Where Have All the Mavericks Gone?

Party Polarization and the Maverick Effect of Past Political Experiences

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Abstract

While polarization in the House of Representatives has received ample attention in recent years, the Senate has largely thwarted scholarly scrutiny despite its parallel rise in polarization. This paper seeks to shed light on the puzzle of polarization in the Senate by analyzing the prior political experiences of its members alongside defection rates and party unity scores in the 100th to 112th congresses. Using original data alongside Poole and Rosenthal's Party Unity data set, we find support for our hypotheses that past political experiences, particularly gubernatorial experience, produce what we call maverick senators, whose likelihood of defection is higher than their counterparts. Our preliminary investigations also suggest that a decline in the number of these maverick senators partially explains the rise in Senate polarization.

Polarization in Congress has received considerable scrutiny in recent years. Observers note that, since the late 1970s, both houses of Congress have become more partisan as legislators have shifted towards the ideological extremities (Theriault 2006; Fleisher and Bond 2000, 2004; Roberts and Smith 2003; Stonecash et al. 2003). In their analysis of the House, scholars associate polarization with changes in the electorate, including gerrymandering and redistricting (Carson et al. 2007; Hirsch 2003) and the post-Civil Rights political realignment of the South (Rohde 1991; Hood et al. 1999), as well as institutional pressures such as procedural reform and agenda-setting (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Roberts and Smith 2003).

In the Senate, polarization presents something of a theoretical problem that has thwarted such analyses. The Senate is the "upper chamber," built for collegiality and bipartisanship. Its longer term lengths, state-wide districts, and smaller size ought to foster deliberation and bipartisan compromise and insulate its representatives from the pressures of popular opinion. Yet the Senate has become polarized nearly as much as the House (Fleisher and Bond 2004; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Theriault 2006, 2008). The practical effect of the growing ideological and partisan divisions in the Senate is that it inhibits the policymaking process (Binder 1999; Jones 2001) and makes legislative compromise less and less feasible (Fleisher and Bond 2004).

In this paper, we seek to shed light on the puzzle of polarization in the Senate by analyzing the prior political experiences of its members. Given that the literature on polarization suggests that the trend is driven by the arrival of new members to Congress, a systematic analysis of the Senate's members in terms of their past experiences may illuminate new approaches for understanding partisanship in the Senate, in particular, and legislative behavior more generally. To this end, we begin by reviewing the relevant literature on Senate polarization.

Then we introduce literature that suggests that past political experiences influences behavior, and we formulate predictions about how individual senators' career histories may impact their behavior in Congress. Next, we provide a clear empirical framework for analyzing these predictions. Finally, we present our results and conclude the paper with the implications of this research both for American politics and for future polarization research.

Previous scholarship on the dynamics of Senate polarization

The existing scholarship on the Senate explains the increase in polarization as the result of changes to Senate membership. The "replacement" hypothesis explains ideological polarization as the result of partisan legislators replacing moderates (Flesher and Bond 2004; Theriault 2006). As newer, more extreme members gradually join the chamber, they replace moderate members, shifting the ideological balance of the Senate toward the extremes. For instance, Theriault (2006) finds that this effect accounts for approximately two thirds of the growth in polarization. Other explanations attribute polarization to long-term shifts in senators' preferences, a process referred to as "conversion" (Fleisher and Bond 2004) or "adaptation" (Theriault 2006). As the Senate has become saturated with ideologically extreme members, the ideological views of the most moderate senators have evolved to conform to the new norm. A related explanation offered by Lee (2008, 2009) holds that the Senate has become more divided as a result of the content of the legislative agenda. During the past three decades, "the types of issues that were most divisive along partisan lines in earlier periods became progressively more prominent on the Senate roll-call agenda" (p.199). Lee finds that economic issues, which tend to be more divisive, have increased from a share of 21% of the roll call votes in the early 1980s to 32% of the agenda during the mid-2000s. In total, the change accounts for as much as 37% of the total growth in party polarization.

In sum, the research on polarization in the Senate suggests that the bulk of the growth in Senate polarization is attributed to the arrival of new, more ideologically extreme members and their influence on their colleagues and the legislative agenda. While this body of scholarship offers a grounded understanding of the dynamics of polarization, little is understood about the members themselves and little research has analyzed members' career histories in a systematic way. Given that the scholarship points to the legislators as the source of polarization in the Senate, it is possible that a more systematic understanding of senators' biographies and prior career experiences may provide important clues into determinants of legislative behavior and the causal origins of the polarization trend more generally.

Theorizing the Influence of Political Experience on Senate Behavior

The notion that behavior is influenced by prior experiences is supported by a large body of research within psychology that suggests that past experiences inform future decision making (e.g. Li, Mayhew and Kourtzi 2009; Jullisson, Karlsson, and Garling 2005). In the context of the U.S. Senate, it is possible that legislators' previous careers as politicians inform their behavior on the Senate floor. This assertion has received only limited attention within political science scholarship. Theriault and Rohde (2011) find that much of the growth in ideological polarization in the Senate can be attributed to a small group of Republicans legislators, dubbed "Gingrich Senators", who previously served in the U.S. House under the leadership of Newt Gingrich. Incredibly, this small group of senators accounts for the "lion's share" of the growth in ideological polarization since they first entered the Senate during the 99th session of Congress (Theriault and Rohde 2011). Theriault and Rohde speculate that these Senators are more ideologically extreme because they were "baptized in the partisan waters of Newt Gingrich" during their tenure in the House (p.1020). Indeed, it seems possible that prior political

experiences, such as service in the U.S. House, influence how legislators participate in politics and their behavior in the Senate. Perhaps past experience in the U.S. House, with its traditionally adversarial, partisan atmosphere, conditions senators to behave more loyally to their party and less trusting of the opposing party. Conversely, it is possible that experience in state or local politics may influence legislators to be less party loyal and defect more frequently, as such offices do not necessarily require subservience to party leadership or a nuanced appreciation for legislative politics. It is also possible that service in lower level politics fosters local political ties that influence a legislator's behavior. This latter assertion—that ties with local and state politics might influence a legislator to defect more frequently—has received some support in research in comparative politics. For instance, Tavits' (2009) study of European parliamentary systems suggests that politicians with local ties are less dependent on political parties during their careers, and thus tend to defect from the party more frequently.

