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## Informal Legislative Groups in the House: A Case Study of the Congressional Black Caucus

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INFORMAL LEGISLATIVE GROUPS IN THE HOUSE:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Government  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by

Claudette A. Moody

1985

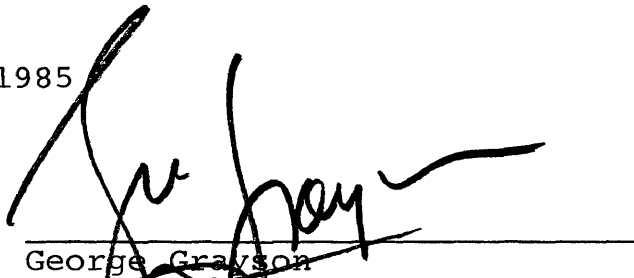
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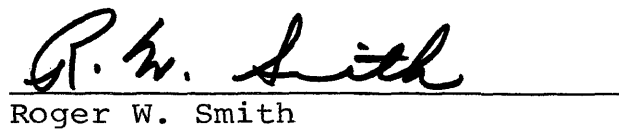
  
Roger W. Smith

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine informal legislative groups in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) is used as a case study of one type of informal legislative group -- an ideologically-oriented group.

The existing literature on the CBC tends to focus on the ethnicity of the group as the most important factor by which the legislative activities of the caucus is judged. Yet, this thesis contends that the work of the caucus must be analyzed in a congressional context, as an informal group subject to the formal rules and structure of Congress.

Through a review of the history of the Congressional Black Caucus, it is shown that the CBC typifies other ideologically-oriented informal legislative groups.

INFORMAL LEGISLATIVE GROUPS IN THE HOUSE:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

## INTRODUCTION

Black Power. . . does not mean merely putting black faces in office. . . Black visibility is not Black Power.

Black Power, Hamilton and Carmichael,  
1967 (1)

The political influence of blacks has fallen to its lowest level in two decades.

The New York Times,  
1981 (2)

In 1967, Charles V. Hamilton and Stokely Carmichael published their book Black Power. At that time, the number of black elected officials in local, state and federal governments was negligible. In 1981, black public officials numbered in excess of 5,000, although this number represented less than one percent of all public officials in the United States. (3, Conyers, 1981). Today, 20 blacks serve in the House of Representatives and constitute the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). (4) (See Appendix A)

For many CBC researchers, the Congressional Black Caucus represents a vital link between decision-makers in Washington, D.C. and the American black community. The CBC, organized in 1971, was the first informal congressional group in the United States Congress based on the ethnicity of its

members. (5) The CBC remains the only organization which attempts to articulate the concerns of black America from within the federal system.

The Congressional Black Caucus is an informal legislative group or, a legislative service organization. There are currently over forty informal groups in the House. These groups are formed "outside" of the formal party and committee structure of Congress to serve the social and legislative needs of representatives.

Informal legislative groups basically perform one of three functions. First, an informal group may act as a tool for the "socialization" of new representatives into the mores and the behavior of Congress. Second, an informal legislative group often provides information on current legislation or issues important to its members. Third, an informal group provides the framework for a collective legislative effort in an attempt to influence House leaders and party policy. The functions of informal legislative groups will be examined in Chapter One.

There are many different types of informal legislative groups. These differences can best be seen if the groups are placed on a continuum. The vast majority of informal groups concentrate on social activities and would be placed on one end of the spectrum. These congressional social groups often cross party and regional lines.



Regional organizations, such as state or city caucuses, focus on the parochial interests of legislators from different geographic areas. These groups have more than social activities on their agendas, but are often bipartisan and tend merely to bring the individual representative's district concerns into a larger arena. Regional informal legislative groups would fall near the center of the spectrum.

Political discussion groups would move a little further from the center of the spectrum. This type of informal group has a definite academic bent and topic focus, whereby congressional members discuss and debate the current issues.

Ideological, policy-oriented informal groups would fall on the furthest end of the spectrum. These groups have an ideological focus; they are often ambiguously identified as politically "liberal" or "conservative." This third type tends to concentrate on the third function of informal congressional groups, namely, the collective legislative effort. These informal legislative groups are most significant for its members when they feel alienated from the formal structures of Congress: the House rules, party identification, party leadership and committee work. When this occurs, members often seek political direction from informal legislative groups.

Much of the literature on the Congressional Black Caucus appears to begin with two assumptions about the caucus that differ from the descriptions in the literature on other informal

legislative groups. First, some researchers on the history of the CBC assume that the caucus has acted or reacted in a certain manner because of the race of its members. Second, some CBC researchers assume that the caucus should act or react in a certain manner because of the race of its members. Thus, the ethnicity of the CBC members is the primary focus of the literature.

Although it can be argued that the CBC members share a similar political ideology because they are of the same race, in the context of this thesis, it is a much more plausible argument that the CBC members share a similar ideology and the same race.

The race of its members was a starting point in the formation of the CBC and it remains a framework for the legislative initiatives of the caucus. The CBC could put forth a collective legislative effort in the congressional system if it admitted white members because all members of the caucus share the same ideology on various issues. Indeed, the admittance of white members with significant black populations in their districts may be a future move for the CBC.

This is not to say that racism is nonexistent in the halls of Congress. (6) For many individuals who work in the House, representatives and staff, racism is as prevalent on the Hill as it is in American society at large. Yet, the

failing of many studies on the CBC is that race is the most important factor by which the legislative activities of the caucus is judged. The work of the CBC must be viewed in a congressional context; as an informal legislative group subject to the formal rules and structure of Congress.

At this juncture, it is important to note that all members of the CBC are Democrats (there has not been a black Republican in the House since the CBC was formed) and have consistently liberal voting records. (7) (See Appendix B)

In addition, the majority of the caucus members belong to other ideologically-oriented groups, including the Democratic Study Group and the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues. (8) The CBC is, thus, merely one forum whereby black representatives may express discontent with the policies of the Democratic leadership or organize a collective legislative effort with a specific, central theme.

The primary focus of the Congressional Black Caucus has been how governmental policy and federal legislation can or, cannot alleviate certain economic and social problems that affect the American society and which often disproportionately affect the American black community. These concerns of the CBC are important to understanding how the caucus functions within the congressional system. In addition, the internal structure and politics of the CBC and the motivations of its

members are interesting topics for discussion.

Nonetheless, it is hypothesized that the Congressional Black Caucus is typical of other ideological, policy-oriented informal legislative groups. The caucus cannot be viewed as just another black civil rights organization. Although the long-term social and political goals of these organizations may be identical, the CBC is unlike the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) because it is in the U.S. Congress and exists to serve members of the House of Representatives.

Through an examination of the CBC's development and legislative activities, this thesis will show that because the caucus is subject to the same rules and structures of the U.S. House of Representatives, it has and continues to function in a similar manner to other informal legislative groups. It will identify how the CBC works as a legislative organization in the congressional system and how the caucus' legislative work typifies the function of one type of informal legislative group.

The thesis consists of chapters which examine the literature on informal groups and the literature on the Congressional Black Caucus. A third chapter reviews the legislative activities of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1982 and 1983, concentrating on the organization's Alternative

Budgets for Fiscal Year 1983 and Fiscal Year 1984.

The conclusion reviews the previous chapters and offers a discussion on the nature of the CBC as a congressional group composed of black members in the American political process.

## NOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

1) Charles V. Hamilton and Stokely Carmichael, Black Power (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 44.

