

Bound Together: Racial Peer Effects and Caucus Control in the U.S. Congress *

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Abstract

Far from the purely constituent-oriented or purely party-oriented member of Congress (MC) that existing work posits, this paper argues that MCs' social groups and the norms of behavior that define them can powerfully constrain legislators' behaviors. Guided by insights from scholarship on legislative organizations and identity politics, I test my argument using the case of Black MCs and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). My main empirical strategy uses an original data set of committee hearing transcripts from 2007 to 2019 and a design that exploits members' exposure to fellow Black MCs on their various committee assignments to uncover the impact of group pressures on CBC members. I show that the effect of serving on a committee with more co-ethnic legislators varies by a given MC's type: Members that are more aligned with the interests of the CBC — those that are left-leaning and represent more-Black Congressional districts — participate more in committee hearings, and members that are less aligned participate less. I then show using a series of empirical tests and qualitative evidence drawing on elite interviews that this pattern of results is driven by in-group sanctions for behavior that is inconsistent with caucus wishes. Together, the theory and findings shed light on the role of groups and their norms in shaping elite behavior and provide evidence for the contextual nature of legislative Black political behavior.

Key Words: Elite behavior, identity, African American politics, legislative organization, parties

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“Only a certain kind of ‘Blackness’ is accepted and represented in the Caucus [...] While difference is not proscribed, it’s definitely not encouraged.”

— A former Congressional Black Caucus Foundation staffer.¹

1 Introduction

What guides elected officials’ behavior in representative democracies has long been a question of interest to scholars of politics. While the classical views are that representatives are driven by the preferences of their home districts or by the goals of the political parties they belong to, scholars have also spent time attempting to understand how legislators’ characteristics — like their race, gender, and social networks — are predictive of their representational styles. Seldom argued is that legislators’ behaviors appear to conform to their social groups’ interests because of the *strategic* value to legislators organizing around their group identity whilst in office. This argument seems increasingly relevant, however, as groups like the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus and Conference, the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues, occupational groups, and even regional delegations — the institutional manifestations of social identities — continue to exercise power in Congress despite changes to their numbers and ideological compositions of their respective memberships. How are these groups able to maintain their power? The present paper argues that identity-based groups in Congress are able to do so via their capacity to guide members both passively through their reliance on established norms of political behavior and actively through directed sanctions for misbehavior.

I test my theory by focusing on Black members of Congress (MCs) and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). Founded in 1971 as a working group for the thirteen Black members of the U.S. House, today the CBC consists of 57 ideologically and socio-economically diverse members representing both majority-minority and minority-minority districts. Despite its size and heterogeneity, the CBC remains a cohesive voting bloc, and scholars of American politics continue to have a clear image of legislative “Black politics.”² Here, I present evidence suggesting that this cohesion is in part related to Black MCs’ adherence to group norms and is enforced via a system of in-group monitoring, rewards for behaviors consistent with caucus goals, and punishments for misbehavior. As an example: In 2009 and 2010, former CBC-member Artur Davis (AL-7) voted against the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the CBC and President Barack Obama’s primary legislative agenda item. Davis’s actions were met by reprisals from fellow caucus members: senior members of the Congressional Black Caucus

¹Qualitative, in-person interviews were carried out in the summer and fall of 2022 with current and former legislative staffers associated with Congressional Black Caucus members and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation.

²For example, see work on the role of a legislator’s race on their speech (Dietrich and Hayes 2022), creation of new legislation (Pinney and Serra 2002; Gamble 2007), roll call voting (Grose 2005), and representational styles (Tate 2004; Fenno 2011; Grose 2011; Broockman 2013).

published a letter calling his actions “disturbing” and “stem[ming] from transparent opportunism” (Members of the Congressional Black Caucus 2012). Additionally, Jesse Jackson, a longtime civil rights activist and father of Representative Jesse Jackson, Jr., criticized Davis by saying, “You can’t vote against healthcare and call yourself a [B]lack man” (Soraghan 2009). The case of Davis not only points to the existence of sanctioning in the CBC, but also the fact that we observe so few of these overt recriminations within the caucus — and high levels of group cohesion — suggests that their threat serves as a constraint on member behavior. In what follows I further assert that this phenomenon can also be generalized to other identity groups in Congress: social groups can powerfully shape elite behavior. Moreover, the intrinsic value of a group’s identity to group members, the resources the group holds, and the costs of maintaining group discipline determine its relative influence over members.

To test my argument that the caucus actively shapes Black MCs’ behaviors, I rely on the assumption that pressures to conform to group norms of behavior increase with greater group contact via monitoring (e.g., White and Laird 2020). So, if Black MCs are in an environment with more co-ethnics, they should be more likely to behave in a way that reflects their group’s goals even if doing so is at odds with their other interests. To gain leverage on this sort of variation, I follow recent work on peer effects in Congress by centering my analysis on legislators’ behaviors in Congressional committee hearings (Ban et al. 2022). Committee hearings — a strategically-valuable part of the policy-making process (Shepsle and Weingast 1987; Cox and McCubbins 1993) — offer the opportunity to make a more precise claim about the role of the CBC and intra-racial pressures because most MCs sit on multiple committees composed of different assortments of their fellow representatives. This means that Black MCs are exposed to different numbers of co-ethnics both across their different committee assignments and within the same committee, over time. Studying committees offers additional, analytical advantages: Firstly, because constituents are less likely to pay attention to committee hearings than other forms of legislative speech (Ban and Kaslovsky 2023), committees are an ideal setting to analyze how MCs react pressures coming from within Congress’s walls. Secondly, *ex ante*, we would assume that all MCs would want to participate during committee hearings in order to augment their political power (Mayhew 1974). If it’s the case that certain CBC members speak less when in the presence of other caucus members — and not other MC types or groups — then it’s likely a result of the CBC shaping their behaviors *and* there is some benefit to them for behaving in that way.

In my baseline committee hearing results, I show using an original data set of hearing transcripts from the 110th to 115th Congresses (2007 to 2019) that as the percent Black on a committee increases, MCs that are aligned with the politics of the CBC tend to participate more during hearings whereas those that are less aligned with the CBC speak less. I proxy CBC alignment both using members’ ideologies as well as their district compositions (more versus less percent Black) and find substantively

similar results. I further show that the declines in participation are most pronounced for members on the fringes of the CBC, and increases are greatest for those that are more likely to be favored by leadership. Specifically, freshman, right-leaning members of the caucus speak the least in response to greater CBC presence and more senior, left-leaning members speak the most. Moreover, this pattern is magnified in committees contexts that receive more CBC-sponsored bills, or, when the benefits to group coordination are greater. Additionally, the patterns I observe appear unique to co-ethnic pressures on committees. Placebo checks indicate that Black MCs behaviors' are not responsive to changes in committee composition for other racio-ethnic groups. Nor are they responsive to changes in the presence of the Congressional Progressive Caucus on committees, another powerful caucus many CBC members belong to.

But why would a group of diverse, ostensibly independent legislators comply with these patterns of behavior? In the second part of the paper, I explore how the pattern of results I find in the first part of the paper — and the intra-caucus control they imply — are maintained. Motivated by elite interviews with current and former Congressional staff members affiliated with CBC members, I use an across-committee measure of speech and a measure of roll-call extremity relative to the rest of the caucus to study how other members of the caucus react to changes in a MCs' behavior. I find evidence that CBC leadership withholds funds and bill co-sponsorship from rank and file members that deviate from past behavior (i.e., change their participation on committees or are less compliant on roll calls).

Taken together, the theory and findings presented here shed light on both our understanding of organized groups and party organization in Congress, as well as our conceptualization of elite ethnoracial minority politics in the United States. To the first point, while new works like Bloch Rubin (2017), Clarke (2020*b*), and Gaynor (2022) argue that — like other representative democracies — the organization of the United States' parties ought to be better understood as collectives of potentially pivotal voting blocs that support each-other and are meaningful to voters, they focus less on how these groups maintain discipline. This work suggests that these groups ought to be understood as being capable of exerting significant pressure on the actions of their members through the traditional tools of control the primarily theoretical literature on parties and legislative groups predicts. To the second point, the findings of this paper highlight the strategic dimension of identity politics and co-ethnic solidarity in Congress. While other work claims that racio-ethnic minority groups of legislators form to provide value for their members (Haynie 2001; Brown 2014; Tyson 2016; Clark 2019), the present paper offers an additional rationale for *why* we would be so easily able to identify Black elite political behavior: these groups exert pressure on their members to behave in ways consistent with group goals.

Further, and finally, this work adds nuance to our understanding of in-group policing and its role in structuring the politics of ethnoracial minorities. While much of the extant literature that focuses

on the importance of racial identity in the mass and elite contexts has attended to questions that study how race gives rise to differences between groups — for example, why Black legislators have different representational styles than White or Hispanic or Asian legislators — empirical scholars have attended less to how legislators of the same social identity might influence each-other, even though these dynamics have been highlighted as theoretically important in structuring elite behavior among under-represented groups (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 1996; Kanthak and Krause 2010; Mendelberg, Karpowitz, and Oliphant 2014). This project provides evidence for these dynamics in the U.S. Congress.

The rest of this paper proceeds as follows. In Section 2, I outline my general theory, situating it in the literature on identity politics and legislative organizations. Section 3 introduces the case of the Congressional Black Caucus using newly collected data on Black MCs’ representational styles and offers expectations for how group pressures would influence the behavior of CBC members. In Section 4, I present my data and empirical analysis of Black MCs’ participation during Congressional committee hearings. In Section 5, I explore potential mechanisms driving my results. Finally, in Section 6 I discuss my findings and their generalisability, and conclude.

2 Theoretical Perspectives

Seminal work has argued that legislators will align themselves with similar legislators to augment their bargaining power (e.g., Mayhew 1974; Aldrich 1995). Less intuitive, however, is *what* identities become valuable to MCs in office and *how* these identity-based groups can maintain any sort of discipline or political relevance when their membership is large or heterogeneous — in other words, when their barriers to collective action are higher (Olson 1965). Ultimately, I argue that pressures to conform to group interests, which are facilitated by in-group policing and increase with a group’s value to legislators in Congress, can serve as a constraint on MC behavior.

Much of the research exploring the role of social identity in driving representative behavior has focused on how MCs of different social identity groups tend to behave in distinct ways from one another (e.g., for racial groups see Grose (2011); and for gender see Anzia and Berry (2011) and Holman and Mahoney (2018)). There are two main rationales offered for these arguments. One argues that the relationship between identity and representation comes from constituent pressures: people of similar types tend to live around one another (Tiebout 1956; Schelling 1969), and voters rely on self-identification with a candidate as a heuristic for quality (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1986; Dawson 1995). So, a MC’s representational style will be consistent with his group’s wishes and less consistent with other MCs representing different groups. Alternatively, social identities guide MC behavior because they are in part determinant of policy preferences, thereby causing differentiation between MCs of different groups. For example, female politicians share similar representational styles

because they developed their policy opinions in a similar way. This makes them behave differently in Congress than male politicians. Evidence showing the effect of contact with out-groups on legislators is indicative of this learning (Washington 2008).

These perspectives ignore an important dimension of the role of social identity groups in shaping behavior: social pressure. The feeling that other members of one's group will cast judgment or dole out punishment for some behavioral misstep has received renewed attention recently especially as it relates to different forms of partisan and electoral expression including turnout (Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2008), the propensity to donate to campaigns (White, Laird, and Allen 2014), and pro-social behaviors (Baxter-King et al. 2022). Although much of this work focuses on mass political outcomes, a multi-disciplinary body of work also shows that social pressure does influence the behavior of ostensibly elite actors like corporate board members (Larreguy and Teso 2018) and local political leaders (Cohen 1999; Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014). Relevant to this project: Scholarship parsing the role of partisan group pressures — party identification being one of the most salient socio-political identities in the legislative context — and parties' abilities to discipline their members are a mainstay in American politics research. Using this work and the theoretical insights it has generated can therefore motivate how we can think about the role of other social identities in the legislative context.

Politicians rely on parties because they provide a useful signal for voters for a representative's type (Downs 1957; Rahn 1993), and they increase independent representatives' bargaining power towards helping them achieve their legislative goals (Mayhew 1974; Aldrich 1995). Given this, we can draw parallels between parties and their value to other groups. For example, per the recent literature on ideological factions in Congress, intra-party groups like the Tea Party or the Congressional Progressive Caucus are valuable in both ways to representatives: voters and donors care about MCs' memberships in them and with greater numbers they have been able to achieve more legislatively (Bloch Rubin 2017; Clarke 2020*b*). Even setting ideological groups aside, one could imagine gender, race, and occupational groups being valuable for legislators. For example, past work has established the importance of candidate race for voters' election day decisions (e.g., Dawson 1995; Visalvanich 2017) and racioethnic minority officeholders' propensity to work with each-other towards carrying out their legislative goals (Epstein, Fowler, and O'Halloran N.d.; Kirkland 2011). When groups' respective importance to voters and their members increase — for example, because of events outside of Congress elevate certain agenda items (Carmines and Stimson 1989) — MCs have greater reason to follow their group in order to reap the rewards of any additional goods the group provides them with (e.g., Hansen 1985).

To gain access to party goods, members are expected to contribute to party activities and goals. In order to maintain discipline and prevent free riding, parties and their members have a reason to police the behavior of other group members (Kam 2009; Congleton 2010). For MCs united by

a shared identity, the actions of each group member can threaten the image and reputation of the group if they deviate from either in-group members or out-group members' perceptions of the group's norms of behavior. The threat of diminished or lost access to identity-based benefits, in turn, leads to incentives for in-group policing and sanctions for misbehavior that are viewed as important to the maintenance and continuation of the group's value (For theoretical perspectives, see Heckathorn 1990; Fearon and Laitin 1996; Nakao 2009). When groups are large and the goals of members are heterogeneous, this policing is often facilitated by monitoring: either norms of behavior are such that every member take its upon himself to watch his fellow members, or particular disciplinarians are designated to maintain cohesion (Congleton 2010).

To recapitulate: Non-partisan identities can be valuable to representatives, and this value is in part dependent on group members' behaving in a cohesive way. To take advantage of group-based benefits, MCs must therefore commit to behaving in a way that supports the goals of their group or else risk punishment by their peers. Hence, not only should we expect that representatives will trade-off between behaviors that benefit themselves versus the group in order to gain access to group-based goods, but also that they will undertake actions to protect the value of their group via the monitoring, policing, and punishment of fellow members. Note that while I will go into the case of the Congressional Black Caucus in the next Section, this argument is not particular to Black MCs. In Section 6, I reflect on other groups in Congress that follow similar dynamics.

