



Multiplex Legislative Networks and the Power of Caucuses to Alleviate Partisan Polarization

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Project Motivations

- Substantive
 - Follow-up from forthcoming book on LMOs
 - Is the proliferation of caucuses in Congress a response to increased partisan polarization?
- Methodological
 - How can we make the multiplex data more informative?

Summary of Argument

The Problem

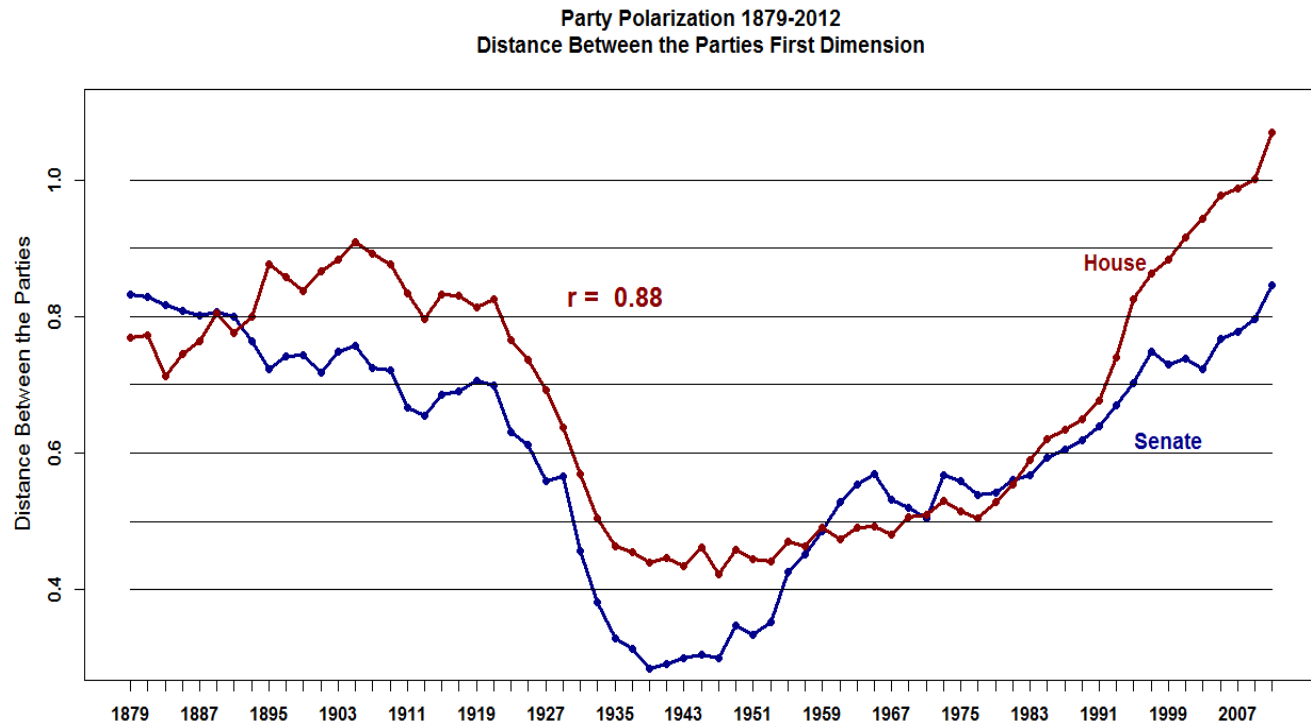
- Congress is polarized.
- Polarization contributes to legislative gridlock.
- Institutional structure of congress restricts cross-partisan interaction.
- Some legislators may seek means of connecting to MCs across the aisle.
- How do they do this?

Summary of Argument

The Solution

- Caucuses help MCs reach cross-partisans.
- As more MCs participate in caucuses they become more connected to their colleagues.
 - Relationships with cross-partisans increases the likelihood of shared behavior.
 - MCs are more likely to have access to the same information.
- **THEREFORE:** As caucus participation increases, MCs are more likely to behave the same way.