2) "Black Political Influence is Lowest in Decades," New York Times, 3 June 1981, sec. 1, p. A1.

3) John Conyers, Jr., "Black Leadership is Ascendent," New York Times, 11 June 1981, sec. 1, p. 24.

4) Andy Plattner, "More Catholics, Jews, Blacks are 98th Congress Members," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, 29 January 1983, pp. 221-223.

5) Marguerite Ross Barnett, "It's Not the Man, It's the Plan; It's Not the Rap, It's the Map," The Crisis, April 1981, p. 116.

6) Interview, 25 May 1982. All of the interviewees requested anonymity in this thesis, (12 staff members from the personal offices of CBC members and the office of the CBC were interviewed for this thesis); personal experience.

7) Andy Plattner, "More Catholic, Jews, Blacks are 98th Congress Members," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, 29 January 1983, p. 222.

8) According to the staff of the Democratic Study Group, nearly all of the Democratic Members of the House of Representatives subscribe to the research material of the group and all but 24 of the House Democrats are members of the organization.

A list provided by the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues indicates that the following members of the CBC also belonged to the Women's Caucus in 1983: Cardiss Collins, Katie Hall, John Conyers, George Crockett, Ron Dellums, Julian Dixon, Mervyn Dymally, Walter Fauntroy, Augustus Hawkins, Mickey Leland, Edolphus Towns and Alan Wheat.

## CHAPTER I

### INFORMAL LEGISLATIVE GROUPS IN THE HOUSE

A great deal has been written on the formal structure and procedures of Congress. Indeed, the formal institutional structure and rules of Congress are what most Americans view as the entire decision-making process. (1) Yet, the formal structure of committees, floor debate procedures, and party divisions is only part of a more complex legislative process.

This formal structure can often result in the fragmentation and decentralization of power in Congress. Parties offer some framework for legislative initiatives, but political parties can "only partially counteract the divisive tendencies of the Congressional organization process." Many members prefer to make their legislative decisions in the freedom of a decentralized system rather than submit to "the yoke of party discipline." (2)

Legislators have to find some effective means of developing and promoting legislation. Thus, a "legislative body" often divides into "subgroups" in order to facilitate the work. (3)

These "subgroups" form in a decentralized and fragmented Congress. Their formation is in response to the anxiety of individual members who must gather and understand information on diverse and complicated issues in order to make

legislative decisions. The informal groups facilitate coordination and cooperation in the legislative process. Although not part of the formal structure of Congress, these groups may have a "significant effect on the lawmaking and oversight ... activities of Congress," (4) primarily because they are an important source of information for legislators. (5)

Informal groups have been defined as "an identifiable, self-conscious, relatively stable unit of interacting members whose relationships are not officially prescribed by statutes and rules." (6) The majority of informal groups in Congress are "friendship and social groups." These groups are generally small in size, frequently cross party lines, and meet for activities such as brunch, exercise, and prayer. In such political discussion groups as the Acorns and the Chowder Marching Society, the type of discussion involved determines the membership of the group. (7)

The "avowedly ideological or policy-oriented groups" are crucial to the legislative process. (8) These policy-oriented groups are primarily ideological organizations such as the Democratic Study Group (liberal Democrats), the Wednesday Club (liberal to moderate Republicans), the Republican Study Committee (conservative Republicans), the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, and the Congressional Black Caucus. (9)



The historic importance and recent proliferation of ideological groups is a growing area of study for students of the congressional process. Studies to date have found that in the past, informal groups formed to "alleviate work problems," or reinforce regional ties. The formation, in 1958, and subsequent success of the Democratic Study Group saw the beginning of a new type of informal policy-oriented group concerned with specific national issues. More ideological groups developed in the sixties during the Vietnam War. This type of informal group became prevalent in the seventies to ensure greater responsiveness to constituent concerns in an extremely fragmented Congress. (10)

One study identified more than forty informal groups which presently exist to aid lawmakers. (11) According to Burdett A. Loomis, "the consequences of organizing [caucuses] are to formalize more fully the already strong representational tendencies of the Congress and to weaken further the ability of the legislative branch to act responsively toward society-wide problems that affect substantial members of particular interest." (12)

This is a rather strong indictment of informal congressional groups. Yet, Loomis continues that the growth of informal legislative groups does not mean that "single-issue politics has come to dominate these groups or the Congress as a whole." (13) Thus, these informal congressional groups

merely indicate the diversity of interest in the legislature.

There are several primary functions of informal groups. The first function of informal groups is one of "socialization." Membership in these groups aids new legislators in adapting to the mores of Congress and adopting the "correct" legislative behavior in Congress. Second, informal groups provide "cues and structure for ambiguous situations." Members learn how other legislators with similar beliefs and constituencies interpret and vote on particular issues of interest. These "cues" are most significant when the formal structure of Congress -- party leadership and committee leadership cues -- are "inconsistent or nonexistent." (14)

Some important services of informal groups include providing "information, advice, and support," for members of Congress. Informal groups help legislators receive the information needed to make many legislative decisions in keeping with their political ideology on a variety of issues. (15) This information must be mentally processed in a limited amount of time. Some view this information service as the major function of informal groups. (16)

Legislators often "justify" a particular vote or issue stance by their identification with an informal group. Legislators find support for their activities and political decisions from informal groups. (17)

Communication activities and the information networks are also seen as an important function of informal groups. These "communication networks" aid representatives in deciphering the great amount of information they are bombarded with because they begin to rely on "trusted sources . . . . [with] similar or identical interests and views." (18) As Congress is often a fragmented legislative body, these informal groups "arise [to] facilitate a variety of essential kinds of communication." (19)

The dispersal of information by an informal legislative group forms the basis for "collective action," a collective legislative effort, the third function of an informal group. Thus, informal groups may transcend the function as dispersers of information to become unified, influential blocs of political power within Congress in order that "pressure for a common set of priorities could be brought to bear." (20)

Informal groups have the potential to become legislatively effective through a coordinated, unified effort and the collective legislative effort function is the primary objective of ideological informal congressional groups. (21)

In summary, the consensus of the literature on informal congressional groups indicates that these organizations, especially ideological, policy-oriented informal congressional groups, perform three functions. The first function of an informal group is the "socialization" of representatives in

the mores and acceptable behavior of Congress. The second function of an informal group is to provide information on the particular issues of interest to its congressional member, as well as inform the representative as to how her colleagues with similar beliefs and backgrounds will vote in committee and on the floor. The third function of an informal group is that it provides a framework for a collective legislative effort which could influence congressional activity on specific policies important to the group members.

The use of informal groups by representatives for "cues" or as "reference points" indicates the potential use of bloc voting by an informal group on the floor. Nonetheless, it is important to reiterate, particularly in the case of the CBC, that an informal group is most influential with its members and in Congress when the formal structure provides inadequate or conflicting signals for the individual representative and the colleagues with whom that member most closely identifies.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

- 1) J. McIver Weatherford, Tribes on the Hill (New York: Rawson, Wade, 1981), pp. 15-18.
- 2) Leroy N. Rieselbach, Congressional Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 140.
- 3) David L. Truman, The Governmental Process (New York: Knopf, 1951), p. 343.
- 4) Leroy N. Rieselbach, Congressional Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 160.
- 5) Randal B. Ripley, Congress, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978), p. 227.
- 6) Alan Fiellin, "The Functions of Informal Groups: A State Delegation," in New Perspectives on the House of Representatives, 1st ed., ed. Robert L. Peabody and Nelson W. Polsby (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1963) pp. 63-64.
- 7) Leroy N. Rieselbach, Congressional Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 160.
- 8) Ibid.
- 9) Randal B. Ripley, Congress, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978), p. 235-240.
- 10) Burdett A. Loomis, "Congressional Caucuses and the Politics of Representation," in Congress Reconsidered, ed. Laurence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1981), p. 206.
- 11) Ibid., p. 204.
- 12) Ibid., p. 207.
- 13) Ibid.
- 14) Leroy N. Rieselbach, Congressional Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 161.
- 15) Randal B. Ripley, Congress, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), p. 257.

