

THE CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY FELLOWSHIP EXPERIENCE IN THE CONTEXT  
OF MAJORITY AND MINORITY PARTY POLITICS

A Thesis

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Abstract  
of  
THE CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY FELLOWSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF MAJORITY  
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by  
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Established in 1957, the Assembly Fellowship Program is a highly selective, eleven-month public policy Fellowship administered by the Center for California Studies at the California State University, Sacramento. Democrats and Republicans alike are admitted to the program and placed in offices of their respective parties to gain first-hand exposure to the legislative process. Given the increasing dominance of the Democratic Party in California, this raises the question of whether the experience may be notably different for Fellows affiliated with each of the parties, and what the implications are for this important professional training program

To address the above question, I conducted background research on party dynamics – that is, the advantages that come with being part of the majority party, and some of the disadvantages that come with being part of the minority party. In addition, after conducting an in-depth literature review on public policy Fellowships in the United States, I found little research or aggregated data on public policy Fellowships studying the impact of being party of the majority or minority party.

In order to answer the question, “How does party affiliation impact the Assembly Fellowship Experience and post-Fellowship career trajectory?” I conducted survey and

phone interviews. I used a fifteen-question survey with the option for a phone interview. The survey was distributed to all former Fellows in the database of the Center for California Studies at Sacramento State University. I received 146 responses total: 97 Democrats and 49 Republicans. I then analyzed the data in quantitative and qualitative terms.

I found that despite the prevalence of party politics in the State Assembly, the vast majority of Fellows from both parties have a positive experience. The experiential commonalities between Fellows of both parties far outweighed any experiential differences: Fellows of both parties have a positive experience in the Fellowship. This speaks well to the ability of the Assembly Fellowship program to recruit, train and provide fruitful experiences to people with varying political views.

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair  
Edward L. Lascher, Jr.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	vi
List of Tables.....	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	1
Introduction.....	1
The Assembly Fellowship Program.....	3
Why the Interest?.....	5
Majority-Minority Politics in the Capitol.....	7
Key Points of Study.....	9
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
Part 1: Public Sector Fellowships.....	12
Opening Observations.....	12
Recent Public Sector Fellowship Research.....	13
Origins of Public Sector Fellowships.....	15
Science Fellowships.....	17
The Need for Further Research.....	19
Part 2: Majority and Minority Party Politics in State Legislatures.....	20
Opening Observations.....	20
Committee Assignments and Leadership.....	20
Party Size.....	22



Term Limits.....	23
Roll-Call Votes.....	23
Bill Introductions.....	24
Relationship with the Electorate.....	24
Patterns that Perpetuate Polarization.....	25
Literature Review Summary.....	28
<b>3. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>31</b>
Overview of Methods.....	31
Anonymity.....	32
Number of Respondents.....	33
Comparability of Answers.....	33
Qualitative and Quantitative Data.....	34
Data and Variables.....	34
Independent Variables.....	35
Dependent Variables.....	36
Changes to Methodology and Data.....	37
Conclusion.....	37
<b>4. FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>39</b>
Survey Sample.....	39
Central Themes.....	40
Experiential Commonalities Based on Party.....	41
Experiential Differences Based on Party.....	52

Phone Interviews.....	57
Conclusion.....	58
5. CONCLUSION.....	61
Recommendations for Further Research.....	61
Policy and Management Recommendations.....	65
Limitations to this Study.....	66
Conclusion.....	67
Appendix A.	
Survey.....	70
References.....	75

## LIST OF TABLES

1. Table 4.1: Office Placement.....	40
2. Table 4.2: Year of Fellowship.....	40
3. Table 4.3 Pre-Fellowship Interest in Legislative Work.....	42
4. Table 4.4 Three Point Scale of Pre-Fellowship Interest in Legislative Work .....	42
5. Table 4.5 Post-Fellowship Interest in Legislative Work.....	43
6. Table 4.6 Three Point Scale of Post-Fellowship Interest in Legislative Work .....	43
7. Table 4.7 Post-Fellowship Trajectory .....	44
8. Table 4.8 Professional Growth.....	45
9. Table 4.9 Three Point Scale of Professional Growth .....	45
10. Table 4.10 Professional Confidence Post-Fellowship.....	46
11. Table 4.11 Three Point Scale of Professional Confidence Post-Fellowship .....	47
12. Table 4.12 Anticipated Fellowship Experience Compared to Actual Experience ...	47
13. Table 4.13 Fellowship Experience Comparing, pre 2000 and post 2000 .....	48
14. Table 4.14 Challenge Level .....	49
15. Table 4.15 Collegiality in Member Office.....	50
16. Table 4.16 Collegiality with Staffers Outside the Member Office.....	51
17. Table 4.17 Working in the Legislature as a Whole.....	52
18. Table 4.18 Impact of Party Affiliation.....	55
19. Table 4.19 Three Point Scale on Impact of Party Affiliation.....	55
20. Table 4.2 Mentorship.....	57
21. Table 4.3 Phone Interview.....	59

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

### Introduction

Political tension in the United States is high. Not only is tension high, it is ubiquitous. It surrounds the American people through the media and press, and grows rampant on social media platforms. American politics are more polarized than ever and it did not happen overnight. Moreover, the polarization is increasingly based on allegiance to one or the other of the two major political parties. On both the congressional and state levels American politics have been growing more polarized based on party allegiance for decades (Boris, 2012). More importantly, polarization is at an all-time high and the trend of divergence does not appear to be stopping (Boris, 2012).

In this thesis, I look at a very small, focused piece of this. I examine how party affiliation impacts young people's desire to work in politics. Specifically, I ask legislative Fellows about their Fellowship experience and frame my findings in the context of party politics. Drawing comparisons of Fellowship experience based on party affiliation, I answer the question: *how does party affiliation impact Fellowship experience and post-Fellowship career trajectory?*

I examine the coveted California State Assembly Fellowship Program, the longest existing legislative Fellowship program in the fifth largest economy in the world (Assembly Fellowship Program, 2018). The program allows thoroughly vetted, bachelor degree-holding individuals to spend a year in a state legislative office of their choosing. With an acceptance rate of 4.5%, the program is highly competitive, so surely Fellows begin with a high level of interest in working in politics (C.A. Bunch, personal

communication, September 4, 2018). But what happens after their Fellowship? Do party politics impact their decision to stay? I explore these concepts in my research. It is also noteworthy that the goal of this particular program is not for it to serve as a pass-through on the way to other careers, but instead to retain Fellows as legislative staff once they complete their Fellowship (P. Chueh, personal communication, October 5, 2018). This thesis looks at how party polarization impacts the goal of the program, and in a broader sense, offers a test of whether polarization affects the ability of experiential programs to meet the needs of people with different political affiliations.

To be clear, the Assembly Fellowship is not a microcosm of American politics. Rather it provides an example of how political polarization might or might not impact a group of people who deliberately, and likely with some level of fervor, enter the political workforce. I am looking at a very specific group of people, in a very specific state, at a very specific time. That is, I am looking at a group of people who have a high level of political interest, in the state that has the highest level of polarization in the country, at a time when American political polarization as a whole is at its highest but has likely not plateaued. I am essentially exploring the question: how do party politics impact their experience?

Chapter 1 includes a brief introduction of the Assembly Fellowship Program, further reasoning behind this study, and an introduction to majority and minority politics in the California State Assembly. It also summarizes the key points of this study, and provides an overview of the contents of my remaining chapters.

### **The Assembly Fellowship Program**

The Assembly Fellowship Program, founded in 1957, affords eighteen individuals with bachelor's degrees the opportunity to spend eleven months in an office of a California State Assemblymember. Administered through the Center for California Studies at California State University, Sacramento, this coveted Fellowship offers a monthly stipend of \$2,698 per month. It also includes medical, dental and vision benefits, and six units of credit towards graduate study at Sacramento State University ("Assembly Fellowship Program", 2018). It begins in October of every year, though students must apply almost a year in advance.

The program is highly selective. The Fellowship program receives approximately 325 applications per year, and admits only 18 students total, for an admittance rate of roughly 5.5 percent (C.A. Bunch, personal communication, September 4, 2018). The first round of applying requires a personal statement essay, policy statement essay, three letters of recommendation, and transcripts proving a strong academic background. Based on the caliber of these documents, program administrators then narrow down the pool of eligible applicants. Upon successfully passing the first round of admittance, applicants are further filtered through an intensive interview by a selection committee panel of senior public sector staffers in the capitol who ask the applicant detailed questions on politics and policy ("Assembly Fellowship Program", 2018).

There is a short waitlist in case not all admitted students choose to enter the program, but most admitted students pursue the opportunity. Of the eighteen chosen students, roughly two thirds are of the majority party (Democrat) and one third are of the

minority party every year (Republican) (C.A. Bunch, personal communication, September 4, 2018). Prior to being placed in a member office, the Fellows are given one-month orientation of customized briefings to familiarize them with the legislative process (C.A. Bunch, personal communication, September 4, 2018). They meet with some of the most influential staffers in the capitol—chief budget consultants, chief clerks, chiefs of staff, and even members of the legislature itself. This makes for a more fruitful Fellowship experience because they likely have more confidence and information prior to Fellowship placement. It also benefits the offices because it prepares Fellows to be successful by slightly lessening their legislative learning curve.

After orientation, Fellows begin interviewing with Assembly offices of their choice. Fellows are highly sought commodities because they are a) thoroughly vetted, and b) incur no cost to a member's budget because their stipend is paid for by Sacramento State, through a state budget allocation to the University's Center for California Studies. In fact, Fellows choose their offices just as much as offices choose them. While Fellows may opt to rank an office not of their same party as their first choice, it is rare. Historically, Fellows are mutually matched with an office of their own party (C.A. Bunch, personal communication, September 4, 2018).

Upon completion of the Fellowship, some offices offer Fellows a permanent place of employment as full-time Assembly staff. The reasons for either offering a post-Fellowship placement or not depend on the member's office budget as well as the overall fit between the fellow and the office. Some Fellows, however, opt to leave for graduate school, other jobs, or are forced to seek other opportunities due to lack of an offer to stay

in the Capitol. This study examines how party affiliation influences Fellows during their Fellowship and their trajectories after. This is a particular time in American history where allegiance to political parties is at an all time high. As party politics become more polarized, it may be useful to the Assembly Fellowship Program to have a better understanding of how these dynamics impact post-Fellowship retention.

This study is limited to the Assembly Fellowship because it is the longest existing Fellowship and also because I have particular interest in it as a former Assembly Fellow. It is also limited to former Fellows so as not to place current Fellows in the position of answering questions about their present employer. Also, with current Fellows there is no means of measuring their post-Fellowship experience.