3 The Case of the Congressional Black Caucus

I test my argument by focusing on the case of the Congressional Black Caucus, one of the largest Congressional Member Organizations (“caucuses”) in the U.S. Congress. Much like legislative factions in other countries, caucuses exist to help members pursue common legislative objectives and elevate groups' interests beyond what a MC could do independently. Although joining a caucus is at the discretion of each legislator and membership in one is not mandatory, nearly all MCs belong to at least on caucus and many are part of multiple — reflecting each MC's diverse interests and backgrounds that might motivate caucus membership (Congressional Research Service 2023).

Founded as a vehicle to augment Black MCs' bargaining power after the Civil Rights Movement, the CBC has been heralded as the “conscience of Congress” because of its history championing social policy legislation. While the CBC's size and influence are reason enough to study its dynamics and role in governing MCs' behaviors in office, as a case it offers a particularly interesting opportunity to better understand the theoretical perspectives I set forth in the section above. In what follows, I outline the case of the CBC using a series of stylized facts and then make explicit how we would expect my argument above to manifest in the context of the CBC.

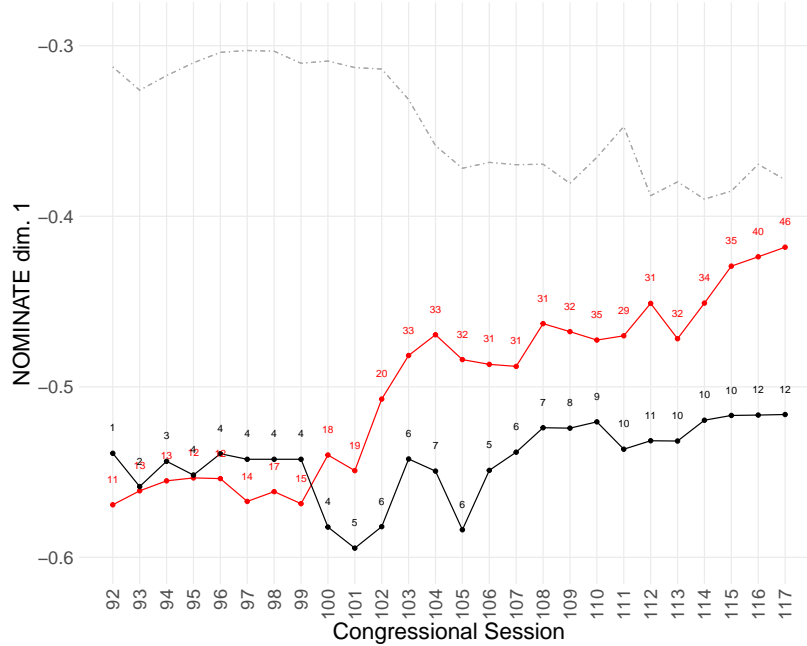


Figure 1 – CBC Members’ First-Dimension NOMINATE Score Figure plots the average first-dimension NOMINATE score of rank-and-file members of the CBC (in red) and those that have ever chaired the Caucus (in black). Numbers above each point indicate how many members in each group are serving at a time. Dotted grey line denotes the non-Black, average first-dimension NOMINATE score of Democrats.

The Composition of the CBC Has Moderated

Membership in the first cohorts of the caucus primarily came from activist backgrounds — many elected based off of their leadership during the Civil Rights Movement — and represented majority-minority Congressional districts (U.S. House of Representatives, Office of the Historian 2008; Tate 2020). As of the the 118th Congress, the CBC consists of 56 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate and represents 25.3 percent of the total U.S. population and 41 percent of the total U.S. African-American population (Congressional Black Caucus 2023). In addition, Democratic members of the CBC represent almost a quarter of the House Democratic Caucus. That statistic aside, the CBC is an ostensibly non-partisan organization: four (out of ten) Black Republican MCs have joined the caucus since its founding.³

Even without the caucus’s Republican members, the CBC has moderated ideologically as it has added new members to its ranks (Tate 2020). Figure 1 plots the average, first-dimension NOMINATE ideal-point of rank-and-file Democrat members of the CBC (in red) and the average ideal-point of CBC members that have ever chaired the Caucus (in black). Numbers above each line denote how many members of each group are serving as of a given Congressional session. The Figure shows

³Melvin Evans (Delegate, VI), Gary Franks (CT-5), Allen West (FL-22), and Mia Love (UT-4).

that as more members have joined the caucus — and, as older, seat-safe members have entered into leadership positions — the average ideal point of CBC members has tended towards the center. This is in contrast to the gradual polarization of the two major parties, pushing Democrats to the left as shown in the figure as the grey dotted line. Despite the changing ideology of the CBC’s rank and file, the ideal point of chairs has remained relatively flat. This represents the selection of new leadership that resembles old-guard members in their policy commitments and voting behavior. This recognition of more left-leaning leadership by the caucus as a whole could be interpreted as the caucus prioritizing a progressive image in Congress. Thus, despite the obvious ideological moderation of the caucus as a whole over time, the caucus remains rooted in the left-leaning politics of its founding cohort of members.

The CBC’s Changing Collective Constituency

Driving this moderation among the caucus’s ideological rank-and-file is the fact that less senior Black MCs represent increasingly non-Black Congressional districts. Moreover, in order to win the votes of racially diverse coalitions of constituents, these MCs are more likely to communicate in ways that are less explicitly racialized. As Gillespie describes, Black politicians of the post-Clinton era are more likely to be supported by multi-racial coalitions and come from less traditionally “Black” backgrounds — that is, they are more likely to have grown up in multi-racial settings and attended non-historically Black institutions for college (Gillespie 2009). Moreover, work on Black politicians at multiple levels of government demonstrates that these diverse electoral environments are associated with an increased candidate emphasis on policy platforms that make little to no explicit references to Black voters (e.g., McCormick and Jones 1993; Hajnal 2006; Gillespie 2009).

To illustrate these points using data, the top left panel of Figure 2 plots the average percent Black in the districts represented by members of the CBC from the 98th Congressional session (1983 – 1985, 22 members) to the 117th Congressional session (2021 – 2023, 55 members) and shows that the CBC collectively represents less and less Black CDs. The top right panel of Figure 2 plots Black U.S. House general election winners’ use of explicitly racialized nouns on their websites for election years from 2006 to 2020. Using archived campaign website text from Wayback Machine, the plot shows that successful candidates who ran in less-Black districts are less likely to refer to “Black(s)” and “African American(s)” on their campaign websites. Finally, the bottom panel of the figure looks at constituent-facing emails using data from the *DC Inbox* project. Echoing the campaign rhetoric plot, members representing less Black areas or are relatively right-leaning (as measured by NOMINATE ideal points re-scaled from the left-most Black MC at 0 to the right-most at 1) tend to use less explicitly racialized language when communicating outside of Congress.

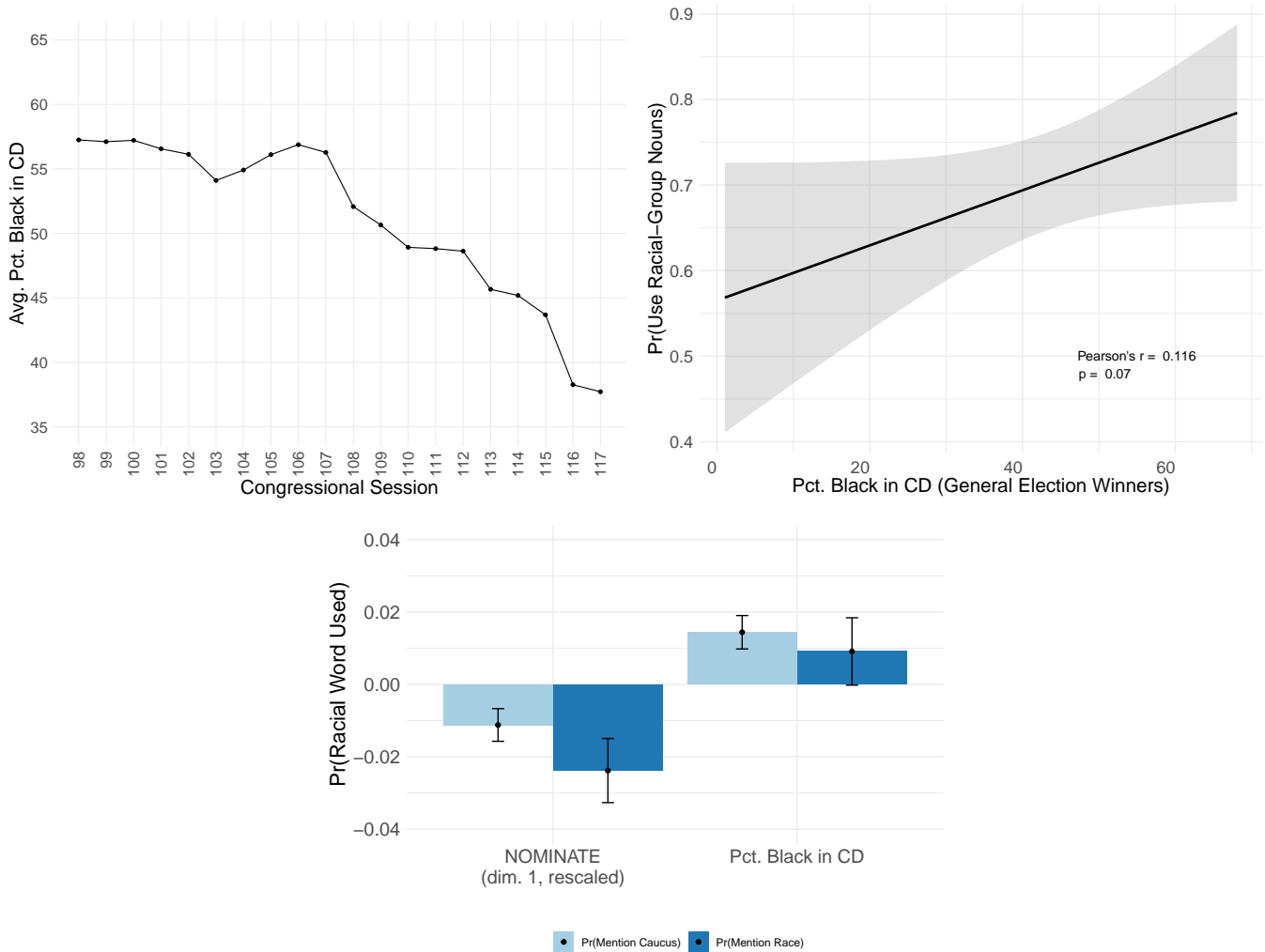


Figure 2 – Descriptives on Black Congressional Candidates Districts and Communication Styles In the left panel, the figure plots the average percent Black in the Congressional Districts represented by members of the Congressional Black Caucus. In the right panel, figure plots the relationship between successful, Black U.S. House candidates’ use of racialized nouns (e.g., “Black” and “African American”) in their website materials and those candidates’ district demographics for general election years 2006 through 2018. Data from Wayback Machine snapshots of candidates’ campaign websites before election day. In the bottom panel, figure plots regression point estimates looking at the relationship between the use of racialized nouns or references to the CBC in constituent-facing emails accounting for Congressional session fixed effects. Data from DCinbox.com.

CBC Members Benefit from Group Cohesion, Racial-Group Resources

While the diversity brought on by the caucuses’ gradual ideological moderation, its less-and-less Black collective constituency, and members’ diverse commitments to using explicitly racialized language may suggest that caucus cohesion should be low, other aspects particular to Black MCs affirm the caucus’s value. Extant scholarship provides many examples of the CBC providing value for its

members in the form of campaign support in the form of funds and endorsements (Crayton 2009; Gaynor 2022) and legislative aid in the form of bill co-sponsorship and voting for CBC member-sponsored bills (e.g., Pinney and Serra 2002; Epstein, Fowler, and O’Halloran N.d.; Rocca and Sanchez 2008).

More relevant to my theoretical discussion above is that CBC unity should vary with greater benefits for MCs. One way to assess this is to study how a measure of caucus cohesion varies with outcomes that CBC members would value. To do demonstrate this, I use a measure of roll-call unity and calculate the CBC’s average Rice index for a Congressional session.⁴ The Rice index ranges between 0 and 1, where a higher number indicates more unity on a roll call and a lower number indicates less. I correlate this with measures of electoral threat and policy benefits: the number of candidates running against a CBC member in the subsequent primary election from 2006 to 2020, and non-formulaic grant dollars going home to a member’s district from 1971 to 2009 using data from Alexander, Berry, and Howell (2016). Figure 3 plots these results. Consistent with my argument, greater roll call unity within the caucus is associated with less electoral threat and more dollars home. While certainly not definitive evidence, this points to CBC members having some reason to behave in a cohesive manner: in sessions when the caucus is unified, they benefit.

In addition to the resources the CBC provides, Black MCs are perhaps more likely to feel a sense of caucus loyalty linked to racialized political norms in the larger Black community. As a result of sustained Black support for the Democratic Party, scholars have worked to unpack what factors drive partisan loyalty among African Americans. One strand of work argues that in-group norms around partisan expression have led to the performativity of a particular type of left-leaning Black politics that is central to Black identity (Cohen 1999; White and Laird 2020). The threat of questioning Black individuals’ racial authenticity or commitment to their racial group can powerfully constrain their behavior (Steele 1990; Kennedy 2008; Cohen 1999), and for no group is racial authenticity perhaps more important than for Black elected officials (e.g., Gillespie and Tolbert 2010; Wamble N.d.). Given their reliance on Black voters and dollars for reelection prospects (Grumbach and Sahn 2020), Black MCs have a strong incentive to behave in a way that not only comports with their constituents’ views on what it means to be a Black MC, but also what others in their peer group — that is, other members of the caucus — believe.

⁴The Rice index is calculated for each roll call vote $i \in n$, and then averaged over the Congressional session, t :

$$Avg. Rice_t = \frac{1}{n} \times \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{|Yes - No|}{Yes + No}.$$

“Yes” refers to a vote in favor of a given roll call i and “No” is a vote in opposition. Abstentions are dropped from my calculation.