16) Burdett A. Loomis, "Congressional Caucuses and the Politics of Representation," in Congress Reconsidered, ed. Laurence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1981), p. 207.

17) Leroy N. Rieselbach, Congressional Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 161.

18) Alan Fiellin, "The Functions of Informal Groups: A State Delegation," in New Perspectives on the House of Representatives, 1st ed., ed. Robert L. Peabody and Nelson W. Polsby (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1963) pp. 66.

19) Ibid., p. 70.

20) Mark F. Ferber, "The Formation of the Democratic Study Group," in Congressional Behavior, ed. Nelson W. Polsby (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 249-250.

21) Leroy N. Rieselbach, Congressional Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 163.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INFORMAL GROUP

#### THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS, 1968-1980

The Congressional Black Caucus is a coalition of legislators with similar ideological beliefs who identify and interact with one another outside of the "officially proscribed ... statutes and rules," of the House. (1) The CBC organization was ostensibly formed on the basis of the ethnicity of its members. Thus, the Congressional Black Caucus is an informal group of legislators cooperating to advance their mutual legislative interests.

Currently, all the members of the CBC are Democrats and are deemed politically liberal. (2) From its beginning, the Congressional Black Caucus can be seen as an ideological policy-oriented informal legislative group which primarily operates within the third function; the collective legislative function. This function has been the guiding force for the Congressional Black Caucus and the CBC should be analyzed in this congressional context.

Much of the literature on the development of the Congressional Black Caucus focuses on the CBC as a black

organization and not as a congressional organization of representatives. Many students of the CBC assume that the ethnicity of its members is the context in which the work of the caucus should be analyzed. These analyses compare the CBC to other black organizations which may have similar goals, but operate outside of the framework of an existing political structure.

The CBC is first and foremost an organization to serve the legislative concerns of members of the House of Representatives. The caucus must work within and abide by the rules and customs of the House. For this thesis, the development of the CBC as a collective legislative group in Congress is important in that it may indicate how an informal group will relate with and react to this formal structure in different periods of time and under different circumstances. Whether the CBC is doing a good job at representing the concerns of the American black community is important, but is secondary to this review. Further, it is unnecessary for the views of the Congressional Black Caucus members on particular issues to be shared by the American black community at large for the CBC to function well as an informal legislative group.

The popular view of the CBC is that of an organization which is a "visible and concrete manifestation of black political power." (3) Many believe the more accurate question



regarding the CBC is not whether blacks can be elected to political institutions, but rather what black politicians, once elected, can "accomplish" within the existing political, social, and economic system of the United States? (4) One student of the Congressional Black Caucus, Marguerite Ross Barnett, states that the answers to this question are rooted in the internal and external factors which have influenced the development of the CBC. (5)

Unfortunately, although Barnett's question is the correct one to ask, her analysis is on the development of the Congressional Black Caucus as a black organization which should force systemic changes in the structure of the political arena in which it exists. Barnett does not compare the CBC to other informal legislative groups and she does not view its success or failure on that basis. Rather, she insists that the caucus must be judged on different grounds because its membership is black. (6)

Few of the studies of the CBC analyze the group in the context of its nearly fifteen-year history as a congressional group. The CBC is viewed as an extension of over 100 years of black social activism. There is a failure to recognize the fact that an organization formed within a particular political structure must abide by the formal and informal rules of that structure. Indeed, the organization's members may begin as reformers but may soon have a vested interest in the maintenance

of the structure which is part of their definition as an organization. Barnett's analysis appears to include a value judgment on how the caucus has or will compromise its goals as its members become more closely identified with the formal structure of Congress.

It is contended in this thesis that the CBC has developed beyond the "gadfly" reformer organization and, in most instances, its members work within the formal structure of the House. Nonetheless, a review of the development of the caucus clearly indicates that it can be a framework by which its members may organize a collective legislative effort.

The following is a review of the history of the CBC as an informal legislative group.

In 1968, three newly elected black representatives joined two other black congressmen as members of the House of Representatives. These five Representatives formed a loose coalition called the Democratic Select Committee (DSC). The DSC formed to challenge collectively the Nixon Administration's civil rights policies. The DSC formally presented President Nixon with lists of their concerns and recommendations for improvement. In 1970, Representative William Clay (D-MO.) proposed a more organized group after the Administration failed to respond adequately to the committee's recommendations. (8)

The reorganization included the adoption of a process for

electing officials, the development of a committee of policy to establish goals, and the organization of task forces to research pertinent issues and report the results of that research. The black legislators renamed their organization the Congressional Black Caucus in 1971. (9)

During these early years, the CBC members defined themselves as "representatives at-large for twenty million black people" in the United States. In addition, the CBC sought to legitimize their position as leaders within the black community by articulating the concerns of that community from the highest level of government, working more on gaining publicity for their concerns than on legislation. (10) More importantly, the CBC members ideologically identified with one another in an attempt to use their positions in the legislature to address their collective concerns.

In the early seventies, the CBC often confronted publicly Nixon and Nixon appointees through the press. The caucus also held a series of nationwide hearings on racism and, in 1972, organized the National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana. The convention was originally designed to develop the Black Agenda, a unified position paper to be used as a check list on the 1972 presidential candidates. (11)

Conflicts within the caucus and within the black community surfaced at the Gary convention. The diversities of the

political approaches to common concerns represented at the convention -- from the Black Panthers, to the NAACP; from black Republicans, to the Democrats of the CBC -- made such conflict inevitable.

A rupture also occurred within the ranks of the CBC concerning Shirley Chisholm's presidential aspirations. In addition, the chairman of the CBC, Charles Diggs, attempted to control the convention which produced a great deal of animosity toward him and his congressional colleagues. At the close of the convention, the CBC, embarrassed by anti-Israeli and anti-busing statements adopted by the other groups attending, released a counter statement of disagreement with those positions. The CBC members appeared to be as moderates who could work with whites for improvements in the social and economic condition of black Americans. (12)

Despite the embarrassment of the convention, the caucus made positive steps in its early development by establishing procedures of its internal organization and defining an agenda for its legislative efforts. (13)

These early years of the CBC's organization have been seen as an attempt by the CBC to gain "symbolic legitimacy." In the early seventies, the CBC helped to fill a "vacuum" for the black community. This vacuum was the result of a waning black power movement and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The CBC represented the success of the 1965 Voting Rights Act

and the direct representation of all blacks within the system. (14)

For some, the Congressional Black Caucus soon established itself as the voice of black America in the federal government, but by the end of the Gary convention, the CBC sought to reflect a statement of Shirley Chisholm that, "We [the CBC] can no longer function in our blackness alone." (15)

The CBC was formed in response to the needs of a group of elected congressmen and congresswomen in the U.S. House of Representatives. Thus, it is important to review what was occurring in the House and the federal government at the time of the group's formation.

