades, in the very places most scholars assume staffer expertise to be at their highest levels and impact on legislative activity to be greatest: congressional committees. A primary contention of this project is that this member reliance, and staff impacts on committee productivity, is at least as marked at the committee level.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Legislative Reorganization Acts of 1946 and 1970 substantially increased staffing capacity at the committee level in an effort to keep pace with an explosion of staffing and bureaucratic specialization within the executive branch, as well as to help lawmakers cope with their expanding workloads. In contrast to personal office staffers that have so far been the focus of this dissertation, committee aides are devoted full time to their committee's specific jurisdictional and policy issue areas "to provide committees with substantive expertise relevant to the subject matter of each committee" (Deering and Smith 1997, 163).

Unsurprisingly, scholars have found even increased member reliance on committee aides for policy helps largely due to their greater experience levels and longer congressional tenures (Aberbach 1987; Brady 1981; Deering and Smith 1997; DeGregorio 1988; Malbin 1980; Price 1972; Salisbury and Shepsle 1981a). However, just as there are differences in expertise and influence within personal offices, studies have found not all committee staffers automatically enjoy influential status. After observing

Senate committee activities and procedures, Price (1971, 1972) makes the distinction between 'policy entrepreneurs' and 'policy professionals' — the former are in constant search of opportunities for the implementation of policy solutions, whereas the later are more willing to let committee members dictate where their policy attention should be spent. In either case, the committee staffer is viewed by lawmakers as a vital repository of long-serving institutional memory and issue area expertise who contributes vitally to committee production. Polsby (1969) writes that the specialization and issue area expertise of committee staffers allows for lawmakers to "increase the efficiency of their explicit analytical activities and enhanc[e] their own knowledge and power" (70-71).

As ample evidence has shown, including within this dissertation, members rely on their personal staffers to create a more efficient, more productive operation of their personal office-enterprise. Dependence of committee members on committee staffers is likely even more pronounced for at least two reasons. First, and most importantly, committee activities are but one subset of a member's responsibilities and attention. Put directly, lawmakers only spend a portion of their time and attention on matters within their assigned committees; for committee aides, on the other hand, committee matters make up their entire job description.

Committee staffers largely serve at the discretion of the chair or ranking member depending on which party employs them, and are expected to consistently execute on the priorities of their respective party's leaders and committee members even when members are not actively engaged in committee activities. These member priorities manifest in a variety of committee outputs that are largely developed, researched, and

advanced by full-time committee aides. In other words, common committee outputs—policy creation, oversight activities, and committee hearings—all occur and require significant and regular staffer attention relatively independent of committee members. Once the direction and focus of the committee is set by its leaders and members, much of the work towards specific outputs is executed by its aides. Importantly, members often act on the work of committee aides only at the culmination of staff work, such as voting to report a bill out of committee that was largely researched, negotiated, and written by committee aides.

The second reason member reliance is more pronounced at the committee level is committee staffers are viewed as distinct sources of issue expertise and institutional memory on the policy topics within each committee jurisdiction, and represent an invaluable resource for the committee to effectively operate. This is true for a variety of reasons. First, committee aides typically maintain longer congressional tenures than staffers employed in personal offices (see, Petersen, Eckman, and Chausow 2016). This longer service allows staffers to become well-versed in the ways of the Hill, develop contacts and relationships across offices and parties, and become fluent in the intricacies of legislative research, policy crafting, and political motivations that often propel or stifle legislative action.

Second, committee staffers enjoy a more limited issue portfolio than personal aides. Whereas committee staffers are expected to become experts on the issues relevant to their committee's jurisdiction, personal office staffers are more policy generalists whose portfolios are so broad that issue area expertise is much harder to

develop. More narrow policy focus allows for committee aides to be better-versed in the minutia of policy details, likely obstacles, and legislative histories that are vital to successful policy creation.⁴² Moreover, more tenured aides with concentrated portfolios allow for committee staffers to develop and maintain relationships with policy stakeholders and pivotal players within and outside the institution, identify policy windows for legislative entrepreneurship, as well as better anticipate likely consequences and costs associated with their legislative proposals.

Third, because committee staffers are employed by the entire committee rather than a member facing reelection every two years, committee work is often accompanied with less attention devoted to issues of reelection such as constituent service responses or direct district messaging of individual members. As such, committees offer staffers an opportunity to execute on issues in more depth with less regard to the day-to-day political happenings of any individual member-boss or Congress as an institution. For staffers who have committed to a career in Congress, committees provide them a more concentrated issue portfolio and a more stable source of employment when compared to personal offices where turnover among staffers is higher and tenures are generally shorter.

⁴² Within another chapter of the congressional capacity edited volume entitled, “What Do Congressional Staffers Actually Know.” Dr. Miller finds that staffers who engage in issues more regularly, such as committee aides who are responsible for consistent attention on issues within their committee’s jurisdiction, maintain higher levels of policy knowledge when compared to aides who never or only occasionally work on an issue.

It is already apparent that staff support is not only helpful, but necessary to legislative productivity for individual members of Congress, congressional committees, and for the institution as a whole. But, the above reasons lead us to expect that committee staff are just as, and likely even more essential to the operations of committees and serving the needs of its elected members than the literature regularly finds with personal staffers. At a time when concerns about congressional gridlock and productivity are paramount, increased staffer support should increase the ability of a committee to function, produce, and execute on its specific priorities. Therefore:

Hypothesis 1: The higher the capacity of congressional committee staff, the greater the legislative output will be in committees.

5.2 The “Right Staff” At The Right Time

Though empirically untested, the importance and impact of committee staff is not novel. As put by Deering and Smith (1997), “Committee staff influence the agenda-setting decisions of chairs, advocate or even champion legislative proposals, conduct investigations, negotiate on behalf of committees and their chairs, and work to build coalitions in committee, on the floor, and in conference. The assistance of quality staff can give a committee...a substantial advantage over competitors in legislative politics” (162).

But, to date, congressional observers have largely overlooked *which* committee staffers influence various committee outputs, instead most often referring to committee aides as a singular resource with few distinctions between their duties and respective

influence on outcomes. The preceding quote aptly describes both the influence of committee staff and the varied aspects of their jobs, but it fails to recognize that each of the itemized tasks demands very different strengths, talents, and expertise on the part of committee staffers. For example, conducting a fruitful committee oversight investigation requires a vastly different set of skills than authoring legislative proposals, and negotiating the scope of a committee hearing utilizes different talents than building coalitions for ultimate passage on the floor.

Though often grouped together, committee aides vary considerably in their job titles and responsibilities. Some are tasked with policy duties, such as researching and authoring legislative proposals for committee consideration; others are responsible for carrying out a communications strategy for the committee to present its work to interested parties; still others serve as leaders overseeing the staff and production, responsible for facilitating progress on committee priorities with outside actors. Along with these occupational differences, committee staffers are demonstrably diverse in their respective personal and occupational experience as well as their levels of legislative and procedural expertise. Some are oversight experts with long tenures at federal agencies and others serve with over a decade of congressional experience and a mastery in parliamentary procedure. Staffers are valuable in their respective roles, but they are valuable on different tasks and at different times.

Therefore, a second primary contention of this chapter is that congressional committee outputs are affected by the particular type of staffers executing its work. We argue that the different types of staffers are better suited to influence production of

varying types of committee outputs, and at varying stages of the legislative process. These stages of the process—our three dependent variables for this study—require different levels of policy and political maneuvering and expertise which we argue different types of committee staffers are in positions to provide, and therefore have positive effects on that particular output. First, we use the number of substantively important bills that are reported out of committee; second, the number of hearings conducted by that committee; and third, the amount of committee-reported legislation that eventually passes the House chamber.

We focus on the two contingents of committee aides that are most likely to influence the legislative productivity of their respective committees: *policy staffers* and *senior staffers*. Policy aides are those most responsible for researching and improving various potential policy proposals, often that have been referred, and authoring legislation that satisfies the members of the committee, many of whom are policy entrepreneurs themselves on the committee's issues. Often policy aides have a established expertise on matters within the committee's jurisdiction thanks to extensive personal and vocational experience with the relevant issues. They are the most likely to be familiar with the intricate details and legislative histories of issues and have developed relationships with internal and external policy stakeholders.

Such issue area expertise is of particular value to congressional committees in the early stages of policymaking as staffers work to implement the policy goals of their respective committee members into viable legislative proposals to be reported out for consideration. A great deal of substantively important legislation is considered within a

congressional committee, but such legislation is of varying quality. The likelihood of any one piece of legislation being reported out of committee depends in part on how well crafted the legislation is, and how it reflects the policy demands of at least a majority of committee members. Thus, the amount of policy expertise applied to that legislation is of great consequence. We argue that *policy staffers* are on the whole most likely to have influence at initial stages *within the committee* as policy proposals are being crafted and improved on, as opposed to in later stages of the process in which political and agenda setting considerations become more paramount (Kingdon 1984). With this in mind, we predict:

Hypothesis 2: *The greater the number of policy-oriented House committee staff, the greater the number of important bills reported out of House committees.*

This initial stage of the legislative process in which legislation is crafted and reported out of committee depends on more than just the quality of the policy. Serious political considerations that depend on assessments of how likely a piece of legislation is to find broader support within the committee are also involved. Subsequently, this support within the committee is itself subject to a perception of how likely that legislation is to pass at the chamber level or become law. We argue that *senior staffers*—the vast majority of whom hold the titles of staff director or deputy staff director—are in a particularly strong position to anticipate and answer these political questions during the committee phase such that only the most politically viable legislation is reported out and is ultimately approved by the full House.

