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THE DESTRUCTION OF ISSUE MONOPOLIES IN CONGRESS

BRYAN D. JONES, FRANK R. BAUMGARTNER and
JEFFERY C. TALBERT *Texas A&M University*

Scholars studying congressional committees have noted the potential for members to seek membership on particular committees, leading to bias. Underpinning this line of scholarship is what might be termed a theory of comparative committee statics, characterized by a cross-sectional empirical approach. We present a new approach that focuses on the dynamics of jurisdictional control. By following a series of issues through the committee hearing process, we show that there is indeed significant issue bias in particular committee venues. However, we also find that new committees often claim jurisdiction over issues as they are redefined in the political process. The degree of jurisdictional monopoly enjoyed by different committees has been overlooked in the literature on this topic in spite of its importance in determining the nature of representation of interests in Congress.

Since Woodrow Wilson's classic study of Congress over a century ago, political scientists have developed a careful picture of the congressional committee system and its role in the American policy process (1956 [1885]). There is, of course, a great range in how committees in Congress operate, and the committee system as a whole has changed over time. Various reform movements have affected the balance of authority between committees and the central structure. Nevertheless, a reasonably clear and coherent theory of committee operation has emerged, with major formal and empirical developments in recent years. We might term this theory a theory of committee statics, because it treats the existing institutional structure of Congress as given. In formal approaches, this allows the analysis of committee activity under a set of parameters—basically, the rules governing the assignment of members to committees and the processing of bills. Similarly, the vast bulk of empirical studies of congressional committees has been cross-sectional in design.

In both formal and empirical research studies on congressional committees, one question has dominated: How do the views of committee members differ from the views of the chamber as a whole, and how might this potential bias affect legislative outcomes? A policy process lodged in policy subsystems centering on congressional committees could be quite different from one governed by the preferences of chamber members as a whole. Of course, no student of Congress ignores the great changes that have affected the institution over the decades; but our theories focus on the regularities in behavior, not the changes. Committees are "structure-induced equilibria" that both channel proposals and "empower veto groups" (Shepsle 1979, 36). That is, they are mechanisms for devolving policymaking to subsystems, yielding policy outcomes that can be different from those which might be supported by the chamber as a whole.

In this article, we first add important new empirical evidence that supports the static view of committee

bias. Then we show that the standard static view is incomplete and probably misleading without an explicit consideration of the dynamics of jurisdictional control. Our new evidence on committee statics comes from considering the particulars of policy content as they are processed by committees. While most analysts of committee structures have focused on a given committee or set of committees, comparing the behavior or votes of their members to those of nonmembers, we adopt a different strategy. First, we identify a series of issues. Then, for each issue, we note the committees and subcommittees that have claimed jurisdiction over them at different periods in time. Our examination of the committee hearing process for a diverse set of issues, including pesticides, nuclear power, tobacco, and drug abuse, shows that committees tend to hold hearings that are favorable to the interests they oversee and that they attract primarily friendly witnesses. The results presented here are based on analysis of almost three thousand hearings during the postwar period.

In the second part, we consider committee dynamics. When we take a longitudinal view of the same issues that we use to show the policy-relevant cross-sectional biases, we find that these biases change dramatically over time and in ways that would not be predicted or understood by a cross-sectional view of the question. Committees are not granted permanent jurisdictional monopolies over the issues under their control at any given time. In fact, change in jurisdictional boundaries is quite common in Congress. Since the degree of jurisdictional control that any given committee may have over a particular issue may vary over time, the question of committee bias must be combined with a question of jurisdictional control in order to understand the impact of committees on policy outcomes.

As we shall see, the empirical findings from our analysis lead directly to the inference that the congressional committee system may be best depicted as a *network of punctuated equilibria*, with each committee possibly holding jurisdiction for a time, then losing

out to other committees that are able to assert control over some aspects of a policy issue. When we add a consideration of the dynamics of jurisdictional control, we can see that a theory of committee statics cannot be used as a guide to understanding the policy role of the congressional committee system. Further, one can easily imagine that where committee behavior corresponds to the views of the parent chamber or falls within a zone of indifference or where deference to chamber norms seem more important than potential policy differences, few will complain or seek to alter the jurisdiction or power of the committee. Where controversy erupts over the perceived biases of committee members, any jurisdictional privileges that exist may be attacked and possibly eliminated. Controversy, issue definitions, and competition for control over emerging issues constitute important elements in the policymaking process within Congress; we pay special attention to these ideas here.

COMPARATIVE COMMITTEE STATICS

The term *comparative statics* has been used by Shepsle and Weingast to refer to equilibrium analysis that allows the comparison of outcomes under an assumed change of the underlying parameters (Krehbiel, Shepsle, and Weingast 1987). We use the term similarly, but in a broader context. In particular, we suggest a reconstruction of a diverse and voluminous literature that rests on three basic premises.

PROPOSITION 1. *The committee system derives from the necessity of the division of labor within Congress.*

The committee structure allows the chamber to accomplish two goals. First, it allows specialization and what Herbert Simon has termed the parallel processing of issues (Simon 1983; see also Simon 1977, 1985). Second, as Shepsle (1979) has shown, it allows the chamber to overcome the problem of cyclical voting by limiting policy conflict to a single dimension within each committee. This allows the voting system within committees to reach equilibrium. "Jurisdictional arrangements not preference distributions create equilibrium" (Shepsle 1979, 48; see also Riker 1980, 1982).

PROPOSITION 2. *Committee jurisdictions are based on policy content, even though other forms of division of labor are possible.*

That is, some committees in Congress handle procedural matters (e.g., the House Rules Committee), but most are policy specialists (Shepsle 1978). The decision to divide labor along policy lines has important implications, which we shall indicate.

PROPOSITION 3. *The assignment of members of committees, while subject to institutional constraints, allows considerable room for the exercise of individual member objectives.*

In particular, subject-matter expertise and electoral considerations are important (Hall 1993; Hinckley

1971, 1975; Masters 1961; Shepsle 1978). As a consequence, committees are to a considerable extent formed from members who are interested in the committees' subject-matter jurisdictions. In recent years, the Senate has made committee membership more broadly available, to reflect a reward structure that has come to emphasize broad involvement in numerous issues, while the House has continued to offer fewer committee assignments and more policy specialization (Sinclair 1988); but this does not negate the central premise that policymaking within committees generally devolves to those interested in the policy area of question.

These three statements are not logical premises or assumptions but, rather, empirical findings. They find strong support in the literature and are not generally questioned by congressional scholars. From these basic premises, four somewhat more controversial propositions can be inferred and analyzed:

PROPOSITION 4. *Committee recommendations carry strong weight in floor deliberations.*

The chamber is seen to give deference to committee positions because of institutional procedures, information advantages, and norms of reciprocity. Congressional scholars have engaged in spirited debate over the role of various procedures in promoting committee power (see Krehbiel, Shepsle, and Weingast 1987; Shepsle and Weingast 1987). Krehbiel and Rivers (1988) report that committees anticipate the majority chamber preference in reporting bills (but see Wilkerson 1991). Krehbiel has gone on to argue that committee power is not rooted so much in procedures as in the ability of committees to provide information to the chamber: "Committees earn the compliance of their parent chamber by convincing the chamber that what the committee wants is in the chamber's interest" (1991, 256). Although scholars have questioned whether committee power has waned under the reform rules of the 1970s, Krehbiel contends that this has not affected the fundamental manner in which committees operate. On the other hand, Smith and Deering (1990) indicate that the committee system is considerably weaker now than in the past, in part because of the flow of new issues that did not fall neatly into the existing jurisdictions of committees. This suggests that the relationship between the chamber and its committees may change over time (Sinclair 1989).