Between 1968 and 1973, President Nixon, a conservative, was viewed as a very popular and successful president in opinion polls. Richard Nixon won by a landslide in 1972. (16) The leadership of the House, as exemplified by Speaker Carl Albert of Oklahoma, was generally old, Southern, and less than politically progressive. (17)

Throughout his career, Carl Albert voted for the anti-poverty, education, and housing programs supported by the CBC. Yet, Albert was often criticized for weak leadership and he was seen as not always responsive to concerns of ideologically liberal members. Albert's style as Speaker was to reach a consensus on an issue with the chairmen of the standing committees; white, conservative, Southern chairmen who were in

their position because of the House seniority system. (18)

A review of the voting records of the CBC members in the early seventies show that the members identified with their northern, more liberal colleagues and not with the more conservative leadership of the House. Researchers divided 649 roll call votes of the 92nd Congress into five issue categories: social legislation, general legislation, monetary matters, external (foreign) affairs, and miscellaneous legislation. The votes of the individual CBC members were first compared with each other and then to the votes of the members with their state delegation and with Northern Democrats.

In this comparison, the caucus members were found to have voted equally or more often with their state delegations and with the white northern Democrats, than with each other. The researchers state this study shows the CBC was, thus, not "a primary source of voting cues" for the black legislators. The authors hypothesize that because the CBC was a young organization, it was not an institutionalized point of reference for the black representatives. The study contends that if the caucus does not develop as a source of voting cues for black legislators in the future, the CBC will remain little more than a "publicity organ" and have slight impact on the voting behavior of the black legislators, or on the public policy affecting the black community. (19)

In a subsequent study, researchers found that the "roll

call cohesion" of the CBC was high between 1970 and 1972. Using the same issue categories as their previous study, the authors found that the CBC had an "overall index of agreement" of 91 percent. The new conclusion was that the CBC "achieved recognition" as a legislative group within Congress and as a leading black organization outside of Congress. (20)

The CBC is a reference point for the black legislators on certain key issues, but the black legislators' loyalties to the CBC, the Democratic Party, and their state delegations may overlap. (21) The formation of the CBC was not an attempt to supercede these party and regional loyalties, but rather it formed to create a framework for collective action in an ideological and, some would argue, a racial context. (22)

The third function of an ideological or policy-oriented group in Congress is to provide a framework for collective action. This framework includes providing voting cues for the groups' members on many different issues. The members of the CBC share a particular political perspective with each other and with some of their white colleagues. It can be argued that the members of the CBC do not vote "black" but rather vote "liberal." (See Appendix B)

As stated above, the roll call voting records show that in the early seventies, the black legislators identified with their Northern Democratic colleagues, their Northern state

delegations, and with one another. The formal structure of Congress -- party leadership and committees -- which was of trolled by Albert and his contemporaries, did not provide the direction needed for the group to "get along and go along." (23)

From 1972 to 1980, Representatives Louis Stokes (D-OH); Charles Rangel (D-NY); Parren Mitchell (D-MD); and Delegate Walter Fauntroy (D-DC) were the chairmen of the Congressional Black Caucus. (24) These chairmen are seen as developing a style of leadership for the CBC which focused on fostering individual legislative success, as opposed to a collective legislative effort. Stokes' "main goal" as caucus chairman "was to turn the group inward." Stokes stated later that "we knew we had to leave civil rights leadership to other organizations and other individuals ...We are legislators ...We ought to be fulfilling that role ...." (25) In essence, the Stokes statement indicates a belief that the CBC was similar to other informal legislative groups and it should operate as such an organization.

After 1974, the CBC sought to attain influential and diverse committee assignments. The five original CBC members, joined by several new members in the 1972 and 1974 elections, were successful in obtaining assignments to committees with jurisdiction over social issues, science and technology, defense, as well as leadership positions on the Committee on Rules. (26) In this period, the CBC had very general



legislative goals, but often the chairmen would work to further their own parochial interests.

Walter Fauntroy used data indicating the black population of significant congressional districts. Fauntroy used this data to encourage the black leaders and black citizens in congressional districts with more than 25 percent black populations to lobby their congressman in favor of home rule for the District of Columbia. The District of Columbia did achieve partial home rule as a result of this effort. (27)

During Parren Mitchell's chairmanship of the CBC, a network of "brainstormers" was developed. The network was composed of a list of experts which would advise the caucus on policy and legislative matters. This strategy basically served as an informational network for the members of the CBC and their staff. Even so, after Mitchell's term as caucus chairman ended, the network lists were rarely used. (28)

These initiatives are important to the internal development of the Congressional Black Caucus. Yet, there were also significant changes in Congress during this period which influenced the legislative activities of the CBC.

In 1974, 75 new members were elected to the House of Representatives. These new members included the largest freshmen class of Democrats elected to the House since 1948. The 1974 freshmen class are collectively referred to as the "Watergate babies." (29)

The Democrats of the House class of 1974 were reformers, heavily influenced by the experiences of the war in Vietnam and the attempted coverup of the Watergate break in and the subsequent resignation of President Nixon. Because of the size of the class and its ideological bent, many reforms, originally proposed by the members of the Democratic Study Group, were pushed through the House. These reforms included a lessening of the seniority system, whereby committee chairmen were elected by the entire Democratic Caucus instead of just the members of the committee. Indeed, senior members of the House and the Democratic leadership began to discuss legislative issues with their junior colleagues. (30)

The members of the CBC were a part of this reform movement and easily identified with their liberal colleagues' efforts. As stated above, black representatives gained more impressive committee assignments and were given a chance to participate in the leadership, as were their white colleagues in the class of 1974. Thus, the CBC did not need to seek its own course because its members had input in the larger strategy of the Democratic leadership and became part of the structure. Indeed, of the remaining members of the class of 1974 reformers, most are now subcommittee chairmen. (31) One Representative elected in 1974 states that now,

The Democratic Party, our delegations, committees and subcommittees all have a greater claim on our loyalties, than the class. We are more likely to turn to members of our committee for support on a bill, than members of the class. (32)

Nonetheless, an analysis of votes indicates that the members of the 1974 class voted alike 82 percent of the time in 1983. If there is a question on a particular issue, or in other words, no clear cues from the party or leadership, many members seek out the position of their colleagues from the class of 1974. (33)

Between the years of 1972 and 1980, the members of the Congressional Black Caucus appear to have followed a similar pattern of development as the class of 1974. In the mid-seventies, the CBC pushed for the passage of the Humphrey-Hawkins bill for full employment, H.R. 60. Barnett views this as a collective legislative effort which was initiated with good intentions, but failed because the caucus was willing to compromise on the provisions of the bill. Barnett decries the CBC's use of "traditional" political techniques on a measure so important for the black community. (34)

Others argue that the use of these techniques is the most effective course for the caucus, because the CBC must necessarily emphasize their positions as legislators and they must work within Congress. There is a belief that it is "public pressure" that will influence the direction of the CBC and create "a climate for change." (35)

It is more likely that change in the tactics and emphasis of the CBC does not occur because of the "climate for change" outside of Congress or, at the very least, such public pressure is secondary. It is the "climate" inside Congress -- how the individual members of Congress identify with the formal structures -- that has primary influence over the development and course of all informal legislative groups, including the Congressional Black Caucus. To suggest otherwise or to suggest that the CBC will have little influence over the condition of blacks in the United States if they operate as do other informal legislative groups, is to indicate a lack of understanding of the congressional process and the functions of informal legislative groups. (36)

The problems of black America are pervasive. Historically, the emphasis of the American civil rights movement was to work toward participation in the existing political, social and economic structure. If the laws of the structure violated this nation's constitutional edicts, then the laws were violated in an effort to change them. (37)

The black politician becomes part of the policymaking structure. This should not imply that the black politician is less outraged at injustice and oppression. It does mean that this black American has decided to fight injustice and oppression in a particular way, a way which attempts to reform from within the structure and is subject to the rules and modes

of conduct of that structure.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, members of the Congressional Black Caucus often felt frustrated with the incrementalism of the system and believed that they were being left out of the process. (38) When this occurred, the members of the CBC, as other informal legislative groups, have closed ranks and developed a method for expressing their concerns and the concerns of their constituency with a collective legislative effort.