Moreover, the role of senior staffers also entails navigating the political and communications dynamics that accompany legislative decisions beyond the committee stage. Whereas policy staffers' main priority is to craft legislation that satisfies the policy demands of committee members, senior staffers are more responsible for guiding the decided-upon legislation out of the committee; into the chamber as a whole where political dynamics are much more prevalent; and potentially into law, all in an effort to satisfy members' individual policy and political motivations.

To do so, senior staffers maintain strong networks with committee leaders, members, and personal staff, and as a result, are in a better position to align committee activities with the agendas set forth by party leaders for maximum effectiveness. This increased level of cooperation between committee staff, outside stakeholders, and committee and chamber leaders should therefore make senior staffers valuable for the successful advancement of committee legislation, from being reported out of committee to being passed by the full chamber. As such, we similarly predict:

Hypothesis 3: The greater the number of House committee senior staff, the greater the number of important bills reported out of House committees and passed by the chamber.

In this study, we propose that committees' ability and decision to take up and accomplish specific legislative goals is conditioned on whether they have the necessary staff capacity to accomplish them. A possible alternative explanation for the importance of staff reverses this causal effect. In this line of thinking, committees decide to pursue certain types of legislative activity, and then staff their committees based on these

specific goals. We believe this proposition is faulty on a theoretical level since appropriations for committees, and therefore funds available for staffing decisions, are set by Congress in advance of each year pursuant to House rules.⁴³ Thus, within-year or within-Congress staffing adjustments would require supplemental appropriations. Though such instances have occurred, they are extremely rare.

Nevertheless, one empirical approach to forestall this alternative explanation would be to lag the dependent staffing variables by one year; if our effects hold, then it is difficult to argue that the decision to act legislatively comes first rather than increases to staff capacity. However, in two of the years in our sample, party switches in control of the House precipitated large staff changes that cause us to drop observations. Relatedly, party switches took place in the Senate and the presidency at several points over this time period, further complicating any lagged effects. Finally, and most importantly, lagging these variables creates a mismatch in all years between election years and non-election years: in effect, non-election year staffing is predicting election year outputs, and vice versa.⁴⁴ Even so, lagging these variables preserves the directionality, though not the statistical significance, predicted by Hypothesis 1. Regression results using the lagged staff count dependent variable can be found in **Tables A.5.3** and **Tables A.5.4** within the Appendix.

⁴³ House Rule X, clause 6.

⁴⁴ One way to address this final issue would be to lag staffing variables by two years, but this would not only exacerbate the previous two issues (party switches in other chambers and branches of government), but would represent a deeply unrealistic conception of how far in advance Congress plans their legislative agenda when political winds can change so fundamentally over the course of an entire election cycle.

A more explicit test of the alternative hypothesis just discussed is to lag staff variables in the opposite direction, effectively testing the causality of committee's preemptively 'staffing up.' If we expected anticipated legislative action to drive staff hires in committees, we could confirm this by using a committee's legislative action in a given year to predict the following year's staffer counts as the dependent variable. However, models constructed to test this alternative hypothesis failed to converge, much less predict any kind of positive result. Each of these tests give us greater confidence in the causal direction of our argument.

5.3 Data and Methods

To test these expectations, we combine a number of preexisting datasets on committee activity and legislative outputs, as well as an original and comprehensive dataset on committee staffing capacity. These data span from 2001-2017, which allows us to capture the effects of staffing as it varies within-committee over time.⁴⁵ It also provides a particularly tough but important test for the power of congressional capacity in an age where much of congressional activity is thought to be governed by partisanship (Lee 2009) and/or party leaders (Curry 2015). If staff capacity can continue to have an effect

⁴⁵ While it is a critical policymaking committee, particularly in the House, we have removed the Appropriations Committee from our models for two reasons. First, due to the sheer scope of the appropriations process, each member of the committee is assigned a staffer who is responsible for tracking various legislative processes within the committee for the respective member. Such an arrangement is not true of any other House committees. Second, in part due to these supplemental staffer assignments, Appropriations is an outlier in the balance of staff types as well as the sheer size of total staff. The committee is three full standard deviations above the maximum in the sample of House committees that does not include them. For these reasons, Appropriations skews the results and descriptive statistics in such a way that we omit this committee from final results.

in even the most party-dominated environments for policymaking, it is a signal that staffers are not merely helpful, but truly essential in addressing and executing on committee priorities, including passing important legislation through regular procedures in Congress.

Notably, we study the impact of staffing on committee outputs only within the House of Representatives. We do so for several reasons. First, because there are far fewer members of the Senate, individual committees are composed of a greater proportion of the chamber across the board, significantly diluting the leverage gained by serving on such a committee relative to other Senators who do not. Relatedly, the average Senator serves on more than double the number of congressional committees than the average House member and nearly triple the number of subcommittees (Ornstein, Mann, Malbin, Rugg, et al. 2013). As a result, Senators are in a far better position to execute on policy concerns no matter if it is a one of their top priorities. Third, Senate rules and procedure grant Senators more opportunities for individual members to affect policy changes independent of the committee process. Fourth, Senators enjoy much larger personal office staff sizes that are better able to execute on all aspects of their office, from policymaking to constituent service to communications efforts aimed at increasing the visibility and prestige of the Senator. For these reasons, in addition to Senators' bigger and more diverse constituencies, our analysis is limited to committees within the House where we are more likely to find such marked distinctions in how members view committee assignments and responsibilities (Deering and Smith 1997).

In order to assess the impact of congressional committee staffing capacity on committee activity, we employ three important measures of legislative outputs: substantively “important” bills voted out of committee, important bills passed by the chamber that were under the jurisdiction of that committee during its life cycle, and total number of hearings held by each committee.⁴⁶ Vitality, this data categorizes bills as “important” bills of substance as opposed to ceremonial bills of little importance.⁴⁷ These bills are a better measure of the impact of committee staffers on committee productivity, as more substantive legislation typically demands increased committee aide experience, issue expertise, and staffer attention for advancement of these issues relative to ceremonial measures. We use by-year counts of these “important” bills that have been reported out of the committee in which they were referred, as well as counts of bills which after having been referred to this committee, passed the chamber in which they originated.⁴⁸ Both of these measures are strong indicators of substantive legislative output from the committees, and also measure the committee’s influence in the chamber in which they reside. The third measure of output used in this project is an

⁴⁶ From Adler and Wilkinson’s (2006) “Congressional Bills Project, available at www.congressionalbills.org/.

⁴⁷ Congressional Bills Project describes their process for coding “important” vs. “not important” bills as “based on the presence of certain words in a title and can be used to exclude bills that are arguably of minor importance. For example, bills to name buildings are fairly common and a large proportion of the laws that are passed.” A full explanation of their coding methods is available on the “Codebooks” page of their website (see Footnote 5).

⁴⁸ Congressional Bills Project captures all bills that passed or did not pass the chamber, whether they were in fact reported out of committee or not. Therefore, the “number of important bills passed” variable captures both reported bills and non-reported bills that went to the floor. We also are not concerned about overdispersion of individual bills: More than 80% of all bills were only referred to one committee in one chamber, and greater than 95% were only referred to two - and most of these were the two appropriate committees from each chamber.

original dataset of aggregated counts of committee hearings held in all House committees.

Committee staffing data used in this project is drawn from Legistorm's personnel compensation database which dates back to 2001. Legistorm cleans and digitizes official staffer compensation information submitted by all congressional offices, personal and committee, to the Clerk of the House. These pay records itemize payments made to each individual staffer, the title held by the staffer, and the office in which the payment originated. The House reports these payments via a statement of disbursements every three months.