PROPOSITION 5. *Congressional committees are the legislative linchpins of policy subsystems.*

Political scientists are not entirely agreed on the nature of policy subsystems and how enduring they are. The "ideal type" subsystem, described most elaborately by Maass (1951) for the Corps of Engineers in the late 1940s, involved a congressional committee, an executive agency, and one or more interest associations. Hecl (1978) and Berry (1989) have argued that the old pattern of tight-knit policy subsystems have given way to more fluid systems. On the other hand, Redford (1960, 1969) and Riley

(1990) suggest that there always existed substantial fluidity in many policy subsystems. At any rate, there is general consensus that policymaking is disproportionately influenced by interested parties and that congressional committees play the lead legislative role in acting as intermediaries between the chamber and the policy community, even where the policy community is fluid and sometimes conflictual.

PROPOSITION 6. *Committees' policy positions are often not representative of the chamber's, yet the chamber often defers to them.*

This proposition seems to flow so easily from the preceding that it was for a long time the prevailing wisdom—at least if one understands bias to apply to the policy arena and not to ideological orientation (see Niskanen 1971). The concentration of interested congressmen, the procedural advantage given to committee activities and the chamber norms of deference and reciprocity acted to give great advantage to interests organized through subsystems (Fenno 1973; Shepsle and Weingast 1987). In particular, the role of committees as agenda setters has been emphasized; that is, they can formulate propositions that can garner support in the general assembly and reject proposals that the majority might support but that are not in the interests of the constituencies of the members of the committee.

Surprisingly, however, Krehbiel (1990) reports that committee members are not generally preference outliers in their voting behavior in comparison to the entire chamber. And Krehbiel and Rivers (1988) suggest that even where committees are preference outliers, they may report bills closer to the median of the chamber in order to win support for their measures. Hall and Grofman (1990) have countered that it is not enough to compare committee members' roll-call votes with those of noncommittee members, since the latter may simply defer to the former's more intense interest in the issue. More persuasively, Hall and Wayman (1990) have argued that interest-group expenditures affect committee decision making in legislative markup sessions much more than in roll-call voting. Thus, they isolate a mechanism that would make committee proposals more responsive to interest-group influence than is member voting on the floor. Hall and his various coauthors have argued persuasively that committee membership affords members the opportunity not so much to vote differently from nonmembers as to become active in the development of legislation, affecting issues well before any floor action (Hall 1993; see also Hall and Grofman 1990). Looking only at roll-call votes could blind the researcher to important aspects of bias (see also Jackson and Kingdon 1992; VanDoren 1990, 1991).

PROPOSITION 7. *Because of the system of deference to the interested, the entire legislative process is biased.*

This is by far the most controversial proposition in the set. It is based on a chain of causation, namely, that congressmen get on committees because of their interests, that the distribution of preferences among

the intensely interested is different from the distribution of preferences in the chamber at large, and that committee positions can prevail in chamber debates. It must reject the notion of counterbalancing—that, for example, liberals dominate the education and welfare committees while conservatives dominate agriculture. Davidson notes that committees may be biased in different directions, perhaps yielding little overall bias in the legislative process (1981, 111). Nevertheless, it survives as one of the folk wisdoms of Congress in operation.

TOWARD A THEORY OF COMMITTEE DYNAMICS

Political scientists who have studied congressional committees through cross-sectional comparisons have sometimes noted the importance of change over time. All students of congressional committees recognize the role of changes in institutional rules on outcomes both within committees and on the floor. Weingast, for example, has written that "the evolution from 18–22 stable committees to 125–50 more fluid subcommittees dramatically reduced the effectiveness of the previous mechanisms underpinning negotiating and maintaining bargains [to keep committee members from defecting in floor debates]" (1989, 812). What characterizes the cross-sectional approach most fundamentally, however, is that it supposes that committee performance is conditional on a preexisting set of parameters, the most important of which is the existing rule structure. Shepsle and Weingast comment: "A mature institution is, in our view, an organization in equilibrium. Changes in its environment ripple through the institution" (Krehbiel, Shepsle, and Weingast 1987, 943). The assumption of equilibrium implies that the basic parameters of policymaking—the institutional "givens" that structure the processing of issues—are unchanging (or change only according to some other well specified rules).

Some scholars have pointed toward a more dynamic picture of committee operation. Davidson and Oleszek (1977), for example, see the committee structure as jeopardizing reforms that tout more centralized control, because committees are subject to "clientelism." This suggests that the deference of the committees to their clientele is in continual opposition to attempts by the legislative parties to impose central programmatic control. Such a dialectic is not easily reduced to equilibrium analysis, or at least, the models of committee equilibria that have been produced have not focused on this dynamic aspect of the relation between committee and chamber.

The most critical facet of committee behavior that is not compatible with the existing static view is how committee jurisdictions interact with developing policy issues. That is, committee statics treats issues as if they change little over time and as if they are easily and permanently assigned to the existing structure of

committees. Shepsle and Weingast refer to committees (at least in the past) as "hegemons" (Krehbiel, Shepsle, and Weingast 1987, 942). Relaxing this unstated assumption brings into question the bias of individual committees and of the whole legislative system. If a committee is unable to maintain monopoly control over a policy issue, then membership bias of the committee is not particularly relevant.

Jurisdictional strife and competition among committees are important parts of congressional behavior (see King 1992). Committees are constantly changing their jurisdictions, both through attempts to grab parts of large issues as they become more important and through unavoidable redefinitions as new policy problems rise on the governmental agenda. In their study of energy politics in the 1970s, Charles Jones and Randall Strahan write that "congressional response [to the oil shocks of the 1970s] took on the character of the Oklahoma land rush. . . . The proliferation of committees and subcommittees claiming jurisdiction over energy policy dramatically expanded the number of members, congressional staff, and lobbyists participating in the issue area" (1985, 153; see also Jones 1975, 1979). It is important that Jones and Strahan attribute the change in committee jurisdiction to the expansion of the issue, rather than congressional reforms, though we should not ignore the possibility of their interaction. As issues hit the congressional agenda, jurisdictional structures change. Thus, congressional committee jurisdictions should never be assumed to be fixed; in fact, their definition is an integral part of the policy process (see Riker 1983, 1984, 1986).