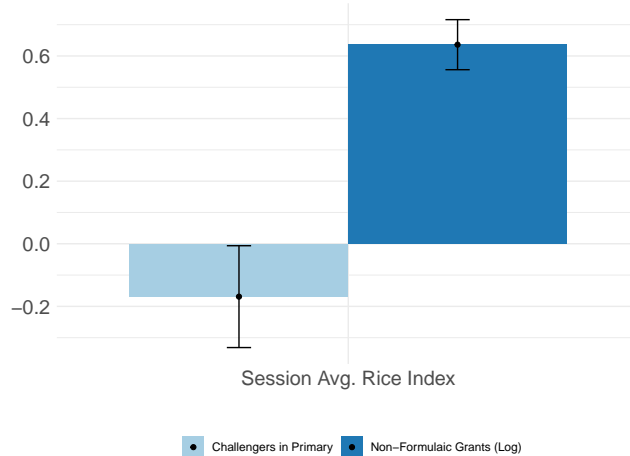


Figure 3 – Correlation Between Congressional Session Rice Index for CBC and Electoral, Policy Outcomes Figure shows regression point estimates looking at relationship between the CBC’s Congressional session-level Rice Index and the number of primary challengers faced by a given CBC member (the left bar), and the logged amount of non-formulaic grant dollars received by a member’s district. Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Regression estimates account for MC fixed effects. Grant data comes from Alexander, Berry, and Howell (2016).

Drawing Expectations

This section presented several stylized facts that underscore not only the importance of studying the CBC, but also what makes it a particularly good case for understanding factional politics in Congress: (1) The caucus has a clear hierarchy: its *de facto* and *de jure* leadership has activist and Civil Rights-era roots; (2) The CBC is a historically left-anchored group and often champions legislation with a strong social justice component; (3) New caucus members are more moderate, perhaps because they represent less-Black CDs; (4) Despite this new diversity in caucus membership, the caucus and its cohesion remains intrinsically valuable for members; and finally (5) Perhaps unlike other groups in Congress, the particular nature of Black political culture in the United States has led to the development of in-group norms around ideological and partisan expression.

As described in the theory section, these features together suggest that members have reasons to bend to social pressure and conform to caucus norms of behavior. Given the CBC’s history, agenda, and continued selection of left-leaning members as leadership, we can say that caucus wishes to represent as a left-anchored organization and deviations from that image would be harmful to the group’s value. Even if most behaviors are constrained by implicit social pressures, members of the CBC that derive the most benefit from the group’s cohesion also have an incentive to actively enforce group-specific behavior to augment their personal political power and status. My theoretical framework therefore suggests an alternative reason for why past scholarship on Black political behavior in Congress has settled on a clear, near-monolithic image of elite “Black politics” (e.g., Tate 2004;

Fenno 2011; Grose 2011). Moreover, it echoes work pointing to the importance of social pressure in the maintenance and continuation of the unique nature of mass-level Black politics (White and Laird 2020), and the finding that membership in Black social institutions is a predictor of racialized political behavior (e.g., Dawson 1994; Brown and Brown 2003; Harris-Lacewell 2004; McDaniel 2009). Settings like the church, fraternal organizations, and community groups are opportunities for members to derive value from some group-based benefit and for enforcement to occur.

The discussion above points to the notion that the CBC could meaningfully shape the behavior of Black legislators. How can we expect caucus pressure to manifest? Because an individual MC’s incentive to conform to group norms increases with the probability of being detected and potentially sanctioned for undertaking less desired behaviors, we can expect that *ceteris paribus* a Black MC will behave in a way that is more consistent with the CBC’s goals when he is surrounded and being monitored by greater numbers of Black MCs than fewer Black MCs. The way that this behavioral change could occur could be through implicit or explicit forces. On the one hand, because the current manifestation of Black legislative politics is so normalized, MCs could easily settle on some standard of collective behavior. On the other hand, greater numbers of group members together could lead to discussion and explicit bargaining over what the optimal form of expression is. Consistent my argument above, what keeps even less aligned members disciplined and amenable to this delegation is the value of the group’s collective goods. The particular way this change could manifest is multifaceted. Perhaps especially for legislators who are already known by others to have opinions that are more right-leaning than the left-anchored CBC, MCs may self-censor their speech in group contexts even if they would otherwise prefer to participate in deliberative settings.⁵ I therefore test for the following hypotheses:

- H1a:** In settings with more CBC members, Black MCs that are less aligned with the goals of the caucus will speak less than they would in settings with fewer CBC members.
- H1b:** In settings with more CBC members, Black MCs that are more aligned with the goals of the caucus will speak more than they would in settings with fewer MCs.
- H2:** The participation patterns outlined in H1a and H1b will be amplified in settings that are more valuable to the CBC — for example, because they are associated with greater potential benefits for the caucus.

⁵This behavior in Black politics is well-documented. White and Laird (2020) show in a series of in-person and survey experiments that the presence of co-ethnics will cause Black respondents to censor potentially norm-deviant opinions. This is echoed in work using observational data on “acting white”: Black students appear to invest less in scholastic endeavors when the risk of being shunned by their same-race peers increases (e.g., Fryer Jr and Torelli 2010). Qualitative studies also document these dynamics in the Black community: For example, during the Civil Rights movement, Black women were rebuked for raising women’s issues, leading some to be less active in the movement (Combahee River Collective 1977; Holsaert 2010).

4 Identifying the Effect of the CBC on Black MCs

How do we identify the role of the Congressional Black Caucus in influencing Black MCs? In this section, I describe my empirical strategy and present results for an analysis centered on MCs' speaking behavior during congressional committee hearings.

4.1 Empirical Strategy

Studying MCs Across Committee Assignments, Through Time

A difficulty in making a claim about the role of caucus pressures in shaping the behaviors of Black MCs is that for many observed behaviors — like roll calls votes or speeches — we might assume that there is no variation in exposure to caucus pressures: all members are equally treated by the rest of the caucus. Congress, however, is divided into “little legislatures” in the form of the congressional committee system. Committees in the U.S. House serve an important role by reviewing recently introduced legislation, identifying issues that require review, and holding hearings towards gathering and evaluating information about new policies. Importantly, essentially all members of Congress serve on at least one committee, meaning a given Black MC is exposed to different numbers of fellow caucus members across his various committee assignments, over time.

My design thus exploits the fact that, from the perspective of a given Black MC, the share of co-caucus members on his committee will increase and decrease over time. A key endogeneity concern with this design involves *why* we observe changes in the share of Black MCs in one committee and not another and whether different committees are trending in ways that would muddy the interpretability of my results. I attempt to circumnavigate this issue in a variety of ways. First, Appendix Section A studies placement onto committees. Generally, the literature asserts that committee assignment is related to a given MC's subject-matter expertise or constituency characteristics (Rohde and Shepsle 1973; Shepsle 1978; Frisch and Kelly 2006), as opposed to intra-party, factional politicking. Those arguments aside, Black MCs of particular types are not more likely to join committees based off of its (lagged) composition — suggesting CBC members are not being packed onto a committee in response to other members. Using committee requests from Frisch and Kelly (2006), I also show that Black MCs do not request to be on committees with more co-ethnics unless the committee is particularly prestigious. This, however, is reflective of MCs' general wishes to be on powerful committees. Secondly, in the discussion of my results I consider different fixed effects specifications that allow for better counterfactual comparisons in my design. I describe these in greater detail, below.

In addition to the variation the committee system provides, studying committees and their corresponding hearings is beneficial from an analytic standpoint as a result of the rules and procedures

that govern them, as well as the benefits they accrue to MCs. House Rule XI clause 2(j)(2) stipulates that all committee members that want to question a witness — that is, participate in a committee hearing — will be able to do so and will receive a minimum of five minutes of speaking time. MCs can speak after these first five minutes, but these opportunities for additional time must be divided equally between the parties. Put another way, this rule states that there is an effective baseline to committee participation and all MCs that wish to speak, will.⁶ From the point of view of the legislators on a committee, this rule assures that they will have fair and equal access to speaking time in order to credit claim to constituents and financial backers and advocate for their policy interests. This is important as members that speak up during committee hearings have been shown to be more likely to be effective legislatively (e.g., Shepsle and Weingast 1987; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Lerner and Shaffer 2020). Hence, if we observe declines in speech during committee hearings in response to changing committee composition in spite of the clear benefits to participation, then we can infer that there is some *benefit* to those declines that are likely linked to caucus membership.

Finally, committee speech is something the CBC is interested in shaping. Following Cox and McCubbins (1993)’s view of party politics in deliberative settings, committees are a key setting for legislative blocs to bargain with other groups towards extracting greater value for their members. Moreover, and relatedly, changes in participation patterns over time is likely indicative of other behaviors that are meaningful to CBC members — again, for example, legislative productivity, or posturing to interest groups. I explore this notion in greater detail when I explore the mechanisms that drive my results.

Measuring Caucus Pressures: Percent of CBC Members on a Committee

Following the above, in order to study the effect of caucus pressures on the behaviors of Black MCs, I use the percent of a Congressional committee that is part of the Congressional Black Caucus (“percent Black” in my specifications). I identify CBC members from the caucus’s web materials and Wayback Machine. Then, using committee assignment data for the Congressional sessions in my data-set from Stewart and Woon (2017), I identify each CBC member. Figure 4 summarizes the variation in my primary independent variable over the course of my analysis period. As the figure shows, the “percent Black” on a committee increases and decreases for essentially all the committees in my sample. Additionally, we can see from Figure 4 that not all Black MCs are placed on committees that are oriented towards domestic politics or social policy. For example, both the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology have had sizable CBC delegations.

⁶Moreover, interviews with former staffers suggest that MCs only attend hearings in order to speak – that is, MCs seldom loiter during a hearing and participate when present. This is consistent with the view that an MC’s time is scarce and he would not engage in an activity unless he can derive some utility from it (Snyder Jr and Strömberg 2010).

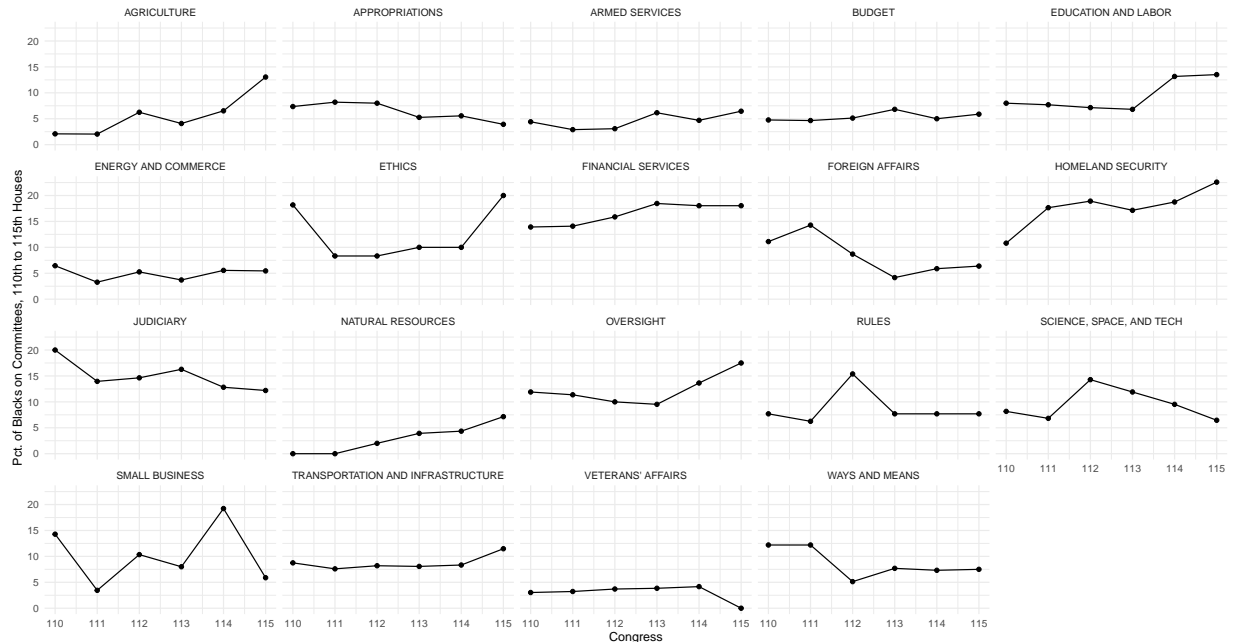


Figure 4 – Percent of Congressional Black Caucus Members on Committees, 110th — 115th Congresses Committee assignment data from Stewart and Woon (2017) and CBC membership data from the caucus’s website and Wayback Machine.

We might imagine that as the percent of CBC members on a committee changes, other aspects of a committee’s workflow would change. Appendix Section C.1 explores how changes in a committee’s racial composition relates to the issues it handles during a given Congressional session, the bills that get referred to it, and the bills that ultimately exit it and go back to the House floor. Looking within-committees, over time: An increase in the percent of CBC members on a committee does not appear associated with the number of bills referred to committee; the share of Black or Democrat-sponsored bills seen by that committee or released to the floor; the median NOMINATE ideal point of the CBC on the committee; or whether the committee had a hearing related to the CBC’s agenda (as determined by the Comparative Agenda Project’s coding Congressional committee hearings).

Congressional Committee Hearing Speech and Participation Data

To study committees, I scrape committee hearing transcript data from the United State Government Publishing Office for the 110th to 115th Congressional sessions (2007 – 2019). This amounts to 7,159 total transcripts and 975,594 total comments from MCs of all racio-ethnic backgrounds. Following Ban et al. (2022), I calculate members’ percent of (substantive) speaking instances on a committee in a Congressional session. This *percent of speaking instances* is the number of times a committee member starts a substantive question or comment in the committee’s hearings, divided by the total

number of times all committee members started speaking in the committee’s hearings. This excludes procedural speaking instances (e.g., deferring to the chair). Because these data are relatively right-skewed, I log-transform my dependent variables of interest. Histograms of the raw and transformed data are shown in Appendix Section C.2.

Empirical Specification

To analyze the effect of increasing CBC presence on a committee on the participation of Black MCs, I estimate Equation 1, below, using ordinary least squares with the two outcomes described above:

$$\ln Y_{i,c,t} = \beta(\text{Pct. Black on Committee}) + \gamma_{i,c} + \delta_t + \chi_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,c,t}. \quad (1)$$

$Y_{i,c,t}$ refers to my outcome of interest — logged percent of speaking instances — for a given MC i , on a committee c , in Congressional session t . As I am interested in the effect of committee diversity on a given Black MC on a given committee, $\gamma_{i,c}$ indicates member-committee fixed effects. δ_t indicates Congressional session fixed effects. Finally, $\chi_{i,c,t}$ is a vector of time-varying MC and committee-level controls: an MC’s committee seniority, their status as chair, their prior election vote share, a MC’s transfer status, a member’s leadership status in the CBC, a MC’s Nokken-Poole score, and whether there are CBC leaders on the committee. These variables come from Stewart and Woon (2017), Volden and Wiseman (2020), Lewis et al. (2023). For all of my analyses, I cluster my standard errors at the member-committee level.