As of yet, there has been no systematic attempt to empirically assess the assertion that past political histories condition Senate behavior. An answer to this question may prove useful in two regards. First, it may provide important clues for understanding legislative voting behavior and the determinants of partisanship. Second, it may shed light on the puzzle of polarization in the Senate. In what follows, we outline an empirical strategy for answering these questions, but first it is necessary to operationalize our variables and arrive at more precise definitions of "polarization" and "partisanship".

Conceptualizing Polarization and Partisanship

"Polarization" is a problematic term because it simultaneously refers to multiple processes. In particular, we can understand *ideological* polarization and *party* polarization as two

logically distinct phenomena that capture different aspects of legislative behavior. On the one hand, ideological polarization is the separation of two parties *along ideological cleavages*. This process occurs as the preferences of legislators shift away from the center and towards the poles along a one dimensional ideological axis. On the other hand, party polarization refers to the polarization of the parties in terms of an increase in party support voting. Perhaps more accurately described as "partisanship," party polarization has occurred as legislators are increasingly unwilling to break party ranks and vote with the opposing party. While ideological cleavages in Congress may or may not come to resemble the boundaries between parties, they remain separate and distinct from the parties themselves.[1] Similarly, while party polarization may be rooted in ideological differences, it may stem from non-ideological causes as well (*see* Grofman, Koetzle & McGann 2002). Thus, while hyper-partisanship and ideological polarization may be empirically related, they are conceptually and logically distinct processes and entail unique consequences for a legislature. For example, we can imagine the effect of ideology on the content and substance of legislation—in other words, the preferences embodied within. An ideologically polarized Congress may result in a "shrinking middle," as the number of ideologically moderate members from both parties decreases over time (Fleisher and Bond 2004), but ideological differences alone should not necessarily foreclose the possibility of bipartisan compromise. In contrast, hyper-partisanship is the antithesis of bipartisanship and directly inhibits compromise. In the Senate, in the absence of one party having a supermajority, extreme party polarization can lead to legislative gridlock (Binder 1999; Jones 2001) and inhibit the passage of legislation altogether.

[1] This particular point serves as the reverse argument that Krehbiel makes (1992, 1999). Whereas Krehbiel asserts that it is not possible to separate the influence of party from the influence of ideology on legislators' roll call votes, I argue that one ought not to assume that a legislator's roll call voting decisions necessarily reflect ideological preference, as opposed to party pressure. In other words, I question the assumption that politicians always vote in terms of ideology.

In terms of the operationalization of these closely related concepts, there are two common measures used within the scholarship on Congress, the DW-NOMINATE dataset and Party Unity scores. Both of these datasets, which were compiled by Poole and Rosenthal, carry drawbacks for our purposes. The first method, the DW-NOMINATE dataset, provides an approximation of ideological preferences and uses roll call votes to measure legislators' positions along a one-dimensional ideological continuum. This approach to measuring legislative behavior assumes that legislators' ideological preferences are (1) sincere and (2) fixed, or at least relatively stable, throughout their careers. While this measure may be extremely useful for certain purposes, such as measuring legislative responsiveness to constituent preferences, it is not necessarily the best measure for understanding partisanship and party defection. Moreover, the assumption of sincerity entails other problems, such as the possibility of strategic voting on the part of legislators, and roll call votes only account for the end result in potentially lengthy and complicated legislative processes. The second measure, Party Unity, captures party voting and partisanship; however, since this measure also relies on roll call voting, it does not capture the entirety of the legislative process—only the end result. In this sense, it is only accounting for one, relatively small component of legislative behavior. Nevertheless, for our purposes, it does have the advantage over the DW-NOMINATE measure in that it (1) only takes account of contentious "party votes" wherein a majority from each party votes with their party, and (2) it does not necessarily rely on any problematic assumptions about ideology as motivating legislative decisions. Moreover, that each legislator is assigned a unique "score" for each session of Congress provides a rather useful and robust measure of the phenomena of interest to us, partisanship and party loyalty. Higher Party Unity scores should indicate that a legislator generally behaves more party loyal and less bipartisan than a colleague with a lower Party Unity

score[2]. We can also use this measure to account for a senator's defection rate by subtracting a legislator's Party Unity score from 100:

Defection Rate = 100 – Party Unity Score

In terms of operationalizing our independent variable, political experience, we code Senators' work histories using the Congressional Biographical Directory. We coded experience in five relevant areas: (1) service as a governor, (2) service as a city or town mayor, (3) service in some other state or local government position (4) service in a state legislature and (5) service in the U.S. House.

Developing Hypotheses

How might each of these experience areas influence behavior in the Senate? First, consider the experience of serving as governor on a senator's behavior: there are several reasons to believe that former governors would be *less party loyal* than their peers and more frequently defect from their party. It is possible that the nature and style of gubernatorial leadership experience influences an individual's behavior in the Senate. In executive level offices, leaders are typically given broad leeway and personal discretion in terms of their behavior. Unlike a legislator, governors are not as constrained by legislative politics and they tend to enjoy a position of authority—the figurehead of the state party. Enjoying this level of independence and autonomy might lead former governors to be less reverent to party leadership and frequently defect from their party in the Senate. It is also possible that former governors maintain closer ties with state level constituents and care more about state politics than national level politics. In either case, we can formulate our first hypotheses from these expectations:

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[2] One potential exception to this is the Majority Leader in the Senate who from time to time must vote "no" on a floor vote against the party in order to preserve the bill for future debate.