### **Why the Interest? My Assembly Fellowship Experience and Observations of Party Dynamics**

I was an Assembly Fellow from 2007-2008. Placed in the office of then-Assemblymember Sally Lieber, I gained exposure to the advantages of majority party leadership because Ms. Lieber was the Speaker Pro Tempore of the Assembly. Of eighty members of the Assembly, there is only one Speaker Pro Tempore. Assuming this position means presiding over floor session—in other words, controlling the rhythm of the largest meetings of the Assembly by upholding parliamentary order (California State Assembly Rules, 2018, p.19). This means authorizing members of the legislature to speak, in what order, on what topic, and for how long. The Speaker Pro Tempore to the Assembly floor session is like a teacher to the classroom. But perhaps more important



than maintaining decorum, the Speaker pro Tempore's prestige lies in participation in large-scale political strategy meetings with other majority party members. Specifically, the Speaker pro Tempore is allowed to attend intimate and exclusive pre-session meetings where leadership strategies are crafted for each floor session.

Under the California Constitution, legislators are limited in the number of terms they may serve; Ms. Lieber was terming out the year I started my Fellowship, and many staffers were leaving the office to find other work before the general election. As a result, I was given the task of staffing her in her role as Speaker Pro Tempore. I immediately was required to attend political strategizing meetings every week. I also worked frequently with other floor staff that had far more capitol experience and knowledge than I. Interestingly, once the bulk of my work duties were directly related to being part of the majority party leadership, my Fellowship experience went from good to magnetic. There are two reasons for this. First, I was becoming proficient at one very specialized type of work in the building because I was getting repeated practice at it. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, I enjoyed the rapport and mentorship that came with being part of a small group of senior staffers who were in the know.

Coming into the Fellowship, I was not sure if I would end up pursuing a long-term career in the Capitol. However, once I gained exposure to the work of majority party leadership, I knew I wanted to stay. Eleven years later, serve as Chief of Staff to an Assemblymember and have never had even a single day that I was not employed by the Assembly. This is including two consecutive situations where members I worked for termed out, and a third situation when another unexpectedly lost an election. Every time I

found myself on the brink unemployment, I sought short-term extensions and forged ahead, determined to stay in the Capitol. Surely, had I not had enjoyed my experience as an Assembly Fellow, I likely would not have made the effort to stay so many times. What kept me coming back, and most importantly, *how much did being part of the majority party impact my Fellowship experience and post-Fellowship career trajectory?* I know my own story. But for other former Fellows, I am curious.

### **Majority-Minority Politics in the Capitol**

To be clear, this study is more than simply an analysis of the Assembly Fellowship—it is a study of how majority-minority party politics in the Assembly impact the experience of Fellows during and after their Fellowship. Hence, background information on majority and minority politics in the Assembly is necessary. Below I briefly introduce party politics in the Assembly, which are governed by the Assembly Rules.

For most of California's modern (1970s and beyond) history, the Democratic Party has been in the majority. The most recent Republican Majority was over twenty years ago, between 1994 and 1996. Ever in flux, the ratio of Democrats to Republicans is constantly changing due to battles over 'swing districts'. Swing districts, also known colloquially as 'purple' districts, are up for the taking every two years during the normal election cycle. However, special elections (typically due to health issues, scandal, or another an incumbent seeking a more appealing elected position that happens to be open) and decennial redistricting complicate and increase the opportunities for district seizure.

Party balances also shift in reaction to changes in the national political mood: for example, the last Republican majority in California coincided with a national shift toward the Republicans that left that party in control of the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time in decades.

Party politics significantly impact votes in the Assembly and which bills pass through the legislature. There are three types of votes in the legislature—simple majority, supermajority, and the most rare, a 4/5<sup>th</sup>'s vote (California State Assembly Rules, 2018). A simple majority requires 41 of 80 votes on the Assembly floor. In a committee, a simple majority vote means the majority of the number of sitting members on the committee (four in a seven person committee, for example). The vast majority of bills require only a simple majority vote. However, some bills require a supermajority, 2/3s vote (California State Assembly Rules, 2018). This is required for any legislation that increases taxes and also for bills that contain an Urgency Clause, which means that instead of going into effect on January 1 of the following legislative year, they go into effect right away. Lastly, a 4/5s vote in the Assembly is used in very rare occasion on specific, controversial policy topics (California State Assembly Rules, 2018). Knowing there are different levels of voting requirements for varying levels of bill passage is important background for this thesis for two reasons. First, being part of the majority party means more voting power for most bills. Secondly, the majority party needs buy-in from the minority party for bills that raise taxes, go into effect right away or are especially controversial. In other words, being in the majority party is advantageous for most bills, but on some bills, bipartisanship is imperative for bill passage.

In addition to voting advantages, the majority party has a larger portion of leadership positions compared to the minority party. The Speaker of the Assembly (who is elected by the majority party) appoints chairmanships to all committees, general membership of committees, and leadership positions (California State Assembly Rules, 2018, p.7 and p.18). All chairs of committees in the Assembly are of the majority party, and heavily influence which bills are let out of committee and which are not. This is particularly important in the Appropriations Committee and Budget Committee which house bills requiring significant funding (California State Assembly Rules, 2018). Lastly, the Speaker appoints members to be various leaders within the Assembly—all of which are granted a piece of legislative power that allows them to influence other members. Unlike the majority party, the minority has a limited number of leadership positions.

In conclusion, the legislative rules governing the Assembly afford the majority party committee chairmanships, committee membership and leadership positions. In question in this thesis is the influence of these politics over the experience during and after an Assembly Fellowship.

### **Key Points of Study: The Assembly Fellowship Experience Amidst Minority-Majority Politics**

This study is two pronged. First, I will examine how party affiliation impacts a fellow's experience. Second, I will examine how party affiliation impacts the post-Fellowship career trajectory.

This thesis will also take into consideration other factors apart from majority-minority politics that might impact a fellow's experience. That is, are the components of a fruitful Fellowship experience closer in proximity to the fellow than the political landscape of the State Capitol and instead something as simple as having engaged guidance from their assigned mentor? In order to assess how party affiliation impacts Fellows, it is important to take into consideration what other factors may be impacting their experience.

With respect to a fellow's experience, this study will look at if they observed whether their party affiliation gave them an advantage or not in terms of passing legislation, if they felt that had more or less access to other members, staff or resources, and if the overall quality of their Fellowship was impacted in any way by their party affiliation.

Post-Fellowship experience is also examined, specifically if Fellows are offered a position upon completion of their Fellowship and if party affiliation impacted a fellow's decision to accept or not accept an offered position, and if Fellows stayed in public service upon leaving the Capitol. I will also look at how former Fellows' attitudes towards government and other party changed due to their Fellowship experience.

The remaining chapters are organized as follows. Chapter 2 provides a literature review covering materials relevant to this thesis. The literature review is divided into two main sections. The first discusses research on public policy Fellowships, and the second discusses research on majority and minority party polarization in state legislatures. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology for my own research. Specifically I will discuss

why I chose to use both surveys and interviews. Chapter 4 discusses the findings from my research in an organized and succinct fashion. Finally, Chapter 5 provides concluding thoughts and major takeaways drawn from my research. It also includes recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This literature review has two parts, which reflect the two major topics that come together in this thesis—public policy Fellowships, and majority and minority party politics in state legislatures. I found little research on how party affiliation influences the experience of public sector Fellowships in state legislatures. More specifically, I found the separate existence of research on both public sector Fellowships and majority and minority dynamics in state legislatures, but little research on the intersection of the two. The literature review provides background and further understanding of these topics while also providing evidence of the need for the type of study undertaken for the present thesis.

### **Public Sector Fellowships**

#### **Opening observations.**

There is very little literature on government Fellowships, especially on how Fellowships are impacted by party affiliation. I did find one master's thesis on the Executive Fellowship program, which is a Capital Fellows sibling of the Assembly Fellowship (Lamb, 2004). I also found a dissertation on the Capital Fellows programs—which encompasses the Assembly, Senate, Executive and Judicial programs (Aguilar,

2015). Lastly, I found one study on a 21-month long legislative Fellowship. However, the vast majority of literature apart from those pieces of work, is somewhat disjointed. There is not a linear path of research by which to form a narrative. The research is interesting and insightful, but it adds to the merit of this thesis because it nears this topic but is not actually this topic. Most is either from the 1970s, exclusively focused on science Fellowships, anecdotal in nature, not California-focused, or some blend of the four (Foster, 2006; Crowder et al., 2016; Rivard et al., 2016; Sterns et al., 2005). There is very little research on the experience of public policy Fellows within the context of party affiliation. To show this, I will start with the two pieces of work most relevant to the topic, then discuss literature from the 1970s, science Fellowship literature and finally close with substantiating the need for more research.

### **Recent public sector Fellowship research.**

The first piece of research most relevant to this thesis is on the Executive Fellowship Program, which was written through the Master of Public Policy and Administration Program at the California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) (Lamb, 2009). The Executive Fellowship program is similar to the Assembly Fellowship, but instead of placing Fellows in Assembly offices, they are placed in the executive branch. This study has two main findings. The first is that the program encourages Fellows to pursue a career in public service, as 67 percent of program alumni continue to work in the field (Lamb, 2009). The author also finds that 97 percent of alumni consider the program



to have furthered their interest in public service (Lamb, 2009). One notable difference on the Executive Fellowship program thesis, compared to my thesis, is that there is not a focus on majority and minority party dynamics. The examination is a more general assessment of the program and whether it encourages future public service by its participants.

The second piece of research most relevant to this thesis is a dissertation on the Capital Fellows Programs as whole (Aguilar, 2015). The Capital Fellows Programs consist of four programs, which house Fellows in different branches of government—the Assembly Fellowship, Senate Fellowship, Executive Fellowship and Judicial Administration Fellowship (Aguilar, 2015). All four programs place students in Sacramento in and around the Capitol, with the exception of the Judicial Administration Fellowship, which places students in courts across the state. The dissertation looks at the impact of participating in a Capital Fellows program on their professional futures (Aguilar, 2015). It finds that participating in Capital Fellows Programs gives its students “skills, knowledge and values” that help them in their careers (Aguilar, 2015). Specifically, the study points out that the Fellowships give students two main benefits: first, the networks they gain from participating, and second, critical thinking and problem solving skills.

One study reviewing the experience of an intern in the Florida state legislature found that the student’s party affiliation had no bearing on her legislative experience, for better or worse, based on measurements of the opportunities the student had to get real world experience, network and understand the legislative process (Sterns et al., 2005).

Another study examined 80 students participating in a 21-month Fellowship, and specifically how their perspectives of four cornerstones of a democratic society were impacted by their Fellowship experience (Oldfield, 2000). The study found that political trust, political interest, sense of civic duty and interest in pursuing a career with the state went down after their Fellowships (Oldfield, 2000). The author posits a disconnect between university teachings and the realities of working in politics as the reason for the aforementioned overall decreased faith in government (Oldfield, 2000).