Though congressional scholars have often focused on how committees and subcommittees with established jurisdictions protect themselves from encroachments from others, some scholarship shows that jurisdictional change may be common. First, bills are increasingly referred to more than one committee. These now constitute about 20% of all referrals and a substantially higher percentage of major legislation (Young and Cooper 1993, 213-15; see also Davidson 1989; Davidson, Oleszek, and Kephart 1988; and Schneider 1980). Second, while the parliamentarian must refer a bill to the committee that has established jurisdiction in that area according to precedent, "authors of bills have learned to draft them cleverly so that they can be referred to the 'right' committee" (Davidson and Oleszek 1977, 51). David King (1991) has shown how jurisdictional battles are often resolved not by reinforcement of the status quo but by the formation of new jurisdictions. This causes the continual realigning of committee jurisdictions in response to changing issue definitions.

When one considers the policy process generally, changes in decision-making structures are an important element of entrepreneurial strategies (see Riker 1986). As Schattschneider (1960) noted, losers in the policy process have an incentive to attempt to change the venue of decision making. Within Congress, this means that the choice of committee that might retain jurisdiction can be an important element in deciding

the eventual outcome, so policymakers clearly have an incentive to attempt to manipulate it. Committee and subcommittee leaders similarly have an incentive to become active in areas where constituents may be affected, so there are both "push" and "pull" factors involved in jurisdictional dynamics. All of this does not mean that established jurisdictional boundaries can simply be ignored; of course they cannot. It simply means that there exist incentives for those within and outside of the committee structure to attempt to move issues from one body to another and that this potential dynamic may therefore be an important question to investigate.

Jurisdictional boundaries may be clearly delineated, and single committees may have exclusive jurisdiction over an issue. We term this state of affairs a *jurisdictional monopoly*. Jurisdictional monopolies seem especially common when an issue has low salience. In such policy environments, tight-knit policy subsystems thrive. This is the situation most often stylized as the structure-induced equilibrium in the formal literature. Committees that enjoy a jurisdictional monopoly and the general acquiescence of the larger body may find it necessary to hold few hearings, and those hearings that are conducted often have a "boosterism" quality to them. Such a situation is not guaranteed to be permanent, however. As Dion has pointed out, the equilibrium that might be induced by these structures will collapse quickly if the "previously indifferent" suddenly show greater interest and if their views are not the same as the interested committee members (1992, 476). This clearly is a variant of the expansion-of-conflict model described by Schattschneider decades ago.

As time goes on, issues that were once treated with indifference by the majority of legislators and relegated to the exclusive consideration of a single committee or group of committees may emerge on the public agenda. As the issue gains visibility, less deference to the wishes of a committee when a bill is considered on the floor is likely. Furthermore, other congressional committees may attempt to claim some jurisdiction through the scheduling of oversight hearings or the crafting of bills so that they will be steered away from traditional venues. These jurisdictional changes have the potential for much greater change in the long-run policy outcomes produced by Congress than the simple willingness or refusal of the floor to defer to the committee members. Through changes in jurisdictional assignments, old structures are replaced by new ones, thereby inducing new equilibria.

EMPIRICAL TESTS

The previous section argued for the importance of studying policy bias both cross-sectionally and longitudinally. In this section, we present empirical evidence on both these questions for several issues. First, we show the important cross-sectional bias that does indeed characterize much of congressional com-

mittee behavior. Second, we move beyond this question of bias by specialization to ask the question of the dynamics of jurisdictional monopoly. Committee bias is more important if it is coupled with jurisdictional control; where control must be shared with another set of committees that harbor different biases, then the overall effect may be mitigated. We shall therefore present first evidence concerning cross-sectional variation in committee behavior, then present the dynamic view.

Bias: Alive and Well in a Cross-sectional View

Studies of congressional committee bias have traditionally focused on the characteristics of members or their districts. The question of greatest interest has been whether committee members differ from the chamber at large in their policy preferences as revealed by either their voting behavior or the characteristics of the districts they represent (Hall and Grofman 1990; Krehbiel 1990; see also Hall 1992 and Hall and Evans 1990). Committees are more than assemblages of members, however. They are institutions with staffs, written and oral procedures, and networks of communications with executive agency personnel and lobbyists. They are venues for policy action. When viewed as an entire system, the structure of congressional committees and subcommittees affords many opportunities for strategic action. Committees, like other institutions of government, are dynamic structures. Fixed at any single time, they nonetheless change over the years.

In order to study the role of committees in influencing congressional agendas, we assembled and analyzed information on every congressional hearing concerning four important issues (civilian nuclear power, pesticides, smoking and tobacco, and drug abuse) either during the entire twentieth century or only during the postwar years—a total of 2,979 hearings. By noting systematically which committee and subcommittee held each hearing, we can trace which committees claim jurisdiction over which issues and note whether this jurisdiction is monopolistic or shared among competitors. For the cases of pesticides and smoking-and-tobacco hearings, we also noted information about each person who testified before Congress, noting (where possible) whether they represented industry, government, or lobbying groups and whether they were likely to be defending or attacking the industry in question. We gathered this information for over six thousand witnesses who testified on pesticides issues and over thirty-six hundred in the case of smoking. Because of the large scope and expense of that witness coding, we have limited this more extensive coding effort to only these two issues. While no selection of issues would be likely to constitute a truly representative sample of all possible issues, the data presented here constitute the largest effort to date to address these questions. They cover a range of types of issues and demonstrate a variety of properties concerning issue dynamics.

As venues for policy action, congressional committees and subcommittees may be more or less favorable to the major interests in a policy area. That is, while many committees may hold hearings on matters relevant to a given policy area, most committees can be categorized as likely to be more or less favorable to the affected interest. For example, agriculture committees are likely to be a more favorable venue for the pesticides industry than are health or environmental committees. While of course it may sometimes be difficult to reduce a policy debate to any single dimension, we find that for the issues chosen this simple dichotomy works remarkably well. In part, the ease in coding is due to our choice of issues. Since each of the issues discussed here includes an affected industry, we can typically break our coding down according to a simple rule. When coding the “tone” or the “venue” of a hearing, we asked, Would an industry leader be pleased or disappointed that these questions were being raised or that they were being raised by this group rather than by another?¹

According to our simple coding rule, discussion of toxic pesticides residues on apples is coded “negative,” because a pesticides industry official would probably prefer to discuss such “positives” as increased crop yields, decreased loss to pests, or improvements in safety techniques. If any of these issues were considered in the agriculture committees, then the venue would be coded as positive; if discussed in an environmental or health committee, then the venue would be coded as negative. By coding these two concepts—tone and venue—separately, we can empirically assess the differences in preoccupation of different sets of congressional bodies. In addition, our coding of witnesses appearing before these different bodies allows us further to investigate the potential bias of different groups of committees and subcommittees.

Our most important innovation in studying committee bias is in following a policy issue rather than a committee. That is, we pick an issue (e.g., pesticides policy) and then note which committees and subcommittees have held hearings on the topic. Thus, our method is (1) to isolate hearings on a topic, using Congressional Information Service keywords; (2) to note the bodies holding hearings; (3) to code the topics covered as generally favorable or hostile to the industry involved; (4) independently to code the probable favorableness of the committee venue toward the affected industry; and (5) in the cases of pesticides and smoking policy, to code witnesses as either favorable or unfavorable to the industry.