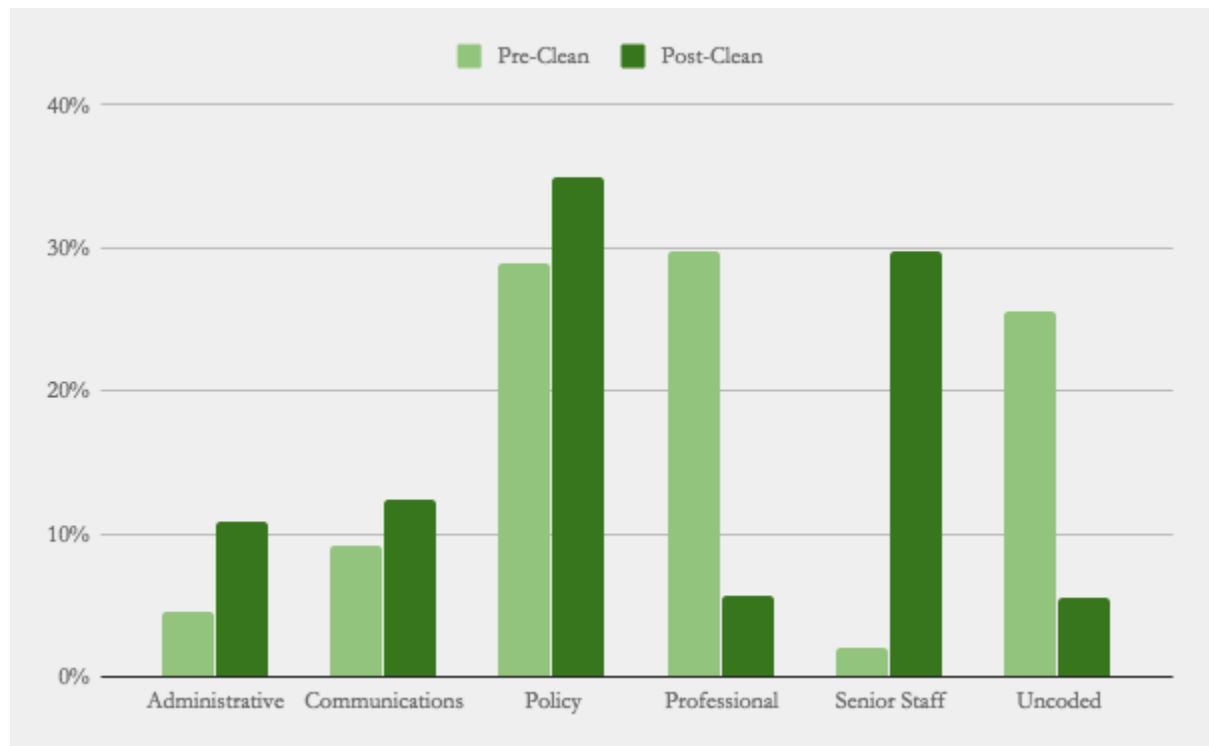
Our data breaks down the number of staffers assigned to a committee in a given year, as well as the types of positions they hold. These staffer counts include any aide that received a payment from the committee within a given year, including paid interns, fellows, part-time, shared, and temporary employees. While Legistorm's data is rich in detail and completely comprehensive in its reach, its pre-cleaning categorization of staffer position types was insufficient to address the relative impact of each type on committee productivity. The "pre-clean" bars in **Figure 5.1** show that of the over 62,000 staffer-years in our dataset, nearly 60% were either Uncoded (categorized in our data as "Other" staff members) or categorized as "Professional Staff Members" (PSMs), who are staffers with functions that vary widely between committees and therefore cannot be easily classified based on title.

As a first step towards correcting this issue, we used regular expressions to search the job titles listed within the official compensation records provided by

Legistorm and re-classified many (in fact, a vast majority) of staffers previously classified as PSMs or uncoded. Many previously uncoded staffers had titles that made their purpose more apparent: for example, “Staff Assistants” and “Research Assistants” were previously uncategorized; using regular expressions, we reclassified these as Administrative and Policy Staffers respectively. PSMs were more difficult, but since staffers were classified by year, we were able to reclassify over 80% of these staffers based on previous titles they had. For example, we would classify a PSM whose title in a previous year “Policy Coordinator” as a Policy Staffer, since a wholesale change of expertise type is highly unlikely from year to year. With all of these changes, we were able to bring the total percentage of uncoded staffers (including PSMs)⁴⁹ down from 56% to just over 11% of all committee staffers over the 18-year period of our study. **Figure 5.1** visualizes the results of this coding and data cleaning process, and a more complete description of the operationalization of these regular expression groupings by title can be found in **Tables A.5.1** and **A.5.2** located in the Appendix.

⁴⁹ Remaining proportions of Uncoded or Professional Staff (who for all intents and purposes are uncoded) were quite low across all committees. As **Figure 5.1** indicates, the total Uncoded and PSM staffers amount to around 11% of all staffer-years post-clean, and all committee-years used in our models fell within a range of 7%-15%. This gives us confidence that these proportions aren’t deeply biasing our results for any one committee.

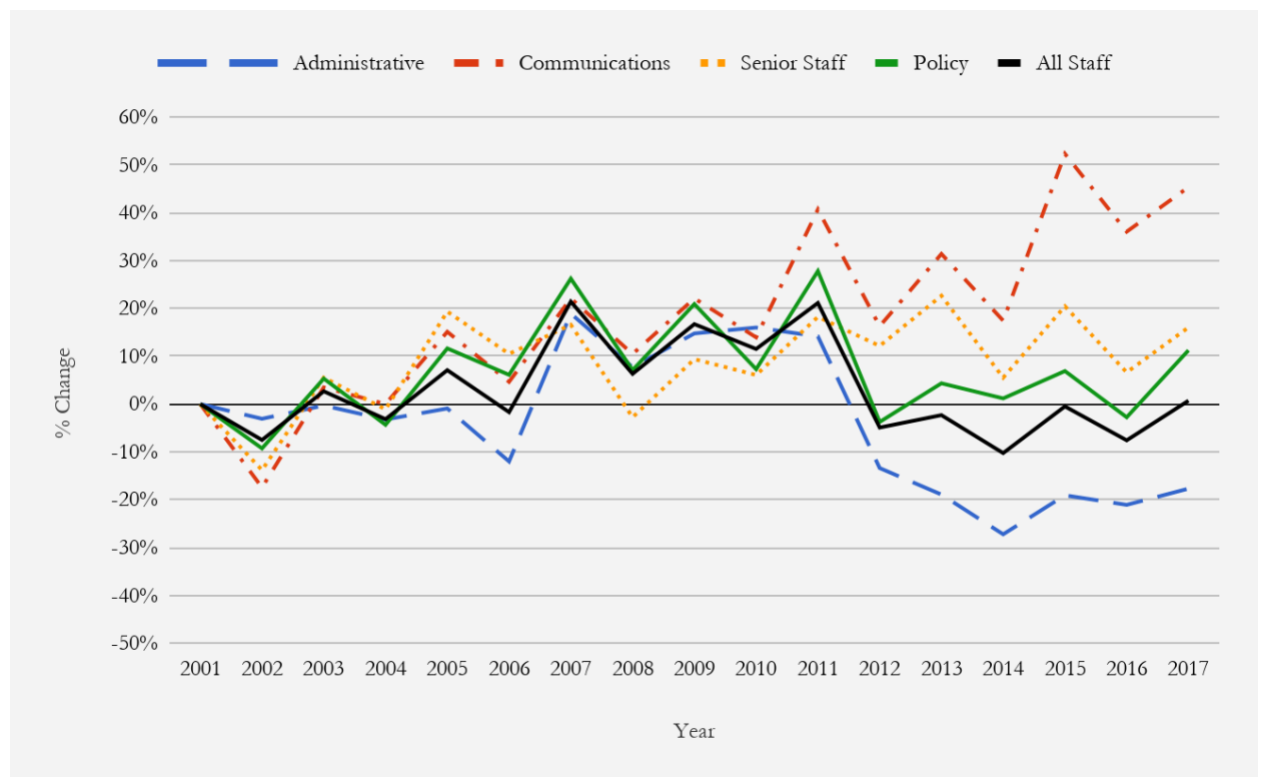
Figure 5.1. Committee staffer types as percentage of total, 2001-2017



After this classification process, we then aggregated the counts of staffers into four distinct position categories for each committee year: *policy*, *communications*, *administrative*, and *senior staff*. PSMs and uncoded Staffers were not included in the committee-level analysis. The trends resulting from this process make clear what many congressional observers have suspected but not quantified regarding committee staffing allocations. **Figure 5.2** shows the percentage change in total numbers of different staffer types across all House committees since 2001. One clear trend is that before 2006, increases and decreases of committee staffers tracked closely between staffer types; that is, the proportion of staffing resources committed to each position group increased at roughly the same rates. Since this time, however, staffer types have diverged

significantly in ways that could be instructive to our understanding of recent partisan gridlock in the legislative process. Since 2006, all four primary staffer types have diverged significantly from each other, with *administrative*, *policy*, and *senior staff* remaining largely stagnant or even decreasing since 2001, while the number of *communications* staff has grown by nearly 75%.

Figure 5.2. House committee staffer types over time, percent change, percent change from 2001 totals



Given such sharp increases in the number of communications committee staff combined with the stagnation in *senior* and *policy staffer* totals indicated by **Figure 5.2**, it may not be so surprising that the committee process has resulted in less overall legislative success in recent years. The changes of distribution of staff within committees over the last several Congresses appears to be yet another indicator of the

preeminence of parties and party leaders in the committee process. When partisan messaging is prioritized over bipartisan legislative accomplishment (Lee 2009), staffing decisions reflect that prioritization of communications. That this dynamic appears to have leaked into the committee process, the advantages of which are supposed to come from division of legislative and policy expertise rather than political and communications expertise, is an indicator that congressional committees are becoming more focused on policy and political messaging that legislative productivity. Reformers looking to use the committee structure to help improve this process, therefore, might do so in part by reversing the trends made clear by **Figure 5.2**.

5.3.1 Control Variables

We also have incorporated a number of important controls that are likely to condition the legislative outputs achieved by any committee. First, we obtained counts of number of members per committee-year to help control for the possibility that committees with more members would produce greater legislative output. Second, we use the Policy Agenda Project's topic codes based on *CQ Almanac* publications and aggregated by committee-year to determine the number of major policy topics each committee addresses. This variable indicates which committees have wider policy jurisdictions, and thus, are in a better position to produce more of our outputs under consideration. Third, we include a dummy variable for instances in which the chair of the committee vacated the post within the year as well as the tenure length of the committee chair. Fourth, we include binary variables indicating whether there was a

unified Congress (both chambers of the same party) in that year, and whether it was an election year to account for House members being preoccupied with electoral politics rather than committee production. Fifth, we include a binary variable indicating whether a committee-specific authorization bill re-emerged that year, as these bills can consume much, if not all, of the committee's attention and resources to secure its passage. Finally, we created a variable indicating exogenous policy shocks, which increase demand for legislative and hearing outputs.⁵⁰

In order to hold as much committee-specific variation constant as possible, we employ conditional fixed-effects negative binomial regression to predict per-year counts of important bills reported out of committee, important committee-reported bills that passed the chamber, and committee hearings held. The effects measured by these models will therefore capture variation only within each committee itself to ensure that member- or committee-specific variables cloud the results. Full descriptive statistics of key variables can be found below in **Table 5.1** and a detailed explanation of each variable and its source data can be found in **Table A.5.5** located in the Appendix.