As mentioned above, in addition to my main specification using member-committee and Congressional session fixed effects, I rely on different time fixed effect specifications to vary the implicit counter-factual comparisons I am doing between groups. This is to address the endogeneity concern that particular committees or individuals on committees are trending differently than others in a way that is concurrent with changes to the committees’ composition. Specifically, I take pre-treatment (*id est* first period) Congressional seniority by Congressional session and committee seniority by Congressional session fixed effects. I also take prior session committee importance to the caucus by Congressional session fixed effects. Committee importance is measured by average number of CBC-sponsored bills that were referred to a given committee over the course of the 105th to 109th Congressional sessions, I then group committees into three groups (least to most important). This measure is illustrated in Appendix Figure C.1. The former refines my comparisons to those MCs that are of similar standing on committees in the 110th Congress and the latter refines my comparisons to those MCs on committees of similar importance to the caucus.

Table 1 – Effect of Committee Composition on Black MCs’ Participation

	Ln Pct. Speaking Instances			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std)	-0.069 (0.061)	-0.126* (0.070)	-0.008 (0.078)	-0.088 (0.060)
Individual-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committee-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Member-committee FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓			
Congress-Cohort FEs		✓		
Congress-Comm. Importance FEs			✓	
Congress-Comm. Seniority FEs				✓
DepVar Mean	-2.732	-2.732	-2.732	-2.732
Observations	318	318	318	318
Adjusted R ²	0.565	0.586	0.574	0.575

Note: Standard errors clustered at the Member-committee level in parentheses. *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001 (two-tailed test).

4.2 Baseline Committee Hearing Participation Results

Relative Alignment with Caucus Interests Shapes Behavior Change

Table 1 present my baseline specification including all controls. An increase in the percent Black on a given MC’s committee (standardized) has a noisily estimated, negatively-signed effect on participation during committee hearings in a Congressional session for Black MCs, but this effect is statistically indistinguishable from zero. Moreover, the point estimates are substantively small: in my simplest specification a standard deviation increase in the percent Black on a committee is associated with a three percent decrease in speech. One reason for this noisily estimated effect could be due to the specification masking heterogeneity by member type as predicted above. Thus, I continue by analysis by exploring how my results vary by MC ideology and MC district composition.

I next assess whether less typical members of the caucus are differentially impacted by changing committee composition. Again, I focus on MCs’ ideology and district composition. For ideology, I use members’ static first-dimension NOMINATE score as well as their time-varying first-dimension Nokken-Poole score. Both scores range from -1 (left most ideal point) to 1 (right most ideal point), but for interpretation I re-scale scores to be between 0 to 1. For district composition, I calculate MCs’ Congressional district percent Black in their first term and use this continuous measure or a binned measure with members placed into two groups: below median percent Black and above median percent Black. In my district composition analysis, I control for MCs’ ideologies.

Table 2 shows that the declines in participation are most concentrated among members that are on the right-flank of the caucus or represent less-Black areas. In other words, left-leaning members speak *more* when their committees become more Black and right-leaning members of the caucus tend to speak *less*. Similarly, those Black MCs representing less Black areas (accounting for their ideol-

Table 2 – Effect of Committee Composition on Black MCs’ Participation: Interaction Analysis

	Ln Pct. Speaking Instances			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std)	0.081 (0.074)	0.187** (0.082)	-0.446** (0.179)	0.032 (0.055)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × NOMINATE (first dim.)	-1.055** (0.363)			
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × Nokken-Poole (first dim.)		-1.303*** (0.352)		
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × CD Pct. Black			0.007** (0.003)	
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × Below Median Black CD				-0.284** (0.108)
Individual-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committee-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Member-committee FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
DepVar Mean	-2.732	-2.732	-2.732	-2.732
Observations	318	318	318	318
Adjusted R ²	0.569	0.581	0.571	0.569

Note: Standard errors clustered at the Member-committee level in parentheses.*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001 (two-tailed test).

ogy) also speak less when their committees grow more Black. These results are robust to alternative fixed effect specifications as shown in Appendix Table D.1, as well as additional controls for hearing characteristics — which I do not use in my main specification as agenda items could be considered post-treatment — as shown in Appendix Table D.2. Additionally, per recommendations from Abadie et al. (2023), which calls for quasi-experimental observational work to attend to assignment procedures when clustering, I try an alternative clustering specification using two-way clustering at the committee-Congressional session and member levels. To do this I use a wild bootstrap procedure. Upon conducting this analysis — shown in Appendix Table D.3 — p-values remain significant at conventional values.

One reason for the results I observe could be that members that are more- or less-aligned with caucus are changing their committee attendance behavior as opposed to their speaking patterns. For example, the caucus’s right-flank may be opting out of hearings in response to greater CBC presence. In Appendix Table D.4, I measure attendance by the percent of hearings a member participated in during a Congressional session.⁷ I find that adding Black members to a committee has a slight negative effect on right-leaning members of the of the caucus, and I observe no differential effect on Black MCs’ attendance rate for those representing less-Black Congressional districts. These results suggest that the variation I observe in speech patterns is largely driven by changes in behavior *during*

⁷This assumes that a given member would not attend a meeting and not speak. This is based off of anecdotal evidence from committee staffer interviewees as well as the extant work on the benefits to committee hearing participation (e.g., Shepsle and Weingast 1987; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Lerner and Shaffer 2020).

committee hearings as opposed to caucus pressures leading more- or less-aligned MCs to select in or out of proceedings entirely.

My baseline results suggest that less typical members of the CBC tend to speak less and less when surrounded by fellow caucus members. We also might expect that seniority would also be a relevant attribute that would differentiate members: more traditional, senior members (left-leaning, or representing more-Black areas) should be most participatory on committees, whereas junior, *fringe* members (right-leaning, or representing less-Black areas) should participate the least. I present the results of my heterogeneity analysis in Appendix Section D.5. For my ideology analysis I use a binned measure of ideology using caucus members' first-dimension (static) NOMINATE scores and split CBC members into three groups: the caucus left-flank, its moderates, and the right-flank. I find that left-leaning senior members increase their speaking the most when their committees grow more Black whereas right-leaning freshman decrease the most. When looking at district composition, I find that declines are most concentrated among more senior members representing less-Black CDs.

Effects of Committee Diversity Vary by Committee Type

Per my theoretical argument above, part of what drives adherence to group norms is the value of the goods associated with group membership and cohesion. Some committee contexts may hold more value for CBC members because of their power in Congress more generally, or because of the bills CBC members' tend to write. One way to look at this using my data is by comparing committee contexts and their relative value to MCs and the caucus as a whole.

Committees in Congress can be broadly thought of as having one of two types: *Policy* committees are those that develop new or review existing policies, and are subject-matter specialized. For example, MCs on the Agriculture Committee have oversight over the development and review of policies that deal with farms and the food supply. On the other hand, *Prestige* committees deal with policies that govern Congress as well as the federal budget and fiscal policy. To explore how different committee types inform my pattern of results, I follow Smith and Deering's distinction and look at the difference between prestige committees — those that review legislation related to distributional benefits (Appropriations, Budget, Rules, and Ways & Means) — and policy committees — those that are attractive to members for more issue-based motivations (where I bin all other committees in my analysis).

In addition exploring the difference between policy and prestige committees, I also use data on bill sponsorships and committee referrals for the five Congressional sessions before my analysis period (105th – 109th Congresses) and determine which committees were Black-sponsored bills most likely to be referred to: In Congress, new legislation is first introduced generally to the floor, and is then sent to the appropriate committee by House leadership. Knowing which committees are most relevant to CBC members' bills is thus a measure of committees' relative importance to the caucus.

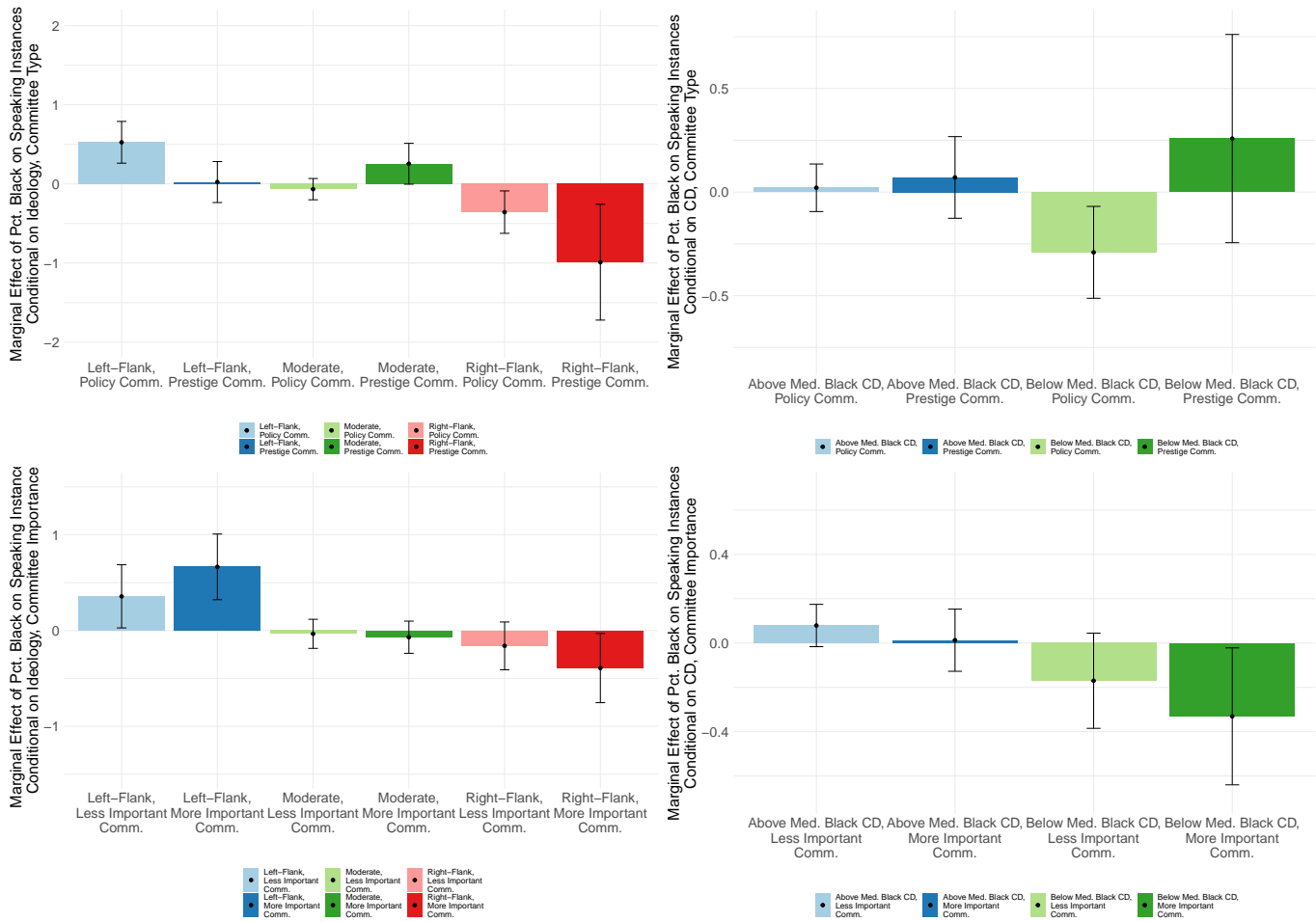


Figure 5 – Marginal Effect of Percent Black on Committee, Conditional on Committee Type The figure plots the full marginal effect of percent black on a committee, conditional on committee type and the type of a Black MC using a triple interaction specification. On the top, the left panel presents results for ideology and the right panel presents results for district composition when comparing policy and prestige committees. On the bottom, the left panel presents results for ideology and the right panel presents results for district composition when comparing committees of above- and below-median importance for the CBC’s pre-period legislative priorities as measured by the average proportion of Black-sponsored bills referred to a committee (illustrated in Appendix Figure C.1.) Estimates shown with 95% confidence intervals using standard errors clustered at the member-committee level.

Appendix Figure C.1 summarizes committees that are most important to CBC members. Intuitively, this list includes the Committee on Education and the Workforce, Judiciary, and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure rank highly as they are more likely to cover legislation related to social programs and development, two issues of high importance to the CBC. For my analysis, I do a median split on this bill importance measure and compare committees of above- and below-median importance to the caucus’ members.

Figure 5 presents my results. The top panel shows my results comparing policy and prestige committees for both ideology (left panel) and district composition (right panel). For ideology, the marginal effect of percent Black on a committee is highest for left-leaning members on policy committees. Right-leaning members in both committee contexts are responsive to increasing committee Blackness and tend to speak less. Interestingly, relatively moderate caucus members on prestige committees tend to speak more in the presence of more co-ethnics. This could point towards strategic delegation of speech, as more “extreme” members could be perceived as less fit to represent caucus interests in higher-stakes hearings. For district composition, again the patterns are less clear. Members representing less Black areas are less likely to speak during policy committee hearings — likely for similar reasons to the results I obtain for ideology. However, those representing less Black areas serving on prestige committees appear to (noisily) speak up in the presence of other Black MCs. Again, this could be linked to the effect I obtain for ideological moderates on prestige committees: the CBC may select more “average” looking MCs to represent it on higher stakes committees, including from a district composition standpoint.

The bottom panel of the figure shows my results when looking at committee importance. The patterns are substantively similar. Left-leaning members appear more likely to speak up on more important committees as the size of the Black delegation increases, and right-leaning members appear less likely to speak. Additionally, those members representing less Black Congressional districts also speak less. In other words, consistent with expectations, in contexts where the CBC values committee output more, “typical” CBC members tend to speak more when surrounded by greater numbers of co-ethnics whereas less typical members speak less.

4.3 The Role of Other Groups

Are Black MCs responsive to other groups on committees? Per my theoretical discussion above, Black MCs’ participation should — on average — be less influenced by changes in other social groups as they are less likely to provide them with the same sort of benefits as the CBC. However, because Black legislators are more likely to identify as Democrats, it could be the case that the findings I observe are a result of *partisan* pressures on Black MCs on committees as opposed to racial group ones. Here, I test this idea by (1) Exploring whether Black MCs are influenced by changes the presence of other racioethnic groups in the Democratic Party (Hispanic and Latino MCs, as well as Whites); and (2) Exploring how Black MCs react to changes in the presence of the Congressional Progressive Caucus — a group that has many CBC members and shares many similarities with the caucus.