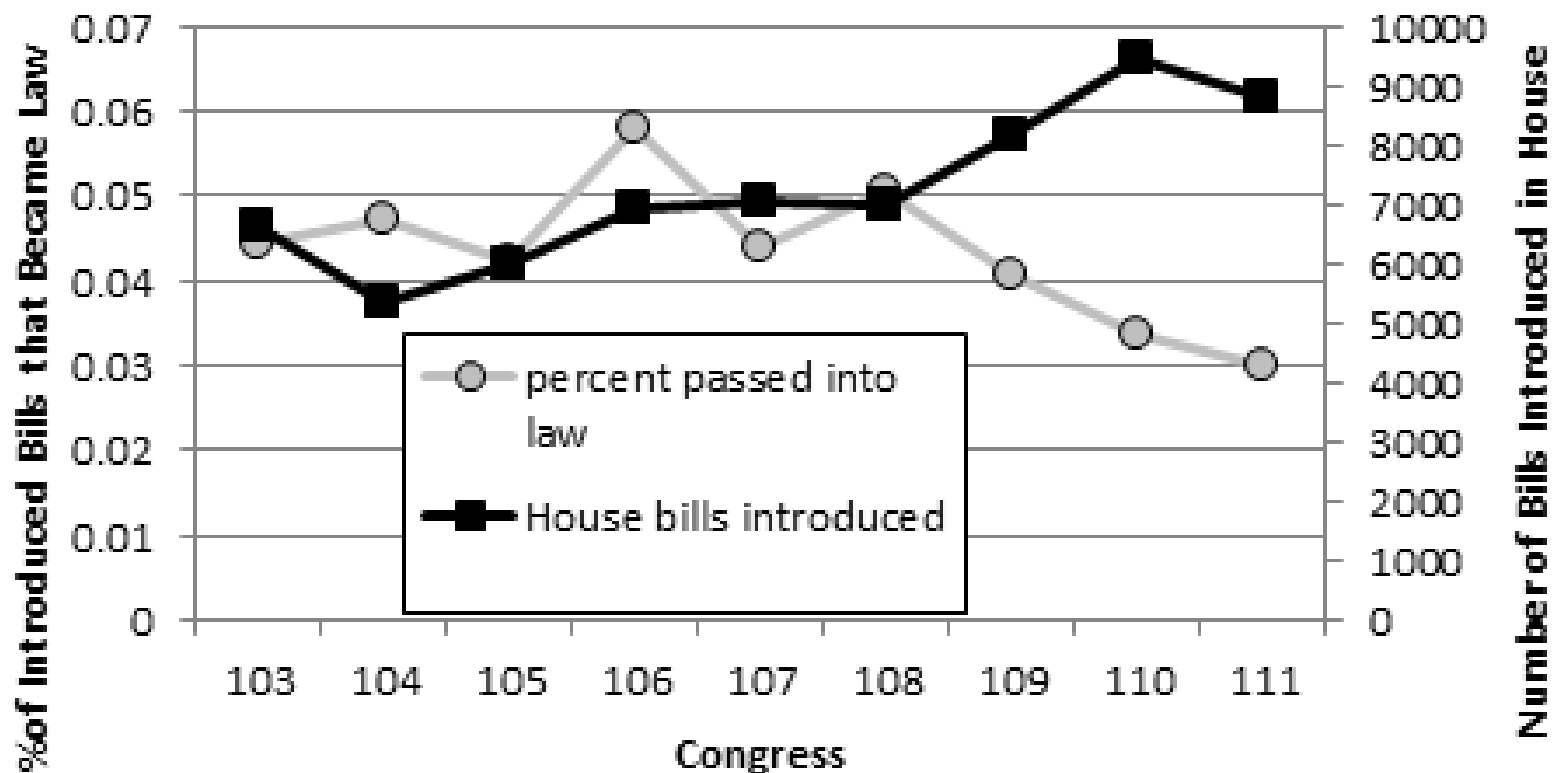
Congress is Polarized



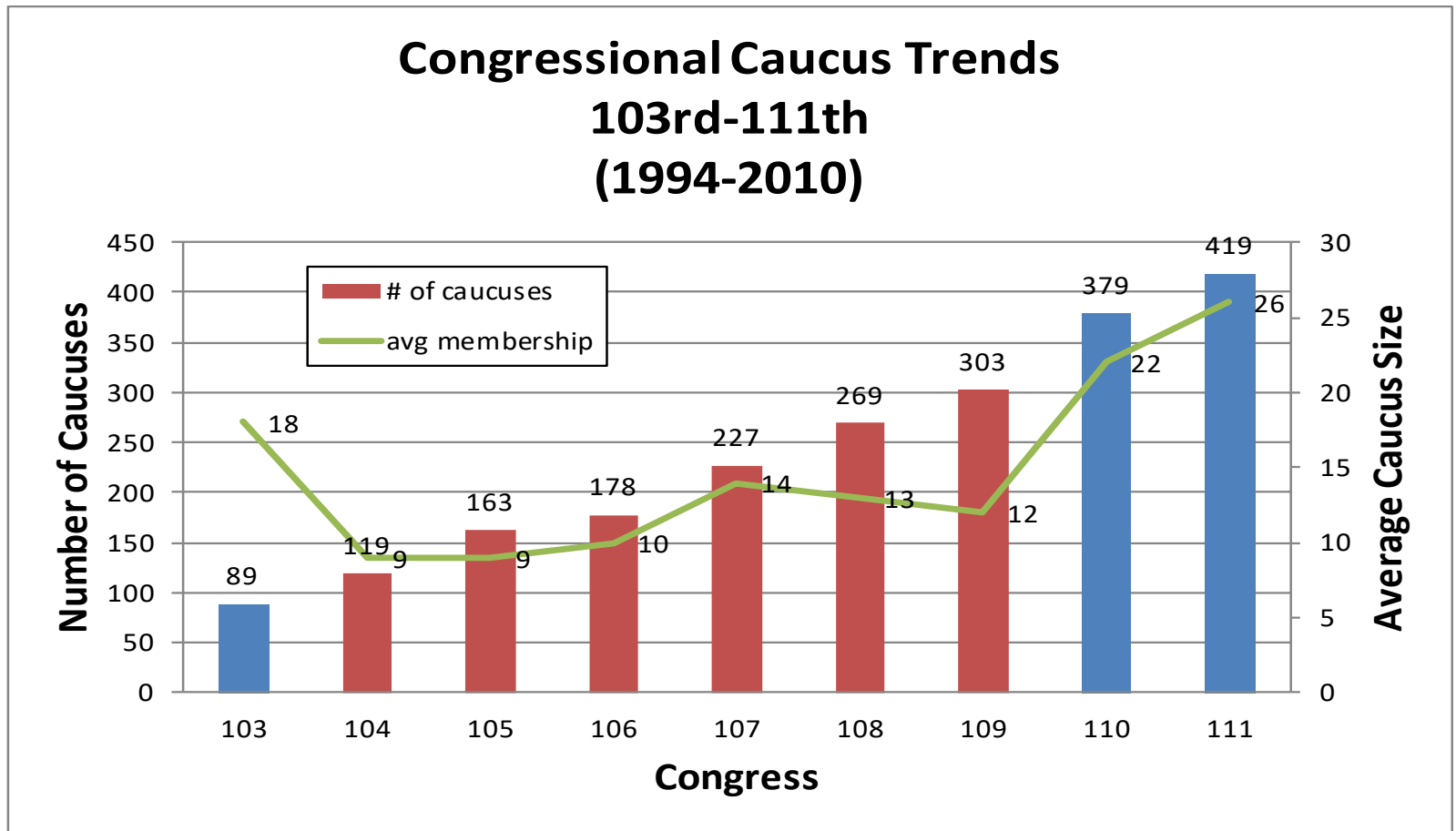
Polarized America / voteview.com

Polarization contributes to gridlock