The Executive Fellowship thesis and the Capital Fellowships dissertation are the most relevant to this thesis. They are likely the works most comparable to my own project. Still, apart from these two works there is very little research on my topic. Below I conduct a comprehensive discussion on what else exists in public policy Fellowships. While not focused on the Assembly Fellowship or even California, this discussion provides a sense of what research there is, and also substantiates the need for my research.

### **Origins of public sector Fellowships.**

The creation of service-learning programs can be traced to the 1960s (Cooper, 1977). Such programs are defined by the simultaneous completion of academic course and professional placement. The aim is to have students apply their academic coursework to the workplace, and vice versa. In 1974, after witnessing a successful, “hard science”-based program carried out by the University of Tennessee, the U.S. Department of

Commerce (the Department) began giving grants to apply the Tennessee model to the social sciences. The Department funded three interstate commissions—the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, the Midwest Council Advisory of Higher Education, and the New England Board of Higher Education—and tasked them with creating service-learning opportunities for students within the states of their respective regions (Cooper, 1977). During this time, it appears Fellowships grew significantly in the United States as a whole. The number of state legislative Fellowship programs across the nation quintupled in size from 1960 to 1970 (45 to 250), and tenfold by the late 1970s (250 to 2,085) (Murphy, 1979). Perhaps the civil rights movement gave way for increased interest in public policy making. Nevertheless, there was a growth of these programs and a brief surge of research on them.

The aforementioned research from the 1970s primarily gives us two pieces of information. The first is that students generally have a good experience and gain a greater understanding for government after their Fellowships (Murphy & Heath, 1974). But the second and more significant point is that Fellows' attitudes change more because of their office circumstances rather than party affiliation (Murphy & Heath, 1974). The argument is that being given menial tasks and treated less-than other staff causes a change in attitudes towards a career in public service. Another study noted that the source of funding for the program matters. Specifically, Fellows who are funded through a university may be treated less critically than Fellows who are paid (however modestly) from the legislature or legislative office itself (Murphy, 1979). This makes sense; if an office is fiscally sustaining the fellow the office may be more concerned with how that

fellow is spending office time. How the fellow is treated within the office matters. Thomas Murphy suggests five “S” requirements as a guide for legislative Fellowships: careful selection of Fellows, precise structure, engaged supervision, adequate living subsidy and synthesis with placement office (Murphy & Heath, 1974). The argument implies that having these five components is more critical to a Fellowship experience than the political landscape in the legislature, and more specifically, where a Fellows’ party affiliation falls within that political landscape. This research is decades old and was explored at a time when political parties were far less polarized than they are today. One study shows that state legislatures are, and will continue to become, more and more polarized over time (Shor, 2012). What’s more, the study finds that California is the most polarized legislature in the country (Shor, 2012). Given this reality, research from several decades past should be taken with the idea that the findings are based on a different time period. Still, this research is relevant because it is the only research in existence on the topic, and also it was conducted during the time when public policy Fellowships were burgeoning.

### **Science Fellowships.**

When researching public sector Fellowships, I found the most common type of program that is reviewed in academia is science Fellowships. However, the reviews are anecdotal in nature. I did not find empirical or aggregated data. Nonetheless, these

reviews on science policy Fellowships in government do give noteworthy information that is relevant for the purposes of this thesis.

Science Fellowships in the United States are plentiful, which perhaps reflects success. In Florida, there is a program that matches radiology residents with state legislative offices, and one student in the program found that the program better helped her understand the legislative process, though the science student went on to continue pursuing studies in radiology upon completion of the Fellowship (Rivard et al., 2016). Another program through the University of Mississippi allows pharmacy students to work in congressional offices for a year (Foster, 2006). Upon completion of the Fellowship program, students return to work in pharmaceuticals. One Fellowship in Georgia suggests a narrowly scoped program is effective. It was created and tailored to a precise area of health policy that the state needed policy solutions for, namely, policies that provide increased access to palliative care and pain relief (Dzotsenidze et al., 2017). By creating a narrow, highly focused program tailored to the needs of the state, policy solutions are more likely to be found. Problems are more likely to be clearly defined, and are met with corresponding, needed expertise. This appears to be a practical model for a policy Fellowship program and is quite different from the Assembly Fellowship in that it is not an on-going program. Another study on a program that introduces nursing students into the policy making process suggests a particular theory, called the Kolb Theory, as conducive to a successful Fellowship experience (Crowder et al., 2016). The Kolb theory states that if the following components are present, the legislative Fellowship process is likely to be fruitful for students: active involvement, reflective observation,

understanding of the legislative process, and application of experience to the process (Crowder et al., 2016).

While these programs are significantly different from the Assembly Fellows program, they can show us different kinds of components that can impact a Fellowship experience. On the other hand, they show us how much of the research that exists on Fellowships is science policy based. It shows non-science policy Fellowships alone are a relevant research topic, and adds to the assertion that research on Fellowships, in the context of majority and minority dynamics, is particularly lacking in academic research.

#### **The need for further research.**

There is research on public sector Fellowships, their origin in the 1960s and 1970s, and science Fellowships. However, there is no research on public sector Fellowships in the context of majority and minority party politics. Over the past few years, the number of government Fellowships on all levels—local, state and federal—has grown significantly (Oldfield, 2000). Despite the growth of the field, researchers suggest that this area needs to be studied more as there is very little research on the topic (Oldfield, 2000). One study notes that despite the long time existence of various public administration Fellowships, there are few studies on how the opinions of Fellows change throughout the course of their programs (Oldfield, 2000). The research in this portion of the literature review suggest the same.

## **Majority and Minority Party Politics in State Legislatures**

### **Opening observations.**

There is a wide array of literature exploring majority party politics in state legislatures across the United States. These pieces of research draw data from scores of states. For the sake of this thesis, I focus on the benefits, disadvantages and notable considerations that come with being part of the majority party or minority party. Based on my research, being part of the majority party generally comes with significant benefits. This is especially true when the rules governing a legislative body afford the majority party with formal power. However, research shows that securing support from the minority party is sometimes necessary for the majority party to accomplish certain legislative goals.

### **Committee assignments and leadership.**

One way of measuring party power is through legislative rules that grant formal benefits such as committee assignments and leadership positions (Battista, 2011). One study on five state legislatures shows that an increase in a party's ability to afford its members committee memberships, chairmanships and gatekeeping power, equate to an increase in party loyalty (Kanthak, 2009). Higher levels of partisanship have a positive relationship with stronger leadership roles whether Democrats or Republicans form the

majority (Clucas, 2009). This is especially true when fiscal committees are involved. When legislative rules give the majority party power over committees, the most influential committees are packed with party-loyal legislators. Research further shows that majority parties use procedural advantages to protect their own policy interests (Cox, Kousser, & McCubbins, 2010).

One study focuses on the California State Legislature in particular. The author noted California's unique 'Suspense File', which contains all bills deemed costly and impactful (Cox, Kousser, & McCubbins, 2010). The Suspense File is where the majority party most exercises its influence over the legislative process, for decisions about which bills are let out of the file are made behind closed doors by majority party leadership (Cox, Kousser, & McCubbins, 2010). Moreover, most of the bills that are legislative headliners go to the Suspense File, which means that the majority power exercises its authority over not only bills that cost the most and have the most policy impact, but that are most politically prominent. The Speaker, elected by the majority party, determines all committee chairpersons, memberships, and leadership positions (California State Assembly Rules, 2018, p.7). The agenda-setting power allows the majority party in the California state legislature to greatly control the movement of policy that flows through the capitol.

To summarize, research shows that committee assignments and leadership generally come hand in hand with being in the majority party of a state legislature. Such benefits can come in the form of committee memberships, chairmanships and control



over the movement of legislation, but is most valued when related to fiscal policy. We also see this is true for the California state legislature.

### **Party size.**

The size of the majority and minority parties can also influence party dynamics. One theory from an analysis of 336 legislative sessions in 36 states, posits that as the majority party shrinks in size, the procedural rights for the minority party increase (Martorano, 2004). Essentially the author argues that the smaller the majority party, the more the minority can band together to secure consequential status in the legislature. In the study, metrics for measuring procedural rights included: committee party ratios, the ability of the minority party to name its own membership for committees, the ability to request committee meetings and easily amend legislation on the floor (Martorano, 2004). Taking into consideration the differences between upper and lower houses when measuring for party power renders more accurate results (Thom, 2015). Senate chambers are typically smaller and more senior than lower chambers. Examples of differences between the two houses include the number of members, levels of seniority and legislative bylaws that afford party leaders with more or less power. The California Assembly has shared rules with the California Senate, but also has a separate set of rules unto itself, for example (California State Assembly Rules, 2018).

**Term limits.**

Term limits impact party politics. Using bill co-sponsorship as a measure for bipartisan collaboration, one study shows that increased party polarization is associated with long term limits or the absence of them altogether. This recent and thorough study, based on 41 states with bicameral legislatures, shows that term limits reduce bipartisanship (Swift & VanderMolen, 2015). Perhaps if legislators know they have a longer period of time to accomplish their goals, they are more likely to have a steady, inclusive approach. Conversely, if term limits are shorter and they know their time is limited, they may work with a spirit of expediency. For example, they may introduce a piece of legislation that is narrower in scope but has a lower threshold, rather than introducing a bill that is more comprehensive and enjoys more bipartisan support.

**Roll-call votes.**

Polarization between the majority and minority party can also be measured by roll-call votes. One study measures partisanship by detecting party power on roll-call votes in 27 states, and finds that party power influences 69% of close roll-call votes, and 44% of all roll-calls (Battista & Richman, 2011). Interestingly, we see that while majority

party power is influential much of the time, it is most influential on legislation that is the most controversial. In other words, the majority party advantage comes in most useful at the very time when it matters most.

### **Bill introductions.**

Measuring the types of bills introduced can be a way to assess majority and minority party politics in state legislatures. One study of 13 states compared the numbers of different types of bills introduced—particularistic policies known as ‘district’ bills, statewide bills or general government bills (Gamm & Kousser, 2010). The study shows a causal relationship between the types of bills that are introduced and strong competition between the two parties of a legislature (Gamm & Kousser, 2010). The more polarized a legislature, the more district bills are introduced rather than statewide bills. This could be because a legislature not dominated by one party intrinsically has more legislative seats available to compete for. Introducing statewide policy may garner more votes for a competitive seat instead of narrow legislation that is tailored to a small jurisdiction. When competition between parties is tight, legislators devote roughly 10-15% of their bills to particularistic policy. But without robust majority and minority party competition, legislators devote one-half to one-third of their bills to blanket, state-wide policy (Gamm & Kousser, 2010).

Professionalization and salaries also play into the types of legislation that are introduced, according to one study (Gamm & Kousser, 2010). That is, when legislators

are paid more, they typically introduce more district specific bills. Even when legislators are paid more though, interestingly, the length of legislative session does not show any correlation with the types of bills introduced (Gamm & Kousser, 2010). Higher salaries lead to increased incentives for incumbents to maintain their seats and cater to their districts.