Mark F. Ferber's review of the Democratic Study Group (DSG) in "The Formation of the Democratic Study Group," indicates a striking similarity between the development of that ideological policy-oriented legislative group and the Congressional Black Caucus. The DSG was created by liberal House members in the 86th Congress (1959-1960) who were frustrated by their inability to pass civil rights legislation and federal aid for education. These members were thwarted in their attempts to pass bills with a liberal bent by the solidly entrenched seniority system of the House of Representatives. The result of this frustration with the formal structure and rules of the House was the organization of the first informal legislative group. (39)

In its initial stages, the DSG did not merely serve as a socialization forum in which liberal members could share ideas. The DSG members and their staff also provided information and organizational skill for liberal candidates running for seats

in the 87th Congress. More importantly, the group developed outside of the formal party and House structure to communicate with its members and promote a legislative agenda in keeping with their political ideologies.

The DSG members, who were not able to penetrate the seniority system and who felt unable to perform their duties as elected officials, sought an alternative method to further their particular legislative concerns. By organizing around specific concerns and developing clear goals, the DSG was able to exert some pressure on the leadership and circumvent the perceived obstructions in the system. (40)

It is also important to note that many DSG members are now part of the leadership or are chairmen of committees. (41) The DSG is now a highly organized and sophisticated operation which provides detailed analysis of legislation and current issues for its many members. Any issue which could be of concern to a liberal Democrat in Congress is objectively reviewed and then followed by the liberal argument for or against. Liberal Democratic Members of the House rely heavily on the group's weekly analysis of upcoming floor action. (42)

These analyses take on more significance during a period of uncertainty on an issue within the ranks of the party leadership or, when the current administration is considered hostile to the DSG point of view. In the case of the Congressional Black Caucus, the frustration and uncertainty

was prevalent after the election of Ronald Reagan as President in 1980.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

1) Randal B. Ripley, Congress, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978) p. 240.

2) Andy Plattner, "More Catholic, Jews, Blacks are 98th Congress Members," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, 29 January 1983, p. 222.

3) Marguerite Ross Barnett, "The Congressional Black Caucus: Symbol, Myth, and Reality," The Black Scholar 8, (January/February 1977):17.

4) Ibid.

5) Ibid.

6) Ibid., p. 20.

7) Ibid.

8) Marguerite Ross Barnett, "It's Not the Man, It's the Plan; It's Not the Rap, It's the Map," The Crisis, April 1981, p. 117.; Michael Barone and Grant Ujifusa, The Almanac of American Politics 1982 (Washington, D.C.: Barone and Company, 1981), p. 526.

9) Marguerite Ross Barnett, "It's Not the Man, It's the Plan; It's Not the Rap, It's the Map," The Crisis, April 1981, p. 117.

10) Ibid., pp. 118-119.

11) Ibid., p. 117.

12) Ibid., p. 119.

13) Ibid.

14) Charles P. Henry, "Legitimizing Race in Congressional Politics," American Politics Quarterly (April 1977): p. 159.

15) Ibid., pp. 164-166.

16) The Gallup Opinion Index; Political, Social and Economic Trends Report 85, (Princeton, New Jersey: George Gallup, 1972), pp. 1-3.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS: 1980-1983

Barbara Williams-Skinner was the Executive Director of the Congressional Black Caucus for seven years. Upon her departure from the CBC in December of 1981, Williams-Skinner granted an interview to the black business publication, Black Enterprise. In that interview, she stressed that the CBC should adopt new "tactics" in Congress to become a more "effective" organization. The outgoing executive director stated:

In this mood and climate of "anti-everything," we have to be much more clever about how we wage battles on behalf of black America, because calling something racist and anti-black is not enough of a strategy. (1)

Williams-Skinner viewed the effectiveness of a black congressional organization as contingent upon a change in the strategies of the CBC as the result of the increasingly conservative mood in Washington and across the country. She indicated that the link between the CBC and social programs exposes the caucus as a target of conservatives in the House and in the Reagan Administration.

The protection and promotion of social programs, many of which have suffered wholesale budget cuts in recent years, are the primary objectives of the CBC. Yet, Williams-Skinner



developed in response to a challenge issued by President Reagan in 1980 for anyone in Congress to "come up with something better" than his first budget proposal. (4) These exceptions clearly identify the different ways in which an informal congressional group will react to different circumstances in the formal structure of Congress.

The CBC fiscal year 1982 budget was described by the caucus as a "compassionate" budget, which would create a surplus in the federal coffers. The CBC FY 1982 budget was soundly defeated in the House, receiving only 61 affirmative votes.

The Congressional Black Caucus proposed their second budget the following year. The CBC FY 1983 budget alternative was developed and proposed in an atmosphere of "violent opposition to Reagan policies." (5) The CBC FY 1983 budget was devised with the expert advice of the black legislators and staff, as well as advice from experts outside of Congress. The following CBC statement concerning the premise of the caucus budget appeared in the organization's publication, Point of View: "The CBC categorically rejects the notion that the budget must be balanced on the back of the truly needy." (6)

The FY 1983 CBC alternative budget had five major objectives. The first goal of the budget was to "reduce the deficit" which, under the CBC budget, would be nearly eliminated by FY 1985,

The second objective was to "adopt a budget that is fair, humane, and economically balanced." The CBC budget would have restored money to social programs cut in President Reagan's FY 1982 budget. This restoration of funds would have indicated the desire of Congress "to meet human needs."

The third objective of the CBC 1983 budget was the "reform" of the tax system to close tax loopholes and remove the third year individual tax cut.

The fourth objective of the CBC FY 1983 budget was to "ensure adequate social security and other support for the nation's poor -- both elderly and non-elderly." The budget retained the social security unemployment compensation benefits to 39 weeks and increased funds to assist the poor on food stamps, medicaid, and supplemental social insurance.

Finally, the CBC FY 1983 budget sought "to establish a saner and safer national defense," by holding defense spending at FY 1982 levels, and re-examining proposed nuclear strategic arms and weapon systems. The CBC rejected the notion of supplying "defense solutions" in foreign aid "for political and economic problems." (7)

On May 24, 1982, the Congressional Black Caucus FY 1983 Alternative Budget was debated on the Floor of the House. These debates, as recorded in the Congressional Record, are illuminating as to the goals of the CBC in the introduction of the group's budget. What is even more illuminating is the

CBC's tactics and approach to the debate of the group's FY 1983-1984 budget.

The CBC budget was proposed by District Delegate and Caucus Chairman Walter E. Fauntroy. Twelve of the CBC members and several liberal white and Hispanic House colleagues spoke in support of the budget. Two Republican congressmen briefly challenged two points of the budget regarding the elimination of several strategic weapon systems and the elimination of the tax credits and cuts proposed in the Reagan Administration budget.