Committee Witnesses: Preaching to the Converted

For every hearing on the topic of pesticides from 1900 to 1988, we have coded each witness as representing a certain kind of interest: (1) agricultural, (2) environmental or health, or (3) other or uncodable. Agricultural interests included officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, farmers’ organizations, and pesticides manufacturers, as well as the individual

TABLE 1

The Correspondence between Witness and Venues in Congressional Hearings on Pesticides, 1900–1988 (%)

VENUE OF HEARINGS	TYPE OF WITNESS		TOTAL (N)
	AGRICULTURE OR PESTICIDES INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE	HEALTH OR ENVIRONMENTAL REPRESENTATIVE	
Agriculture	75.7	24.3	100.0 (2,103)
Health or environmental	27.5	72.5	100.0 (3,128)
Other or uncodable	47.9	52.1	100.0 (746)
Total	47.0	53.0	100.0 (5,977)

Note: Gamma = .78; tau-b = .47; chi-squared (1d.f.) = 1,174.2 ($p < .001$). An additional 996 witnesses could not be coded; they appeared in omnibus appropriations hearings and discussed other issues.

members of Congress whom we could identify as having strong proagriculture views. Environmental or health witnesses included officials from environmental organizations, health officials, and others whose affiliations made clear that they were health or environmental experts, rather than farming experts. Table 1 shows that of a total of 6,973 witnesses who appeared in hearings during the century, we were able to classify 86% of them into one of these two substantive categories. Intercoder reliability for this coding of witnesses was 98.2%. (For another example of coding witnesses at congressional hearings, see Jenkins-Smith, St. Clair, and Woods 1991; for another use of hearings data, see Hansen 1991.)

In the case of smoking, similar coding was performed, distinguishing among witnesses representing agricultural interests (including cigarette manufacturers), trade questions (usually concerning foreign restrictions on the import of American cigarettes), health questions, taxes, and an uncodable category. Two complications arise in the case of smoking that lead to a large number of uncodable witnesses: appropriations and trade hearings often tend to be omnibus affairs in which smoking-and-tobacco questions are but one of many items on the agenda. In these cases, we have included the witnesses discussing smoking and tobacco but omitted all others. Thus, we are left with a total of 3,616 codable witnesses, as shown in Table 2.

We coded the committees and subcommittees

holding the hearings in the same way as we coded the witnesses. Some committees were clearly pro-agriculture, others were clearly preoccupied with health and environmental questions, and still others could not be coded. In all, there were 385 hearings on pesticides topics from 1900 to 1988, held by 39 different committees and 89 different subcommittees. We have coded each of these committees or subcommittees as being part of the pro-agriculture venue, the health and environmental venue, or as part of another or uncodeable venue. This venue coding was done by referring to the title of the committee or subcommittee in question, independently of the topics of the particular hearings. Therefore we are confident that this venue coding is distinct from the question of tone of the topics considered, or the witnesses appearing before them. When this venue coding for pesticides hearings was done by a second coder, 95.2 percent of the cases were coded identically.

In the case of smoking, similar coding was performed, though Table 2 shows that we distinguished among three types of bodies: agriculture and trade bodies, which tend to promote the industry; health bodies, which tend to be more critical; and taxation bodies, which are negative, but in a different way than the health bodies.

Table 1 presents the relationship between the type of witness and the type of venue for pesticides; Table 2 shows the same relationship for smoking. Table 1

TABLE 2

The Correspondence between Witnesses and Venues in Congressional Hearings on Smoking, 1945–1986 (%)

VENUE OF HEARINGS	TYPE OF WITNESS			TOTAL (N)
	AGRICULTURE, TRADE, TOBACCO INDUSTRY	HEALTH	TAXATION	
Agriculture, trade	95.2	2.7	2.1	100.0 (2,510)
Health	28.3	71.4	.2	100.0 (829)
Taxation	21.7	17.0	61.4	100.0 (277)
Total	74.2	19.6	6.2	100.0 (3,616)

Note: Gamma = .91; tau-b = .71; chi-squared (4 d.f.) = 3,466 ($p < .001$). An additional 4,078 witnesses could not be coded. This large number stems mostly from appropriations and trade hearings, where smoking is one of many topics discussed; we coded only those witnesses discussing smoking.

TABLE 3

The Correspondence between Tone and Venue in Congressional Hearings on Pesticides and Civilian Nuclear Power (%)

VENUE	TONE			TOTAL (N)
	POSITIVE	NEUTRAL OR UNCODEABLE	CRITICAL	
Pesticides hearings, 1900–1988^a				
Agriculture committees	17.6	3.9	78.5	100.0 (102)
Neutral or uncodable committees	11.2	6.3	82.5	100.0 (63)
Health or environmental committees	1.8	5.0	93.2	100.0 (220)
Totals	7.5	4.9	87.5	100.0 (385)
Civilian nuclear power, 1944–86^b				
Booster committees	20.0	28.0	52.0	100.0 (611)
Neutral or uncodable committees	6.3	52.0	41.7	100.0 (352)
Critical committees	8.8	7.7	83.5	100.0 (274)
Total	13.6	30.3	56.1	100.0 (1,237)

^aGamma = .48; tau-b = .20; chi-squared (4 d.f.) = 26.9 ($p < .001$).

^bGamma = .30; tau-b = .18; chi-squared (4 d.f.) = 190.5 ($p < .001$).

shows that agricultural committees tend to schedule testimony from propesticides witnesses, while health and environmental committees are more likely to receive testimony from those critical of the industry. For the case of smoking, the relationship between venue and witness is even stronger, making it clear that committees like to hear from their allies, not their opponents.

When an agriculture committee has hearings on pesticides topics, its members are three times more likely to listen to testimony from representatives from the pesticides industry or from others likely to have a favorable view on pesticides than from health or environmental representatives. When a health committee holds hearings on a similar topic, the same selection bias in witnesses occurs: almost three-quarters of the witnesses appearing before these committees are health or environmental experts, rather than agricultural officials. We can also note from Table 1 how much more active the health and environmental committees have been in holding hearings on pesticide matters as compared to the agriculture committees. Over 3,100 people have testified before these committees on pesticide concerns, as compared to fewer than 2,300 before the agriculture committees. Of 385 hearings on pesticide topics coded, 220 have been in the health or environmental venue, as compared to only 102 in the agriculture venue.

The relationship between witness and venue in the case of smoking could hardly be more powerful. Agriculture and trade committees, when considering tobacco questions, simply do not schedule witnesses who could be expected to attack the industry. Congress specializes. When pesticides are to be attacked, one group of committees holds those hearings, and one group of members hears their testimony. When pesticides are to be defended, another committee holds those hearings and schedules a different group of experts to give testimony. Committees use hear-

ings to garner support for the views they already hold (see also Del Sesto 1980).