To summarize, polarized legislatures produce more policies that benefit the entire state. More polarized legislatures are characterized by more district bills, long (or no) term limits, and high salaries.

### **Relationship with the electorate.**

Party polarization decreases trust in state legislatures, particularly from citizens belonging to the party that is less extreme on the political spectrum (Banda & Kirkland, 2017). For example, if a state legislature has Democratic members that are further to the left than the proportion by which Republican members are to the right, Republican constituents will have less trust in that legislature. Studies show this to be true for constituents but perhaps this holds true for inside the legislature as well. That is, when parties closer to the center, perhaps there are higher levels of trust. But with extreme partisanship, those within opposing parties may feel less trusting. Policy discrepancies aside, low trust in highly polarized legislatures is not conducive to constructive policy negotiations.

One study compares two states—Kansas and Nebraska—on party activism and its influence over the legislature (Wright & Schaffner, 2002). Kansas has strong partisanship, Nebraska does not. The study shows that without strong partisanship in the legislature, there is less political order, and subsequently an absence of an electorate-friendly means of measurement by which to hold the legislature accountable (Wright & Schaffner, 2002). While it is likely that different factors lead to strong partisanship, strong parties group issues into easily digestible platforms making it easier for voters to keep tabs on the legislators they elect.

In other words, a lack of partisanship creates disconnect between the voters and the legislature which results in a lower voter turn out and low accountability.

### **Patterns that perpetuate polarization.**

While the disparity between values based on race and socioeconomic status have remained mostly stable, the disparity between values of Americans on the political left and political right have become more polarized than ever (Gift & Gift, 2015). This is exacerbated by research suggesting that a group of people working in an environment of politically like-minded individuals, subconsciously and mutually perpetuate political extremism (Jones, 2013). This is because there are fewer arguments—especially substantive ones—made against the common denominator political platform, and are instead reinforced with encouragement and assertion (Jones, 2013). Weak arguments compound and reinforce each other, and are not challenged to the point of necessitating

stronger arguments. The opposite is true of nonpartisan environments—that is, in less partisan work environments, partisanship declines (Jones, 2013). In sum, the more partisan the working environment, the more polarized the political beliefs.

Interestingly, one study examined job applications where party affiliation was marked. The research showed that a call back depends on the majority party affiliation of the county where the employment is located. For example, a Democrat is most likely to receive a call back in the highly liberal county of Alameda (California), whereas a Republican is most likely to receive a call back in the very conservative county of Collin (Texas). In both counties, those who do not put a party affiliation are the next called, and those who put the party affiliation that is not the same of the county's majority, are called last. (Gift & Gift, 2015).

Another consideration in legislative party politics is a state's political uniqueness. States that have populations that are more diverse may face a more diverse set of policy conundrums, requiring more structure than states with more homogenous populations. When holding all other variables held constant, partisanship in state legislatures increases with higher levels of state socioeconomic diversity and legislative careerism (Battista, 2011). Also, in states with higher levels of legislative careerism (i.e. legislators look to stay in office for longer periods of time and make a career of it), there is more reason to create order by way of parties to achieve long-term political and policy goals. With more policy challenges, parties are more likely to have higher levels of influence over legislators' decisions. Given California's diverse nature, it is then within reason to say that parties, by default, have high levels of influence over the state legislature.

## **Literature Review Summary**

This literature review provides three pieces of important information for this thesis. First, I review existing research on public sector Fellowships. Second, I review existing research on majority and minority politics in state legislatures. Third and more broadly, I show that there is no research focusing on their convergence.

The research on public sector Fellowships is mixed. It can be divided into three groups: policy Fellowships, the origins of public sector Fellowships, and science Fellowships. It is apparent that public sector Fellowships generally have a positive impact on students, but there is more anecdotal evidence for this than systematic empirical data. There are, however, recommended guidelines for ensuring a fruitful Fellowship experience. Notably, none of the guidelines mention party affiliation. They mention only recommendations on program protocols and how a fellow should be treated in the office. Still, there is not an extensive amount of analysis on such programs on a large scale. More can be done.

The existing literature on majority and minority politics in state legislature shows us that being part of the majority party is generally advantageous. This seems to be true for most legislative bodies across various states. It is also true regardless of whether Democrats or Republicans are the majority. Less important than the party is which holds the majority. Party dynamics influence, and are influenced by: committee and leadership assignments, party size, term limits, types of bills introduced, the electorate, and patterns

that perpetuate polarization. Being part of the majority party almost universally means have more procedural and political advantages.

Research shows that there are significant legislative advantages to being part of the majority party in state legislatures. This is measured by legislative wins associated with being in the majority party, such as successful passage of bills, prestigious committee assignments, and powerful leadership positions. However, such measurements are limited to the experience of legislators—there is no research exploring whether such majority party advantages seep into the experience of staff or Fellows. There is also no research on how it impacts their career trajectory. In other words, legislative Fellowship experience has yet to be used as metric for measuring the reach of majority party advantage. The current academic assessment of how majority party advantage comes into play stops at the member level. It is simply not clear if the majority party influence happens as strongly—if at all—on the staff or fellow level.

Academic findings aside, this literature review shows that more research in this area could prove useful. Bringing this information together as context is helpful, but there is not much research that is specifically looking at Fellowship experience in the context of majority and minority party politics in state legislatures. Do politics impact a Fellows' experience, or does the office experience impact it more? It is reasonable to say that being part of the majority party comes with great benefits in state legislatures. It is also fair to say that public sector Fellowships began in the 1970s and continue to grow. But how does party affiliation impact that experience? If there is one point to take away from



this literature review, it is that studies on how party affiliation impacts a legislative Fellowship are sparse, and this topic should be researched further as in this thesis.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter covers my research methodology and data. I first begin by explaining my methodology and why it was reasonable. I then explain the types of variables I considered in my data and why those were reasonable.

### **Methodology**

#### **Overview of methods.**

My research question is: how does the party affiliation of Assembly Fellows impact post-Fellowship career trajectory? I used a survey and also a phone interview to answer my research question; the remainder of this paragraph focuses on the former. More specifically, I used a fifteen question, multiple-choice survey distributed to former Assembly Fellows to answer my research question. I developed the survey by crafting questions with the help of my advisors. To analyze the survey, I compiled all of the answers and conducted a separate analysis of each survey question. First, I put them into an excel sheet and then calculated the percentages of respondents that gave particular answers for each question. I then analyzed each set of percentages and compared Democrat and Republican answers so as to observe any notable differences between Fellowship experience based on party affiliation. I also ran chi squared tests to confirm

my analysis. For the phone interview piece, I simply offered the option at the end of the survey with my contact information, and also left a space for them to leave their contact information, if they felt so inclined.

I used a survey and phone interview as my methodologies for four reasons: anonymity for those surveyed, number of respondents, the comparability of answers, and access to both qualitative and quantitative data.

### **Anonymity.**

The first reason this methodology is reasonable is that it protects both the anonymity and contact information of respondents. Given that matters related to party affiliation can be sensitive, particularly if a respondent is still working in politics, it is especially important to protect anonymity. I purposefully made sure I did not have access to the personal contact information of those taking the survey and that answers were not linked to personal identities. The survey was distributed via e-mail to former Assembly Fellows through an e-mail containing a link to a Survey Monkey website where I uploaded my survey. To ensure respondent privacy was not jeopardized, I asked the Center for California Studies (the Center) at Sacramento State University to distribute the surveys to former Assembly Fellows. The Center had a list of e-mails of former Assembly Fellows and distributed the survey. This methodology was ideal because I could not access the contact information of former Fellows, but could still successfully

access the responses as the administrator of the survey on the Survey Monkey website. I allowed two separate two-week long windows for respondents to answer.

### **Number of respondents.**

The second reason this methodology was reasonable is because I was able to capture data from a large number of Fellows rather than basing my research solely on in-person interviews which would provide detailed data but would not allow as high a number of responses. Maximizing the number of responses to my survey resulted in data being less anecdotal and more conducive to discerning patterns of how party affiliation impacts the post-Fellowship trajectories of Assembly Fellows. The phone interviews gave an additional layer of information but to do interviews alone would have limited my data set.

### **Comparability of answers.**

The third reason this methodology was reasonable was because the survey provided consistent questions and answers that could be easily organized, compared and analyzed. A multiple-choice survey ensured that most of the questions were close-ended. Specifically, thirteen of fifteen the questions offered only multiple-choice answers. There were two questions that were not multiple choice—one asking for the year of their Fellowship, another asking if they would be willing to have a phone interview. The

uniformity of all questions and answer options made it easier to determine patterns.

Additionally, closed ended questions were easier and faster to respond to than open ended ones, which increased the likelihood of respondents participating in the survey.

### **Qualitative and quantitative data.**

The last reason a survey was a reasonable methodology choice was because it drew both quantitative and qualitative data. By using feedback from phone conversations I drew qualitative analysis, but the data from the surveys gave me answers from which I can draw comparisons and made a quantitative analysis. Specifically I used party affiliation, year of Fellowship and initial interest levels of working in politics as my independent variables to measure against several other dependent variables. The phone interviews were more open-ended and provided additional qualitative data to work with. A hybrid approach of both qualitative and quantitative analysis was the best fit for my research.

### **Data and Variables**

My data set consisted of responses from 148 former Assembly Fellows. The survey (which is included in the appendix) was sent out twice. Each time it was sent out, I allowed a two week window for respondents to answer the survey. The initial window

was in early December of 2018, and the second window was late January of 2019. Each survey had fifteen questions, for a total of 2,220 answers to work with.

### **Independent variables.**

My independent variables were party affiliation, year of Fellowship, and both pre- and post- Fellowship interest in level in pursuing a career in the capitol. All Assembly Fellows, when starting their Fellowship, are assigned to an office of a particular party affiliation. Since my research question was asking how post-Fellowship career trajectories are impacted by party affiliation, I made party affiliation one of my independent variables so as to compare the experiences of Democrats and Republicans. My second independent variable was Fellowship year. I included this variable to see if there were patterns showing difference in experience based on the period of time a Fellowship was completed. For example, I can use this variable to compare post-Fellowship choices during the recession in the late 2000s, compared to now in 2018 when the economy is out of the recession. My third independent variable was the interest level of working in the legislature pre- Fellowship, and my fourth independent variable was interest level in working in the legislature post- Fellowship. I asked these questions to gauge desires before Fellows even set foot in the Capitol building, and how their Fellowship experience changed their desires.