H1A: Serving as a governor increases a senator's likelihood of defecting

H1B: As gubernatorial tenure increases, a senator's rate of defection will increase

Next we turn to mayoral service. Since mayors are also executive level agents, we might expect similar results as former governors. Former mayors should be comfortable in positions of authority and leadership and should feel less pressure to conform to party leadership in the Senate. Moreover, they should generally have strong local ties that supersede their concern for the agenda of the party in national politics. Thus, we predict that:

H2: Serving as a mayor increases a Senator's likelihood of defecting

With regard to service in a state legislature, we expect similar results as with mayors and governors. Since these are state level office, prior experience in a state legislature should foster ties with state and local governments and thus make senators less reliant on national party support. In this regard, these senators should be more likely to defect from their party. Notwithstanding, that these offices are not executive offices should reduce the magnitude of this effect. Senators with prior legislative experience at the state level should generally be familiar with legislative politics and should understand the power structure of the party and the need to yield to party leadership in order to ascend. Therefore, we expect an increased likelihood of defection, but not as high as a former governor or mayor.

H3: Serving as a state legislator will increase a Senator's likelihood of defecting, but to a lesser degree than those senators who served as governors or mayors

Next, in order to isolate the possible effect that local and state ties have on defection, we consider whether service in some other state or local position, other than as a governor, state legislator or city mayor, influences behavior in the Senate. As we noted above, we predict that prior service at the state or local level should foster ties with local constituents and state and

local politics while in the Senate. Considering this category of all other state and local positions has the benefit of isolating this "local ties" prediction from the potential conflating effects of executive and legislative experience. Thus we predict that service in other state and local positions will influence senators to defect more frequently:

H4: Holding another state or local position increases a Senator's likelihood of defecting.

Lastly, we consider the experience of U.S. House service on Senate behavior. For the vast majority of Senators who share this trait, their experience in the House directly preceded their service in the Senate—in other words, the common political career path to the Senate is to use the U.S. House as a launching point to the U.S. Senate. In this regard, experience in the House should have a strong impact on party voting behavior in the Senate. The atmosphere of the House over the past few decades has been divisive and hyper-partisan, and the large size of the chamber incentivizes collective action and party unity. These qualities, combined with Theriault and Rohde's (2011) analysis of the ideological extremism of former House Republicans in the Senate, all suggest that prior service in the U.S. House should influence senators to be less bipartisan, or more party loyal.

H5A: Serving in the House decreases a Senator's likelihood of defecting

Empirical Analysis

Having formalized our theoretical expectations, we will now outline an empirical strategy for testing our hypotheses. As noted above, this paper uses an original dataset that combines Poole and Rosenthal's (2012) data on Party Unity in the Senate with hand-coded data on senators' local and state level political ties, as described in the Congressional Biographical Directory, for the 100th to 112th Congresses. In measuring our dependent variable, party defection rate, we simply subtract each senator's Unity Score from 100. Next, we recorded

whether senators served in an array of political positions. The main independent variables included: *house*, coded 1 for those senators who previously served in the House of Representatives; *governor*, coded 1 for senators who previously held governorships; *mayor*, coded 1 for senators who previously held mayorships; *state legislature*, coded 1 for senators who previously served in their home state's governing body; *other state or local position*, coded 1 for senators who previously held other state or local level political positions—typical examples included serving on a city council, serving as a lieutenant governor, or a state attorney general—and, *state or local experience*, coded 1 for senators who previously held any of the above listed positions. Since the primary purpose of this part of our analysis is the impact of political experience on behavior, we also included a variable to control for time. For our *time* variable, we assign values of 1 – 13 to stand in for the 100th – 112th sessions of Congress.

We evaluate each of our hypotheses that predict defection rates of senators based on their prior experiences in two ways. First, we compare the mean defection score of those senators who previously held the position of interest with the mean defection score of those senators who did not. We do this for each of the 13 congresses examined herein. We also employ ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to evaluate the magnitude of the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable and their levels of significance. To evaluate our hypothesis H1B, that predicts party defection rate increases with years of gubernatorial experience, we run a second OLS regression analysis that contains all of the independent variables in our first model, but with years of gubernatorial experience as a variable in the place of our *governor* variable. This will allow us to see if the gubernatorial service effect is a strengthened by experience or not.

Trends

A total of 250 senators served in the 100th through 112th congresses. *Table 1* provides information on these senators' prior state and local level political experiences. Of the 250 senators, 171 had some kind of state or local level political experience. Those 171 held an average of 1.544 positions—40 were governors, 17 were mayors, 97 were state legislators and 110 held at least one other state or local level position.