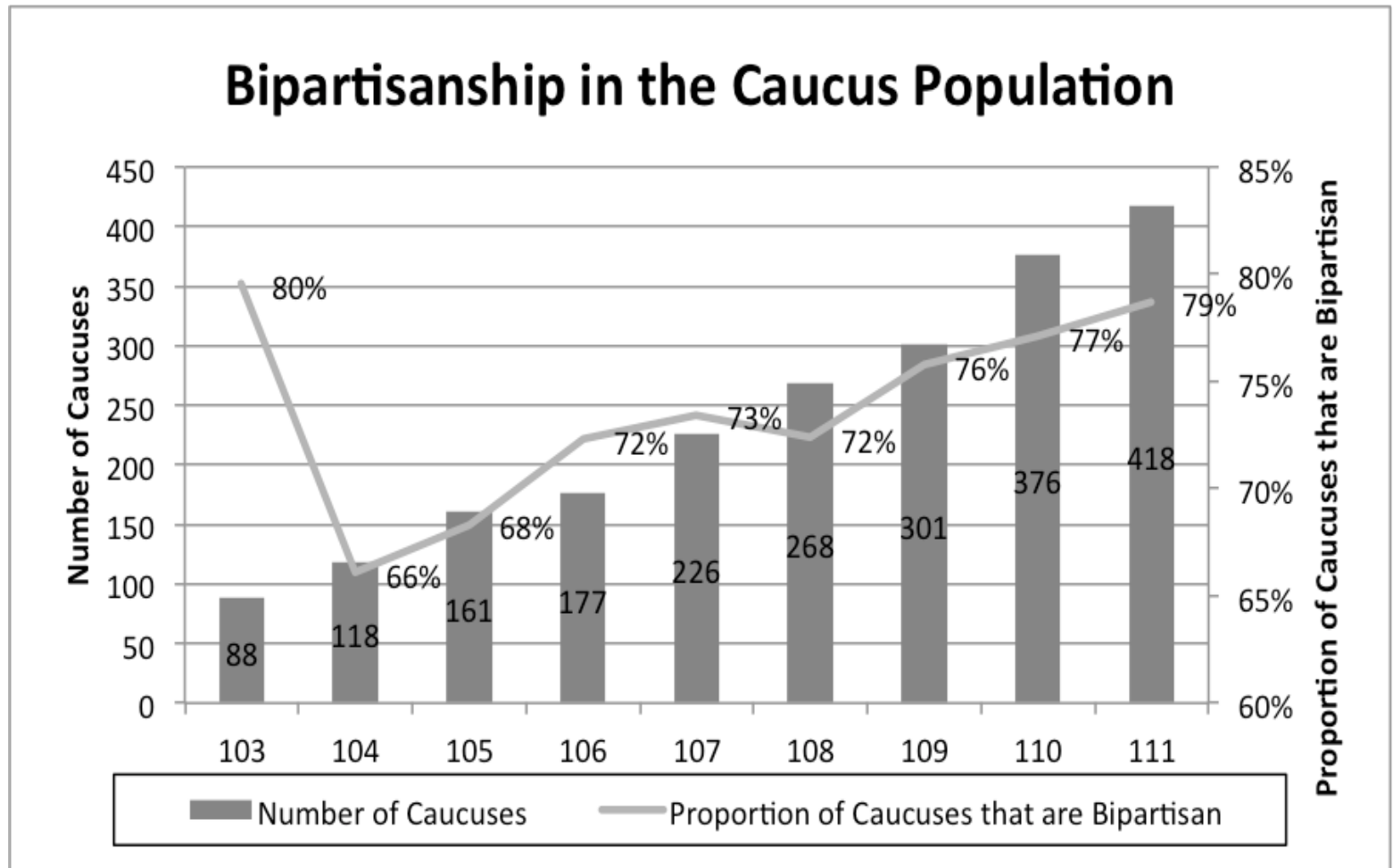
House Productivity 1993-2010



Caucuses are Growing



Caucuses are Bipartisan



Research Design

Data & Measurement