⁵⁰ For example, the House Homeland Security Committee, which is in charge of FEMA's budget, was given a positive value for this variable in 2005 and 2006, when and shortly after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast; similarly, the House Financial Services Committee was given the same designation during and following the financial crisis of 2008-2009.

Table 5.1. Descriptive statistics for key variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max.
Imp. Bills Reported from Cmte.	16	22.4	0	143
Imp. Cmte. Bills Passed Chamber	11	15.1	0	91
Number of Hearings Held	50	30.1	0	164
Total Staff	67	33.1	25	160
Policy Staff	24	16.4	3	84
Communications Staff	5	2.6	0	18
Administrative Staff	14	8.4	1	52
Senior Staff	10	5.7	1	25
Unified Congress	0.7	0.5	0	1
Election Year	0.5	0.5	0	1
Cmte. Chair Turnover	0.0	0.2	0	2
Cmte. Chair Tenure Length	1.7	1.5	0	7
Cmte. Size (Members)	47	14.5	9	82
Exogenous Policy Shock	0.08	0.3	0	1
Cmte. Authorization Year	0.03	0.2	0	1
Cmte. Jurisdiction Count	7	3.5	2	14

5.4 Results

As previously stated, we ran a number of different models to capture the differences expected by our three hypotheses. First, we ran fixed-effects negative binomial regressions on each of our measures of legislative output in all House committees to assess Hypothesis 1, which predicted that increases in total staff support of all types would lead to increases in legislative output. **Table 5.2** shows the raw regression results of these models for each of our three measures of output.

Table 5.2. Effects of staff support on committee outputs, 2001-2016

Dependent Variable	Important		
	Important Legislation Reported	Legislation Passed Chamber	Number of Hearings Held
Total Staff Support	0.86*** (0.26)	0.69** (0.29)	0.14 (0.19)
Unified Congress	0.06 (0.08)	0.16* (0.09)	-0.07 (0.06)
Election Year	-0.84*** (0.08)	-0.83*** (0.09)	-0.15** (0.06)
Cmte. Chair Turnover	-0.57* (0.30)	-0.43 (0.31)	-0.27 (0.18)
Cmte. Chair Tenure Length	0.03 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.05** (0.02)
Cmte. Size (Members)	0.003 (0.007)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01* (0.005)
Exogenous Policy Shock	-0.36** (0.16)	-0.44** (0.18)	0.01 (0.10)
Cmte. Authorization Year	-0.16 (0.25)	-0.28 (0.28)	-0.33* (0.18)
Cmte. Jurisdiction Count	-0.003 (0.04)	0.008 (0.05)	0.03 (0.04)
Constant	-1.91** (0.99)	-1.78 (1.11)	0.83 (0.85)
N	254	254	254

Note: Results found using conditional fixed-effects negative binomial regression.

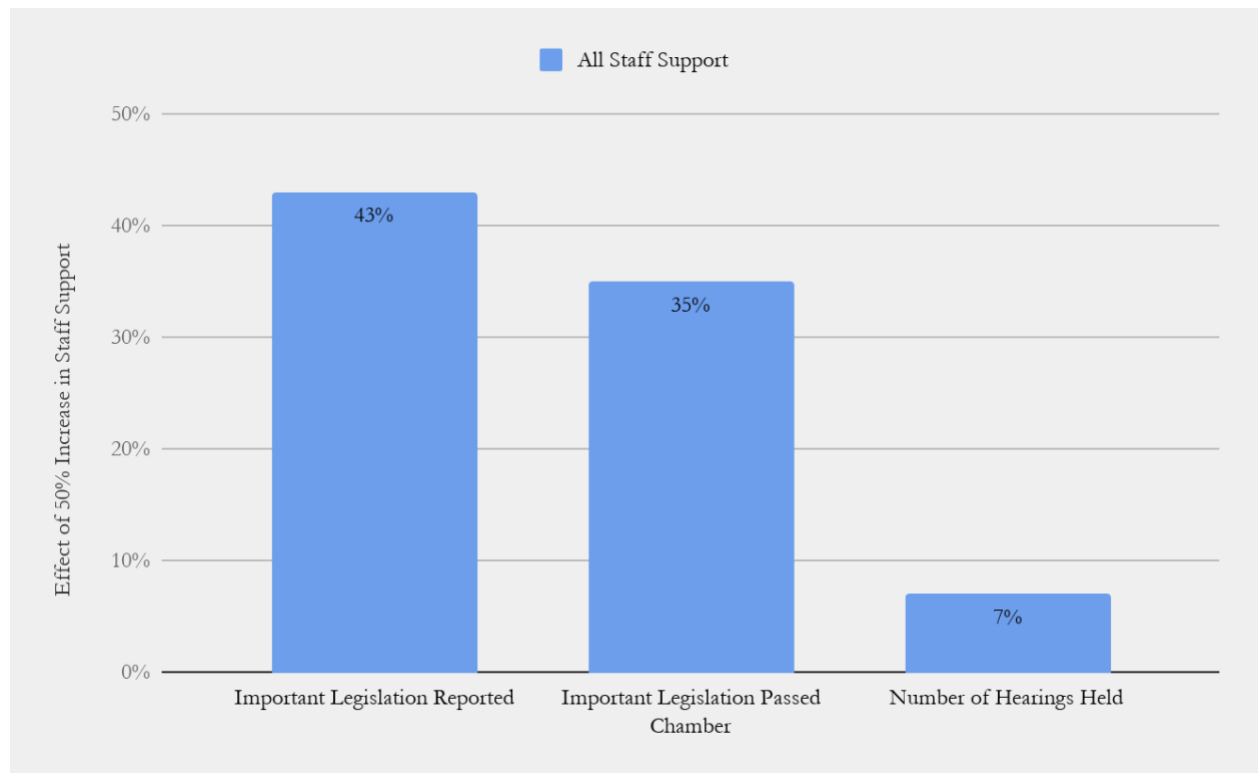
*p < .1, **p < .05, ***p < .01

These results are a clear confirmation of Hypothesis 1. All three measures are positively affected by total staff support, with *important legislation reported* and *important legislation passed chamber* reaching statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

The coefficients also tell us about substantive significance. For example, according to our model, a 50% increase⁵¹ in the total staff support a committee results in a 43% increase in the amount of important legislation reported out of that committee, and a 35% increase in committee legislation that passed the chamber as a whole. It also results in a 7% increase in the number of hearings held in that calendar year. Clearly, having more staff support matters across the board in terms of producing legislative output from committees and successfully passing it. **Figure 5.3** plots the predicted increases in committee outputs resulting from a 50% increase in committee staff support.

⁵¹ Due to non-normal distributions of our primary independent variables - committee staff counts - we have taken the natural logarithm of these variables to capture percent change rather than per-staffer change for more accurate specification, even distribution, and generalizability of results. We also do this because one additional staffer is likely to have a different effect in a committee that already has 70 staffers, as opposed to one that only has 10. Similarly, we also use the original interpretation of the coefficients, which is to predict percentage change in the legislative outputs dependent variables. We do so because each committee produces different average counts of legislation, average predicted counts across all committees would be a non-intuitive measure. This allows us to standardize causes and effects across committees to a greater extent, which is particularly valuable in a fixed-effects model that captures within-committee variation.

Figure 5.3. Effects of 50% increase in committee staff support on committee outputs



Hypothesis 1, however, reflects a weakness in previous work on both congressional committees and congressional staff: that all staff are created equal in terms of their expertise. Our findings that accompany Hypotheses 2 and 3 aim to rectify this mistake by breaking down our primary independent variables by staff type. For these tests, we substituted *total staff support* variable for counts of the four substantively important groups of staffers by committee (*policy, communications, administrative, and senior staff*) to demonstrate the differential effects. **Table 5.3** shows the raw regression results of these models for each of our three measures of output.

Table 5.3. Effects of specific types of staff support on committee outputs, 2001-2016

Dependent Variable	Important Legislation	Important Legislation Passed	Number of Hearings
	Reported	Chamber	Held
Policy Staff Support	0.33** (0.13)	0.14 (0.15)	0.01 (0.11)
Communications Staff Support	0.29** (0.13)	0.35** (0.15)	-0.06 (0.10)
Administrative Staff Support	-0.03 (0.12)	0.03 (0.13)	-0.07 (0.09)
Senior Staff Support	0.32** (0.13)	0.29* (0.15)	0.30*** (0.10)
Unified Congress	0.09 (0.08)	0.19** (0.09)	-0.04 (0.06)
Election Year	-0.86*** (0.08)	-0.85*** (0.09)	-0.14** (0.06)
Cmte. Chair Turnover	-0.61** (0.30)	-0.49 (0.31)	-0.30 (0.18)
Cmte. Chair Tenure Length	0.02 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.05** (0.02)
Cmte. Size (Members)	0.008 (0.007)	0.02** (0.01)	0.01** (0.01)
Exogenous Policy Shock	-0.35** (0.15)	-0.47*** (0.17)	0.03 (0.10)
Cmte. Authorization Year	-0.20 (0.23)	-0.31 (0.27)	-0.31* (0.17)
Cmte. Jurisdiction Count	0.01 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	0.07* (0.04)
Constant	-0.69 (0.64)	-0.99 (0.72)	0.67 (0.60)
N	254	254	254

Note: Results found using conditional fixed-effects negative binomial regression.