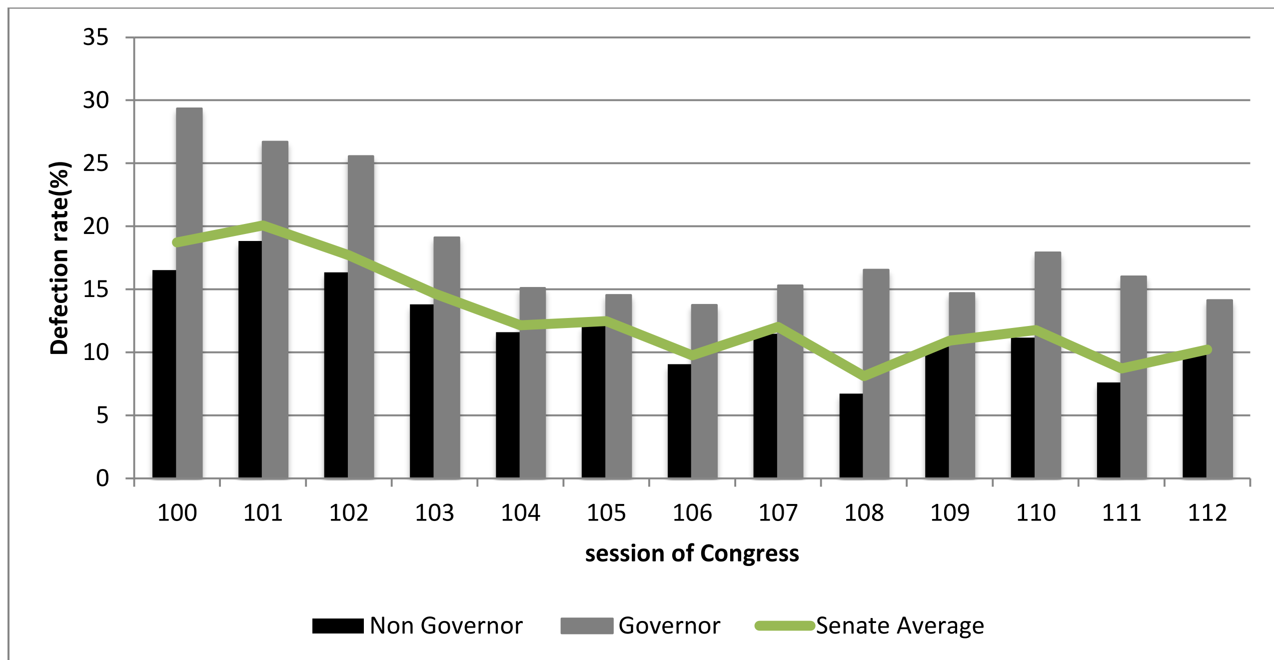
Table 1. A Look at Senators' Political Careers.

Senators	250
Governors	38
Mayors	17
State Legislators	97
"Other" State and Local Politicians	110
Senators with Any State or Local Experience	171
Average Number of State or Local Positions	1.544

Turning to defection trends, *Figure 1* shows the average defection of those senators who previously held governorships as compared to those who did not. The senate average is also included. The graph suggests that those senators who were previously governors consistently defect more than those lacking gubernatorial experience. However, defection overall is on the decline and the gap between former governors and those who have not held governorships is also

shrinking. Nonetheless, this graph suggests that our first hypothesis—that being a governor increases a Senator's likelihood of defection—is valid.

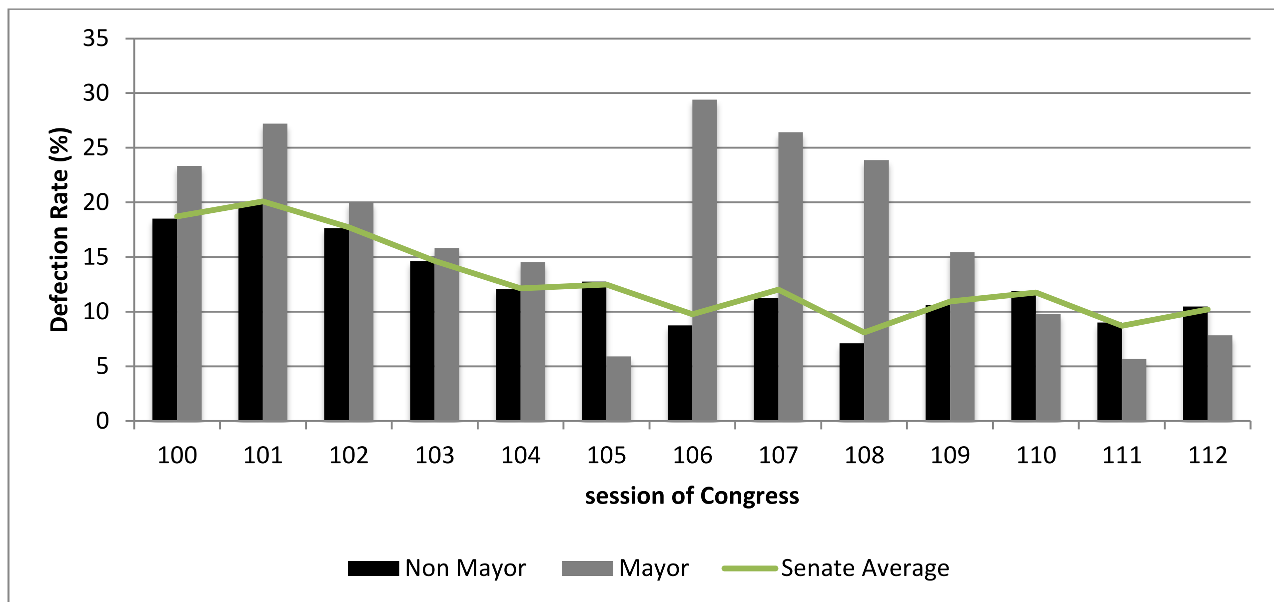
Figure 1: Mean Defection Rate of Senators with Gubernatorial Experience



Our next hypothesis, H2, predicts that mayoral experience similarly leads to defection. The trends in mayoral experience, illustrated on *Figure 2*, are less clear than those in gubernatorial experience. On its face, being a mayor appears to have a cyclical effect—declining between the 101st and 105th congresses, surging in the 106th congress, declining through the 111th congress and increasing marginally between the 111th and 112th congresses (Figure 2). Further investigation, however, shows that the patterns above are largely the result of the defection of three maverick mayors.[3] Moreover, less emphasis should be placed on these results because the sample size of mayors is relatively small, even when we include the maverick outliers.

[3] Senators Chafee, Cohen, and Miller

Figure 2: Mean Defection Rate of Senators with Mayoral Experience



Next, we consider hypothesis H3, which looks at the effects of serving in the state legislature on defection in the Senate. As with gubernatorial and mayoral experience, experience in a state legislature leads to increased defection, although this trend is also on the decline in recent years (*Figure 3*). Despite this mixed evidence, it does appear that our hypothesis is generally supported. At first glance, our results suggests that serving in the state legislature results in increased defection rates in the Senate, although not at levels as high as serving as a governor or mayor.