Most of the CBC members spoke in their particular area of expertise from a prepared text. Liberal white Democrats, such as Representatives Ted Weiss (NY), Mary Rose Oaker (OH), Claude Pepper (FL), Richard Ottinger (NY), and David Obey (WI), spoke on behalf of the CBC budget because it supported the poor and aided the elderly and handicapped. These representatives congratulated the caucus' initiative in the funding of social programs. Few other Democrats participated in the debate.

The failure of fellow Democrats to participate in the debate of the CBC budget did not go unnoticed by three black representatives. John Conyers (D-MI) stated that the CBC budget was "The most important collective effort" of the caucus and that it was not a "black budget," but a budget for all American people. Conyers stressed the fact that members of the CBC were "sensitive" to the fact that the leaders of the House were

"silent" on the merits of the CBC budget. (8)

Conyers continued that 1982 was the second year the leadership had "ignored" the CBC's efforts. According to Conyers, the CBC members had been called into a conference the morning of the debate and told to "stick with Jones," the Democratic budget developed by Congressman Jim Jones (D-OK), Chairman of the House Budget Committee. Conyers angrily replied that the CBC "cannot stick with Jones" when the budget offered by the committee did not address the concerns of the Black Caucus. (9)

Ronald Dellums of California reiterated Conyers' position and stated that he joined his fellow CBC members "in their frustration, in their anger, and in their humiliation" for how the efforts of the CBC were ignored by the leadership. (10)

The most caustic comments came from retiring Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, a co-founder of the CBC, who blamed her white colleagues and the leadership of not sharing the "vision" of the caucus in its fight for "equality of life of the American people." Chisholm reiterated that the CBC budget was not merely concerned with the welfare of blacks, but that it still would not pass the House and asked if it was "because of the terminology of black?" (11) Chisholm continued that because of the Reagan Administration's policies, it would take "ten, twelve, fourteen years before we [blacks and poor] will be able to lift ourselves again ...." (12)

Congresswoman Oakar agreed with Chisholm that the reason the CBC budgets do not get the support they deserve may be based upon racism. She stated,

Unfortunately I happen to believe it is because it [the CBC budget] is presented by the Black Caucus . . . It is about time that we openly acknowledge that there is that subtle form of prejudice that exists [in Congress]. (13)

The journalist David S. Broder wrote in The Washington Post of how the CBC Alternative Budget was virtually "ignored" by the white legislators in the House and by the mass media. Broder commented that the CBC worked "within the system" to develop and propose their budget. Instead of meaningful debate on a legitimate proposal, the House leadership and the vast majority of representatives "patronized" their black colleagues. The result was that there was "no serious debate" on the CBC budget. Broder stated that the CBC budget thus became an "invisible document" not unlike the symbolic representation of black America in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man. (14)

The Congressional Black Caucus Alternative Budget for FY 1983 was defeated in the House by a vote of 322 to 86. The race issue, although present, may not have been as influential in this defeat as the fact that the CBC budget had a very liberal slant in its support of social programs and in its cuts in defense programs. Although many members of the House may have viewed this budget as symbolic legislation, the members of the Congressional Black Caucus submitted the budget as a

substantive and viable alternative to the "official" Democratic House budget.

The proposal and debate of the CBC FY 1984 budget was completely different. According to Capitol Hill sources, the Congressional Black Caucus, under the leadership of its chairman, Congressman Julian Dixon of California, and Congressman William Gray of Pennsylvania, a member of the Budget Committee, struck a deal with the Democratic leadership. The Democratic leadership stressed that many aspects of the CBC's budgets were included in the budget approved by the House Budget Committee. Under the agreement, the CBC was allowed one hour debate on their budget proposal and then threw their support to the Democratic budget.

For the most part, the debate was polite and in much less strident tones than the previous year. Several members of the CBC, the most vocal being John Conyers, expressed their opposition to the compromise. Nonetheless, the majority of caucus members, now numbering 21 after the 1982 Congressional elections, adhered to the agreement and supported the Democratic budget.

Julian Dixon, Chairman of the CBC, opened what was termed the discussion (not debate) of ". . .the Congressional Black Caucus' constructive alternative budget for 1984 . . . ." Dixon stated that the CBC was "compelled to take a leadership role in the budget process because of the harsh cutbacks and misplaced priorities which the Reagan Administration had



advocated," and that the CBC could not "ignore the plight of America's poor and unemployed: for they are more often than not our own people." (15)

Dixon closed his opening remarks with a reference to the internal debate within the caucus regarding the 1983 CBC budget and the closed rule which did not allow that budget to be formally introduced on the floor. He stated that some members of the CBC could not support the Jones budget, but that was not the caucus position. The point of the budget was to articulate the concerns of the caucus and to have "the opportunity for a dialog" on the House floor. For Dixon, political reality was the primary reason the majority of the caucus would support the Jones budget "because when we look at the figures in our budget which we would obviously prefer, we recognize that those figures are only \$18 billion short of what the caucus has recommended." (16)

William Gray reiterated Dixon's comments and stated that,

An overwhelming majority, 17 members, voted not to offer its alternative before the House . . . We made that decision, not the leadership nor anyone else . . . And so 17 of us voted not to offer it because the Jones budget comes very close to what we have been seeking over the last two years, even though there are parts of it which we are not satisfied with. (17)

The rest of the discussion consisted of different CBC members speaking on their areas of expertise, and liberal white colleagues congratulating the efforts of the caucus. Nonetheless, several Republican members stated that the

closed rule, which did not allow debate on the CBC budget, was a conspiracy forged by the Democratic conspiracy to hold down debate on the Jones budget and force their party members to vote a particular way.

Both John Conyers and Gus Savage (D-IL) of the CBC condemned the deal struck by the Democratic leadership. Conyers underscored the fact that "there are some very significant differences underlying the premises on which the Jones budget and the CBC budget were formed." Conyers' basic argument was against the most consequential differences between the two budgets, defense spending and a jobs program. The CBC budget would have cut \$49 billion more from defense spending in FY 1984 than the Jones budget. The jobs program in the CBC budget was funded at double that of the Jones budget. Conyers continued that,

... to say that Jones' budget and the Black Caucus budget are just about the same means you have not read either one of them. There is a world of difference. (18)

Yet, even Savage, who felt that Dixon and Gray forced the caucus to "acquiesce to this deal that left us with this shine time," stated that "the Democratic budget represents improvement over its efforts of the past two years." (19)

Dixon concluded the hour-long discussion by throwing the support of the caucus for the budget of the Budget Committee by stating that "All in all, Mr. Chairman, it seems to at least 17 members of the caucus that although this is not a perfect budget, it cannot be defended from a military

expenditure point of view, it is a reasonable budget that protects many of the interests of the poor and needy of our society." (20)

It is evident from this comparison of the Congressional Record transcripts that the CBC's approach to the budget process in 1983 was markedly different from that organization's experiences in 1982. The major reason for the difference in the CBC's approach and attitude to their own budget proposals and the budget proposal of the House Democratic leadership, is significant to the examination of ideological informal congressional groups.

In the early part of 1982, the House was still reeling from two years of conservative legislative success. The Democratic leadership was fighting, often in vain, to keep the ranks of the party unified behind particular social and fiscal policies. The black representatives of the House felt alienated from the rising tide of boll-weevilism within the party, and the House leadership's ineffective control of this conservative ideology. The black legislators, who felt they had little input in the formal structure of Congress, coordinated a collective legislative effort to vent their frustration. The CBC budgets were attempts to influence legislative direction.