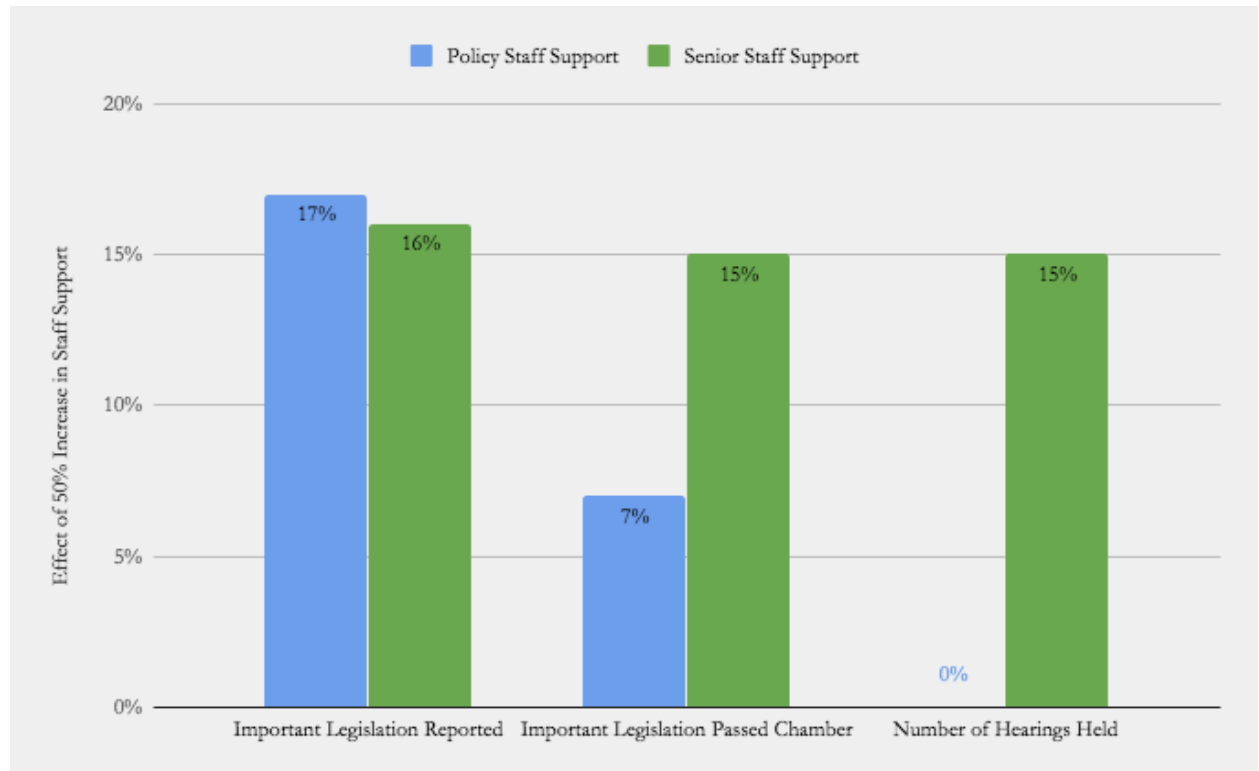
*p < .1, **p < .05, ***p < .01

In these results, we first find confirmation of Hypothesis 2: that higher numbers of *policy staffers* are particularly conducive to early-stage legislative output—in this

case, the amount of important legislation reported out of committee. The results indicate that a 50% increase in policy staff predict a 17% increase in legislative output from a committee. Policy staff influence is also apparent in the results for the amount of committee legislation that passes the chamber, but the result is not statistically significant, and likely just reflects residual effects from the first “committee reported” dependent variable, which is a prerequisite for the second. These results confirm the suspicions reflected in Hypothesis 2: that staffing expertise in the policy/legislative realm is most valuable at the initial stages of the legislative process, in crafting quality enough legislation to reach the next stage.

The results in **Table 5.3** also confirm Hypothesis 3: that the experience and multifaceted expertise provided by *senior staffers* lead to higher policy output at all points in the legislative process. In this case, a 50% increase the number of senior staff lead to about a 15% increase in each of the three committee outputs we model and each reaching statistical significance at the 0.10 level or better. These results are consistent with our expectations for senior staffers in that they have consistent impacts on productivity driven by multifaceted expertise and leadership in both policy and political spheres on the Hill; extended social and political networks that enable them to organize support for legislative priorities; and that their prior experience shepherding through legislation gives them a better intuition for what legislation should be debated in a hearing or reported out of committee based on what has the best chance of passing.

Figure 5.4. Effects of 50% increase in staff support by position groupings on committee outputs



Interestingly, **Table 5.3** and **Figure 5.4** also show that senior staffers heavily impact the number of hearings held by committees. While not explicitly hypothesized, this finding aligns strongly with our theoretical expectations. The public event of the committee hearing is the final presentation of the work conducted by staffers weeks and months prior. As previously theorized, senior staffers, by virtue of their extended networks, tenures, and expertise, are in the best position to recognize the policy and political implications hearings offer, and are responsible for aligning the work of the committee’s policy and communications staff to carry out necessary research and preparation. More specifically, senior staff lead negotiations between the committee chair and ranking member as to the needs and topics of hearings, as well as specifics such as scope, potential witnesses, and lines of questioning. Moreover, these senior

aides are the most likely to have been granted discretion by committee leaders and members to work on the committee's behalf while members are fulfilling the other numerous aspects of their elected office. Just as senior staff manage committee efforts for the reporting and passing of important legislation, these senior aides also influence the production of committee hearings, another important, and public, committee output.

Finally, the results presented in **Table 5.3** show that *communications* staffers also produce substantive and statistically significant increases ($p < 0.05$) in the numbers of *important legislation reported* and *important legislation passed the chamber*. These findings suggest that communications aides generate and capitalize on public narratives or policy windows in which a committees' legislative proposals can be characterized as viable solutions (Kingdon 1984), or as winning messaging plays by the majority party (Lee 2016). By making use of their skills and media contacts, communications staffers provoke positive media coverage of member and party-desired committee actions—such as framing a controversial policy proposal as a justified course of action—thereby increasing public demand and acceptance for the action to ultimately occur. More fundamentally, the effects of communications staffers on a committee's legislative productivity found in this chapter suggest a strong committee media presence helps facilitate their being out of committee and being passed by the chamber.

On the whole, our results shown in **Tables 5.2** and **5.3** confirm our theoretical expectations discussed earlier: not only that staffers generally can help increase

legislative productivity, but that this productivity also depends on the type of staffer deployed at different points in the legislative process.

5.5 Discussion

These results presented in this chapter should encourage congressional scholars and reformers to consider not just how staff can improve legislative productivity, but which types of staff are most likely to be successful at these efforts. Our results indicate not only that committee staffers have positive effects on legislative output in the chamber in a general sense, but that meeting particular staffing needs at different points in the legislative process can and does exponentiate these effects. At the same time, the trends suggested by our data and **Figure 5.2** suggest the reality that if granted the increased committee staffing resources for which many reformers are advocating, committees are likely to put them towards communications rather than policy positions.

These findings comport with theories put forward in earlier chapters in this volume that point out not a simple need for greater capacity to accomplish legislative goals in Congress (as we find in our first Hypothesis), but that reformers should also consider more diverse applications of this capacity in the attempt to maximize legislative productivity and quality.⁵² Over the course of the last several decades, the responsibilities of the federal government, and of Congress in particular, have grown in both size and complexity (Sinclair 1989, 2016), while at the same time a great deal of

⁵² See Chapter 1 (Drutman and LaPira), and Chapter 2 (Baumgartner and Jones) within the edited volume in particular.

congressional action has been crippled by partisan gridlock (Layman and Carsey 2002; Theriault 2008) and increased competition between the two major parties for majority control (Lee 2016). Our findings in particular demonstrate that different types of staffers with distinct expertise are necessary to navigate both the new legislative complexities that Congress must face, as well as the political ones.

These parallel responsibilities that Congress is expected to address are often in conflict with each other: ideal policy goals are political untenable to enough lawmakers to gain passage, and partisan political goals are thwarted by the reality of a diverse, complex nation with both old and emerging policy problems. Elected representatives are the embodiment of this conflict, often pulled in different directions by policy and political priorities alike. But at the committee level, legislative success can happen only when these differing goals converge not just in the individual, but between lawmakers.