Similarly, hypothesis H4 predicts that experience in "other" political positions—including lieutenant governors, attorney generals, and city council members—results in defection patterns similar to those found with other state and local level experience (*Figure 4*). The initial results appear to support this hypothesis, though we do see a reversal of the expected outcome in the 112th congress. Notwithstanding our tepid support for H3 and H4, we provide more systematic analyses of the significance and effect of these variables below with our OLS regression model.

Figure 3. Mean Defection by State Legislature Experience

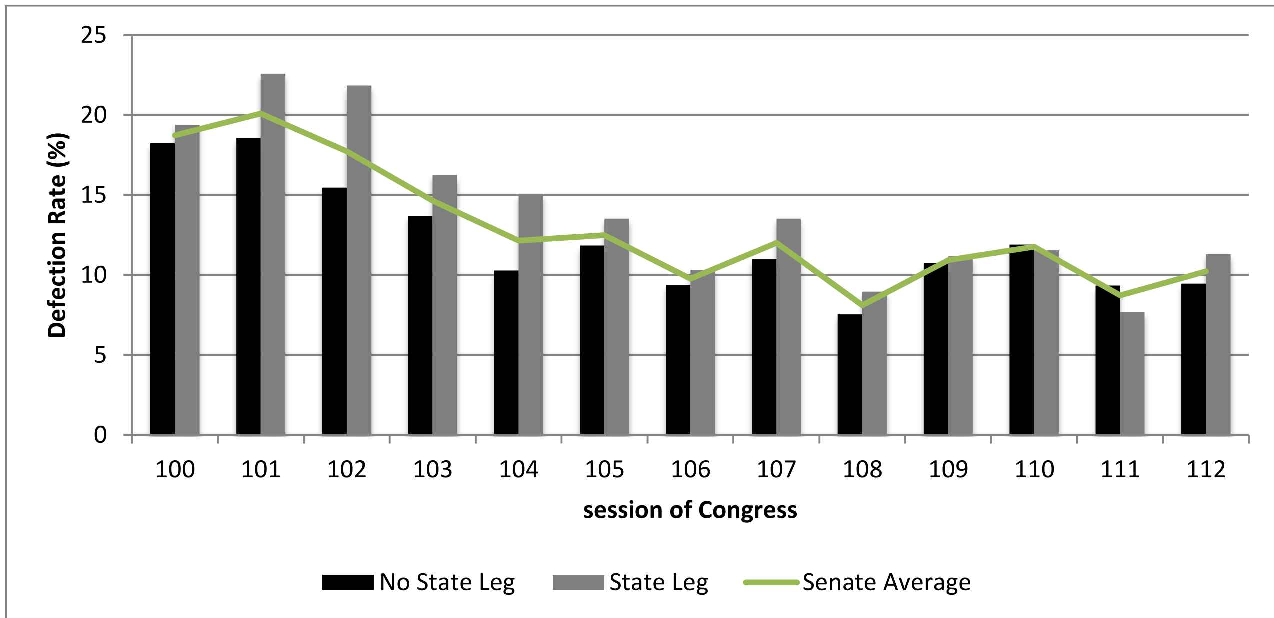
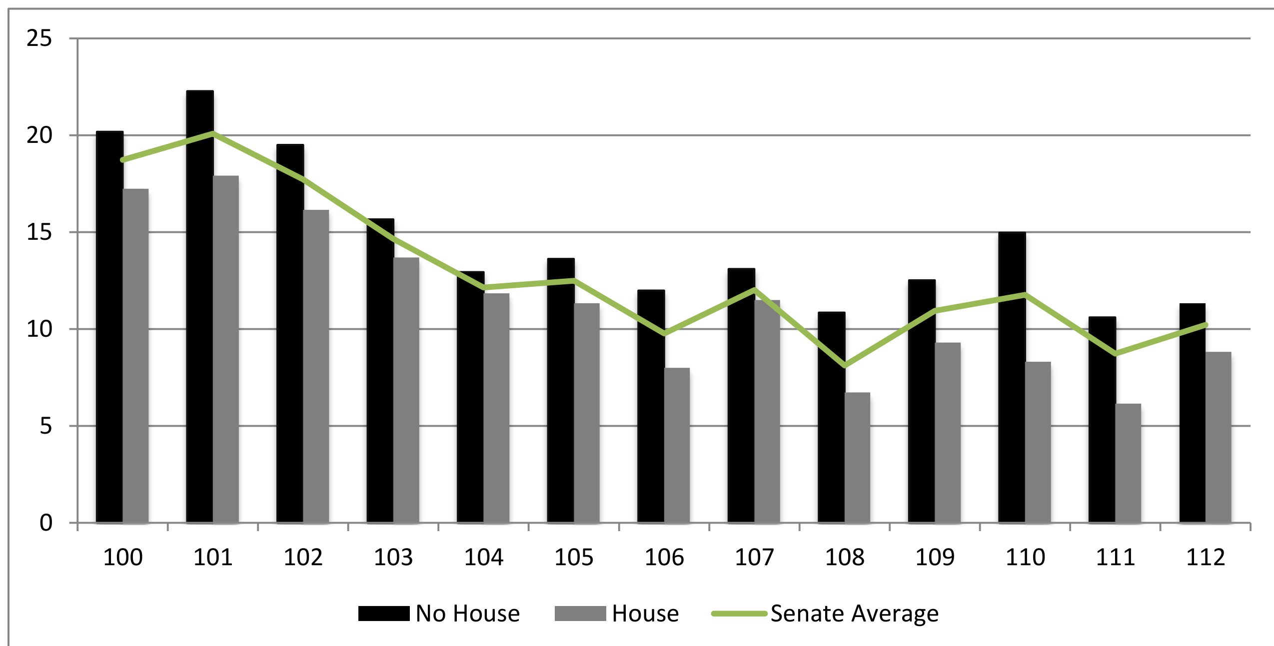


Figure 4: Mean Defection by "Other" State or Local Experience

Lastly, we turn to the effects of serving in the House of Representatives on defection in the Senate. As previously outlined, we expect that serving in the House of Representatives is likely to decrease senators' rates of defection because party loyalty is a necessity in the House,

the mood of the chamber is more adversarial, and because the body's size demands strategic collective action. *Figure 5* offers a side-by-side comparison of the average rate of defection amongst senators with and without House experience. As we predict, serving in the House appears to decrease senators' rates of defection. This effect holds for each of the 13 congresses we study.