Saying What They Want To Hear: The Venue-Tone Connection

As noted, we have coded each hearing on pesticides, smoking, drug abuse, and civilian nuclear power by the tone of its title and description in the Congressional Information Service abstracts. In the cases of pesticides, smoking, and nuclear power, we coded hearings simply as whether the title and abstract suggested that the tone was favorable or antagonistic toward the industry. For drug abuse, we coded hearings according to whether they emphasized an enforcement or suppression option, on the one hand, or an education or treatment option, on the other. Intercoder reliability for the tone-of-coverage coding was 96.0% for pesticides. We also coded the committees and subcommittees holding hearings in a manner similar to the one described for pesticides.

The results from this procedure are presented in three tables. Each classifies the venue within which the hearing was conducted as against the tone. Table 3 presents this tabulation for pesticides and civilian nuclear power; Table 4 contains information on drug abuse; Table 5, information on smoking and tobacco. For pesticides and nuclear power, most hearings are of a critical nature, regardless of the venue. For example, for pesticides, 78.5% of hearings before agriculture committees or subcommittees had a critical tone. Health and environmental committees were even more prone to scheduling hearings critical of the industry: 93.2% of the topics these committees and subcommittees examined were negative toward the industry. A similar pattern is evident for nuclear power: when hearings are held, they tend to be critical. In the case of nuclear power, the pronuclear

TABLE 4

Tone and Venue, Congressional Hearings on Drug Abuse, 1945–86 (%)

TYPE OF COMMITTEE	FOCUS OF ATTENTION			TOTAL (N)
	LAW ENFORCEMENT	EDUCATION, HEALTH		
Enforcement committees	74.7	25.3		100.0 (561)
Education, Health committees	15.5	84.5		100.0 (283)
Other or uncodable committees	64.5	35.5		100.0 (200)
Total	45.9	45.1		100.0 (1,044)

Note: Gamma = .88; tau-b = .56; chi-squared (1 d.f.) = 265.68 ($p < .001$)—statistics based on the four coded cells only. Since virtually all hearings share a negative tone toward the illicit drug industry, we code the hearings by their focus on law enforcement and interdiction matters or on education and treatment matters.

set of committees (esp. the defunct Joint Committee on Atomic Energy) have been considerably more positive in tone than the health and environmental committees. (Only 52% of their hearings were critical in tone, versus 83.5% of those held in the rival group.)

Even a committee generally favorable toward nuclear power must occasionally hold hearings on topics, such as radioactive leaks, that industry leaders would just as soon see discussed in private. Table 3 shows that much of congressional oversight through the hearings process focuses on problems in the industry in question. Even “favorable” venues are home to much critical oversight in these areas. Tables 1 and 2 give some indication that more favorable venues are not home to as much criticism as the critical venues, even when they hold hearings on the same topic. There we noted a strong bias in witness participation between the two venue classifications for pesticides and smoking policy. Our reading of abstracts, witness lists, and committee prints of hearings suggests that committees favorable to an industry tend to hold hearings that address an alleged problem; but their witnesses may be expected to dismiss it (see Del Sesto 1980). Hence, the subject of the hearing is not what the industry wants on the congressional agenda; but favorable committees are, at least, examining the problem from the industry’s perspective. We shall see that efforts to contain conflict within favorable committees are not always successful. As the tone turns negative, attention tends to increase. As attention increases, it tends to spread. As it spreads, a jurisdictional monopoly

supporting close and positive relations with an affected industry can be destroyed.

In the cases of drug abuse and smoking-and-tobacco hearings (Tables 4–5), there are more striking differences among committee venues regarding their tone. In the case of smoking and tobacco policy, 57% of hearings in agriculture or trade committees were on topics that we considered favorable toward the tobacco industry, while only 10.8% were unfavorable. For health and taxation committees (where cigarette taxes are considered), 73.1% of hearings are critical. Here, one gets the “ideal type” of venue bias: the protobacco venues almost never consider any topics that are unfavorable toward the industry. On the other hand, the unfavorable venues never consider anything that might be construed as favorable toward the industry.

For drugs, no hearings are favorable toward the industry, so we coded hearings according to the policy solutions to the drug problem. The data show vividly the disaggregated approach to an important policy problem, with each venue considering a set of solutions in isolation from others and with little reference to other options. Members of two separate solution-based subsystems seem to be talking only to themselves.

In general, this is the pattern that we have found for all of our issues. Examining the relationship between venue and tone reveals considerable support for the thesis that congressional committees are strongly biased. Proindustry committees do not often schedule critical hearings; and when they do, they

TABLE 5

Tone and Venue, Congressional Hearings on Smoking and Tobacco, 1945–86 (%)

TYPE OF COMMITTEE	TONE			TOTAL (N)
	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	CRITICAL	
Agriculture or trade	57.0	32.0	10.8	100.0 (203)
Health or taxation	2.9	24.0	73.1	100.0 (104)
Other	—	66.7	33.3	100.0 (6)
Total	38.1	30.0	31.9	100.0 (313)

Note: Gamma = .91; tau-b = .62; chi-squared (2 d.f. = 137.1) ($p < .001$)—statistics based on the six cells coded by type of committee only.

TABLE 6

The Relationships between the Number of Distinct Congressional Committees Holding Hearings on a Topic and the Total Number of Hearings in a Year, 1945–86

POLICY AREA	EQUATION 1 (N = 42)				EQUATION 2 (N = 41)				
	R ²	INTERCEPT	NUMBER OF HEARINGS	D-W	R ²	INTERCEPT	NUMBER OF HEARINGS	LAGGED NUMBER OF DISTINCT COMMITTEES	DURBIN'S H
Nuclear power	.88	1.74 (.49)	.23* (.01)	1.57	.91	1.01 (.50)	.15* (.03)	.38* (.11)	.496
Drug abuse	.96	.85 (.33)	.27* (.01)	2.12	.96	.79 (.35)	.26* (.02)	.04 (.09)	-.744
Smoking	.84	.55 (.34)	.57* (.04)	1.71	.84	.32 (.39)	.53* (.05)	.12 (.08)	.231
Pesticides	.86	.92 (.32)	.43* (.03)	1.11 ^a	.92	.43 (.27)	.29* (.03)	.39* (.07)	.627

Note: The dependent variable for all equations is the number of distinct committees holding hearings on a given topic in a given year. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients (standard errors in parentheses). Equation 1 estimates a model without lags: $(Y_t = a + b_1X_t + e_t)$. Equation 2 estimates a model with a lagged endogenous variable: $(Y_t = a + b_1X_t + b_2Y_{t-1} + e_t)$.
^aTest indicates potential autocorrelation. Equation 2 model shows no autocorrelation problem.
^{*} $p < .05$, two-tailed test.

hear from proindustry representatives. Similarly, critical venues tend to schedule witnesses that provide unfriendly testimony. In sum, committees neither seek nor receive balanced, objective policy information and thus cannot be viewed simply as information-gathering agencies of Congress.