The findings in this chapter demonstrate that congressional staff members at the committee level are well-suited to facilitate this convergence. Staffers, with their particular issue expertise and talents, can use their individual types of experience to enhance the chances of passing substantive legislation that serves the policy and political needs of both members and constituents. Policy staffers can use their issue expertise to create quality legislation within the committee; and senior staffers can work alongside them to anticipate political complexities and put the legislation in the best position to succeed, not just at the committee level, but at the chamber level as well. As for the committee structure at large, this division of responsibility is clearly

assists in passing substantive legislation, and particularized staffing resources help solve the broader problem of congressional inaction in an age of intense partisan conflict.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

No matter the time or occasion, it is rare to see a member of Congress without any staff following a half a step behind the boss, hands full of phones and binders, ready to assist. As elected representatives, members face a list of job demands far too long to check off themselves and have long turned to hired aides for assistance in doing so.

Consequently, lawmakers, journalists, and academics alike regularly identify congressional staff as a primary institutional resource who are imperative to the functioning of individual member-offices, congressional committees, and Congress as an institution. After all, for nearly every action taken by a member of Congress—from a vote on the House floor to a speech given in the district to setting up meetings with important stakeholders—staff are involved, scheduling, researching, writing, advising.

But, despite the acknowledgement of staff importance from those who know the Hill best, these behind-the-scenes-aides remain behind-the-scenes far too often.

Particularly in recent decades, very little scholarly attention has been devoted to the vital support roles played by hired staffers, from casework to drafting and advancing policy proposals. It is a puzzling dynamic: observers know and admit staff are imperative to each congressional office, personal and committee, yet most still treat members as unitary actors rather than heads of an enterprise employing over a dozen aides who are responsible for much of the work in the member's name. As a result, though with a few

important exceptions, (e.g., McCrain 2018a; Montgomery and Nyhan 2017) the roles, characteristics, and impacts of staff in the modern congressional environment remain largely unknown and unquantified.

This dissertation addresses some of the literature's lingering questions, even misconceptions, regarding how members make use of their staffing resources and the ultimate effects aides have within personal and committee offices. To fully understand why and how Congress works the way it does, staff must be a part of the discussion. By focusing on member use and the impacts of the thousands of congressional aides, this dissertation contributes to a more informed understanding of congressional operations, member motives and behaviors, and policymaking in Congress.

I began the study by detailing the legislative and congressional reform efforts that increased and institutionalized staffing resources available to members. I also detailed the high levels of agency members enjoy regarding staffing decisions within their personal offices via the Members' Representational Allowance (MRA). Additionally, I provided a rare empirical look into modern day staff patterns within the House of Representatives, including the degrees to which members vary in how they allocate their appropriated funds to different functions, such as constituent service and policy positions.

But, the true contributions of this dissertation come from both the scope of staffer-level data used and the quantitative tests and results the data help produce. Using such authoritative sources as official House statements of disbursements and the *Congressional Yellowbook*, often going back to as early as 2001, this study provides

empirically-grounded insights to the use and impact of staffers on three important staffing topics that congressional observers have, to-date, left unsubstantiated: measures of staffer experience and expertise; turnover of aides and its impact; and the effects of different types of aides on various committee outputs.

6.1 Longer tenures isn't the only valued form of staffer expertise

As in any other professions, some employees become known to be better at their job than most others. Congress is no different. While much of the journalistic and scholarly attention is spent identifying and explaining which members are the most effective in their roles, numerous articles and observational studies have highlighted instances in which staffers have earned a reputation as a true source of expertise (e.g., Malbin (1980)). These accounts of influential staffers are quick to point to the years of service as a main reason why a particular aide has earned such a reputation; longer tenured aides are said to have developed issue area expertise because of their years of experience. Though empirically unverified to-date, the expertise of a staffer is assumed to be solely generated from an aide's length of service on the Hill.

In chapter 3, I argue that the proxy of tenure as expertise ignores the vital importance of, and the premium members place on, a staffer's ability to generate collaborative information networks and coalitions. In the legislative context, it is one thing to master a single policy's ins and outs but quite another to be able to identify political opportunities and drum up the support—inside and outside of Congress—necessary to advance legislation. For policy aides responsible for issue areas on behalf of their member-boss, I suggest expertise can come in at least two different forms: longer

service on the Hill and wider networks operationalized by working in more congressional offices.

Ultimately, I find that members value both forms of expertise when deciding which of their policy staffers should be responsible for the House's most prestigious and policy-laden issue areas. As expected, lawmakers value longer tenures on Capitol Hill for issues such as *appropriations*, *foreign affairs*, and *taxes*. But, I show that members also seek more networked aides to handle these important legislative responsibilities, and often do so over aides with longer tenures. These findings demonstrate that staff with wider networks, deeper ties to interest groups, and connections to more congressional offices maintain a different, yet necessary, form of expertise that benefits their bosses' coverage on the issues.

By being the first to leverage issue portfolios of House policy staffers, this study shows that members value in their staffers what observers know to be important aspects of policymaking and politics, in general: contacts and relationships. Altogether, in showing that members value both more tenured and networked aides—sometimes independently of each other—for certain legislative assignments, chapter 3 offers insight into which characteristics contribute to staffers' earning reputations inside and outside the chamber as 'unelected issue leaders' (Hammond 1996).

6.2 Turnover isn't as systemic as feared, but where it exists it has negative consequences

The second empirical study within this dissertation analyzes one of the most pervasive normative concerns regarding congressional staffers: levels of staff turnover. Many fear

that lawmakers offices are made up of inexperienced staffers who are soon to cash in on their Capitol Hill networks and experience for more lucrative positions as lobbyists or consultants. Consequently, observers caution that much of the work done in Congress, including writing legislation, is executed by novice staffers who depart after short stints, ultimately depleting the institutional memory necessary for the body to efficiently and effectively function. As put by one congressional reporter, staff turnover is thought to be so bad, “The most powerful nation on Earth is run largely by 24-year olds.”⁵³

In chapter 4, I draw on the economics and business management literatures to theorize why members with higher levels of salary weighted collective turnover—that is, the proportion of staff salaries within a lawmakers’ office that depart each year—are likely to be less active and successful in producing and advancing policy. Using a novel dataset of officially reported statements of disbursements submitted to the House Chief Administrative Officer, I provide the first longitudinal empirical analysis of collective turnover rates for every member of Congress since 2001 and test the impacts that higher rates of turnover have on legislative productivity and effectiveness.

Two important findings result. First, concerning high rates of salary weighted turnover are far less systematic than many observers caution. Most offices experience healthy rates of staff replacement with about 20 percent of its office salaries departing in any given year, a percentage on par or lower than most other private sector

⁵³ Luke Rosiak, “Congressional staffers, public shortchanged by high turnover, low pay.” *The Washington Times*. June 6, 2012. Available at, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/jun/6/congressional-staffers-public-shortchanged-by-high/>

industries. Second, I show that when offices do experience higher proportions of salaries that turnover, members are less effective policymakers. Results from stringent within-member models demonstrate that lawmakers who experience a higher proportion of salaries that depart the member's office are both less legislatively active and less successful ushering substantive bills through the various stages of the legislative process. Put directly, members constantly hiring new aides face a comparative disadvantage compared to their House colleagues who lead and maintain more stable offices.

In addition to its data advances, this chapter provides strong evidence of member-dependence on staff to carry out legislative duties expected of them as Representatives and contributes to our understanding of the role of staff in creating and advancing public policies within Congress. Further, this chapter provides a much needed empirical context to the popular normative caution often found in the growing congressional capacity literature that staff turnover ultimately leads to more executive branch and special interest influence. Given the results from this chapter, recommendations for improving the congressional staffer work environment may benefit from knowing that turnover may not be as pervasive as often portrayed, but when levels are high, lawmakers, their policy effectiveness, and the institution are all negatively impacted.

6.3 More than policy staff is needed to get committee bills reported and passed

The final empirical chapter of this dissertation focuses on staffing resources within congressional committees. Largely by virtue of their more focused jurisdictions, many academics, Hill veterans, and journalists characterize committees as repositories of issue area expertise not only because members are able to specialize, but because they are staffed with longer tenured aides devoted to the committee's topics. Particularly within the congressional capacity literature, committee policy aides are framed as the true drivers of a committee's legislative productivity; that if Congress only had more policy experts on committees, a greater number of sound policy proposals would break through the polarized institution and be signed into law.

Within chapter 5, I argue that most scholarly and journalistic accounts paint committee aides with too broad of a brush. I theorize that though committee aides are crucial drivers of legislative productivity for the committees for which they work, not all committee aides are created equal; they are not a singular resource responsible for the same tasks. Instead, different types of committee staffers affect different committee outputs at different stages of the policy process. Using a novel dataset of all committee staffers job titles within each House committee from 2001-2017, I assess the extent to which increases in staff resources drive legislative productivity and which types of staffers are most consequential in these efforts.

I demonstrate that increases in committee staff support result in substantive and statistically significant increases in three measures of common committee outputs: number of important bills reported out of committee; number of important bills that

pass the House; and the number of committee hearings held. Though an important finding, highlighting the impacts of more staff tells us little about which staff are responsible for producing which outputs. By delineating job titles into specific position groupings, I show that the type of committee productivity is contingent on aides with specific responsibilities and expertise. *Policy staffers*, for example, are crucial to the early legislative process of producing quality legislation that gets reported out of committee. But it is *senior staffers* plugged into more congressional offices and outside organizations who are the driving force behind their successful passage out of the chamber.