Figure 5: Mean Defection by U.S. House of Representatives Experience



The above charts illustrate a clear trend regarding the effects of experience on Senate defection and partisanship behavior. Senators with prior experience in state and local politics tend to defect from their parties more frequently. This initial result is consistent with Tavits' (2009) findings in the context of European parliamentary systems: local and state level political ties increase rates of defection from the party. Moreover, as we predicted, the type of state and local political experience also influences the rates of defection. Experience in executive level offices tend to result in higher defection rates, possibly because officeholders are less bound by

party authorizes and enjoy a degree of autonomy in their actions. Nevertheless, this analysis provides only a limited illustration of the effects of experience in state and local politics; it does not take into consideration the possible compounded effects of holding multiple state or local level political positions prior to entering the Senate or the statistical significance of our results. In our next analysis, we explore our theoretical expectations in a more systematic way.

The Effects of State and Local Political Ties

To further evaluate our initial results and to test the remaining hypotheses, we develop an OLS regression model to explain the effects of each form of political experience on senate defection (Table 2). Although the model in general is limited in its ability to explain variation in defection rates among Senators ($R^2 = .12$), it nevertheless suggests that certain types of past political experiences have a significant and substantive impact on party voting and partisanship in the Senate. For example, prior service as a governor increased the average senator's defection rates by roughly 5.4%, while service as a mayor is associated with a 3.7% increase in party defection. These results appear to support our hypotheses H1A and H2, which predict that executive experience increases the likelihood of party defection. Similarly, serving in a state legislature or in "other" state and local positions also increased senators' rates of defection by 1.8% and 1.7%, respectively. These results provide support for our prediction that state and local experience influences how senators behave on the Senate floor. They also lend credence to our expectation that the effects of state legislative experience should be less than gubernatorial or mayoral experience, where officeholders enjoy more autonomy and individual discretion. In short, state and local political experience results in a clear "maverick" effect, increasing senators' rates of defection. Conversely, serving in the House is associated with a decrease in party

defection in senators of 1.6%. This means that former House members tend to be more loyal to their parties once in the Senate.

Table 2: Effects of Political Experience on Senate Defection, 100th-112th Congresses

Variable	**Coefficient (Std. Error)**
Governor	5.369*** (.9424)
Mayor	3.671** (1.406)
State Legislature	1.781*** (.6509)
Other State and Local Exp.	1.703*** (.6542)
House	-1.606* (.6719)
Time	-.8088*** (.0843)
Intercept	16.87*** (.8143)
N	1323
R^2	.1201

*p < .05, **p <.01, ***p <.001

Although our results appear to support each of our hypotheses, our last remaining hypothesis remains to be tested. H1B expects to see defection rates increase with the length of tenure as governor. This is an important question to address because if our theoretical assertions are indeed valid and executive experience influences legislators to behave as mavericks in the

Senate, then we should see significant increases in defection associated with each year of service. *Table 3* provides a list of senators who served as governors alongside their gubernatorial tenure. As *Table 4* demonstrates, this hypothesis is indeed empirically supported. We reran the model in *Table 2* with this new variable added in place of the *Governor* variable. As the model suggests, each year of gubernatorial service was associated with an approximately 1% increase in party defection.

Table 3. Senators with Gubernatorial Experience, 100-112th Congresses

Senator	***Number of years as governor***
Alexander	8
Ashcroft	8
Bayh	8
Bond	4
Boren	2
Brownback	3
Bryan	6
Bumpers	4
Carper	8
Chafee	6
Chles	8
Corzine	4
Dayton	3
Evans	12
Exon	8
Ford	3
Graham	7
Gregg	8
Hatfield	8
Hoeven	10
Hollings	4
Johanns	6
Kempthorne	7
Kerrey	4
Manchin	6
Miller	8
Nelson	8
Risch	2
Robb	4

Rockefeller	8
Sanford	4
Shaheen	6
Stafford	2
Thurmond	4
Voinovich	7
Warner	4
Weicker	4
Wilson	8

Table 4: Effects of Political Experience on Senate Defection, 100th-112th Congresses

Variable	**Coefficient (Std. Error)**
Years of Service as Governor	.9879*** (.1490)
Mayor	3.462** (1.400)
State Legislature	1.789*** (.6479)
Other State and Local Exp.	1.760*** (.6504)
House	-1.544* (.6665)
Time	-.8211*** (.0839)
Intercept	16.86*** (.8057)
N	1323
R^2	.1236