### **Dependent variables.**

My nine dependent variables were: specific reasons for leaving the capitol, designated mentor, self-perceived level of professional growth, Fellowship experience compared to anticipated expectation of the experience, challenge level of Fellowship, self-perceived role party affiliation plays in Fellowship experience, collegiality level in member office, collegiality level with staffers outside the office, and pleasantness of working in the capitol as a whole. I used these variables because they are factors that could impact a Fellowship experience. They are also factors that could be influenced by party affiliation. By drawing comparisons between the dependent variables based on party affiliation, Fellowship year, and a fellow's interest in working in politics, rendering data to answer my research question. At the conclusion of the survey, I also left the option for respondents to have a more in-depth phone interview.

### **Changes to Methodology and Data**

I used a survey as my primary methodology, with a phone interview as a secondary means of obtaining data. I made two changes as I was determining my methodology. The first was adding a section in my survey to include an option for a phone interview (initially I only considered a survey).

**First change: methodology: phone interview.**

The first change I made was adding the option at the end of the survey for a phone interview. I made this change with the guidance from my advisor, to create the space for a larger range of answers and allow respondents to elaborate on answers from the survey. The questions I used in my phone interview were:

- How would you describe your Fellowship experience overall?
- How do you think your party affiliation impacted your Fellowship experience?
- Looking back, what do you think the Center for California Studies could have done to improve the likelihood of you staying in the capitol after your Fellowship was completed?
- What was the lasting impression your Fellowship left on you?

I deliberately drafted broad and open-ended questions, to contrast the narrow, specific answers on the survey.

**Conclusion**

My methodology and data aimed to get a sense of what causes Fellows to stay in the Capitol or leave post-Fellowship, and of course, to specifically draw linkages to party affiliation. I used a survey to gather a large number of responses, and I chose my



variables based on what I suspect may influence Fellows to stay or leave in the Fellowship. My survey was precisely crafted; each variable corresponds to a particular question in the survey. The phone interview added an extra element to the survey that may reveal other elements not included in the survey. Overall, this methodology was reasonable not only because it was conducive to answering my research question but also because it protected the anonymity of respondents.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss the findings of my research. First, I discuss the survey sample. Second, I will discuss the central theme I found in my research. Third, I will detail experiential commonalities amongst Assembly Fellows regardless of party affiliation. Fourth, I will detail experiential differences in Fellowship experience based on party affiliation. Fifth, I will detail themes I found from phone interviews. Lastly, I will conclude with a brief summary of the most significant findings from my research.

### **Survey Sample**

As shown in Table 4.1, a total of 146 (out of 1116 former Fellows total, for a response rate of 13%) former Assembly Fellows took the survey: 97 Democrats and 49 Republicans. Approximately 66.4% of the respondents were placed in Democratic offices and 33.6% were placed in Republican offices. These percentages indicate that the pool of respondents accurately represents the proportion of Democrats and Republicans that are typically found in Fellowship classes (C.A. Bunch, personal communication, September 4, 2018). It also shows, however, that there are fewer responses from Republicans than Democrats altogether.

While more than half of all respondents completed their Fellowship within the past twenty years, there was a considerable percentage of respondents who completed their Fellowship before the year 2000. Per Table 4.2, 15.4% of Democrat respondents and

10.2% of Republican respondents completed their Fellowship in the 1990s. A considerable percentage of respondents completed their Fellowship in the 1980s: 10.5% of Democrat respondents and 16.4% of Republican respondents.

Table 4.1: When you served as an Assembly Fellow, were you placed in the office of a Democrat or Republican Assemblymember?

Democrats	Republicans
97 (66.4%)	49 (33.6%)

Table 4.2: What year did your Fellowship start?

Response	Democrats	Republicans	Total
Pre-1989	19 (19.5%)	8 (16.4%)	27 (18.5%)
1990-1999	15 (15.4%)	5 (10.2%)	20 (13.7%)
2000-2009	27 (27.8%)	15 (30.6%)	42 (28.8%)
2010-present	36 (37.1%)	21 (42.8%)	57 (39.04%)

### **Central Theme: Former Fellows Experience Eleven (Positive) Similarities and Two Differences**

The central theme I found in my research can be summarized as follows: experiential commonalities far outweighed experiential differences between all Fellows, regardless of party. Also, the vast majority of Fellows from both party affiliations gave positive responses about their Fellowship experience.

Commonalities held between Fellows of both parties were:

- high pre-Fellowship interest in legislative work
- increased interest in legislative work post-Fellowship
- post-Fellowship career trajectory
- positive impact on professional confidence
- the Fellowship exceeding expectations

- Fellows feeling challenged intellectually
- high levels of collegiality both within the member office
- high levels of collegiality outside the member office
- an overall pleasant experience working in the capitol

Differences between Fellowship experiences based on party were:

- the perceived advantage or challenge that came with respective party affiliation, and
- office mentorship.

While there were both commonalities and differences based on party affiliation, the experiences of all Fellows are generally positive and more similar than not.

Experiential commonalities and experiential differences are detailed below.

### **Experiential Commonalities among All Fellows**

#### **High pre-Fellowship interest in working in the capitol.**

The vast majority of both Democrats and Republicans answered that before they began their Fellowship, they were at least “somewhat interested” in working in the legislature: 98% of Republicans and 89.7% of Democrats indicated as much. Moreover, 34% of Democrats and 44.8% of Republicans were “extremely interested.” This indicates that the Assembly Fellows Program successfully draws interest from individuals who have a desire to work in the capitol upon completion of their Fellowship, rather than individuals using it as a pass through before other ventures. Table 4.3 shows the

responses to this survey question, and table 4.4 shows the responses on a three point scale to streamline answers.

Table 4.3: Once you were accepted into the Fellowship program (but before you started the Fellowship), how interested were you in continuing to work in the legislature after you completed the Fellowship?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Not at all interested	11 (11.3%)	1 (2%)
Somewhat interested	16 (16.4%)	5 (10.2%)
Moderately interested	15 (15.4%)	7 (14.2%)
Quite interested	22 (22.6%)	14 (28.5%)
Extremely interested	33 (34%)	22 (44.8%)

Table 4.4 (Three Point Scale)

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Not at all	11 (11.3%)	1 (2%)
Somewhat/moderately interested	31 (31.9%)	12 (24.5%)
Quite/Extremely interested	55 (56.7%)	36 (73.5%)

### **Post-Fellowship interest in legislative work increased.**

Pursuing legislative work becomes more appealing on both sides of the aisle once a Fellowship is completed. More than two-thirds of respondents from both parties said their interest in working in the legislature increased after their Fellowship. This is particularly notable because while respondents indicated that they had already very high levels of interest in legislative work before the Fellowship, those interest levels increased even more after their Fellowship. 71.2% of Democrats and 63.7% of Republicans state their interest in working in the legislature increased at least “somewhat” as a result of their

Fellowship. Within that group, 52.5% of Democrats and 28.5% of Republicans said their interest increased “significantly”. Some did have decreased interest, but it was less than those whose interest increased. Interestingly, Democrats had a higher rate of decreased interest at 15%, while Republicans had a decreased interest of only 6.1%. The percentage of respondents who answered that their interest level stayed the same was very similar in both parties, with 22.6% of Democrats and 26.5% of Republicans. It is notable that this increased interest was on top of an already high level of interest in legislative work that Fellows had before their Fellowship even began. Table 4.5 shows survey responses and Table 4.6 shows responses streamlined into a three-point scale to better illustrate interest levels.

Table 4.5: Did your interest in pursuing a career in the legislature increase or decrease after your Fellowship?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Strongly decreased	7 (7.2%)	1 (2%)
Somewhat decreased	8 (8.2%)	2 (4%)
Stayed the same	22 (22.6%)	13 (26.5)
Somewhat increase	19 (19.5%)	16 (32.6%)
Strongly increase	51 (52.5%)	17 (28.5%)

Table 4.6 (Three Point Scale)

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Strongly/somewhat decreased	15 (15.5%)	3 (6.1%)
Stayed the same	22 (22.6%)	13 (26.5%)
Somewhat/strongly increase	70 (71.2%)	33 (67.3%)

**Post-Fellowship career trajectory: most Fellows stay in the capitol immediately upon completion of Fellowship.**

More than half of all respondents said they stayed working in the legislature upon completion of their Fellowship: 56.7% of Democrats and 55.1% of Republicans. Per Table 4.7, 45% of Democrats and 32.6% of Republicans left the legislature to pursue academic work or for other reasons. However only a very small percentage, 6.1% of Democrats and 4% of Republicans, left because they felt working in the legislature was not a fit for them. Consistent with other responses from the survey, these percentages indicate that the Fellowship had a positive impact on Fellows' interest in legislative work.

Staying in the capitol upon Fellowship completion indicates two factors at play: the opportunities provided to Fellows, and the desire of Fellows to take on those opportunities. These percentages indicate that opportunities to continue working in the legislature between Democrats and Republicans were existent for the majority of Fellows in both parties, and that there was also desire from both parties to continue working in the legislature.

Table 4.7: If you left the legislature immediately upon Fellowship completion, what was the primary reason?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Not a fit	6 (6.1%)	2 (4%)
School	19 (19.5%)	5 (10.2%)
Other	25 (25.5%)	11 (22.4%)
Not offered	3 (3%)	4 (8.1%)
Not applicable: stayed	55 (56.7%)	27 (55.1%)

### **Post-Fellowship interest in politics increases as a whole.**

Strikingly similar percentages of Democrats and Republicans said their overall interest in politics grew as a result of their Fellowship: 86.6% of Democrats and 87.8% of Republicans. Only 4.1% of Democrats and 2% of Republicans said their interest in politics decreased after their Fellowship, and 8.2% of Democrats and 10.2% of Republicans said their interest level stayed the same. Below are two tables—one with the responses from Fellows and another which consolidates the responses to a three point scale so as to better illustrate the high levels of pre-Fellowship political interest. Table 4.8 shows the survey answers and Table 4.9 consolidates them onto a three point scale.

Table 4.8: How would you describe the growth of your overall interest in politics as a result of your Fellowship experience?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Lessened significantly	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Lessened somewhat	4 (4.1%)	1 (2%)
Stayed the same	8 (8.2%)	5 (10.2%)
Grew somewhat	29 (29.8%)	14 (28.5%)
Grew significantly	55 (56.7%)	29 (59.1%)

Table 4.9: (Three point scale)

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Lessened significantly/somewhat	4 (4.1%)	1 (2%)
Stayed the same	8 (8.3%)	5 (10.2%)
Grew somewhat/significantly	84 (86.6%)	43 (87.8%)



### **Positive impact on professional confidence.**

What is of the impact of the Assembly Fellowship experience on personal traits? My survey suggested that it was overwhelmingly positive. The vast majority of Fellows on both sides of the aisle saw a growth in their personal levels of professional confidence. A testament to the positive impact of the Fellowship, as shown in Table 4.10, 90.6% of Democrats and 95.8% of Republicans said their professional confidence grew at least “somewhat”. Of this group, 57.7% of Democrats and 44.8% of Republicans said their professional confidence grew “significantly”. While a minute percentage said their professional confidence declined, Democratic respondents who experience this more, at 5.1% compared to the Republicans at 2%. Identical percentages of respondents on both sides of the aisle said their professional confidence level stayed the same, at 2%. Below is the survey question on professional confidence level and two charts detailing their responses; one chart details their actual response, and the second chart condenses their responses to a four-point scale to illustrate more clearly the impact on their professional confidence level. Table 4.10 shows the survey answers and Table 4.11 consolidates them onto a three point scale.