Findings presented in chapter 5 corroborate the widely-held assumption that staffers with issue area expertise are most able to develop policies that move through the legislative process. Additionally, the chapter identifies an important overlooked element in our understanding of congressional committees, their staffing resources, and ultimate productivity: certain staffers, because of their job responsibilities and specific skill sets, are more impactful at different stages of the policymaking process. Those concerned with the level of staffing resources available to congressional committees—particularly in an era of concentrated power within leadership offices—would be wise to heed the finding that the type of committee staff matters. Allocating the right staff at the right time is vital.

6.4 Concluding thoughts

The theories and results presented within this dissertation are some of the first few steps towards empirically quantifying the impacts of congressional staff on member

decisions and policy outcomes within Congress. In previous decades—following increased staffing resources being allocated to individual members to cope with their increasing demands—scholars paid particular attention to the roles and importance of staffers in efforts to explain policymaking processes that largely took place behind-the-scenes. At the time, scholars suggested that the influence of particular aides on policy outcomes was being overlooked, and in order to provide the most complete explanation of how Capitol Hill worked, staff warranted more study. I argue the same is true today.

Members are incredibly busy, and thus, depend heavily on their hired hands to help them execute the many functions of their office in their name. From writing policy to facilitating committee hearings, congressional aides are constantly involved. Yet, despite their involvement, congressional staff remain largely discounted in favor of the member. As scholars, we know staff matter, but we are just beginning to quantify how, how much, and when.

Findings from this dissertation offer new and intriguing answers to important staffer-related questions. But, they also produce more questions that future research should investigate to gain a more informed understanding into the legislative enterprises of Congress. Most notably, this dissertation does not examine the many potential interesting questions regarding the number one staffer frustration with the congressional work experience: pay. Among other lines of pay-related inquiries, future research should detail how increased staffer pay impacts the tenure lengths of aides, if better pay results in a more satisfactory work environment, and how it affects the number of staff that depart for lobbying shops upon leaving the Hill.

Also unstudied in this dissertation are Senate aides, and their similarities and differences to House staffers. Gender gaps in positions, pay, and policy portfolios, especially across chambers and political parties also merit study. Importantly, individual staffer level data is becoming more and more available to scholars and good-government researchers. Increased data availability and new statistical techniques will greatly advance our understanding of staff impacts on member decisions, Hill processes, and policymaking in Congress. And, of course, qualitative research from the member-perspective will help inform scholars of exactly what members look for in their aides, how much leeway certain aides have in making decisions on behalf of the member, and how lawmakers vary in running their legislative enterprises.

Admittedly, the topic of congressional staffing is a narrow one, even to scholars who study Congress and its processes. After all, most know members need their staff, and each office has some policy staff and several aides located in the district to work on constituent issues and requests. For many observers, that is enough. It is my hope that this dissertation begins to convince readers that there is far more to know about staff and their impacts. Capitol Hill would look far different without its thousands of anonymous aides. This dissertation is just the first step in showing us why.

Appendix

Chapter 3 Appendix

Table A.3.1. Frequency of staffer job titles assigned minimum of one legislative responsibility

Title of Policy Aide	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Percent
Legislative Assistant	609	30.18	30.18
Legislative Director	325	16.11	46.28
Legislative Correspondent	128	6.34	52.63
Senior Legislative Assistant	104	5.15	57.78
Chief of Staff	83	4.11	61.89
Legislative Counsel	50	2.48	64.37
Legislative Aide	46	2.28	66.65
Deputy Chief of Staff/Legislative Director	45	2.23	68.88
Staff Assistant	34	1.68	70.56
Deputy Chief of Staff	33	1.64	72.2
Senior Policy Advisor	32	1.59	73.79
Military Legislative Assistant	24	1.19	74.98
Legislative Fellow	21	1.04	76.02
Scheduler	20	0.99	77.01
Communications Director	18	0.89	77.9
Caseworker	11	0.55	78.44
Legislative Correspondent/ Staff Assist.	11	0.55	78.99
Policy Advisor	11	0.55	79.53

Table A.3.2. Legislative responsibilities and their committees of jurisdiction

Legislative Responsibility	Committee of Jurisdiction
Agriculture	Agriculture
Animals	Agriculture
Appropriations	Appropriations
Armed Services	Armed Services
Budget	Budget
Commerce	Energy and Commerce
Defense	Armed Services
Education	Education and Workforce
Energy	Energy and Commerce
Environment	Energy and Commerce
Financial Services	Financial Services
Foreign Affairs	Foreign Affairs
Healthcare	Education and Workforce
Homeland Security	Homeland Security
Housing	Financial Services
Immigration	Judiciary
Intelligence	Intelligence
Judiciary Issues	Judiciary
Labor	Education and Workforce
LGBTQ Issues	Judiciary
Medicaid	Energy and Commerce
Medicare	Energy and Commerce

Natural Resources

Postal Issues

Science/Technology

Small Business Issues

Social Security

Taxes

Telecommunications

Trade

Transportation/Infrastructure

Veterans' Affairs

Welfare

Natural Resources

Oversight

Science and Technology

Small Business

Ways and Means

Ways and Means

Energy and Commerce

Energy and Commerce

Transportation and Infrastructure

Veterans' Affairs

Education and Workforce

Table A.3.3. Logistic regression results for each legislative responsibility

Legislative Responsibility	Hill Tenure	Office Count	MC Tenure
Agriculture	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.01*** (0.01)
Animals	-0.06** (0.01)	-0.45*** (0.11)	-0.000 (0.01)
Appropriations	0.10*** (0.01)	0.28*** (0.07)	-0.02** (0.01)
Armed Services	-0.03 (0.02)	0.01 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.01)
Budget	0.04*** (0.01)	0.30*** (0.06)	-0.02*** (0.01)
Commerce	0.02 (0.01)	0.22** (0.09)	-0.03*** (0.01)
Defense	0.02 (0.01)	0.09 (0.06)	-0.01** (0.01)
Education	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.07 (0.07)	-0.01*** (0.01)
Energy	0.02 (0.01)	0.17*** (0.06)	-0.02*** (0.01)
Environment	0.02 (0.01)	0.04 (0.06)	-0.01*** (0.01)
Financial Services	-0.01 (0.02)	0.18** (0.08)	-0.02*** (0.01)
Foreign Affairs	-0.02 (0.01)	0.21*** (0.07)	-0.01** (0.01)
Healthcare	0.03** (0.01)	0.09 (0.06)	-0.01*** (0.01)
Homeland Security	-0.03* (0.01)	0.15** (0.07)	-0.02** (0.01)
Housing	-0.05*** (0.01)	0.15 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.01)
Immigration	-0.001 (0.01)	0.04 (0.07)	-0.01*** (0.01)
Intelligence	-0.01 (0.02)	0.12 (0.10)	-0.02** (0.01)
Judiciary Issues	-0.03** (0.01)	0.18*** (0.07)	-0.01*** (0.01)

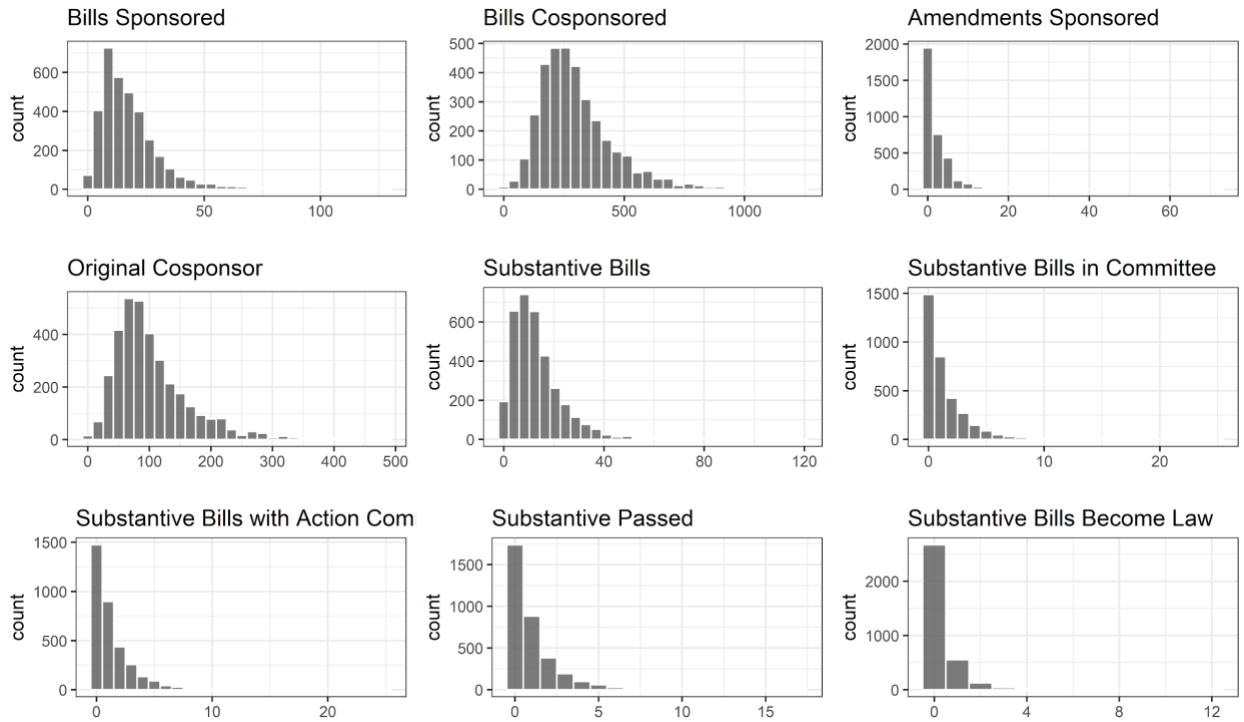
Labor	0.01 (0.01)	0.07 (0.07)	-0.01** (0.01)
LGBTQ Issues	0.02 (0.10)	-0.09 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.01)
Medicaid	0.04** (0.01)	0.05 (0.07)	-0.01** (0.01)
Medicare	0.05*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.01** (0.01)
Natural Resources	-0.001 (0.02)	0.10 (0.08)	-0.03*** (0.01)
Postal Issues	-0.05*** (0.02)	-0.28*** (0.09)	-0.01*** (0.01)
Science/Technology	-0.03* (0.01)	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.02*** (0.01)
Small Business Issues	-0.02 (0.02)	0.11 (0.07)	-0.02*** (0.01)
Social Security	0.03** (0.02)	-0.14** (0.07)	-0.01 (0.01)
Taxes	0.03** (0.01)	0.24*** (0.06)	-0.02*** (0.01)
Telecommunications	-0.03 (0.01)	0.08 (0.07)	-0.02** (0.01)
Trade	0.03** (0.01)	0.16** (0.07)	-0.01*** (0.01)
Transportation/Infrastructure	0.03** (0.01)	0.17*** (0.06)	-0.02** (0.01)
Veterans' Affairs	0.02** (0.01)	0.001 (0.07)	-0.01*** (0.01)
Welfare	-0.03* (0.02)	-0.13 (0.11)	-0.01*** (0.01)
Women's Issues	-0.01 (0.02)	0.04 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.01)