*p < .05, **p <.01, ***p <.001

The "Maverick" Effect and Senate Polarization

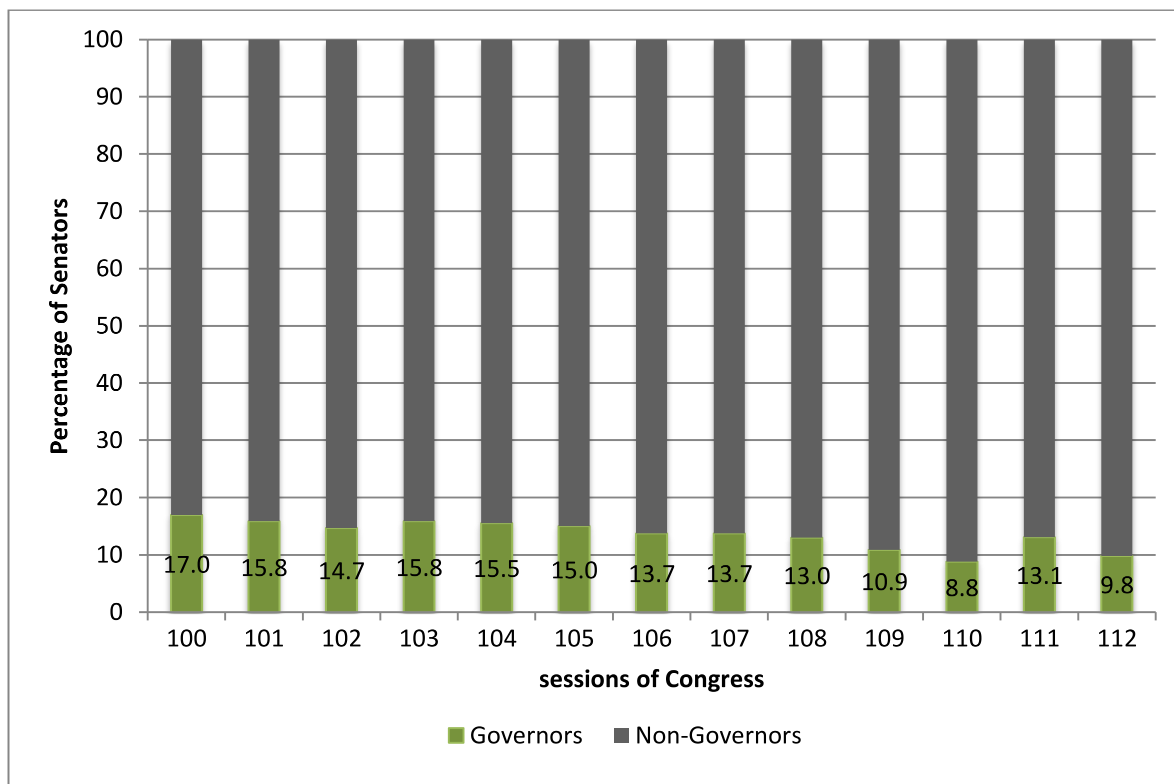
The above results provide support for the notion that prior political experience influences behavior in the Senate. In particular we find that politicians with experience in executive offices at the state and local level were more likely to defect from their party. We suspect that this is associated with two factors. First, as previous literature has suggested (Tavits 2009), state and local ties results in politicians being less reliant upon national party support during their political careers. In this regard, senators with experience in local and state government roles have political priorities that do not perfectly overlap with party leadership, and they are not afraid of the consequences of voting against their party while in the Senate. But our results also suggest that this explanation alone does not tell the entire story. Simply having experience in state and local offices was not associated with the highest levels of defection; rather, the type of experience mattered. Executive level officeholders, such as governors and mayors, appear to defect at the highest rates. This provides evidence to support our assertion that quality of experience matters. It seems likely that former governors, who enjoy the flexibility of unilateral power and serve as leaders of local parties, are conditioned by this experience. Perhaps they are less willing to submit to Senate party leadership or tow the party line as frequently as their peers. In light of these unique features and their propensity to break from party discipline, these types of senators appear more likely to be "Mavericks" and their common set of characteristics can serve as an objective definition for a term that is often used casually and inconsistently. For our purposes, then, the Mavericks are those senators who serve in the U.S. Senate after serving in the highest state level office as governors and thus are used to exercising unilateral power and relative autonomy as executives. For the final part of our analysis, we explore whether the presence of these Senate Mavericks can shed light on the broader trend of Senate polarization. Given that

Mavericks tend to be more bipartisan and less party loyal than the peers, is it possible that party polarization in the Senate is associated with fewer of these members serving in the chamber?

Maverick Departure and Senate Polarization

Although our analysis is still in its preliminary stages, two observations are worth nothing in terms of the potential role of the Mavericks on Senate polarization. First, as *Figure 6* demonstrates, the proportion of Mavericks serving in the Senate has decreased between the 100th and 112th sessions.

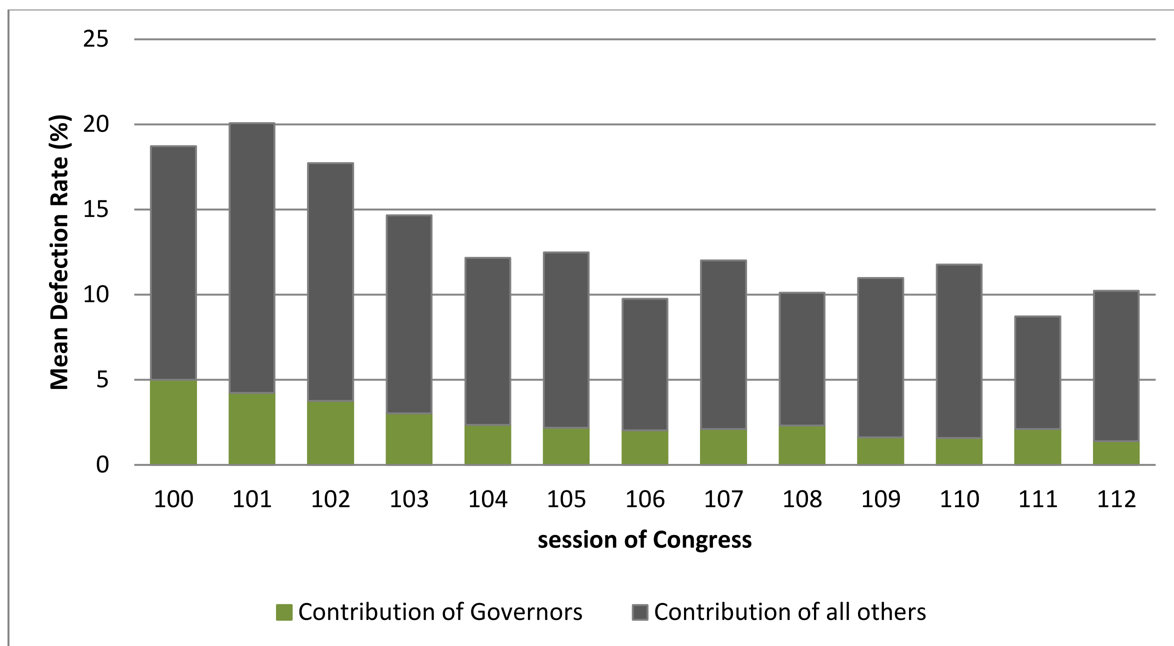
Figure 6. Former Governors as a Percentage of the Senate