Table 4.10: How did your professional confidence level change as a result of the Fellowship?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Lessened significantly	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
Lessened somewhat	5 (5.1%)	1 (2%)
Stayed the same	2 (2%)	1 (2%)
Grew somewhat	32 (32.9%)	25 (51%)
Grew significantly	56 (57.7%)	22 (44.8%)

Table 4.11 (Three point scale)

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Lessened significantly/somewhat	6 (6.2%)	1 (2%)
Stayed the same	2 (2%)	1 (2%)
Grew somewhat/significantly	88 (90.7%)	47 (96%)

### **Fellowship experience exceeded expectations.**

Fellows from both parties responded overwhelmingly that their Fellowship experience was better than they anticipated it would be. 90.6% of Democrats and 89.7% of Republicans responded that their experience was at least “somewhat better” than they anticipated, and 51.5% of Democrats and 42.8% of Republicans said their experience as “a lot better” than they anticipated. Strikingly similar percentages of Fellows from both parties indicated that the Fellowship was “somewhat worse” than they anticipated—with Democrats at 8.2% and Republicans at 8.1%, but not a single respondent indicated their experience was “a lot worse” than they anticipated. Once again, responses are generally very positive about the Fellowship.

Table 4.12: How did your Fellowship experience compare to what you thought it would be like?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
A lot worse	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Somewhat worse	8 (8.2%)	4 (8.1%)
Same	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Somewhat better	38 (39.1%)	23 (46.9%)
A lot better	50 (51.5%)	21 (42.8%)

In addition to calculating percentages simply based on party affiliation, I take my analysis a step further by breaking down responses by year. Table 4.13 shows responses from Fellows who had their Fellowships before the year 2000 juxtaposed with responses from Fellows who had their Fellowships after the year 2000. This table allows the cross sectional comparison of Fellows based on both year and party. The percentages shown in 4.13 are reflective of the proportions of Fellows within the pre 2000 and post 2000 subgroups. For example, the percentage of pre 2000 Democrat Fellows responding that the Fellowship was “somewhat better” than they expected was 34.7%, which reflects 17 out of the 49 total Democrats who had Fellowships before 2000. The percentages illustrate that even with a time divide taken into consideration, Fellows of both parties, before and after 2000, overwhelmingly responded that the Fellowship was at least “somewhat better” and in many cases “a lot better” than they anticipated.

Table 4.13: Comparison Table: Pre 2000 Fellows and Post 2000 Fellows: How did your Fellowship experience compare to what you thought it would be like?

Response	<b>Pre 2000 Democrats</b>	<b>Post 2000 Democrats</b>	<b>Pre 2000 Republicans</b>	<b>Post 2000 Republicans</b>
A lot worse	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Somewhat worse	2 (4.1%)	6 (12.2%)	0 (0%)	4 (11.8%)
Same	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Somewhat better	17 (34.7%)	21 (42.9%)	6 (42.9%)	17 (50%)
A lot better	20 (40.8%)	30 (61.2%)	8 (57.1%)	13 (38.2%)
Total in subgroups	49 (100%)	57 (100%)	14 (100%)	34 (100%)

### **Fellows felt challenged.**

While Fellows considered the Fellowship to have exceeded their expectations, they also agreed that they felt challenged. One could argue this is an ideal learning experience – where both satisfaction and challenge coexist. 100% of Democrats and 98% of Republicans felt at least “somewhat challenged” during their Fellowship. As shown in Table 4.14, of the vast majority that felt challenged, 19.5% of Democrats and 14.2% of Republicans felt “extremely challenged”. Considering the procedural advantages that often come with being in the majority party, it is interesting that Democratic Fellows felt more challenged than Republicans.

Table 4.14: How challenged did you feel in your Fellowship compared to what you anticipated it would be like?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Not at all challenged	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
Somewhat challenged	8 (8.2%)	6 (12.2%)
Moderately challenged	25 (25.7%)	17 (34.6%)
Quite challenged	43 (44.3%)	18 (36.7%)
Extremely challenged	19 (19.5%)	7 (14.2%)

### **High levels of intra-office collegiality.**

Nearly all Fellows report high levels of collegiality within their member offices. As noted in Chapter 1, there are less Republican offices in the state legislature than Democrat offices. This smaller number could either create a stronger rapport in Republican offices bannng together against a larger majority, or this could create a

stronger rapport amongst Democrats who have the majority, more legislative power and political momentum. Interestingly, Fellows of both parties reported similarly. 100% of Democrat Fellows and 98% of Republican Fellows reported at least “somewhat collegial” levels in their member offices. Broken down even further, over half of both Fellow groups said their member offices were “extremely collegial”. Table 4.15 details these responses.

Table 4.15: How would you best describe the collegiality level in your Member office environment?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Not at all collegial	0 (0)	1 (2%)
Somewhat collegial	5 (5.1%)	2 (4%)
Moderately collegial	11 (11.3%)	3 (6.1%)
Quite collegial	30 (30.9%)	17 (34.6%)
Extremely collegial	50 (51.5%)	26 (53%)

### **High levels of inter-office collegiality.**

Perhaps more interesting than the reported collegiality within a member office was the reported collegiality between Fellows and staffers of other offices, or inter-office collegiality. Within a member office, all staffers are of the same party affiliation—but interaction outside the member office means there is a chance of interaction with staffers of the opposite party. Fellows of both parties reported high levels of collegiality with staffers outside their member offices. In fact, not a single Fellow reported that interaction with staffers outside their member offices was “not at all collegial”; 100% percent of respondents stated the interaction with staffers outside their office was at least “somewhat collegial”.

While there are clearly legislative privileges given to the majority party as illustrated in previous chapters, responses to this survey show that there exists high levels of collegiality between Fellows and other staffers despite an imbalance of political power. However, it is possible that Fellows interact more frequently with staffers of the same party even outside of their member office. While inter-office interaction most likely includes at least *some* bipartisan interfacing, it is also possible that a good portion of this interaction consists of intraparty interaction.

Another consideration with respect to this question is party size. While there are fewer Republican staffers than Democrats, this could also translate to fewer opportunities for legislative successes within the minority party. This in turn could translate into not only more interparty competition but rather intraparty competition. Given these dynamics and possibilities, it is interesting that Fellows generally report high levels of collegiality outside their member office.

Table 4.16: How would you describe the collegiality with staffers outside your member office?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Not at all collegial	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Somewhat collegial	21 (21.6%)	6 (12.2%)
Moderately collegial	7 (7.2%)	1 (2%)
Quite collegial	39 (40.2%)	28 (57.1%)
Extremely collegial	29 (29.8%)	14 (28.5%)

**The vast majority of Fellows had a pleasant experience working in the capitol.**

Taking into consideration the responses regarding intra-office and inter-office collegiality, it is not entirely surprising that an overwhelming majority of respondents

stated working in the legislature was a pleasant experience. Per Table 4.17, out of 146 respondents, only 6.1% said they had an unpleasant experience in the legislature.

Juxtaposed with the 100% of respondents reporting collegiality with staffers outside their office, and the 99% of respondents reporting collegiality within their member office, this survey question clearly shows that most Fellows have a pleasant experience working in the capitol. Despite the advantages that come with being part of the majority party, Democrats were more likely to have an “unpleasant” experience in the capitol. Out of the six respondents that reported “unpleasant” experiences working in the capitol as a whole, five were Democrats and only one was a Republican. Below is the survey question on working in the legislature as a whole and a chart detailing responses.

Table 4.17: How would you best describe working in the legislature as a whole?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Extremely unpleasant	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Quite unpleasant	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
Somewhat unpleasant	3 (3.1%)	1 (2%)
Somewhat pleasant	19 (19.5%)	10 (20.4%)
Quite pleasant	45 (46.3%)	28 (57.1%)
Extremely pleasant	27 (27.8%)	10 (20.4%)

### **Experiential Differences Based on Party**

It cannot be overstated that the experiential commonalities between Fellows, based on party affiliation, were far fewer than their experiential differences. Still, there were two substantively and statistically significant differences between the experiences of Democrats and Republicans. The first, which is perhaps the more notable one, is that Republicans felt their party affiliation rendered more challenge, whereas Democrats

reported their party affiliation rendered more advantage. The second difference, which is perhaps less notable, is that Republicans had more direct mentorship from Assemblymembers, whereas Democrats have more direct mentorship from chiefs of staff.

**Republicans stated party rendered challenge; Democrats stated party rendered advantage.**

The first and most significantly difference between Fellowship experiences, based on party affiliation, was the perception of challenge or advantage resulting from party affiliation. Fellows reported nearly polar opposite experiences on whether their party affiliation brought advantage or challenge. Nearly one third of Democrats felt their party helped them, and nearly one third of Republicans felt their party hindered them. Most Democrats, 64.9%, stated their party affiliation put them at least “somewhat of an advantage”. Most Republicans, 61.2%, felt their party affiliation made their experience at least “somewhat challenging”. The experiences of these Fellow groups were nearly the inverse of each other. Only 4.1% of Democrats, compared with the aforementioned 64.9% of Republicans, felt their party affiliation put them in a more challenging position. This survey question is the one time throughout the entire research process that stark differences were found between Democrats and Republicans.

There was also a middle option allowing respondents to convey that party affiliation “did not play a part” in their Fellowship experience. More Democrats than Republicans opined that their party affiliation did not play a part—29.8% of Democrats compared with 16.3% of Republicans.



To confirm that the difference between the two parties was statistically significant, I ran a chi squares test. A chi squares test is a statistical test that show the likelihood of the magnitude of difference between Republicans and Democrats in my sample being the result of chance alone. More specifically, the chi squares test compares the observed values of a data set with the expected values of a data set and calculates a p value. When a p value  $<0.05$ , the difference between the observed data values and expected data values is statistically significant. If there is a p value of 0.05, then there is a 95% chance that the values in a data set did not happen by chance. In this case, the “chi squares test” can confirm whether differences in responses could be by chance or if in fact they are based on party affiliation. When I calculated the p value with a chi squares test, the p value was much less than .000. This means there more than a 99.99% chance that these differences are based on party affiliation and not by random chance.