The 1982 congressional elections brought 25 new Democrats to the House. The mood of the country was less conservative

and the mood of the Congress shifted as well. The leader of the boll-weevils was more successfully punished by the House leadership (stripped of committee assignments), which in the congressional elections had taken on the role of the champion for the poor, the elderly, and the unemployed. (21) The majority of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus could, once again, feel like contributing members of the Democratic Party. The leadership, and their white colleagues, listened to their concerns and included CBC budget suggestions in the FY 1984 budget. Indeed, there was a CBC member on the Budget Committee. (22)

The FY 1984 House budget increased funding, or maintained existing levels of funding, for many social programs, in addition to questioning more than in recent years the fiscal irresponsibility of an out-of-control defense budget. The organization of the Congressional Black Caucus was not as significant because, in the minds of the majority of the black legislators, it was not necessary for the caucus to play a more significant legislative role.

As with the DSG and other ideological policy-oriented informal groups in the House, the CBC is an informal congressional group in which the black representatives can identify and share information with one another. More importantly, when it is deemed necessary by its members, the CBC serves as the framework by which the black members can coordinate a legislative effort to express their opposition to current

policies or present their ideology before Congress. These activities are consistent with those of other ideological, policy-oriented informal legislative groups.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

- 1) Isaiah J. Poole, "The Congressional Black Caucus Struggles to Find a New Way, " Black Enterprise, December 1981, p. 37.
- 2) Ibid.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) David S. Broder, "Invisible Budget," The Washington Post, 30 May 1982, Sec. C, p. 7.
- 5) Interview, 25 May 1982. All of the interviewees requested anonymity in this thesis.
- 6) The Congressional Black Caucus, Point of View, May 1982, p. 1.
- 7) Ibid., pp. 1-2.
- 8) U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., 24 May 1982, Congressional Record 128:2700.
- 9) Ibid., p. 2702.
- 10) Ibid., p. 2704.
- 11) Ibid., pp. 2708-2709.
- 12) Ibid., p. 2709.
- 13) Ibid., p. 2710.
- 14) David S. Broder, "Invisible Budget," The Washington Post, 30 May 1982, Sec. C, p. 7.
- 15) U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, 98th Cong., 1st sess., 23 March 1983, Congressional Record 129:1583.
- 16) Ibid., p. 1584.
- 17) Ibid., p. 1586.
- 18) Ibid., pp. 1590-1591.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER III (cont'd)

19) Ibid., pp. 1589, 1595.

20) Ibid., p. 1595.

21) Richard E. Cohen, "House Democrats No Longer Can Use the Excuse That They Lack the Votes," National Journal, 22 January 1983, pp. 152-154.

22) "House Partisanship Increases; Democrats Exhibit New Unity," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, 31 December 1983, p. 2789.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

In Chapter I of this thesis, an ideological, policy-oriented informal legislative group was identified as that which tends to focus on two of three functions for its members. First, these groups provide information for representatives on a variety of issues, as do other informal legislative groups in Congress. Second, but unlike other informal groups, ideological, informal legislative groups provide a framework for collective legislative activities.

It was also noted that this framework for collective legislative action is particularly important for an informal legislative group if the members of that group feel alienated from the formal structure of Congress, including party leadership and committee work.

The literature regarding the Congressional Black Caucus tends to analyze the CBC without utilizing the accepted definitions and functions for informal legislative groups. Studies on the CBC focus on the ethnicity of its members as the most important factor in reviewing the legislative activities of the caucus. When the history of the CBC is reviewed,



it can be seen that the caucus has related with and reacted to the structure of the House in similar ways to that of other informal legislative groups.

Upon review of the voting record of the CBC members, it is apparent that the caucus is one reference point for the black representatives. The roll call votes of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus are consistent with the votes of their liberal white colleagues. The black representatives identify with House liberals -- white, black, or Hispanic -- on issues of mutual concern; poverty, unemployment, social and health welfare, equal economic and educational opportunities. Indeed, the 1982 voting record of the members of the CBC indicate that they consistently rank with the most liberal members of the House. The CBC was formed to provide a particular informational and legislative perspective on these problems for the black members and the entire Congress.

The Congressional Black Caucus' budgets are illustrative of how an ideologically-oriented informal legislative group will operate in Congress under various circumstances. In 1982, circumstances were such that the leadership of the House was deemed ineffectual against the conservative forces in Congress and in the Administration. Collectively, the members of the CBC introduced a budget which reflected the concerns they did not believe were addressed in the budget presented by one component of the formal structure of the House, the House

Committee on the Budget.

In 1983, the CBC worked with the leadership to ensure that the caucus members' concerns were incorporated in the FY 1984 budget. The congressional election in November 1982 brought 25 additional Democrats to the House. The Speaker of the House effectively punished the leader of the boll-weevil Democrats by stripping that member of his committee assignments. Democrats who voted like Republicans were, thus, put on notice that such behavior would not be tolerated. Further, the leadership allowed the CBC to have an hour of floor time to explain their budget. In that time, most CBC members related how similar the CBC budget was to the budget passed out of the House Committee on the Budget.

The difference in the CBC approach to the budget in 1983 from 1982 is significant. In 1982, the members of the CBC felt alienated from the leadership and many members of their party. The caucus members did not feel they had input into the development of the FY 1983 budget. In 1984, the leadership of the House was able to control the more conservative party members and made an attempt to include CBC members in the budget process. The CBC, thus, follows a similar pattern to other ideological, policy-oriented groups who primarily work as a legislative unit when its members are alienated from the formal structure and rules of the House.

The 1984 election brought further changes for the

Congressional Black Caucus. First, Ronald Reagan was re-elected President in a landslide victory. Second, one member of the CBC was defeated in a close race. Finally, and the most significant change for the members of the CBC, in the 99th Congress, black representatives assumed the chairmanship of 5 of the 22 House standing committees, including the politically powerful House Budget Committee. Other CBC members hold key ranking positions on nearly every House committee. (3)

Ironically, the seniority system -- the same system which impeded the civil rights efforts of the DSG in the early 1960s and helped to ensure congressional support for the retrogressive domestic policies of the Nixon era -- has served to enable black legislators to gain committee positions with significant political influence.

This influence is especially important when one considers that any additional black representatives will have to be elected from districts which are not predominately black. The members of the CBC are moving into the political mainstream of the Democratic Party in the House. Whether this move will mean greater legislative input and a wider appeal to the white electorate or, whether it signals the compromise of efforts to aid the American black community is a matter of some debate.

It is uncertain how the CBC may develop as an informal congressional group in the future. The CBC continues to touch base with the black community by holding their annual

legislative weekend. This event is partly social, partly political, and partly educational. One black member's staff person commented that the weekend "is one guarantee of a yearly assessment of where the caucus is and must go, and be black leaders." (1)

The CBC has resisted the inclusion into their ranks of white colleagues. In 1982, the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, formerly known as the Congressional Women's Caucus, allowed male representatives who are interested in issues which affect women to join the organization. This type of coalition-building may be a future possibility for the Congressional Black Caucus. (2)

The black representatives feel a heavy responsibility to their constituents and to the American black community at large. Yet, the CBC developed to serve the needs of the black representatives who have similar legislative goals. The caucus' collective efforts, their alternative budgets, were means by which the black representatives sought to influence the political process to reach these goals. For the present, the majority of the caucus members feel that they and their constituency are represented by the congressional Democratic leadership, and that the interest of black America can best be served by legislative and committee efforts from within that structure.