Given that our above analysis demonstrates that these members are more likely to defect from their party than their peers, it is possible that the broader trend of polarization can be partially explained by the long-term departure of the Mavericks from the Senate. A second observation

also suggests that this may be the case. *Figure 7* illustrates the mean party defection rate of the Senate between the 100 and 112th Congresses, along with the unique contribution to the Senate mean of the Maverick members and all other members. For each session, Mavericks outperform their peers in terms of party defection. In other words, their contribution to the Senate's average always exceeds their proportional presence.

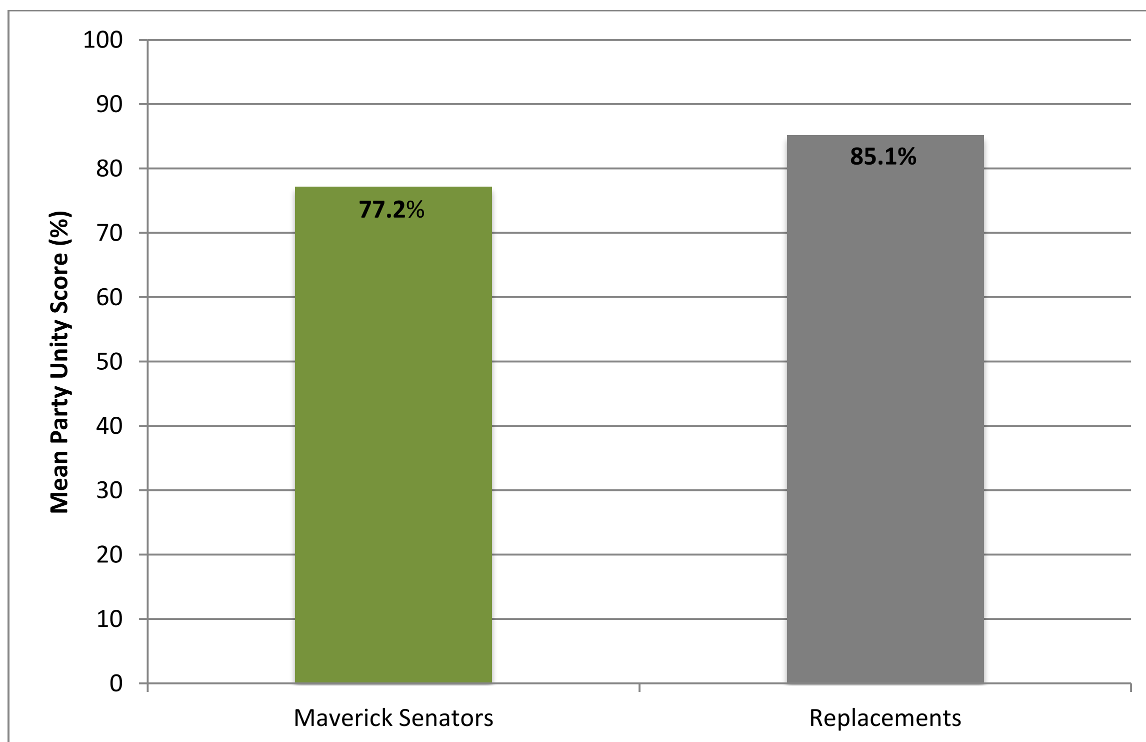
Figure 7: Mean Party Defection Rate of Senate



In the 100th session, Mavericks contributed 5 points of the Senate's 18.7% defection rate. In other words, despite having only 17% of the Senate's members, they accounted for about 27% of the total defection. By contrast, in the 112th session, Mavericks contributed about 1.4 points of the 10.2% mean defection rate. The proportion of Mavericks in the Senate dropped below 10%, and while their contribution to the Senate's mean defection rate fell to 13.7%, this figure still exceeds their proportional share.

As a final test, we compared the party defection rate of the Maverick senators who departed the Senate before the 112th Congress with the defection rate of each of their replacements. In particular, we recorded the scores for the last session of service for the Maverick Senators (28 in all) and the scores for these senators' replacements in their first session of service. A dummy variable was added to separate the senators with gubernatorial experience from their replacements. This variable, *gov*, was coded 1 if the observation belonged to a senator who had served as a governor. We then conducted a t-test to compare the means of the two groups (Figure 8). The results indicate that, on average, the replacements voted with their party nearly 8% more than did the senators with prior gubernatorial service. This result was significant at the 0.1 level (P=0.056).

Figure 8: Unity Scores for Maverick Senators and Their Replacements



In sum, it seems likely that at least part of the decline in party defection over the last three decades is attributable to the dwindling numbers of Mavericks in the Senate. While these exercises are preliminary and our methods are merely descriptive at this point, it is possible that a closer study of Maverick departure in the Senate can provide clarity to the puzzle of polarization and partisanship in the Senate or perhaps point to a root cause of these trends. For instance, it may be possible that Maverick departure is a symptom of the broader trend in American politics of voter abstention. Perhaps voters who participate in primary elections, who tend to be more ideologically extreme as a result of lower voter turnout, are less inclined to select former governors as candidates. Conversely, perhaps former governors are less inclined to run for office in the Senate. Whatever the case, further analysis is necessary to support these speculations and to quantify more precisely the effect of Maverick departure on Senate partisanship and polarization.

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