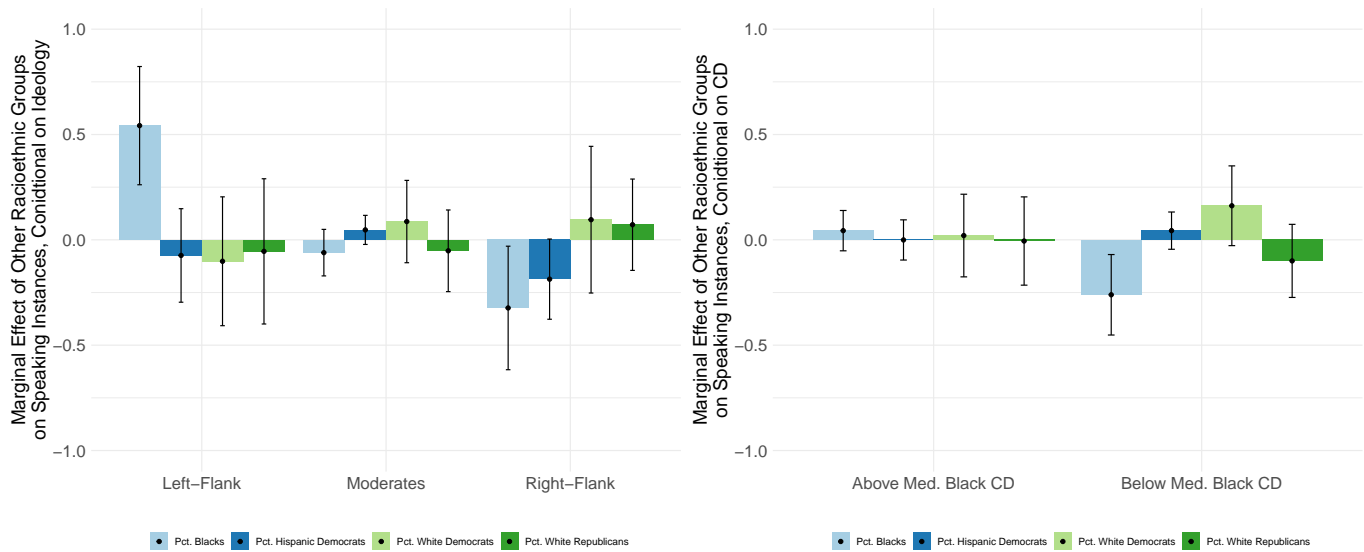


Figure 6 – Effect of Other Groups on Black MCs’ Behaviors The figure presents marginal effects for three regressions exploring the effect of other racial/ethnic groups on committees. All regression use (logged) percent speaking instances as the outcome. Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Black MC Behavior is Unresponsive to Other Racioethnic Groups

To assess whether and how Black MCs are responsive to other racial/ethnic groups on committees, I identify the race of each MC in my sample and mirror the analyses I performed above for my baseline results. Figure 6 explores how Hispanic Democrats and White Democrats shape Black MCs’ behaviors.⁸ I find that — while noisily estimated — neither Hispanics nor Whites shape speaking behavior in the same way as co-ethnics for Black MCs. Notably, right-leaning CBC members and those representing less Black areas do not speak up when around White Democrats. This is despite being, based on their observable characteristics, closer to the average White Democrat MC than they are the average Black MC.

Black MC Behavior is Unresponsive to Size of Congressional Progressive Caucus on Committees

The Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), founded in 1991, is the largest ideological caucus in the Democratic Party. The multi-ethnic membership espouses similar goals to the CBC, is characterized by strong vote cohesion, and represents a strong party sub-brand that is meaningful to voters and donors (Bloch Rubin 2017; Clarke 2020b). Additionally, a majority of CBC members *also* belong to the CPC. These features make it a good comparison case for my purposes as CPC presence on

⁸Unfortunately, Asian and Native American representatives represent too small a group in Congress to conduct any meaningful analysis.

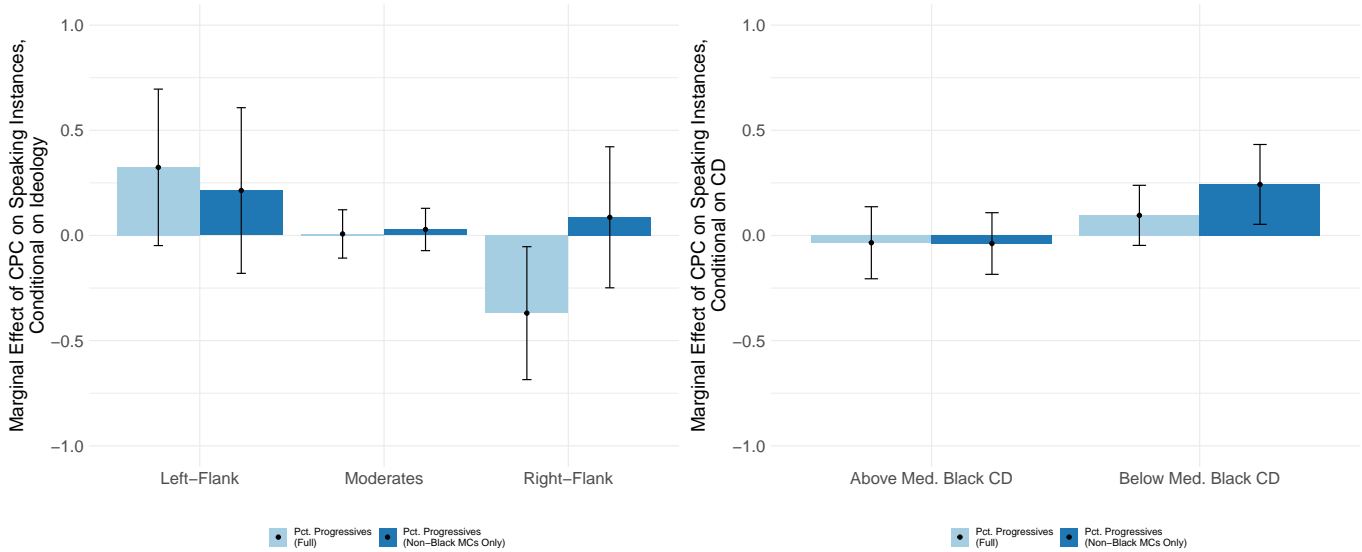


Figure 7 – Effect of the Congressional Progressive Caucus on Black MCs’ Behaviors The figure presents marginal effects for three regressions exploring the effect of the CPC on Black MCs behavior during committee hearings. All regression use (logged) percent speaking instances as the outcome. Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

committees could plausibly exert a similar effect on CBC members. Appendix Figure D.2 mirrors Figure 4 and shows how CPC membership varies on committees.

Figure 7 presents point estimates for regressions studying the impact of the percent of a committee affiliated with the CPC on Black MCs’ speaking behavior, by ideological group. Looking at ideology on the left side of the Figure, while the patterns of behavior in the first panel studying the effect of all CPC members look similar to the ones presented in my main results in Table 2 with left-leaning members speaking more and right-leaning members speaking less, the effect of changes in CPC membership on a committee goes away when only looking at changes in non-Black CPC membership. When looking at the effect by district composition, I do see that Black MCs representing less Black areas speak more when around non-Black CPC members. This result is not necessarily out of step with expectations: These members are participating more when other MCs representing similar districts join them on committees. In Appendix Section D.7, I show a similar analysis using variation in the presence of the Blue Dog Coalition, an older Democratic faction. I again find that Black MCs’ speech does not respond to the group.

4.4 Summary

Committee diversity indeed has an impact on the behavior of Black MCs, but the effect varies based on the relative alignment of members with the goals and interests of the caucus. These effects do not appear driven by changes in attendance patterns on committees and are robust to a variety of

specifications. Additionally, I do not observe significant changes in behavior for Black MCs when the share of other racioethnic or ideological groups changes on committees, suggesting the findings above are related to CBC-specific group pressures.

A lingering question given the above is if the *content* of speech changes significantly with changing committee composition. While the focus of the present manuscript is participation for the reasons outlined earlier, Appendix Table D.6 shows results using my baseline specification assessing the role of committee percent Black on MCs' use of racialized nouns (e.g., "Black" and "African American") in their statements. Committee composition does not appear to predict the use of these words. This finding echoes committees' lack of hearings on racialized or CBC agenda items when their membership grows more Black shown in Appendix Table C.1. Even if the explicit racial content of speech does not change in response to changing committee dynamics, this is not to say that CBC members would not still be interested in controlling what fringe members of the caucus say. Referring back to Figure 2 in the section outlining the case of the CBC, Black MCs that are relatively right-leaning or are representing less Black areas tend to communicate in less racialized ways when they are off Capitol Hill and perhaps feel less monitoring pressure from other CBC members. Once back in Congress, it would be reasonable for other caucus members to assume that these MCs would be poor messengers of CBC talking points in deliberative settings like committee hearings, leading to the behavior I observe above.

Taken together, the above results are striking and suggest that caucus pressures are exerting some influence over Black MCs during committee hearings. In the next section, I explore the mechanisms that could be reinforcing this pattern of results.

5 Carrots and Sticks in the Congressional Black Caucus

The previous section presented results on the relationship between changes in CBC presence on committees and the behavior of Black MCs. By themselves, they represent an interesting contrast to a large body of work asserting that ideology or district pressures alone influence legislators.⁹ But a tension remains: The results obtain despite the benefits that participation during committee hearings offers MCs that the literature generally asserts.

Returning back to the example of Artur Davis given in the introduction, the CBC and its leadership has tools to suppress dissent in its ranks. In a similar example of a public repudiation, one staffer recounted in an interview that a senior CBC member "cuss[ed] out" other members for going off script and deviating from their expected committee hearing behavior. Moreover, from my inter-

⁹Some scholars of the U.S. Congress also argue that legislators take informational *cues* from peers, but these studies largely focus on activities where MCs would be uncertain about appropriate behavior, like roll calls (Zelizer 2019; Fong 2020). In contrast, the decision to participate during committee hearings across a legislative session appears more straightforward for the average MC per the extant work on committee participation.

views it is clear that rank-and-file members are wary of angering leadership. One current staffer in a CBC leader’s office explained to me “Everyone is watching [Senior Caucus Member]. Nobody wants to piss off [the member].” As anecdotal evidence of these members’ concern over the caucus’s new diversity and the potential slippage of the CBC’s group identity, one former staffer in a senior CBC member’s office said, “What you [have are] a lot of members who [are] coming to grips with not only their own political humanity, but also the fact that the work they did in the sixties and seventies is being questioned. All their work looks like it might not even matter [...] Why should [they] cede power?” Put together: Why avoid angering CBC senior members by behaving in a way that is at odds with the caucus’s goals? Beyond being in charge of valuable resources, these members are *most* wedded to a particular vision of Black politics that ostensibly left-leaning — reflective of their policy ideals — and emphasizes group cohesion.

While telling, these quotes are far from systematic evidence that the CBC is enforcing intra-caucus norms by disciplining members. Hence, in this section I explore what maintains the patterns of behavior observed in the previous section. I argue that CBC and particularly its leadership, as a result of their monetary resources and relative power inside of Congress, hold enough “sticks” to induce loyalty in rank-and-file members.

5.1 Empirical Strategy

One way to assess whether CBC members are responsive to their co-ethnic peers is to flip my quantities of interest from the prior section use MCs’ behaviors as my explanatory variable. Following from my discussion above, we should expect that members behaving in a way that is inconsistent with their type will be punished by CBC leadership. On the caucus’s right-flank — as the previous empirical section suggests — MCs are perhaps expected to speak little in deliberative settings, especially when in the company of other caucus members. On the caucus’s left-flank, I assume that their “role” in the CBC is to be loyal to the caucus on roll call votes. So, to test for punishment I use both aggregated committee speech as well as a measure of roll-call extremity relative to the caucus: right-leaning members should be sanctioned for too much speech and left-leaning members should be sanctioned for voting out-of-step with the caucus majority.¹⁰ Put more formally, I hypothesize:

H3a: Increases in Black MCs’ committee speech will be associated with a greater probability of sanctioning on for more ideologically moderate MCs that are less aligned with the CBC and its leadership.

¹⁰An analysis selecting strategically-chosen outcomes as my independent and dependent variables of interest does raise questions on the what the results would signify, or at a more fundamental level, why we would observe changes. Presuming a model Congress where legislator agents approach decision problems with uncertainty or bounded rationality, one could obtain relationships like the ones I predict.

H3b: Increases in Black MCs’ roll call deviation will be associated with a greater probability of sanctioning on for more ideologically leftist MCs that are more aligned with the CBC and its leadership.

5.1.1 Data

Committee Speech To construct my aggregate committee speech measure, I use my committee speech data and construct a Congressional session-level version of my percent of speaking instances (i.e., the number of MC i ’s speaking instances over the total number of instances across all committees in a Congressional session). To the extent that I study changes in behavior for a given MC over time, this measure picks up on a member’s talkativeness relative to the prior Congressional session.

Roll Calls For my roll call measure, I use data on every roll call vote in the 110th to 115th Congresses and calculate the percent of votes each CBC member is in disagreement with a majority of other CBC members. In other words, if more than fifty percent of the caucus votes “aye” on a roll call item, and member i votes “nay,” I say i is in disagreement with the caucus on that item. Then, I take the percent of votes i is in disagreement with the caucus, or how “out of step” (OOS) they are with the caucus. In Appendix Section F, I show the correlation between these two measures. Consistent with the notion that changes in speaking behavior is a signal of broader attempts to break rank with the CBC on the right of the caucus, these tend to also have higher OOS measures in Congressional sessions when their speaking rate increases.

Leadership PAC Data In the United States, congressional parties increasingly rely on donations from incumbent office-holders contributing to other candidates from their leadership political action committees (LPACs) (Dwyre et al. 2007). LPACs — which are defined by the Federal Election Commission as “non-connected committee[s] that ... [are] controlled by a federal candidate or office holder which is neither an authorized committee nor affiliated with the candidate’s authorized committee” — and transfers from them have been argued to reflect the PAC owner’s ideological biases and strategic ambitions in Congress (Herrnson 2009; Heberlig and Larson 2010; Aldrich et al. 2017). Following from this literature, I collect data on transfers from CBC leaders’ LPACs to rank-and-file CBC members. Given my two measures of MC behavior, we would expect that talkative, right-leaning members from CBC leadership (who are ideologically some of the left-most members) and out-of-step, left leaning members should be punished.

Bill Co-Sponsorship Data As with any legislative coalition, the legislative productivity of CBC members is a priority for the caucus and its leadership. For the CBC, one way to ensure the success of any particular member-MCs’ bill is through signaling support in the form of bill co-sponsorship.

Perhaps surprisingly, there is significant variation in the proportion of CBC members and leaders that join on co-caucus members’ legislation. Thus, using data from ProPublica on Congressional bills, I explore whether lagged speech and roll call behavior influences present-period bill support. Again, my two outcomes of caucus discipline are useful. If CBC rank-and-file members and leaders are withholding bill support in response to another MC’s misbehavior in the prior period, we should expect that talkative, right-leaning MCs and out-of-step, left-leaning MCs should be punished. In other words, MCs that behave against their “type” in the caucus should receive less support on their bills.