Our analyses of policy issues, rather than particular committees, shows that policy issues are often divided among many committees. More importantly, these committees can generally be grouped into supportive and critical venues; the committees specialize in defending or in attacking some policy. We can conclude that committees in Congress may well be biased in their members' policy preferences, but this fact alone does not allow us to infer that the entire system of committees is biased. Overall levels of bias depend on the degree of jurisdictional monopoly the committees are granted and on the dynamics of jurisdictional control among committees, a subject to which we turn next.

Attention and Jurisdictional Control

Jurisdictional dynamics imply that as hearings on an issue increase, the number of bodies conducting these hearings should also increase. Indeed, we have found that in each issue we have studied, a rise in attention is always accompanied by an increase in the number of distinct congressional committees claiming some part of the jurisdictional action. In the cases of nuclear power, pesticides, smoking and tobacco, and drug abuse, correlations between number of hearings per year and the number of different committees holding them are uniformly close to 1.0, as we shall see. Increased attention almost always leads to a breakup of a jurisdictional monopoly. Table 6 shows the close relation between the number of

hearings and the number of different committees holding them. It reports the results of simple regressions in which the number of committees holding hearings in a given year is the dependent variable and the total number of hearings held is the independent variable:

$$Y_t = a + b_1X_t + e_t,$$

where Y_t is the number of committees holding hearings on the topic in a given year² and X_t is the total number of hearings held by all committees on that topic in a given year.

A rise in congressional attention tends systematically to be associated with an increase in the number of different congressional committees claiming jurisdiction; and the relationships are very strong. These powerful relationships make one suspect a tautology. Certainly it is possible that as Congress created more committees and subcommittees, these new bodies had to hold hearings on something. Thus, as the number of bodies increased, so did the number of hearings. However, the increases we note in our four issue areas do not occur only after the congressional reforms expanding committee and subcommittee power in the mid-1970s, but before then, as well. This would seem to indicate the operation of a conflict expansion model, rather than one of bureaucratic aggrandizement.

We may examine the issue of the direction of causality in more detail. The left-hand side of Table 6 presents ordinary least squares estimates, one of which involves potential autocorrelation problems. Lagging the dependent variable and including it explicitly in the equation is both a potential remedy for the statistical problem of autocorrelation and a way of controlling for the hypothesis that bureau-

cratic expansion (capacity to hold hearings) drives the number of hearings held. This is possible because now the number of committees holding hearings is, in effect, a change from the previous year's number of committees. So now we estimate the model as

$$Y_t = a + b_1X_t + b_2Y_{t-1} + e_t$$

Estimates are presented on the right-hand side of Table 6. The effect of hearings on bodies survives the lagged controls; the number of hearings is statistically significant in all equations in the table. The lagged variable is sometimes significant as well, indicating that the capacity to hold hearings is also important. The lagged variable technique also remedies the autocorrelation problem.³ It appears that both issue expansion and bureaucratic aggrandizement contribute to the growth of Congress's capacity to hold hearings.

Conflict Expansion and Jurisdictional Dynamics

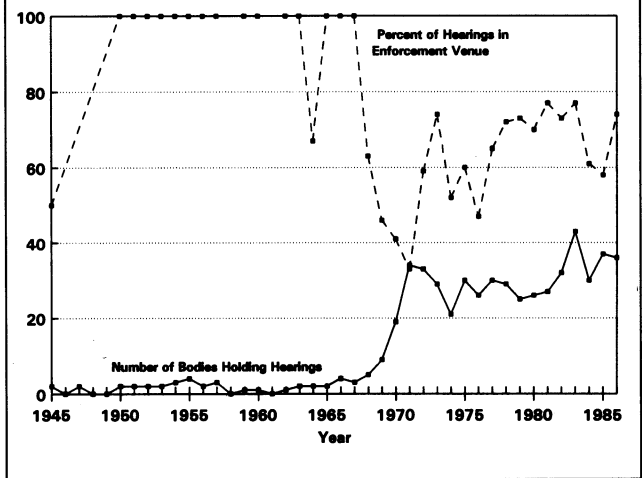
If the expansion of conflict in a policy subsystem is associated with a decline in the jurisdictional monopoly of congressional committees, then we can expect a decline in the proportion of hearings held within the dominant venue as the number of bodies holding hearings increases. That is, as conflict expands, committees and subcommittees not previously active on an issue hold hearings—and these new arenas tend to be unfriendly places for defenders of the status quo. Second, as the number of hearings increases, the proportion of hearings that have a favorable tone for the regulated industry or the existing policy subsystem should decline.

Several specific models are consistent with our general hypotheses, and we would not expect the process to follow the same pattern in every case. For example, in some areas, collapse in jurisdictional monopolies may occur very rapidly in the face of challenge, while in others there may be protracted conflict over control of the issue. In some cases, one jurisdictional monopoly may be replaced with another, while in another it may be permanently divided. Before we proceed to regression estimates of jurisdictional dynamics, it is worthwhile to pause briefly to consider some specific cases. Figure 1 illustrates the relation between attention and venue for the case of drug abuse.

During the period before attention to drug abuse was high, virtually all hearings on the topic of drug abuse were held within the confines of committees that generally focused on enforcement and interdiction options. As the number of different bodies (committees and subcommittees) jumped in the late 1960s and early 1970s, this jurisdictional monopoly was destroyed. From 1970 onward, no single group of committees or subcommittees could be said to control congressional attention to drug abuse questions: the proportion of the hearings held before enforcement-type committees was only slightly higher than that for the education and treatment committees. From a jurisdictional monopoly, drug

FIGURE 1

Monopoly Jurisdiction and Number of Congressional Bodies Holding Hearings: Drug Abuse, 1945–86

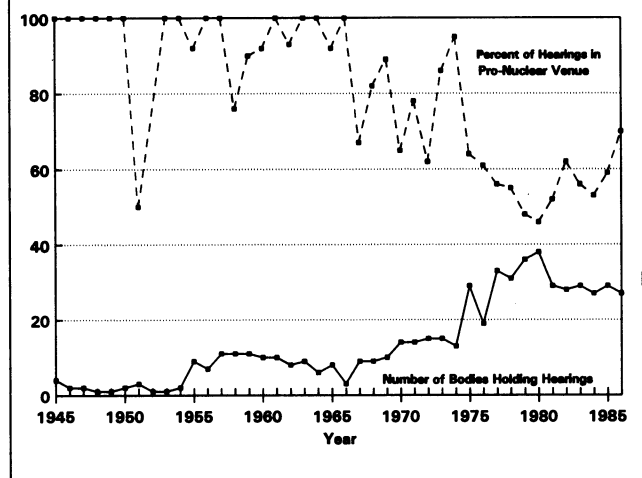


abuse policy became subject to considerable jurisdictional wrangling. (It is worth noting that the expansion of the number of bodies holding hearings occurred prior to the congressional reforms of the mid-1970s. These policy expansions were probably institutionalized, rather than created, by the reforms; see King 1991.)