Below are two charts detailing responses to the question about whether party affiliation made the Fellowship experience more challenging. Table 4.18 shows responses on a six-point scale, and Table 4.18 shows responses on a three-point scale to more clearly illustrate the different experiences based on party affiliation. The key point is that the differences across former Fellows are substantively large. Still, the extent of the challenge did not infringe upon positive Fellowship experience. In other words, the Fellowship was challenging but not so challenging that it was unenjoyable.

Table 4.18: How did your personal party affiliation play a role in your Fellowship experience?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Made it extremely challenging	0 (0%)	6 (12.2%)
Made it somewhat challenging	4 (4.1%)	24 (48.9%)
It did not play a part	29 (29.8%)	8 (16.3%)
Put me at somewhat of an advantage	46 (47.4%)	6 (12.2%)
Put me at an extreme advantage	17 (17.5%)	5 (10.2%)

Table 4.19 (Three point scale)

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Made it extremely/somewhat challenging	4 (4.1%)	30 (61.2%)
It did not play a part	29 (29.8%)	8 (16.3%)
Put me at somewhat/extreme advantage	63 (64.9%)	11 (22.4%)

**More members mentored Republicans; more chiefs of staff mentored Democrats.**

The experiential factor differentiating Democrat and Republican Fellows was mentorship. Republicans reported more primary mentorship from Assemblymembers, whereas Democrats reported more primary mentorship from chiefs of staff; 49.4% of Democrats were mentored by chiefs of staff, compared with 34.6% of Republicans. Conversely, only 6.1% of Democrats were mentored directly by the member, and 14.2% of Republicans were mentored by the Assemblymember.

Fellows of both parties reported similar numbers of mentorship by legislative directors and legislative aides. 26.8% of Democrats and 24.4% of Republicans reported being mentored by legislative directors. 6.1% of Democrat and 8.1% of Republicans reported being mentored by legislative aides. Schedulers were the least likely to mentor

Fellows, on both sides of the aisle. These responses are logical because most Fellows are interested in policy work which more closely aligns with the work of legislative directors, legislative aides, chiefs of staff or the member directly.

Republicans also more often reported being mentored by staffers who were not categorized as members, chiefs of staff, legislative directors, legislative aides or schedulers. That is, they reported being mentored by staffers who did not fall into typical legislative personal staff categories. This could mean more mentorship from policy consultants, committee consultants, capitol directors, or other roles.

Table 4.20 shows the responses to the survey question on mentorship and a chart detailing responses. I suspect there may be a few plausible reasons why Republican Fellows receive more direct mentorship from members than Democrat Fellows. Perhaps it is due to the smaller staff size of Republican offices, rendering more opportunity for direct mentorship with the member. It could also be due having a lesser number of bills moving through the legislative process, leaving members more time to spend on Fellows. Another possibility is that Republican members take more interest in Fellows simply from being part of the minority which may be conducive to an esprit de corps, encouraging minority members to take special interest in Fellows to build their party's overall team. On the Democrat side, it is possible that Democrat members have the inverse relationship with Fellows because they have the inverse of circumstances. That is, they have larger offices with more people, more bills staying alive through the legislative process, and an already large and powerful base that likely requires internal safeguarding against fragmentation as its priority instead of growth in numbers. Simply put,

Republicans members, while in some ways have less legislative power than Democrat members, may indeed have more of other types of resources such as time, attention and mentorship to give Fellows.

Table 4.20: Who in your office would you describe as your primary mentor?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Chief of Staff	48 (49.4%)	17 (34.6%)
Legislative Director	26 (26.8%)	12 (24.4%)
Legislative aide(s)	6 (6.1%)	4 (8.1%)
Scheduler	0 (0)	1 (2%)
Member	6 (6.1%)	7 (14.2%)
Other	11 (11.3%)	12 (24.4%)

### **Phone Interviews**

When asked to participate in a phone interview, a slightly higher number of Democrats were willing to participate than Republicans. 47.4% of Democrats were willing to participate, compared to 40.8% of Republicans. While many respondents agreed to participate in a phone interview, respondents often did not leave contact information. Still, I was able to have six phone interviews; two with Democrats, three with Republicans, and one who preferred to keep their party private. During the interview, I asked three questions, which are described below.

I first asked Fellows to describe their Fellowship experience in three words. I did not provide examples of word choices to the Fellows. Even so, four said the Fellowship “educational”, three said it was “fun”, and two described the Fellowship as “transformative”. Some of the other descriptor words they provided were “informative”,

“fun”, “useful”, “networking”, “inspiring” and “life changing”. Not one interviewee described the Fellowship in a negative way. All responses were positive.

The second question was related to the Center for California Studies. Specifically, I asked if the Center for California studies (the Center) could have done anything more to encourage Fellows to stay in the legislature after their Fellowship. The responses were quite mixed, most likely because it was an open ended question. Most Fellows said that the Center could not have done much more to help them stay in the capitol. Two said they wished for higher salary opportunities after their Fellowship, which is of course outside the jurisdiction of the Center.

The last question was related to job opportunities and party. Most phone interviewees did not feel their party hindered them from finding work after the Fellowship. One Republican said their party helped them find work because there were less Republican Fellows than Democrats, which meant this individual had a pick of legislators to work with. Another Republican had the opposite opinion—that being a Republican was quite frustrating because it was so difficult to get legislation passed. The two Democrats interviewed said their party affiliation had no bearing on overall experience or that it made it easier to get work.

The phone interview responses align with the survey responses—Fellows generally had similar experiences, and their experiences were good. A larger number of phone interviews would have been ideal, but that can be a suggested area of research which I will detail in chapter 5.

Table 4.21: Are you willing to have a 15 minute phone interview?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Yes	46 (47.4%)	20 (40.8%)
No	45 (46.3%)	27 (55%)

## **Conclusion**

The results of my research show that experiential commonalities far outweigh experiential differences between Democrats and Republicans in the Assembly Fellowship program; eleven similarities and two differences were found. Most Fellows have not only similar, but positive, experiences.

The similarities found were: a high level of interest in legislative work pre-Fellowship, an increased interest in legislative work as a result of the Fellowship, an increased interest in politics, an increase in professional confidence, a feeling that the Fellowship exceeded expectations, an opinion that Fellows felt intellectually challenged, a high level of inter-office collegiality, a high level of intra-office collegiality, a high level of pleasantness during their Fellowship, and a high percentage of Fellows making the choice to continue working in the legislature immediately upon Fellowship completion.

The two differences were related to party impact and mentorship. First, Democrats and Republicans feel differently about the impact of their party affiliation. Democrats feel more often that their party gives them an advantage, while Republicans feel that their party gives them a disadvantage. Second, Republicans receive mentorship directly from members of the legislature more often than Democrats.

The sheer proportion of similar responses (eleven) to dissimilar responses (two) shows that Fellows have a similar experience regardless of party. The responses also show that generally, Fellows still have a fruitful experience. Clearly, based on evidence provided in previous chapters, the majority party has significant advantages in the capitol. And in fact, the Fellows' response to the survey question regarding party aligned with that evidence. Still, the assembly Fellowship experience proves to be a positive and similar one across party lines

The points to remember are first that Fellows of both parties have similar experiences and second that Fellows of both parties have mostly positive experiences. Based on my research, party politics for the most part do not get in the way of the benefits that the Fellowship affords.

## **Chapter 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

The point of my research was not to simply examine the experiences of Assembly Fellows– it was to look at their experiences within the context of majority and minority politics. My research question was: how does party affiliation impact the Assembly Fellowship experience and post-Fellowship career trajectory? I showed in Chapter 1 that there are considerable power dynamics in the California State Assembly based on majority and minority politics. But as I demonstrated in my literature review, there is very little research on based on the impact that party affiliation has on public policy Fellowship experiences. I also had personal interest as a former Assembly Fellow. It was because of this focused scope that I asked 146 former Assembly Fellows the same survey questions, then controlled for party affiliation to draw comparisons. I found that Fellows of both parties have both similar *and* positive experiences. These findings have important implications. Before I discuss them further I will provide further research recommendations, policy and management recommendations, address the limitations of my study, and provide a summarizing conclusion.

#### **Recommendations for Further Research**

I have several recommendations for further research. These recommendations are based on my research in addition to the literature review I conducted which showed there is little research in the area of public policy Fellowships as they relate to party affiliation.



My first recommended area of research relates to the one area that I did find a statistically significant difference between the experiences of Democrats and Republicans. That is, more research could be warranted in examining the specific disadvantages Fellows perceived when they expressed their party put them at a disadvantage. Clearly, Republicans felt their party affiliation put them a disadvantage—but what does that mean, exactly? What specific disadvantages ensued? Are there tangible disadvantages? Are they simply perceived? Conversely, since Democrat Fellows expressed privilege was coupled with their party, what specific advantages did they have? Once again, are they real or perceived? How does one measure advantage or disadvantage? It is quite subjective, but therein lies the gap of information: the measurable, even quantifiable, advantages and disadvantages that come with being a fellow of the majority or minority party.

Examples of tangible benefits include learning about state government and politics, gaining skills, interacting with constituents, developing areas of interest or even expertise in particular policy areas, assisting in the passage of legislation, and networking for a potential future career in politics. But an area of further research could be examining which specific, measureable advantages Fellows of each party experience. For example, it is possible that Republican Fellows enjoy most of these tangible experiences but may not be involved in the passage of many pieces of legislation due to the political disadvantages the minority party faces. On the other side, Democrat Fellows may enjoy benefits of helping pass legislation but do not receive as much mentorship because the power afforded to majority party offices gives such offices the luxury of controlling (and by

default, focusing) on larger legislative goals than mentoring Fellows. It is likely that this is especially true in leadership offices. For example, a Democrat Fellow placed in the Speaker's office may be less likely to receive as much focused mentorship than a Fellow placed in a Republican office of a non-leadership Member. This is possibly the most extreme example of opposite Fellow placements—a majority party Fellow placed in the Assembly office of most legislative power, compared to a minority party Fellow placed in an Assembly office of the least legislative power. The point is, there are likely trade offs. As such, it would be interesting to research this topic further and measure those trade offs more precisely. And while these examples are certainly speculative, further research could substantiate or rebut such speculation.

The second area of further possible research is whether Fellows stay in politics long-term. In my survey, I ask if they stay in the legislature immediately upon the completion of their Fellowship. In the interest of keeping a fixed scope for my research, I did not expand into whether Fellows ended up pursuing legislative or public policy careers long-term. There is merit in researching this because as I have mentioned, there is little if any research on this subject already, and secondly, while my research touches the surface of this, it can be looked into deeper. Does the Assembly Fellowship produce 'lifer' legislative staffers? That is, does it produce staffers that make a life's career out of working in the capitol? Does it contribute to the larger government workforce, producing state workers who stay in the public sector but leave the capitol? Is there a way to track Fellows long-term based on their party affiliation during their Fellowship? While my research clearly shows that just as many Democrat Fellows as Republican Fellows stay

on in the capitol *immediately* after their Fellowship, it is largely focused in scope on their experience during their Fellowship and their *immediate* career trajectory. But what about the career choices they make long term? This is an area that can be looked into further.