Although the caucus can be seen as a black organization, the caucus is limited by its very definition. It is an

informal congressional group composed of black legislators. As legislators, the CBC members are bound by the structure of Congress, the realities of American politics (they may not be reelected), the legislative priorities of their districts, and their Democratic party loyalties, which run deep and strong in the hearts of most blacks, and ambitious politicians.

The Congressional Black Caucus will remain one force in the federal system. The future legislative success of the CBC members is dependent upon factors which influence the success of their white colleagues: intelligence, staff, timing, contacts, money, and the support of the leadership or key Democrats. Nonetheless, the CBC provides the framework for a collective effort by the black representatives if its members become alienated from the formal structure of Congress.

## NOTES FOR CONCLUSION

- 1) Interview, 3 June 1982.
- 2) Vera Glaser, "Woman Power," Washingtonian, June 1982, pp. 112-121.
- 3) Milton Coleman, "Black Caucus Comes of Age," The Washington Post, 7 January 1984, Sec. A, pp. 1, 4.

APPENDIX A

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CBC MEMBERS' PROFILE</u>		<u>STANDING COMMITTEES</u>
	<u>DISTRICT/%BLACK</u>	<u>YEAR ELECTED</u>	
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>			
Ronald Dellums	8th / 24%	1970	Armed Services, District of Columbia (chairman)
Julian C. Dixon	28th / 42%	1978	Appropriations, Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (chairman)
Augustus F. Hawkins	29th / 46%	1962	House Administra- tion, Education and Labor (chairman)
Mervyn M. Dymally	31st / 31%	1980	Foreign Affairs, District of Columbia, Post Office and Civil Service
<u>ILLINOIS</u>			
Charles A. Hayes	1st / 96%	1983 (special election)	Small Business, Education and Labor
Gus Savage	2nd / 66%	1980	Public Works and Transportation, Small Business
Cardiss Collins	7th / 60%	1973 (special election)	Energy and Commerce, Government Operations

APPENDIX ACBC MEMBERS' PROFILE

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<u>NAME</u>	<u>DISTRICT/%BLACK</u>	<u>YEAR ELECTED</u>	<u>STANDING COMMITTEES</u>
<u>MARYLAND</u>			
Parren Mitchell	7th / 70%	1970	Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs, Small Business (chairman)
<u>MICHIGAN</u>			
John Conyers, Jr.	1st / 66%	1964	Government Operations, Judiciary
George W. Crockett, Jr.	13th / 67%	1980	Foreign Affairs, Judiciary
<u>MISSOURI</u>			
William Clay	1st / 46%	1968	Education and Labor, Post Office and Civil Service
Alan Wheat	5th / 20%	1982	Rules
<u>NEW YORK</u>			
Edolphus Towns	11th / 17%	1982	Government Operations, Public Works and Transportation
Major R. Owens	12th / 80%	1982	Education and Labor, Government Operations
Charles B. Rangel	16th / 49%	1970	Ways and Means



APPENDIX ACBC MEMBERS' PROFILE

Page 3

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DISTRICT/%BLACK</u>	<u>YEAR ELECTED</u>	<u>STANDING COMMITTEES</u>
<u>OHIO</u>			
Louis Stokes	21st / 58%	1968	Appropriations
<u>PENNSYLVANIA</u>			
William H. Gray, III	2nd / 76%	1978	Appropriations, District of Columbia, Budget Committee (chairman)
<u>TENNESSEE</u>			
Harold E. Ford	9th / 57%	1974	Ways and Means
<u>TEXAS</u>			
Mickey Leland	18th / 39%	1978	District of Columbia, Energy and Commerce, Post Office and Civil Service
<u>DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA</u>			
Walter E. Fauntroy	at- / 66% large	1971	Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs, District of Columbia

APPENDIX BCBC MEMBERS' IDEOLOGICAL RATING (1)

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ECONOMIC</u> Lib/Cons	<u>FOREIGN</u> Lib/Cons	<u>CULTURAL</u> Lib/Cons
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>			
Ronald Dellums	79%/21%	96%/1%	88%/11%
Julian C. Dixon	81%/18%	89%/11%	84%/14%
Augustus F. Hawkins	80%/20%	79%/20%	85%/14%
Mervyn M. Dymally	93%/6%	82%/18%	74%/25%
<u>ILLINOIS</u>			
Charles A. Hayes	N/A		
Gus Savage	77%/23%	96%/1%	84%/16%
Cardiss Collins	92%/7%	96%/1%	81%/18%
<u>MARYLAND</u>			
Parren Mitchell	90%/9%	96%/1%	92%/8%
<u>MICHIGAN</u>			
John Conyers, Jr.	76%/23%	89%/11%	98%/8%
George W. Crockett, Jr.	95%/5%	96%/4%	93%/3%
<u>MISSOURI</u>			
William Clay	91%/9%	99%/1%	92%/7%
Alan Wheat	N/A		

APPENDIX BCBC MEMBERS' IDEOLOGICAL RATING

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<u>NAME</u>	<u>ECONOMIC</u> Lib/Cons	<u>FOREIGN</u> Lib/Cons	<u>CULTURAL</u> Lib/Cons
<u>NEW YORK</u>			
Edolphus Towns	N/A		
Major R. Owens	N/A		
Charles B. Rangel	96%/2%	91%/8%	99%/1%
<u>OHIO</u>			
Louis Stokes	93%/6%	95%/4%	88%/1%
<u>PENNSYLVANIA</u>			
William H. Gray, III	94%/5%	99%/1%	79%/20%
<u>TENNESSEE</u>			
Harold E. Ford	85%/14%	91%/9%	76%/24%
<u>TEXAS</u>			
Mickey Leland	99%/0%	92%/6%	89%/11%
<u>DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA</u>			
Walter E. Fauntroy	-- non-voting Delegate		

## NOTES FOR APPENDIX B

1) Michael Barone and Grant Ujifusa, The Almanac of American Politics, 1984, (Washington, D.C.: National Journal, 1983). This rating was compiled by National Journal and The Baron Report. It comprises 42 key House votes. The liberal and conservative percentiles rank the members relative to other members in the House.

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## VITA

Claudette A. Moody was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on September 15, 1956. Ms Moody graduated from Walnut Hills High School, a public college preparatory school, in 1974. She attended the University of Cincinnati for two years, majoring in political science and history. In 1976, Ms Moody moved to California where she worked in the field of health and was elected shop steward by her colleagues to the Hospital and Institutional Workers Union, Local 250, an affiliate of the Service Employees International. She served in this position until August of 1978.

Between 1978 and 1981, Ms Moody attended California State University (CSUS) in Sacramento, California. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Government in 1980. Ms Moody worked her way through college with various jobs on and off the university campus.

While a student at CSUS, Ms Moody was an intern with the Senate Democratic Caucus of California, with the Office of Assemblyman Henry Mello, and with the Planned Parenthood Association of Sacramento. In addition, she was a volunteer with Californians for Brown '78, the organization for Governor Jerry Brown's 1978 gubernatorial campaign, from April 1978 until January 1979. Ms. Moody also was a volunteer at several functions for the California State Democratic Party.

## VITA

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In 1982, Ms Moody worked towards a Master of Arts degree at The College of William and Mary in Virginia. As a graduate student, she was elected co-representative from the Department of Government to the Graduate Student Association and was selected Arts and Sciences graduate representative to VAPIRG. She is now a legislative assistant for Congressman Jim Moody (D-WI).