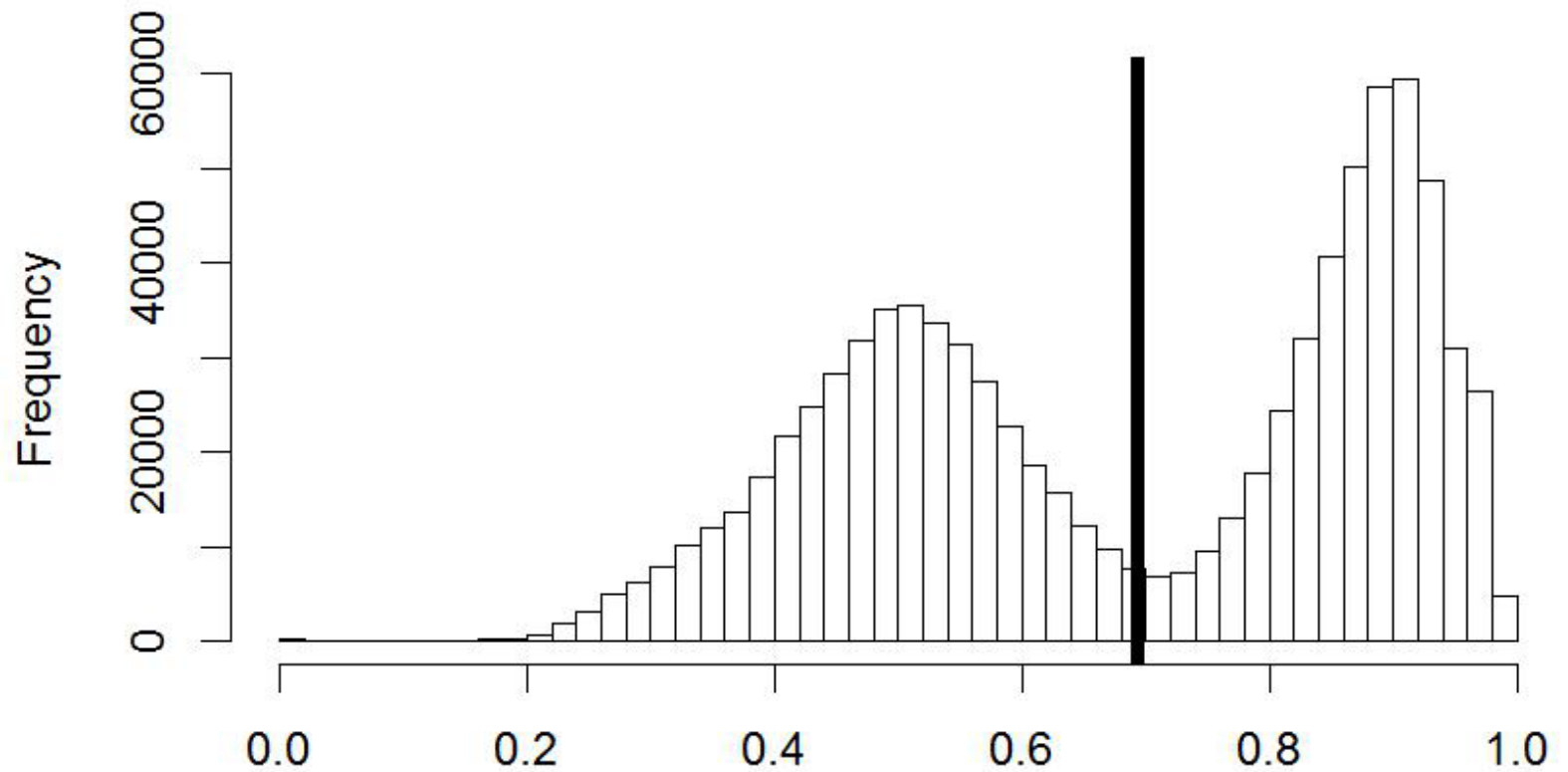
- 1993 - 2010 (93rd-111th Congresses)
- Explain roll call voting
 - Covoting
 - % change in covoting
- Covariates