A third area of consideration may be to compare the experiences of Fellows from different programs. While the Assembly Fellows are housed in the legislature, Executive Fellows (a program also administered through the Center for California Studies) are housed in the governor's administration. It may be interesting to compare the impact that party affiliation has on Executive Fellows compared to the impact it has on Assembly Fellows, since a governor's administration is certainly led by one party. In the legislature, of course, Fellows are placed within an office of their same party. But Executive Fellows are placed in the administration regardless of their party, by default almost ensuring opposite-party interaction for some Executive Fellows. The Fellow programs are essentially immersion programs—but Assembly Fellows are immersed in offices of their own party, while for Executive Fellows that is not necessarily the case. For this reason, comparing the experiences of Fellows of these two programs based on party affiliation could merit further examination.

A last area to be researched is to more accurately measure interoffice (interaction between staffers and staffers of other offices) collegiality. I asked Fellows about the interaction with staffers outside of the member placement office, and the vast majority reported that they felt high levels of collegiality even with staffers of other offices. But looking into this further is warranted because if interaction outside the member office is within staffers of the same party, it might make sense that these interfaces are collegial.

In order to know if bipartisan interaction is collegial, it should be more accurately measured. For example, do Fellows interact with staffers of the same party when they communicate with staffers outside their member office, or do they have bipartisan interaction? If there is bipartisan interaction, how much of the interoffice communication does it comprise? If interoffice collegiality is mostly comprised of partisan interaction, then this does not provide evidentiary support for bipartisan collegiality. Certainly, Fellows learn some sense of decorum, based on their reported collegiality levels. But is this decorum amongst their own party, or is there a spirit of *bipartisan* respect that they see and learn?

### **Policy and Management Recommendations**

Both Democrat and Republican Fellows have similar and positive experiences. Given this was the feedback across the board in my data, I would offer the possibility that the Center for California Studies could use this data during recruitment. While Republicans did report that their party affiliation rendered challenge rather than advantage, the reoccurring theme found in my data was that the experiences between Fellows of both parties had overwhelmingly positive and similarities experiences. That is, there is not much evidence (at least in this study) that Republican Fellows should be discouraged or worried that simply because they are Republicans they will have a lesser experience. It may also be useful to emphasize the specific benefits the Fellows reported and remind potential Fellows that these benefits can have long-term benefits that surpass

their Fellowship year. Introducing potential Fellows to such research during recruitment may entice more students to apply for the program.

Given the results of my research, it may also be worth offering Fellows a post-Fellowship survey asking for input of their experience. Given that 146 former Fellows spanning five decades had positive responses regardless of party, a post-Fellowship survey may show similar responses. The results of such a survey could further substantiate the findings of this research and provide an added layer of evidence that Fellows of both parties find the experience fruitful and beneficial. It may even be worth connecting the Fellowship to diminishing party tribalism. Or, perhaps it can be said that at the very least, it does not further fuel magnetic and even blind party loyalty that is increasingly found on both sides of the aisle. This is not to say that the Fellowship can dismantle party tribalism. But perhaps there is a positive role the Fellowship can play in helping people reach across the aisle. Certainly the minority party faces legislative challenges in the California State Assembly, but party seems to matter far less within the microcosm of the Fellowship. When recruiting, this study can be used to address and even dispel concerns around minority party affiliation.

### **Limitations to this Study**

There were four limitations to this study. First, there were fewer Republicans surveyed than Democrats. While the proportion of Republicans to Democrats in the survey sample accurately represents the typical proportion of Republicans to Democrats in a Fellowship class, there were simply more answers to analyze from Democrats. The

second limitation was that even though many Fellows agreed to a phone interview, most did not leave contact information, so there was a missed opportunity to obtain more data. The third limitation was that Assembly Fellows and former Fellows in the survey sample completed their Fellowships during different time periods. Some completed them only two years ago, others completed theirs in the 1970s. Since the study did not control for other era-based variables that might impact a Fellowship experience—such as political and economic climates-- it is difficult to know how these variables might have impacted their experience and accounted for them leaving or staying. I did ask why Fellows stayed or left after their experience and provided multiple choice options (including “other”), but since the focus of my research was party affiliation, I did not hone in on factors that might be specific to a certain era. The last limitation is one of selection bias. Given that all participation in the survey is voluntary, it is possible that those who responded had more of an attachment or positive experience with the program. On the other hand it is possible that Fellows who had a negative experience took interest in responding in the spirit of informing research on the program. In either case, it is difficult to determine what the impact of the selection bias is, but it is a limitation nonetheless.

## **Conclusion**

My research shows that the Assembly Fellowship provides both a similar and positive experience for Fellows of both parties. Through my research, I identified eleven professional, skill-set building benefits both Democrat and Republican Fellows. These benefits include but are not limited to: increased interest in their professional field of

interest, increased professional confidence, intellectual stimulation, a real-time example of professional decorum, and job placements in the Capitol. The two differences I found were that Republicans opine that their party puts them at disadvantage, and Republicans are often mentored directly by an elected official. While the former is potentially significant, the latter is likely less so, and the vast majority of Fellows from both parties had far more experiential commonalities and positive benefits. All of these benefits were experienced by Democrats and Republicans alike, and at similar rates.

An additional and perhaps larger takeaway is that the eleven benefits found by Fellows of both parties can surpass and transcend the Fellowship, or even political work altogether. For example, as a result of the Assembly Fellowship, most Fellows have an increased interest in legislative work. This is helpful for Fellows because the survey showed they had an already high level of preliminary interest in legislative work—in other words, the Fellowship increases their enthusiasm in a field they already care about. The Fellowship also increased their enthusiasm about politics in general. For a person in the beginning of their career, a Fellowship that increases their excitement about a field of interest is surely a positive professional experience. The Fellowship also provided an increase in professional confidence, which can help Fellows be resilient in their professional career whether they stay in politics or not. A feeling that the Fellowship exceeded expectations simply means the Fellowship was simply a positive jumpstart to their professional trajectory. The general opinion that Fellows felt intellectually challenged shows this is an educational experience. And lastly, the high level of inter-office collegiality, high levels of intra-office collegiality, and high levels of pleasantness

in the capitol shows that Fellows see an example of maintaining professional decorum. The high percentage of Fellows making the choice to continue working in the legislature immediately upon Fellowship completion shows that many Fellows secure employment after the Fellowship, which is conducive to more professional growth. The list of benefits is long. But more importantly, the benefits themselves likely have longevity.

The overarching story of my findings is that party affiliation does not significantly impact the experience of Assembly Fellows. This is interesting because, as discussed in my literature review, majority and minority politics are a real phenomenon in the California legislature. Imbalances of political power exist that are a direct result of party politics. Such dynamics impact what laws get passed. They impact who holds leadership positions. They impact the flow of tax dollars. But contrary to what these dynamics might imply in other areas of politics, they do not mean that Republicans have a bad experience as Fellows simply because they are in the minority party. They also do not mean that Democrats have a better experience because they are part of the majority party. There are some slight differences that can be researched further, but the big takeaway of this thesis is: the positive benefits of the Assembly Fellowship trump party politics.



## Appendix A: Assembly Fellowship Survey

### Survey Pool: Former Assembly Fellows

**Prompt: Thank you for agreeing to take this survey. Please base your answers on your experience working in the legislature during your Assembly Fellowship experience. Please read all answers thoroughly before making your selection. Thank you for your time!**

- 1) Once you were accepted into the Fellowship program (but before you started the Fellowship), how interested were you in continuing to work in the legislature after you completed the Fellowship?
  - a. Extremely interested.
  - b. Quite interested.
  - c. Moderately interested.
  - d. Somewhat interested.
  - e. Not at all interested.
  
- 2) Did your interest in pursuing a career in the legislature increase or decrease after your Fellowship?
  - a. Strongly increase.
  - b. Somewhat increase.
  - c. Strongly decrease.
  - d. Somewhat decrease.
  - e. My interest remained the same.
  - f. I don't remember.
  
- 3) If you left the legislature immediately upon Fellowship completion, what was the primary reason?

- a. I was not offered a position.
  - b. My time in the legislature showed me it was not a professional fit for me.
  - c. I left to pursue further schooling or academic work.
  - d. Other (specify)\_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Not applicable; I stayed in the legislature after my Fellowship.
- 4) When you served as an Assembly Fellow, were you placed in the office of an Assemblymember who was a Democrat or Republican?
- a. Democrat.
  - b. Republican.
- 5) What year did you start your Fellowship?
- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) How would you describe the growth of your overall interest in politics as a result of your Fellowship experience?
- a. It grew significantly.
  - b. It grew somewhat.
  - c. It stayed the same.
  - d. It lessened somewhat.
  - e. It lessened significantly.
- 7) Who in your office would you describe as your primary mentor?
- a. Legislative director.
  - b. Chief of staff.
  - c. Scheduler.

- d. Legislative aide(s).
- e. Assemblymember.
- f. Other, please specify:\_\_\_\_\_.

8) How did your professional confidence level change as a result of the Fellowship?

- a. It increased significantly.
- b. It increased somewhat.
- c. It stayed the same.
- d. It decreased somewhat.
- e. It decreased significantly.

9) How did your Fellowship experience compare to what you thought it would be like?

- a. A lot better than I anticipated.
- b. Somewhat better than I anticipated.
- c. Somewhat worse than I anticipated.
- d. A lot worse than I anticipated.

10) How challenged did you feel in your Fellowship compared to what you anticipated it would be like?

- a. Extremely challenged.
- b. Quite challenged.
- c. Moderately challenged.
- d. Somewhat challenged.
- e. Not at all challenged.

11) How did your personal party affiliation played a role in your Fellowship experience?

- a. It make it extremely challenging.
- b. It made it somewhat challenging.
- c. It put me at somewhat of an advantage.
- d. It put me at an extreme advantage.
- e. It did not play a part.

12) How would you best describe the collegiality level in your Member office environment?

- a. Extremely collegial.
- b. Quite collegial.
- c. Moderately collegial.
- d. Somewhat collegial.
- e. Not at all collegial.

13) How would you describe the collegiality with staffers outside your member office?

- a. Strong collegiality.
- b. Some collegiality.
- c. Not much collegiality.
- d. No collegiality at all.

14) How would you best describe working in the legislature as a whole?

- a. Extremely pleasant.

- b. Quite pleasant.
- c. Somewhat pleasant.
- d. Somewhat unpleasant.
- e. Quite unpleasant.
- f. Extremely unpleasant.

15) Are you willing to have a 15 minute phone interview? I would be grateful for the opportunity to talk to you about your Fellowship experience in more depth. If you are willing to have a conversation, please leave your name and phone number here.

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