5.1.2 Empirical Specification

To assess the relationship between changes in speech or roll call behavior on donation co-sponsorship behavior in the caucus I use two, related strategies. For leadership PAC transfers, I estimate:

$$P(\text{Donation})_{d,c,t} = \beta(\text{Member Type}_{d,c} \times \text{Member Behavior}_{c,t}) + \gamma_d + \delta_t + \chi_{d,c,t} + \varepsilon_{d,c,t}$$

where I use one observation per leadership PAC donor-MC pair where d indicates the donor, c the target-MC, and t the election cycle. The outcome of interest, the decision of whether or not d contributed to c , is equal to 100 if there was at least one leadership PAC transfer between the two members during time t . For each donor-MC that made at least one contribution with his LPAC, I then identify all the potential target MCs he did not make a contribution to, and set the dependent variable of those pairs to 0. I regress this outcome on the interaction between the the ideology of the target-MC and the target-MC’s prior Congressional session behavior. I also control for a range of time-varying donor and MC characteristics that could also plausibly predict donations: the candidate’s last-election cycle vote share, c ’s ranking in the party, c ’s status as a committee chair. Finally I also take election year fixed effects, donor-MC fixed effects and cluster the standard errors two-way, at the donor-MC and target-MC levels.

To study bill co-sponsorship, I regress the proportion of bills a CBC rank-and-file member i has with at least one CBC leader co-sponsor during Congressional session t on his behavior in Congress $t - 1$. I expect there to be differences in member type, thus I interact i ’s NOMINATE ideal point with his behavior in the prior Congressional session. My specification is as follows:

$$Pct. \text{ Bills } w. \text{ CBC Leader Co-Sponsor}_{i,t} = \beta(\text{Member Type}_i \times \text{Member Behavior}_{i,t-1}) + \gamma_i + \delta_t + \chi_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t}.$$

γ and δ again refer to member and Congressional session fixed effects, and χ is a vector of individual-level characteristics: a legislator’s freshman status, a legislator’s chair status, legislator i ’s committee membership, and the number of bills a member had in a session. Again, $Member\ Behavior_{i,t-1}$ refers to member i ’s across-committee speaking behavior or how out-of-step they were on roll calls relative to the caucus majority in the prior Congressional session. I cluster my standard errors at the member (bill sponsor’s) level.

5.2 CBC Leadership Reacts to Misbehavior with Punishment

Table 3 – Effect of MC Behavior on Receipt of Leadership PAC funds

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
NOMINATE (first-dim)	19.244* (10.193)			19.332* (10.165)		
Pct. Speaking Instances (std)	4.538** (1.791)	3.734 (2.152)	4.847 (2.942)			
Pct. OOS Roll Calls (std)				1.735 (3.926)	-2.611 (4.801)	-2.513 (4.560)
NOMINATE (first-dim) × Pct. Speaking Instances (std)	-21.561** (8.418)	-13.692** (3.877)	-21.420* (9.706)			
NOMINATE (first-dim) × Pct. OOS Roll Calls (std)				13.535 (9.840)	19.273 (12.315)	19.003 (12.294)
Donor, Recipient Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Donor FEs	✓			✓		
Democrat Recipients Only			✓			✓
Donor-Recipient FEs		✓	✓		✓	✓
Election Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DepVar Mean	6.647	6.647	6.767	6.647	6.647	6.767
Observations	1,531	1,531	1,507	1,531	1,531	1,507
Adjusted R ²	0.107	0.282	0.285	0.109	0.281	0.284

Note: Two-way clustered standard errors at the donor and recipient level in parentheses.
*p<0.10,**p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

Table 3 presents the results of my LPAC analysis. My analyses looking at the interaction between recipient MCs’ ideologies and their speaking during committees are shown in columns (1), (2), and (3). Consistent with my hypotheses, more right-leaning MCs who speak more are less likely to receive LPAC funds from CBC leaders. In columns (4), (5), and (6) I present point estimates for my “out of step” roll call analysis, but observe no clear relationship between roll-calls and LPAC transfers.

Table 4 presents the results of my bill co-sponsorship analysis. Right-leaning members of the caucus that increased their speaking rate in a prior Congressional session are less likely to receive co-sponsorship support from CBC leaders. Additionally, left-leaning members of the caucus that are more out-of-step with the CBC majority appear less likely to receive the support of at least one CBC leader on their bills. Interestingly, I observe that relatively moderate Black MCs have more bills with

Table 4 – Effect of MC Behavior on Bill Co-Sponsors

	(1)	(2)
Lag Pct. Speaking Instances (std)	0.877 (0.759)	
Lag Pct. Speaking Instances (std) × NOMINATE (first-dim)	−8.965** (3.486)	
Lag. Pct. OOS Roll Calls		−1.973** (0.908)
Lag. Pct. OOS Roll Calls (std) × NOMINATE (first-dim)		8.178* (4.094)
MC Controls	✓	✓
MC FEs	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓	✓
DepVar Mean	3.258	3.258
Observations	215	215
Adjusted R ²	0.002	0.051

Note: Standard errors at member level parentheses. *p<0.10, **p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

CBC leader co-sponsors in a Congressional session when they grow less aligned with the caucus on roll calls.

Is relationship between the provision and withholding of resources by CBC leaders in response to behavior exclusive to rank-and-file CBC members? Following a similar logic to my committee hearing analysis, CBC leaders should not respond to non-Black MCs’ behavioral deviations as their behavior on committees or roll call votes is not as important for leaders’ electoral or policy fates. While no CBC leader-affiliated LPAC donated to a non-Black MC over the course of my analysis period, I can study this in the context of bill co-sponsorship. In Appendix Table E.2 I show that neither non-Black MCs’ lagged speaking rates on committees nor their percent of times out of step with the caucus correlates with CBC leaders’ propensity to co-sponsor their bills.

5.3 Summary

In this section, I showed that rank-and-file CBC members that behave against their “type” during the Congressional session are less likely to receive support from senior caucus members in the form of campaign donations and bill co-sponsorship. Taken together, these results suggest a strategic dimension to co-ethnic loyalty in Congress. In the next section, I discuss my findings and conclude.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

Far from the purely constituent-oriented or purely party-oriented member of Congress that existing work posits, MCs are influenced by a variety of organized pressures inside and outside of Congress

that must be considered when drawing conclusions about their behaviors. In this paper, I argue that MCs face social pressures to comport to their social identity groups’ norms of behavior while in office. I tested my argument by relying on the case of the Congressional Black Caucus, a historically powerful organization that continues to exhibit group cohesion despite its increasingly diverse pool of members. Ultimately, I show that caucus pressures appear to elevate the voices of MCs that are more likely to be aligned with old-guard members of the CBC that tend to be in leadership positions and silence those that are out of alignment. These patterns of behavior appear reinforced by a system of carrots and sticks: those MCs that behave against “type” in the caucus tend to be punished for errant, undesirable behavior in the form of fewer resources and less bill support.

While the case and importance of the CBC is arguably enough to study its internal organization, Section 2 presents an argument that is not exclusive to Black MCs. Other groups in Congress mirror the dynamics outlined in my argument. A recent example concerns the House Freedom Caucus (HFC), an organization whose growth in size and influence has corresponded with its efforts to reign in members. The HFC — shown by Clarke (2020*b*) to share similarities with the CBC in the resources it provides to members — expelled Marjorie Taylor Greene (GA-14) in July 2023 in response to her verbal fight with fellow HFC member Lauren Boebert (CO-3).¹¹ The expulsion came at a time when the potential payoffs to unity for the HFC were high: the HFC was at its largest (45 members, a fifth of the House Republican Conference), the earnest start of the 2024 presidential campaign, and just ahead of Donald Trump’s indictment due to his January 6th involvement. While extreme, expulsion represents the ultimate punishment for not conforming to group goals.

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus serves as an example of policing growing too costly for a group and outside options available to members becoming sufficiently attractive. In response to a surge in new, Republican Hispanic MCs and the increased political power of Cuban American voters outside of Congress, Republican Hispanic MCs split away from the caucus to form the Congressional Hispanic Conference. For Black MCs, this paper suggests that one reason for the continued cohesion of the CBC despite its heterogeneity is its value to members. However, new, progressive MCs (like members of the multi-racial “Squad”) and more moderate MCs have clashed over the caucus’s priorities (see e.g., Tate 2020). As the progressive arm of the caucus continues to gain its own power and become more independent in the form of outside funding and attention from interest groups, a similar cleavage could be on the horizon for the CBC.

Follow-up research can further contribute to our understanding of the organization and effects of intra-party politics. One avenue for research concerns the value of identity groups for MCs. While Section 3 provided some descriptive statistics suggesting that the cohesion of the CBC correlates with outcomes that are valuable to members, more work should be done to address this question directly. Clarke (2020*a*), for example, shows that abolition of legislative service organizations during

¹¹Specifically, she called the Colorado Republican a “Little bitch” on the House floor.

the “Republican Revolution” of the 1990s led to changes in MCs’ legislative effectiveness. Per my argument above, we may also anticipate that this change led to reductions in the capacity of identity-based organizations to discipline members and maintain cohesion.

Additionally, the results of the main empirical section of this paper show that caucus pressures are associated with MCs conforming to caucus interests even when their district interests may differ. The role of caucuses as intra-party “whips” could lead representatives to misrepresent their constituents’ policy preferences. Black voters, sometimes thought of and theorized as single-issue voters (e.g, Dawson 1995), might be more prone to this disconnect because their policy preferences may be less clear to MCs. Future research can explore whether caucuses and their tools for maintaining unity cause MCs to drift from their constituents’ preferences, conversing with recent work like Canen, Kendall, and Trebbi (2020), which explores how the major parties’ tools of discipline have led to legislative polarization.

Coalitions forming among Members of Congress based on shared experiences and interests are not a novel phenomenon. However, this paper argues that the persistence and continued relevance of these groups result from intra-group pressure and policing, compelling members to conform to group standards of behavior. In the case of Black MCs, this paper posits that rather than “birds of a feather flocking together” (Shepsle and Weingast 2012), we should interpret the behaviors of this diverse group of individuals — and possibly others as well — as the outcome of identity-based pressures stemming from within Congress’s walls.

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This Appendix is intended for online publication, only.

A Exploring Selection

A.1 How Do Committee Characteristics Inform Assignment?

If MCs of certain types in the caucus were selecting onto more or less Black committees, then this would obfuscate the interpretation of my results. Hence, I explore whether prior Congressional session committee characteristics inform whether a given MC joins the committee in the present session. Formally, I estimate:

$$\text{Membership on Committee}_{i,c,t} = \beta(\text{Committee Pct. Black}_{c,t-1}) + \chi_{i,c,t} + \gamma_{i,c} + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{i,c,t}$$

where a member i 's assignment to committee c in Congressional session t is regressed on the committee's lagged percent Black, a vector of time-varying controls that might predict membership, as well as member-committee fixed effects, $\gamma_{i,c}$ to account for time-invariant factors that may predict why i would join committee c , and Congressional session fixed effects, δ_t . For ease of interpretation, I rescale my outcome variable to be between 0 and 100, meaning point estimates should be interpreted in terms of percentage points.

As Table A.1 shows, prior-session committee composition does not appear to meaningfully predict a given member being assigned to a committee. Additionally, these role of prior-session composition does not appear to vary with MC characteristics.

Table A.1 – Effect of Lagged Committee Composition on Black MCs' Committee Assignment (0 – 100)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Lagged Pct. CBC Members (std)	-0.126 (0.227)	-0.115 (0.224)	-0.135 (0.232)	-1.203 (0.902)	-0.117 (0.225)	-0.072 (0.266)
Lagged Pct. CBC Members (std) × Caucus Left-Flank			0.231 (0.196)			
Lagged Pct. CBC Members (std) × Caucus Right-Flank			0.087 (0.124)			
Lagged Pct. CBC Members (std) × NOMINATE (dim.1)				-2.159 (1.560)		
Lagged Pct. CBC Members (std) × Freshman					0.110 (0.133)	
Lagged Pct. CBC Members (std) × Ever CBC Leader						-0.139 (0.423)
Individual-Level Controls		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committee-Level Controls		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Member-committee FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	38,305	34,325	34,325	34,325	34,325	34,325
Adjusted R ²	0.381	0.378	0.378	0.378	0.378	0.378

Note: Standard errors clustered at the Member-committee level in parentheses. Analysis looks at all possible MC committee pairs. Controls include an MC's freshman status, their first-dimension Nokken-Poole score, prior election vote percentage, status as a CBC chair, status as a party leader, lagged legislative effectiveness, state delegation size, majority party status, and an MC's rank in his or her party.

A.2 Analyzing Committee Requests from the 103rd Congress

I also analyze whether Black MCs tend to *request* to be on more or less Black committees, and if those requests are actually predictive of committee placement. I use committee request data from the 103rd Congressional session from Frisch and Kelly (2006). I only use the 103rd as very few Black MCs formally requested committee placement until then. This limits my sample to the requests of only 25 legislators.

To do my analysis, I regress whether Black MC i requested assignment to committee c on the committee's characteristics. As Table A.2 shows, prior Congressional session racio-ethnic composition of a committee only modestly predicts a Black MC making a placement request. As shown in Columns (3) and (4) of the Table, whether other members of Congress are interested in a committee (which generally measures how popular the committee is) is much more predictive of a given Black MC requesting placement on a committee. Additionally, as Column (5) shows, making a request is predictive of eventual placement onto a committee.

Table A.2 – Predictors of Committee Assignment Requests (103rd Congressional Session)

	Made Request			On Committee	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Lagged Pct. CBC Members (std)	1.869* (1.117)			0.092 (1.092)	
Other CBC Members Requesting (std)		3.541 (2.225)	-3.344 (2.701)	-3.441 (2.929)	
Other Non-CBC Members Requesting (std)			10.029** (4.132)	10.240** (4.277)	
Made Request					53.422** (19.919)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	203	280	280	203	280
Adjusted R ²	0.076	0.118	0.143	0.112	0.096

Note: Standard errors clustered at the MC level in parentheses. Analysis looks at all possible MC committee pairs. Controls include an MC's freshman status, their first-dimension Nokken-Poole score, prior election vote percentage, status as a CBC chair, status as a party leader, lagged legislative effectiveness, state delegation size, majority party status, party rank, district racioethnic composition, and committee type (policy versus prestige). *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001 (two-tailed test).