Caucus participation	Party
Ideology	Terms Served
Common Cmte.	Cosponsorship
State	Leadership
Mean Electoral %	Gender
Electoral % dist.	Mean betweenness
Mean degree	

Measure Polarization as Covoting

- The frequency with which any pair of legislators casts the same vote.
- A measure of polarization by dyad is I-covoting rate.
 - Similar to NOMINATE, but dyadic
 - 864,879 dyads
 - Mean = 0.68, (Stand. Dev. = 0.21)

Covoting Rate Distribution



median = 0.7 indicated by vertical line

Results

Panel Linear Regression (pkg: plm)

Table 1: Covoting Rate by Members of Congress

	Estimate	SE	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
(Intercept)	0.26745	0.00100	267.79458	0.00000
(lagged DV)	0.62273	0.00104	599.16819	0.00000
Number of common caucuses	0.00302	0.00007	44.03197	0.00000
Number of common committees	-0.00046	0.00017	-2.65690	0.00789
Dummy for same party	0.04104	0.00038	108.32349	0.00000
Dummy for same state	-0.00286	0.00037	-7.67071	0.00000
Dummy for both female	-0.00420	0.00058	-7.21858	0.00000
Dummy for both party leaders	0.00381	0.00060	6.34343	0.00000
NOMINATE distance	-0.12306	0.00051	-239.46165	0.00000
Mean betweenness score	0.00000	0.00000	4.22019	0.00002
Mean degree	-0.00002	0.00000	-73.63501	0.00000
Number of measures cosponsored	0.00022	0.00000	108.95901	0.00000
Mean electoral %	0.00044	0.00001	49.41905	0.00000
Electoral % distance	-0.00008	0.00001	-11.29045	0.00000
Mean number of terms served	0.00002	0.00003	0.88245	0.37753

Notes: Dropped 103rd Congress due to inclusion of lagged dependent variable. Includes all legislator dyads for Congresses 104-111. $n_{\text{dyad-Congress}} = 769613$, $n_{\text{dyads}} = 262497$.

Interpretation

- One additional common caucus is associated with three additional votes in agreement across a 1000-vote Congress.

-OR-

- Three additional common caucuses is associated with about a 1% higher covoting rate.

Conclusions

- All else being equal, caucus participation increases covoting (*i.e.*, decreases polarization).
- Caucus participation has a meaningful effect on legislative behavior.

Future Work

- How can we improve the causal inference?
 - Can we improve the statistical model?
 - How can we tease out the causal feedback (increased polarization → join caucuses; common caucuses → decrease polarization)?
- Can we bring more data to bear on the question?