Notes: Dependent variable is each individual legislative responsibility. Coefficients found using logistic regression with standard errors clustered at the member level.

*p < .1, **p < .05, ***p < .01

Chapter 4 Appendix

Figure A.4.1: Histograms of Legislative Activity and Effectiveness Variables, 107th - 114th Congresses



Chapter 5 Appendix

Table A.5.1. Staff classification by job title: regular expression initial keywords⁵⁴

Policy	Communications	Administrative	Senior Staff
Legislative	Communications	Administrative	Chief of Staff
Policy	Press	Staff Assistant	Leader
Research	Media	Scheduler	Staff Director
Counsel	Social	Accountant	
Legal	Writer	Clerk	
Adviser	Photog	Intern	
Analyst	Specialist	Page	
Investigative	Public Liaison	Parking	
Fellow	Radio	Professional Assistant	
Economist	Television	Receptionist	
Health	Community	Office Manager	
Budget	Outreach	Office Administrator	
Appropriatio n	Speech	Assistant to Rep	
Grants		Assistant to Sen	
National			
Security		Executive Assistant	
		Systems	
		Information Tech	
		Network	

⁵⁴ Many of these regular expressions captured elements of multiple staff types (about 20% of those that were captured overall). We sorted these overlapping job titles and manually coded those appearing most frequently, cutting the proportion of overlapping titles down to about 2% of all captured titles. These overlapping titles are contained within the roughly 5% of total unclassified titles that remain, as per **Figure 5.1**.

Table A.5.2. Resulting staff grouping examples by title⁵⁵

Policy	Communications	Administrative	Senior Staff
Legislative Director	Communications Director	Office Manager	Chief of Staff
Legislative Assistant	Press Secretary	Scheduler	Deputy Chief of Staff
Legislative Correspondent	Deputy Press Secretary	Financial Administrator	Staff Director
Policy Director	Press Assistant	Financial Services Administrator	Deputy Staff Director
Policy Adviser	Speechwriter	Director of Operations	Rep/Dem Staff
Counsel/Legal	Digital Media Manager	Director of Information Technology	Director
Policy Coordinator	Social Media Manager	Systems/Network Administrator	
Clerk	New Media Manager	Staff Assistant	
Research Assistant	Web Manager		
Fellow			

⁵⁵ Over the 2001-2017 time period, there were just over 2,000 unique job titles given to committee staffers. This list is therefore not exhaustive, but represents a sample of the most common titles. Many were variations on common titles (i.e. *Legislative Assistant/Analyst/Associate/Aide, Chief/Assistant Policy Counsel, Digital Media Director/Manager*, etc.)

Table A.5.3. Effects of lagged total staff support on committee outputs, 2001-2016

Dependent Variable	Important		
	Important Legislation Reported	Legislation Passed Chamber	Number of Hearings Held
Total Staff Support	0.19 (0.27)	-0.25 (0.30)	0.10 (0.18)
Unified Congress	0.02 (0.09)	0.14 (0.10)	-0.07 (0.06)
Election Year	-0.96*** (0.09)	-0.88*** (0.10)	-0.19*** (0.06)
Cmte. Chair Turnover	-0.54* (0.30)	-0.43 (0.32)	-0.25 (0.18)
Cmte. Chair Tenure Length	0.01 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.05** (0.02)
Cmte. Size (Members)	0.01* (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.01** (0.006)
Exogenous Policy Shock	-0.47** (0.16)	-0.54** (0.18)	0.06 (0.10)
Cmte. Authorization Year	-0.21 (0.24)	-0.31 (0.27)	-0.38** (0.18)
Cmte. Jurisdiction Count	-0.05 (0.04)	0.08 (0.05)	0.03 (0.04)
Constant	0.23 (1.01)	1.23 (1.12)	0.99 (0.76)
N	244	244	243

Notes: Results found using conditional fixed-effects negative binomial regression. The dependent variable (staff counts) is lagged by one year).

*p < .1, **p < .05, ***p < .01

Table A.5.4. Effects of lagged staff position group counts on committee outputs, 2001-2016

Dependent Variable	Important		
	Important Legislation Reported	Legislation Passed Chamber	Number of Hearings Held
Policy Staff Support	0.19 (0.14)	0.06 (0.15)	0.05 (0.10)
Communications Staff Support	-0.003 (0.13)	0.14 (0.15)	-0.15* (0.09)
Administrative Staff Support	-0.18 (0.12)	-0.18 (0.14)	-0.11 (0.09)
Senior Staff Support	0.33** (0.14)	0.25 (0.15)	0.28*** (0.10)
Unified Congress	0.08 (0.09)	0.19* (0.10)	-0.06 (0.06)
Election Year	-0.97*** (0.09)	-0.85*** (0.10)	-0.19*** (0.06)
Cmte. Chair Turnover	-0.52* (0.30)	-0.40 (0.31)	-0.25 (0.18)
Cmte. Chair Tenure Length	-0.001 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.05** (0.02)
Cmte. Size (Members)	0.01 (0.008)	0.02** (0.01)	0.01** (0.01)
Exogenous Policy Shock	-0.42*** (0.16)	-0.50*** (0.18)	0.08 (0.10)
Cmte. Authorization Year	-0.26 (0.22)	-0.35 (0.27)	-0.41** (0.17)
Cmte. Jurisdiction Count	0.07 (0.05)	0.09* (0.05)	0.06* (0.04)
Constant	0.23 (0.62)	0.31 (0.68)	1.06** (0.51)
N	244	244	243

Notes: Results found using conditional fixed-effects negative binomial regression. The staff position grouping dependent variables are lagged by one year.

*p < .1, **p < .05, ***p < .01

Table A.5.5. Explanation and data sources of key variables

Variable	Explanation
Imp. Bills Reported from Cmte.	Count of substantively "important" bills reported out of committee per committee-year from Adler and Wilkinson's (2006) "Congressional Bills Project
Imp. Cmte. Bills Passed Chamber	Count of substantively "important" bills reported out of committee passed by chamber per committee-year from Adler and Wilkinson's (2006) "Congressional Bills Project
Number of Hearings Held	Count of number of hearings per committee-year from Adler and Wilkinson's (2006) "Congressional Bills Project
Total Staff	Count of Total Staff per committee-year from LegiStorm congressional staff employment database/House Statements of Disbursements
Policy Staff	Count of Policy Staff per committee-year based on job titles from LegiStorm congressional staff employment database/House Statements of Disbursements
Communications Staff	Count of Communications Staff per committee-year based on job titles from LegiStorm congressional staff employment database/House Statements of Disbursements
Administrative Staff	Count of Administrative Staff per committee-year based on job titles from LegiStorm congressional staff employment database/House Statements of Disbursements
Senior Staff	Count of Senior Staff per committee-year based on job titles from LegiStorm congressional staff employment database/House Statements of Disbursements
Unified Congress	Dummy variable (House and Senate majorities of same party=1)
Election Year	Dummy variable (year of election=1)
Cmte. Chair Turnover	Dummy variable (committee chair turned over within committee-year=1)
Cmte. Chair Tenure Length	Tenure length (years) as chair of committee chair

Cmte. Size (Members)	Count of committee members per committee-year
Exogenous Policy Shock	Dummy variable (committee responded with important legislation in response to exogenous shock in a given year=1), examples include recovery funds out of Homeland Sec. Committee after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and 2006
Cmte. Authorization Year	Dummy variable (committee-specific authorization bill passed=1), examples include Farm Bill for Ag. Committee and NDAA for Armed Services
Cmte. Jurisdiction Count	Number of major policy topics under each committee's jurisdiction

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