B Additional Descriptive Statistics on the Composition of the CBC

C Congressional Committee Descriptive Statistics

C.1 Committee Changes in Response to Changing Composition

I look at how changes in a committee’s share of Black MCs varies with different committee-level outcomes. Table C.1 explores changes to committees’ agendas, focusing on the share of Black-sponsored bills referred to a committee, the share of Democrat-sponsored bills referred to a committee, and whether there was a main committee hearing on a subject related to the CBC’s agenda (using topics from the Congressional Black Caucus’s webpage and codings from the Comparative Agenda Project.) While noisily estimated, the point estimates I recover are substantively small. Overall, there does not appear to be a systematic relationship between the percent of Black committee members and these outcomes.

Table C.1 – Relationship Between Committee Agenda and Committee Composition

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Pct. Black on Committee (std.)	0.442 (0.290)	0.226 (0.382)	0.366 (1.783)	-0.750 (0.839)	-2.976 (3.780)
Committee FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DepVar Mean	7.007	4.216	46.932	5.806	35.263
Observations	186	186	186	186	186
Adjusted R ²	0.576	0.361	0.407	0.629	0.295

Note: Outcomes are share of Black-sponsored bills reviewed by committee, share of Black-sponsored bills referred back to the floor, share of Democrat-sponsored bills reviewed by committee, share of Democrat-sponsored bills referred back to the floor, and whether there was a hearing on a CBC agenda item. All outcomes scaled to be between 0 and 100. Controls include whether the chair is Black, the majority holder, the number of hearings in a session, and the committee’s size. Standard errors clustered at the committee level in parentheses. *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001 (two-tailed test).

Table C.2 shows how a committees’ ideal points (as measured by delegation medians) vary with the addition of Black members. While a standard deviation increase in the share of Black members on a committee is associated with a leftward lean of the Democratic delegation on a committee, I do not observe changes in the median NOMINATE of a committee’s Black delegation or changes in the Republican median.

Table C.2 – Relationship Between Committee Ideal Points and Committee Composition

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pct. Black on Committee (std.)	-0.017 (0.010)	0.031 (0.018)	-0.015** (0.006)	0.003 (0.006)
Committee FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
DepVar Mean	0.19	-0.47	-0.38	0.45
Observations	199	185	199	199
Adjusted R ²	0.844	0.310	0.742	0.721

Note: Outcomes are a committee’s median NOMINATE, the NOMINATE of the CBC delegation on the committee, the median NOMINATE of the Democrat delegation, and the median NOMINATE of the Republican delegation. Controls include whether the chair is Black, the House majority holder, the president’s identity, and the committee’s size. Standard errors clustered at the committee level in parentheses. *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001 (two-tailed test).

C.2 Pre-Analysis Period Committee Importance

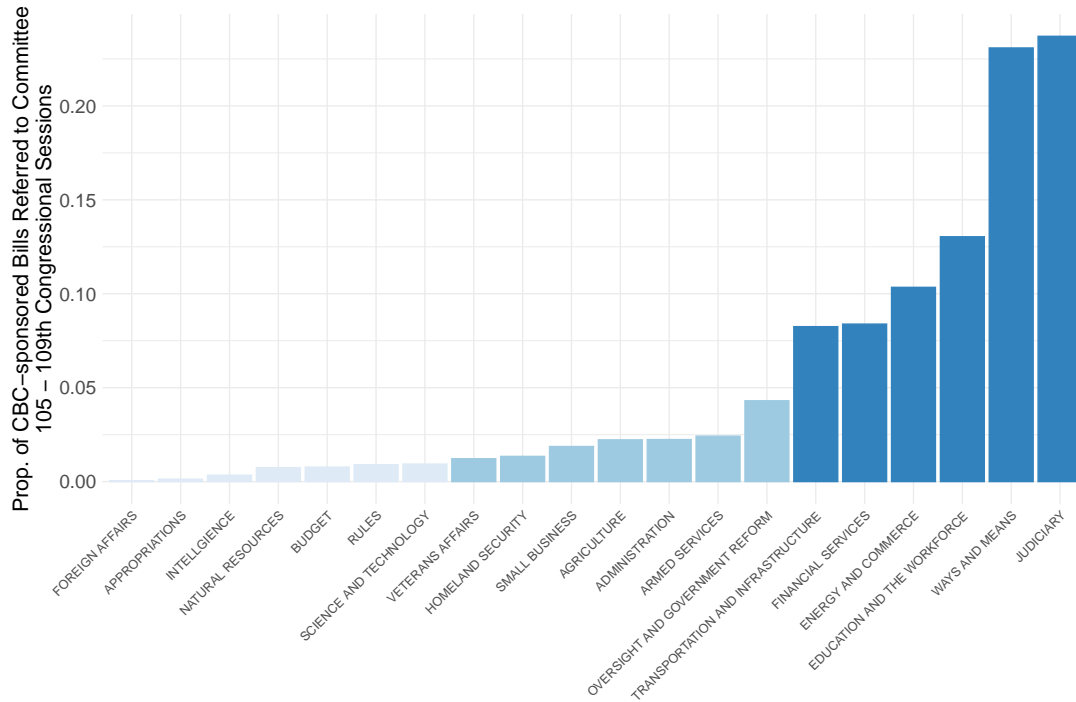


Figure C.1 – Pre-Analysis Period Bill Importance The figure presents the average proportion of CBC member-sponsored bills referred the committees in my sample over the course of the 105th to 109th Congressional sessions. Shading indicates terciles used in alternative time fixed effects specifications used in Appendix Tables D.1.

C.3 Speech Data

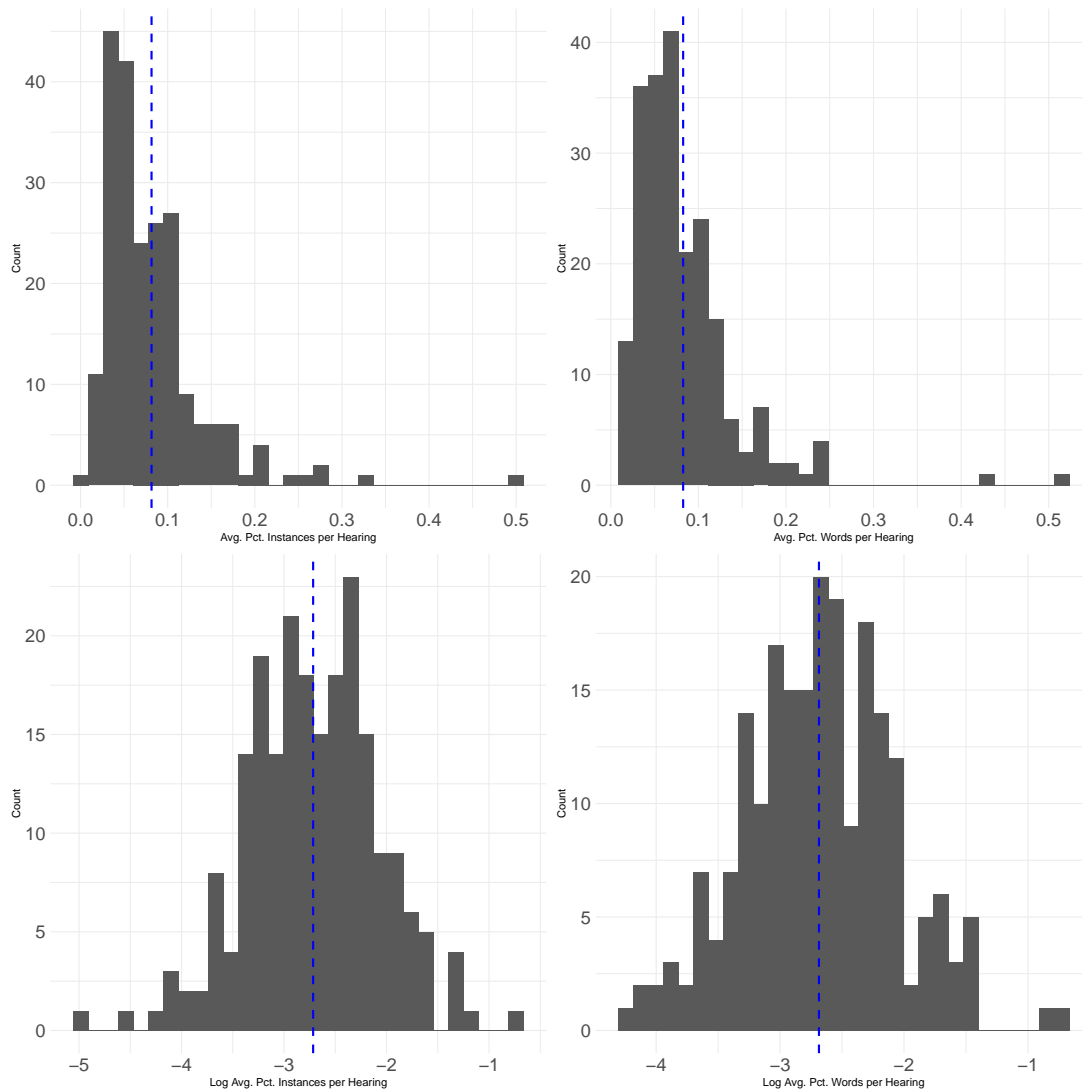


Figure C.2 – Histograms of Speech Data The figure presents raw and transformed speech data used in the manuscript. The dotted blue line denotes the sample mean.

D Additional Committee Hearing Results

D.1 Alternative Time Fixed Effects Specifications

Table D.1 – Effect of Committee Composition on Black MCs’ Participation: Interaction Analysis, Alternative Fixed Effects

	Ln Pct. Speaking Instances								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std)	0.008 (0.075)	0.091 (0.088)	-0.017 (0.065)	0.105 (0.083)	0.204** (0.093)	0.054 (0.073)	0.050 (0.065)	0.134 (0.084)	0.013 (0.058)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × NOMINATE (first-dim)	-0.874** (0.344)			-0.855** (0.429)			-0.957** (0.360)		
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × Nokken-Poole (first-dim)		-1.099** (0.334)			-1.133** (0.356)			-1.164** (0.352)	
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × Below Median Black CD			-0.256** (0.101)			-0.197* (0.117)			-0.306** (0.115)
Individual-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committee-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Member-committee FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress-Cohort FEs	✓	✓	✓						
Congress-Comm. Importance FEs				✓	✓	✓			
Congress-Comm. Seniority FEs							✓	✓	✓
Observations	318	318	318	318	318	318	318	318	318
Adjusted R ²	0.585	0.595	0.587	0.579	0.586	0.569	0.581	0.586	0.579

Note: Standard errors clustered at the Member-committee level in parentheses. *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001 (two-tailed test).

D.2 Main Results with Additional Controls

Table D.2 – Effect of Committee Composition on Black MCs’ Participation: Interaction Analysis with Add’l Controls

	Ln Pct. Speaking Instances			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std)	0.074 (0.085)	0.152 (0.094)	-0.515** (0.194)	0.043 (0.064)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × NOMINATE (first-dim)	-1.212** (0.439)			
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × Nokken-Poole (first-dim)		-1.258** (0.390)		
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × Pct. Black in CD			0.008** (0.003)	
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × Below Med. Black CD				-0.348** (0.125)
Individual-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committee-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Member-committee FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	299	299	299	299
Adjusted R ²	0.590	0.598	0.590	0.588

Note: Standard errors clustered at the Member-committee level in parentheses. Additional control include whether a committee held a hearing in a Congressional session on a racialized or CBC agenda item (omitted in the baseline results due to post-treatment bias). *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001 (two-tailed test).

Table D.3 – Effect of Committee Composition on Black MCs’ Participation: Interaction Analysis

	Ln Pct. Speaking Instances			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std)	0.081 (0.074)	0.187** (0.082)	-0.446** (0.179)	0.032 (0.055)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × NOMINATE (first dim.)	-1.055** (0.363)			
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × Nokken-Poole (first dim.)		-1.303*** (0.352)		
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × CD Pct. Black			0.007** (0.003)	
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × Below Median Black CD				-0.284** (0.108)
Wild Bootstrap p-values	0.12	0.015	0.043	0.010
Individual-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committee-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Member-committee FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
DepVar Mean	-2.732	-2.732	-2.732	-2.732
Observations	318	318	318	318
Adjusted R ²	0.569	0.581	0.571	0.569

Note: Original standard errors clustered at the Member-committee level in parentheses. * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.001 (two-tailed test). P-values from a wild bootstrap procedure clustering two-ways at the committee-Congress and MC levels using 9,999 iterations are presented.

D.3 Alternative Clustering Specifications

D.4 Attendance Analysis

In Table D.4, I look at how committee CBC presence influences a given Black MC's propensity to attend committee hearings. To do this, I rely on the assumption that a committee member would not attend a hearing and not speak at all. This is based off of anecdotal evidence from interviewees, as well as the clear benefits to speech during a hearing as outlined by the extant literature on committee hearing behavior (Shepsle and Weingast 1987; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Lerner and Shaffer 2020). Then, I measure how often over the course of a congressional session a given member appeared during a hearing.

Table D.4 – Effect of Committee Composition on Black MCs' Hearing Attendance

	Ln Pct. Speaking Instances				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std)	-1.431 (1.681)	-0.160 (2.111)	1.244 (2.195)	-5.707 (4.728)	-0.671 (2.057)
nominate.dim1_use		(0.000)			
below_med_Black					(0.000)
first_pctBlack				(0.000)	
pct_black_alt_std:nokken_use			-16.501* (8.772)		
nokken_use	-44.571 (30.528)	-53.572* (30.669)	-44.750 (29.156)	-46.847 (31.654)	-40.270 (32.199)
pct_black_alt_std:nominate.dim1_use		-8.253 (10.516)			
pct_black_alt_std:first_pctBlack				0.085 (0.087)	
pct_black_alt_std:below_med_Black					-1.485 (2.873)
Individual-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Committee-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Member-committee FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Congress FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	
DepVar Mean	29.872	29.872	29.872	29.872	
Observations	318	318	318	318	318
Adjusted R ²	0.611	0.606	0.608	0.610	0.608

Note: Standard errors clustered at the Member-committee level in parentheses. *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001 (two-tailed test).