Figure 2 shows the case of civilian nuclear power. While the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy once held virtual monopoly power in this case, the pro-nuclear institutional structures within Congress were eventually eliminated, beginning in the 1960s, as the percentage of hearings within "favorable" venues began to decline. This process accelerated in the

FIGURE 2

Monopoly Jurisdiction and Number of Congressional Bodies Holding Hearings: Nuclear Power, 1945–86



1970s as the number of competing bodies rose and as the jurisdictional monopoly of the pronuclear committees was transformed into a veritable free-for-all, with both sides holding almost equal numbers of hearings.

As Figures 1 and 2 suggest, increases in the number of bodies claiming some jurisdiction over an issue lead to a decline in jurisdictional control for the group that once enjoyed monopolistic control. From Table 6 it is clear that we could have reported the total number of hearings rather than the number of different bodies holding them in Figures 1 and 2; the correlations are so high that either series would show a similar pattern. (The *lowest* correlation between the total number of bodies and the number of hearings held in a given year for the four cases is .95.) Our understanding of the process of conflict expansion indicates that it is not the additional hearing per se that leads to the breakup of a jurisdictional monopoly but the fact that these increases almost always stem from an incursion of new congressional bodies into areas that had previously not interested them.

We may now turn to more quantitative estimates of the process of jurisdictional dynamics. In order better to capture the competitive versus monopolistic nature of the jurisdictional situation, we transform the dependent variable by taking the absolute value of its deviation from 50. That is, a score of zero on the dependent variable would mean that half of the hearings are held in a hostile venue, half, in a favorable venue. A score of 50 means that all of the hearings are held in the same type of venue (be it favorable or hostile). By transforming the variable in this way, we make clear that many bodies claiming control should be related to great conflict (and so, a low score on the dependent variable); few bodies claiming control should be related to a monopolistic jurisdiction (and a score on the dependent variable close to 50).⁴ If our expectations are correct, there should be a strong negative relation between the number of bodies holding hearings and jurisdictional control. In order to determine whether there may be diminishing marginal returns to continuing increases in the number of bodies holding hearings, we estimate a logarithmic decline model, as well as a standard linear model.

In Table 7 we estimate two models:

$$M_t = a + b_1 Y_t + e_t$$

and

$$M_t = a + b_1 \ln Y_t + e_t,$$

where M_t is the monopoly control variable and Y_t is the number of bodies holding hearings.

Table 7 shows an impressive level of fit for our model of jurisdictional dynamics. The dependent variable in all equations is monopoly control, as described above; the independent variable is the number of bodies holding hearings on the issue. On the left-hand side of the table are standard ordinary least squares estimates, but two of the equations

indicate potential problems with autocorrelation. In those cases, we have reestimated the equations including this lagged endogenous variable as an additional control.⁵ Equation 2 in Table 7 estimates the following models:

$$M_t = a + b_1 Y_t + b_2 M_{t-1} + e_t$$

and

$$M_t = a + b \ln Y_t + b_2 M_{t-1} + e_t.$$

The right-hand side of the table presents the new estimates, and standard tests indicate that they are free of autocorrelation problems. In every case but one, the coefficients presented in Table 7 show statistically significant and substantively important results for our idea that jurisdictional incursions virtually always cause the breakup of whatever cozy arrangements might have existed between policy-making groups in Congress. Further, the logarithmic decline model of monopoly control shows significant results in every case, generally outperforming the linear model. This indicates that jurisdictional control may be more difficult to maintain in Congress than some have suspected, because increases in the number of distinct congressional masters have an especially important impact as that number increases from a very restricted set to a slightly larger set. Increases above a certain limit have relatively little additional impact. From the point of view of a former subsystem participant, the damage has already been done by time the number of congressional masters has increased from a very small number.

We showed in Table 6 that increases in hearings are related to increases in the number of different committees holding hearings. One might say that the demand for attention (hearings) affects the supply of opportunities to be heard. As public and congressional attention focuses on a new problem, this is rarely contained within a single set of committees; new committees are not shy about claiming some part of that jurisdictional action. This has important policy consequences, since Table 7 indicates that the expansion of hearing opportunities interferes with monopoly control of those issues. Though the results indicate that each issue does not follow precisely the same pattern, the general trend is ubiquitous: as more bodies become active, jurisdictional monopolies are destroyed. The better fit of the logarithmic model in each case shows that initial intrusions into new jurisdictions are especially important in destroying monopoly control.

It would seem that jurisdictional monopolies may be more fragile than many students of Congress have realized. Jurisdictional battles are a constant and important part of legislative politics. Further, there is considerable malleability in the domains covered by different bodies within Congress. As Jones and Strahan (1985) pointed out in the case of energy policy, when issues hit the congressional agenda, there is often a vast mobilization of dozens of congressional bodies, each claiming some small piece of the action.

The analyses already presented provide ample ev-

TABLE 7

The Relationships between the Percentage of Hearings Held in the Dominant Venue and the Number of Bodies Conducting Hearings in a Given Year, 1945–86

POLICY AREA	EQUATION 1 (N = 42)				EQUATION 2 (N = 41)				
	R ²	INTERCEPT	NUMBER OF BODIES	D-W	R ²	INTERCEPT	NUMBER OF BODIES	LAGGED % OF HEARINGS IN DOMINANT VENUE	BREUSCH-GODFREY TEST
Nuclear power									
Linear	.68	51.72 (2.83)	-1.41* (.15)	1.89	.67	48.92 (7.72)	-1.33* (.24)	.05 (.14)	-.05
Log	.57	68.01 (5.39)	-15.80* (2.15)	1.25 ^a	.61	51.16 (10.04)	-12.13* (2.80)	.26 (.13)	.59
Drug abuse									
Linear	.49	45.60 (2.99)	-.93* (.15)	1.27 ^a	.63	33.16 (7.43)	-.68* (.20)	.30* (.15)	-.77
Log	.57	53.93 (3.52)	-11.01* (1.50)	1.29 ^a	.70	42.84 (7.36)	-8.93* (1.83)	.25 (.13)	-.30
Smoking									
Linear	.27	42.47 (4.61)	-2.21* (.57)	1.67	—	—	—	—	—
Log	.30	55.75 (7.32)	-15.95* (3.84)	1.63	—	—	—	—	—
Pesticides									
Linear	.47	46.70 (3.14)	-2.11* (.36)	1.63	—	—	—	—	—
Log	.55	51.64 (3.34)	-13.00* (1.88)	1.87	—	—	—	—	—

Note: The dependent variable in all equations is the yearly index of hearings on a given topic held in the dominant venue. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients (standard errors in parentheses). Equation 1 estimates a model without lags: $(Y_t = a + b_1x_t + e_t)$. Equation 2 estimates a model with a lagged endogenous variable: $(Y_t = a + b_1x_t + b_2y_{t-1} + e_t)$.

^aTest indicates potential autocorrelation. Equation 2 model shows no autocorrelation problem.

* $p < .05$, two-tailed test.

idence of the policy importance of the changes in jurisdictional control that follow from the expansion of conflict shown in Table 7. Tables 1–5 showed how competing groups of congressional committees (what we have termed competing venues for policy action) harbor distinctly different biases. Now we can see the importance of agenda setting and of issue definition in Congress. Where issues are clearly within the agenda of only a single group of like-minded committees, policy is likely to follow the wishes of its members. Where the issue rises on the agendas of other congressional bodies, however, this is likely to bring an end to the dominant policy bias. New committees will consider different—and often less flattering—aspects of the issue, and the policy bias of legislation may change dramatically.

In summary, the conflict expansion process within Congress appears to follow a clear pattern. Increases in attention to an issue lead to great demand to be heard in Congress and to increases in the number of distinct congressional bodies active in the area. Since the rise in congressional attention is usually associated with some changes in how the issue is defined, there are ample grounds for jurisdictional aggrandizers within Congress to claim some part of the action.

The increase in opportunities to be heard rarely comes only from those committees with established jurisdiction; rather, many congressional bodies argue that they have say over some part of the issue. Table 6 showed that congressional committees are often successful in claiming jurisdiction over at least some part of a newly important issue. This process of jockeying for control inevitably challenges the prevailing equilibrium of institutions and interests, and we see clear evidence in Table 7 that the expansion of bodies holding hearings is strongly related to a breakup in jurisdictional control. Evidence presented in Tables 1–5 showed the likely policy consequences of these changes in control. The dynamics of changing committee jurisdictions make Congress not only the home of cozy arrangements between members of policy subsystems but also the institution of government through which policy monopolies can be destroyed.

CONCLUSION

We have reconfirmed important aspects of what we have termed the theory of committee statics, using a

novel methodological approach. Specifically, we have presented new evidence that supports the contention of policy bias in congressional committees. We have seen that committees that are favorable to an economic interest tend to hold hearings that are positively skewed toward that interest. In the two cases where we coded thousands of witnesses appearing in hundreds of congressional committees, we observed a marked tendency for favorable venues to specialize in favorable witnesses.

This information alone is not enough to impute bias to the legislative process. Committee bias is important for controlling legislative agendas only when committees can establish a jurisdictional monopoly over an issue. Where several committees consider different aspects of an issue, the jurisdictional monopoly has broken down, and bias is far less likely. There is a dynamic associated with the creation and dissolution of jurisdictional monopolies. In particular, when issues become more controversial, jurisdictional monopolies are likely to come under fire. For the issues we studied, as attention (the number of hearings held on an issue) increased, the number of committees involved in scheduling hearings increased. And as interest in the issue expands, the percentage of hearings favorable to the existing policy subsystem declines, and the number of hearings conducted in unfavorable committee venues increases. Our dynamic regression analyses demonstrate the fragility of monopolistic control over issues in Congress.

The existence of jurisdictional dynamics would seem to pose serious problems to the existing equilibrium-based analyses of committee structure. At the minimum, rules must be flexible enough to allow for new understandings of issues; otherwise, we would not have observed the process of disruption of jurisdictional monopolies. Our analysis also poses problems for Krehbiel's informational model, in which committees collect and package information for the chamber. Committees do not just collect information and package it for the chamber; they collect biased information and themselves demonstrate marked tendencies to favor issue definitions that are consistent with the imputed bias of the committee venue.

We have elsewhere proposed a punctuated equilibrium model of the agenda-setting process in the United States (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). That model stresses the existence of periods of stability characterized by jurisdictional monopolies and consensual understandings of issue dimensions. These periods of stability are punctuated by periods of rapid change characterized by the intrusion of new issue understandings and new participants in the policy process and by the breakup of previously existing policy monopolies. During periods of stability, issue understandings are reinforced through the congressional hearing process. In a recent article discussing the structure-induced equilibrium literature in Congress, Dion (1992) has formally analyzed those factors that can help to create or to destroy equilibria (e.g., the indifference of members). We conceptualize a

system in which new institutional structures are created from time to time, each harboring a new set of biases. Cross-sectional views of these biases are of course interesting, but they cannot tell us whether the biases and the structures that create them might change over time. We believe that they change in dramatic ways over time and that this can best be observed by examining the hearings process. Hearings provide multiple functions in this system, including the provision of symbolic outputs for the policy community, the raising of attention on the issue, and the depicting of acceptable solutions that committees hope will influence the bill-writing process. That is, much occurs in hearings that has little to do with the drafting of legislation but that is critical to the process of issue definition, a point quite unappreciated in the recent literature on committees and on Congress more generally.

These issue definitions are occasionally subject to challenge, and these challenges punctuate the more normal periods of policy subsystem equilibrium. In the issues we studied, the environmentalists challenged the "atoms for progress" image of nuclear power (Baumgartner and Jones 1991; Weart 1988) and the "agricultural bounty" image of pesticides (Bosso 1987). Government health agencies attacked the tobacco industry, with many successes but without victory (Fritshler 1989). And the dominant enforcement-based drug policy subsystem was challenged by social service professionals during the Nixon administration (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Falco 1989; Musto 1987; Sharp 1991, n.d.). In each case, as new participants brought fresh issue understandings to the policymaking process, more and different committees held hearings on the topics. The content of the hearings changed, becoming more hostile as attention increased and shifted from one dominant group to another. While the approaches of committee statics are appropriate for the periods of stability, they are not so useful for understanding the periods of struggle over issue definition and jurisdictional monopolies. This struggle is fundamental to understanding the policy process.

Notes

This is a revised version of a paper originally presented at the 1992 meetings of the Midwest Political Science Association. We appreciate the helpful comments we received from Charles Franklin, David King, and Dan Wood.

1. In the four cases we discuss, only drug abuse requires a slight reconceptualization, since none of the hearings are favorable; in that case, we differentiate between enforcement (including interdiction and border controls) and treatment (including education, rehabilitation, and health topics). For other topics (e.g., urban affairs), the simple dichotomy cannot be used. For more details on coding, see Baumgartner and Jones 1993, esp. app. A.

2. In these regressions, the unit of analysis is the year, not the hearing. The total number of hearings on which these data are based are reported in Tables 3-5. When we run the identical regression based not on the number of committees but on the number of distinct *subcommittees*, the results are

even slightly stronger in the proportion of variance explained. For simplicity, we present only one model here.

3. The standard test for autocorrelation, the Durbin-Watson (d) statistic, is not appropriate when lagged endogenous variables are used; we present Durbin's h in equation 2 of Table 6 (see Gujarati 1988, 525-27; Ostrom 1990, 66.).

4. In a few cases, as indicated by missing data points in Figures 1 and 2, the percentage of hearings conducted in the dominant venue could not be calculated because there were very few or no hearings in a given year. In those cases, we have coded the maximum score of 50 in our monopoly control variable, since *no hearings* is a sign of strong control. In any case, recalculating the figures in Table 7 with these data missing shows only minor fluctuations from the results reported.

5. Durbin's h-test for autocorrelation is indeterminate in certain cases, in which cases the Breusch-Godfrey test is appropriate (Johnston 1984, 319-21; Ostrom 1990, 66). We report this figure in Table 7.

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Bryan D. Jones is Paul Puryear Professor, Frank R. Baumgartner is Associate Professor, and Jeffery C. Talbert is Doctoral Candidate of Political Science, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4348.