D.5 Heterogeneity Analysis Looking at the Effect of MC Seniority

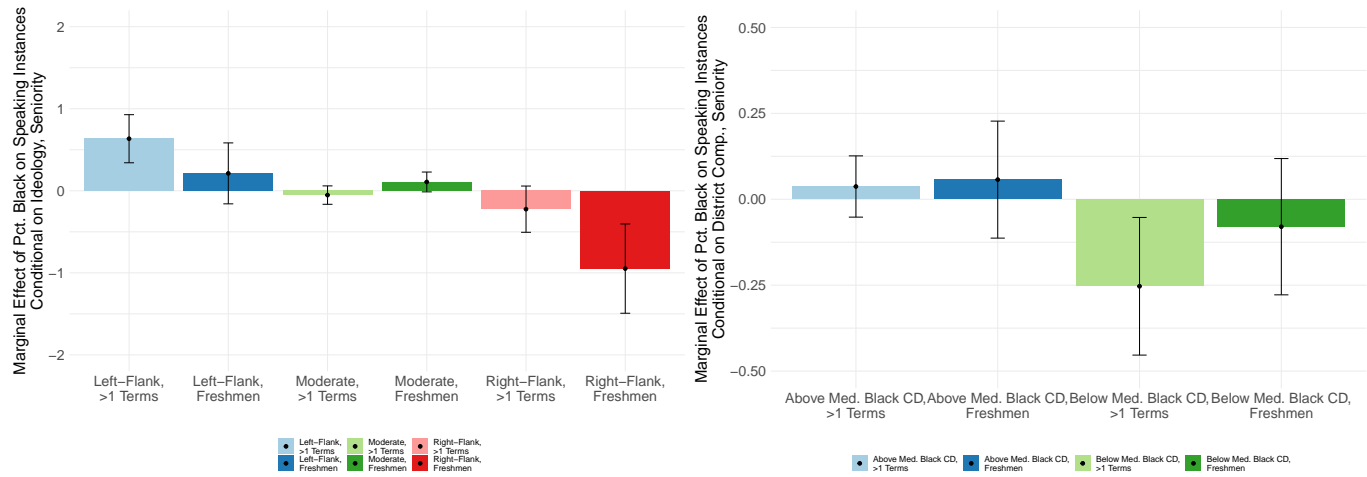


Figure D.1 – Marginal Effect of Percent Black on Committee, Conditional on Seniority, MC Type The figure plots the full marginal effect of percent black on a committee, conditional on the seniority and the type of a Black MC using a triple interaction specification. The left panel presents results for ideology and the right panel presents results for district composition. Estimates shown with 95% confidence intervals using standard errors clustered at the member-committee level.

Figure D.1 presents the full marginal effects of committee diversity, conditional on MCs' seniority and type (ideology or district composition). Right-leaning, freshman MCs are most discouraged in more-Black committee environments, whereas left-leaning senior members speak the most. I do not observe the same sort of pattern for my analysis looking at district composition: freshman are less impacted by committee composition than senior members when looking at those that represent less-Black areas.

D.6 The Effect of the Congressional Progressive Caucus

The Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC) is the largest ideological caucus in the Democratic Party. Figure D.2 plots its membership across committees over the course of my analysis period. Table D.5 does a similar analysis to the one presented in Table 1, but instead uses changes in CPC membership on committees to explore how Black MCs react to the group's presence.

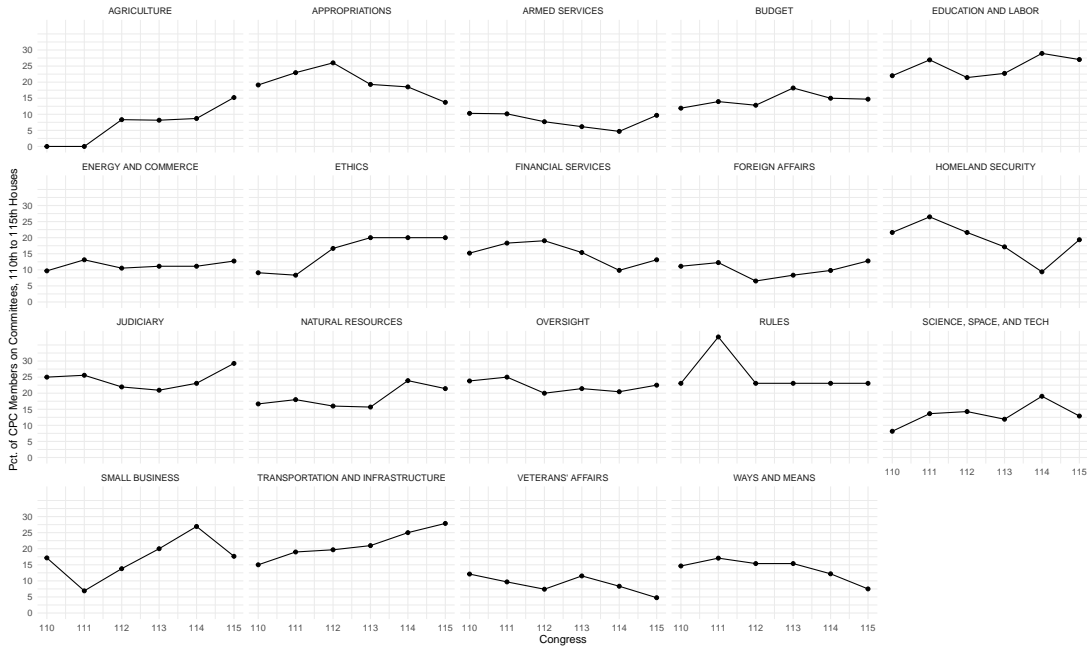


Figure D.2 – Percent of Congressional Progressive Caucus Members on Committees, 110th — 115th Congresses

Table D.5 – Effect of Committee Composition on Black MCs’ Participation, Progressive Caucus Specification

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Pct. Progressive Caucus Members (std)	0.016 (0.061)	-0.177 (0.121)	0.007 (0.059)	-0.035 (0.087)				
Pct. Progressive Caucus Members (std) × NOMINATE (dim.1)		-0.386 (0.264)						
Pct. Progressive Caucus Members (std) × Caucus Left-Flank			0.317* (0.185)					
Pct. Progressive Caucus Members (std) × Caucus Right-Flank			-0.377** (0.156)					
Pct. Progressive Caucus Members (std) × Below Med. Black CD				0.130 (0.110)				
Pct. Non-Black Progressive Caucus Members (std)					0.059 (0.062)	0.156 (0.190)	0.028 (0.051)	-0.038 (0.075)
Pct. Non-Black Progressive Caucus Members (std) × NOMINATE (dim.1)						0.191 (0.404)		
Pct. Non-Black Progressive Caucus Members (std) × Caucus Left-Flank							0.185 (0.200)	
Pct. Non-Black Progressive Caucus Members (std) × Caucus Right-Flank							0.058 (0.161)	
Pct. Non-Black Progressive Caucus Members (std) × Below Med. Black CD								0.281** (0.119)
Individual-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committee-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Member-committee FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	318	318	318	318	318	318	318	318
Adjusted R ²	0.563	0.563	0.575	0.563	0.565	0.563	0.565	0.574

Note: Standard errors clustered at the Member-committee level in parentheses. *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001 (two-tailed test).

D.7 The Effect of the Blue Dog Caucus

The Blue Dog Caucus (BDC) is . Figure D.2 plots its membership across committees over the course of my analysis period. Table D.5 does a similar analysis to the one presented in Table 1, but instead uses changes in CPC membership on committees to explore how Black MCs react to the group's presence.

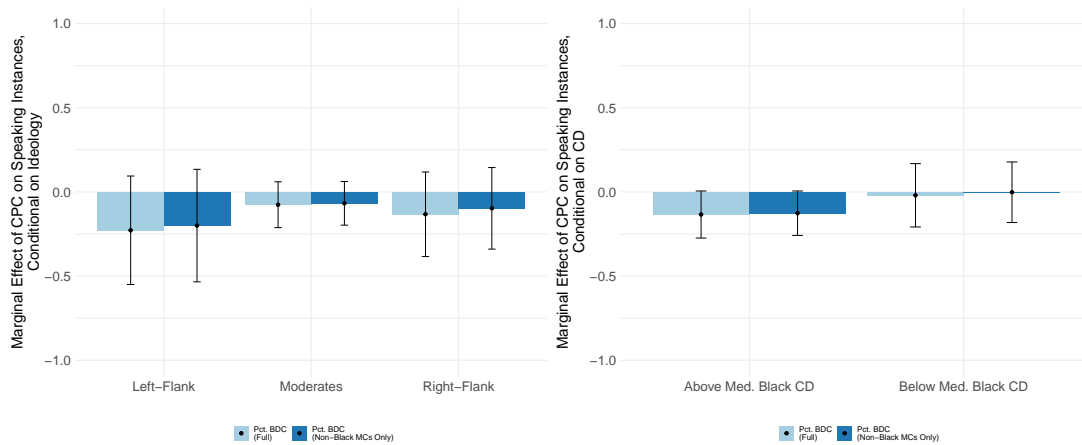


Figure D.3 – Effect of BDC Committee Mememebers on Black MCs’ Behavior, 110th — 115th Congresses

D.8 The Effect of Committee Composition on the Content of MCs' Speech

Table D.6 – Effect of Committee Composition on Black MCs' Mentions of Racialized Nouns

	Ln Num. Racial Nouns				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std)	0.015 (0.057)	0.060 (0.074)	0.085 (0.081)	-0.097 (0.129)	0.038 (0.074)
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × NOMINATE (first-dim)		-0.306 (0.212)			
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × Nokken-Poole (first-dim)			-0.366 (0.233)		
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × CD Pct. Black				0.002 (0.003)	
Pct. Blacks on Committee (std) × Below Median Black CD					-0.060 (0.080)
Individual-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committee-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Member-committee FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DepVar Mean	0.571	0.571	0.571	0.571	0.571
Observations	318	318	318	318	318
Adjusted R ²	0.468	0.468	0.469	0.467	0.467

Note: Standard errors clustered at the Member-committee level in parentheses. *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001 (two-tailed test).

E Additional Leadership PAC and Bill Co-Sponsorship Results

E.1 Leadership PAC Changes Analysis

Table E.1 – Effect of MC Behavior on Receipt of Leadership PAC funds: Changes

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
nominate.dim1_use	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
scale(change_avg_ptimes_spoke_recipient)	1.018** (0.398)	2.001* (0.942)		
scale(oos_change)			-1.152 (2.859)	-1.157 (2.871)
nominate.dim1_use:scale(change_avg_ptimes_spoke_recipient)	-6.983* (3.621)	-13.670** (5.607)		
nominate.dim1_use:scale(oos_change)			21.773 (16.424)	21.862 (16.499)
Donor, Recipient Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Democrat Recipients Only		✓		✓
Donor-Recipient FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
DepVar Mean	6.647	6.647	6.767	6.647
Observations	1,531	1,507	1,415	1,397
Adjusted R ²	0.264	0.267	0.189	0.194

Note: Two-way clustered standard errors at the donor and recipient level in parentheses.
*p<0.10, **p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

E.2 Is Punishment Racialized?

Do CBC leaders punish non-Black MCs for changes in behavior? In Table E.2, I regress the percent of a non-Black MC's bills that have a CBC leader co-sponsor over the course of a Congressional session on his behavior on committees in columns (1) and (2) and roll call votes in column (3). Not only are values nosily estimated, but point estimates are substantively small.

Table E.2 – Effect of Non-Black MCs' Behavior on CBC Leaders' Co-Sponsorship

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Lag. Pct. Speaking Instances (std)	-0.597 (1.408)	-2.748 (4.254)	
Lag. Pct. OOS w. CBC (std)			0.118 (1.756)
Lag. Pct. Speaking Instances (std) × NOMINATE (first-dim)	0.281 (2.213)	4.382 (7.870)	
Lag. Pct. OOS w. CBC (std) × NOMINATE (first-dim)			-1.821 (2.637)
Democrat MCs Only		✓	✓
Individual-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓
Member FEs	✓	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓	✓	✓
Dep. Var. Mean	16.56	26.4	26.4
Observations	1,404	616	616
Adjusted R ²	0.528	0.447	0.450

F Linking Committee Hearing Participation to Out-Of-Step Measures

When motivating my analysis, I argued that in addition to be a form of behavior that the CBC and its leadership would be interested in controlling, speech during committee hearings is also likely indicative of other behaviors that may be relevant to caucus interests.

To develop this idea, I use data on every roll call vote in the 110th to 115th Congresses and calculate the percent of votes each CBC member is in disagreement with a majority of other CBC members (*id est*, if more than fifty percent of the caucus votes “aye” on a bill, and member i votes “nay,” she is in disagreement). I regress each MC’s session-level OOS measure on his or her average percent of times speaking during hearings using a two-way MC, Congress fixed effect specification to see if participating more on committees is associated with less agreement on votes. Specifically, I estimate:

$$OOS_{i,t} = \beta(\text{Avg. Log Pct. Speaking Instances Across Hearings})_{i,t} + \gamma_i + \delta_t + \chi_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

with standard errors clustered at the member-level to account for multiple observations through time. γ and δ refer to member and Congressional session fixed-effects, and χ refers to a vector of individual-level time-varying characteristics that I account for in all of my specifications: seniority, vote percentage, status as a CBC leader, status as a committee chair, as well as members’ first-dimension Nokken-Poole score. For ease of interpretation, I re-scale the *OOS* measure to be between 0 and 100, meaning point estimates are in terms of percentage points. Although this specification ought not be interpreted as causal, we can interpret the estimates as the effect of a change in speaking behavior on roll call behavior.

Table F.1 – Effect of Committee Participation on Agreement with CBC Majority on Votes

	Pct. Votes Out of Step (0 – 100)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Avg. Log Pct. Speaking Instances (std)	0.005 (0.602)	9.406** (3.584)	−0.011 (0.744)	1.222* (0.648)
Avg. Log Pct. Speaking Instances (std) × NOMINATE (dim. 1)		17.934** (7.096)		
Avg. Log Pct. Speaking Instances (std) × Caucus Left-Flank			−0.427 (1.109)	
Avg. Log Pct. Speaking Instances (std) × Caucus Right-Flank			4.320** (2.109)	
Avg. Log Pct. Speaking Instances (std) × Below Med. Black CD				−2.438* (1.363)
Individual-Level Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Member FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	255	255	255	255
Adjusted R ²	0.814	0.825	0.814	0.820

Note: Standard errors clustered at the Member-level in parentheses. *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001 (two-tailed test).

Table F.1 shows my results with the same interaction effects from my baseline analyses. While I observe no main effect of speech on the *OOS* measure, right-leaning members that speak more on committees — as measured using their continuous, first-dimension NOMINATE score or their ideological group — tend to be out of step with the Black majority on more roll call votes. In other words, those MCs that go against the patterns outlined in the main committee analysis also appear to go against the caucus on another important legislative behavior. I do not observe the same effects for district composition, rather I find that those speaking up from less-Black areas tend to fall in line with the caucus majority. However, this result is less precisely estimated at the 10 percent level. Taken together, these results suggest that changes in committee participation correspond to members' willingness to oppose the CBC in other ways.