

The Gingrich Senators and Party Polarization in the U.S. Senate

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The political parties in the Senate are almost as polarized at they are in the House. Nevertheless, the explanations for party polarization work better in the House than they do in the Senate. In this article, we argue that the polarization in the House has directly contributed to polarization in the Senate. We find that almost the entire growth in Senate party polarization since the early 1970s can be accounted for by Republican senators who previously served in the House after 1978—a group we call the “Gingrich Senators.” While our analysis indicates that part of this effect has its roots in the senators’ constituencies, the experience of these representatives serving in the House continues to exert a real and substantial effect on their voting behavior in the Senate.

By virtue of its design and practice over the last 220 years, the Senate has been less likely to be captured by the trends of the day than the House. Nonetheless, party polarization, which has recently consumed the House, is also widespread in today’s Senate. The popular Senate depiction as “the old boys’ club” or “the greatest deliberative body in the world” suffered as senators established their independence from their beloved Senate in the 1970s and 1980s (Sinclair 1990; Smith 1989). The era of rampant partisanship, which started at about the same time, only became exceedingly prevalent in the 1990s and 2000s.¹

Although the estimates vary, most scholars find that the political parties have polarized almost as much in the Senate as they have in the House (Fleisher and Bond 2004; Brady, Han, and Pope 2007; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Theriault 2006, 2008). That polarization is present in the Senate is not shocking; but that it is nearly as polarized as the House is a bit surprising because three of the

most prevalent explanations for the polarization of the political parties in Congress more appropriately fit the House than they do the Senate.

First, popular especially among the political pundits and politicians, the purposive creation of safe districts through redistricting has lead ideologically purer districts to elect more conservative Republicans and more liberal Democrats (Carson et al. 2007; Hirsch 2005; although see McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006 for the counter argument). With fixed state borders, the Senate is immune to the manipulation of constituencies that may cause House party polarization. Second, several scholars suggest that voters have geographically segregated themselves quite independent of district-boundary manipulation (Bishop 2008; Oppenheimer 2005). Voters can more easily move across House district lines than state borders to live by their political soul mates. A third set of scholars thinks that the evolving legislative process exacerbates the divide between the parties (Roberts and Smith 2003; Theriault 2008).² Unlike

¹An online appendix for this article is available at <http://journals.cambridge.org/JOP>. Data and supporting materials necessary to reproduce the numerical results are available at <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/government/faculty/seanmt>.

²The simplicity of listing these three explanations, of course, does not reflect the development of the polarization literature. First, we have not included a discussion of the electorate polarizing Congress (see Abramowitz 2010 and Hetherington and Weiler 2009 for two good pieces of analysis on this subject). Nothing in this explanation would suggest that the Senate would be more sensitive to it than the House. Second, we do not explicitly consider the different voting agendas in the House and Senate. In the House a mere majority can close down debate; the hurdle for doing so in the Senate is far greater. Because of the use of Unanimous Consent Agreements, the Senate has the potential to cast many more divisive amendment votes, which would increase members’ polarization scores. Of course the differences in agenda control could have the opposite effect: the Senate’s freer amendment environment could produce a greater number of amendments supported or opposed by only a small minority, which would be less polarizing. Manipulation of the legislative process in both the House and Senate, so it seems, can cut both ways. These considerations are a matter for further research.

the House of Representatives where the majority party leaders can more easily manipulate floor proceedings, the more egalitarian Senate requires that much of its work be accomplished through unanimous consent agreements. Because of these polarization theories and because of the greater access to and variation within, most studies focus almost exclusively on the House (see, for example, Jacobson 2000; Mann and Ornstein 2006; Sinclair 2006; Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani 2003).

A number of new explanations for Senate party polarization have recently been offered. Lee (2008, 2009) finds that the increased proportion of votes on divisive matters helps explain why the Senate has become more polarized. Theriault (2008) shows that, like the House, the Senate has increasingly become beset by procedural battles. More votes on the increasingly divisive motions to table amendments and to invoke cloture have increasingly driven Democrats to vote differently than Republicans.³

This article answers the polarization literature puzzle without directly testing or contradicting the more recent arguments specific to Senate party polarization. It finds that the growing divide between the voting scores of Democrats and Republicans in the Senate can be accounted for almost entirely by the election of a particular breed of senator: Republicans who previously served in the House after 1978. It is the replacement of retiring or defeated senators (both Democrat and Republican) by these newly elected former House Republicans that can account for almost the entire growth in the divide between Democrats and Republicans in the Senate since the early 1980s.

To be clear, non-House veteran Republican and Democratic senators serving during the same time period, Republican senators with House experience prior to 1978, and Democratic senators with House experience (before or after 1978) are no more ideological than they were in the 1960s and early 1970s; the source of the increased polarization are those senators who are jointly (1) Republican, (2) former House members, and (3) elected to Congress after 1978. These traits are not additive. If a senator has one—or even two—of these traits, she is no more likely to be systematically more polarizing than her colleagues. It is the *combination* that systematically increases a senator's ideological tendencies. Because the timing of their House career coincides with the career of

the most important House Republican of the last 40 years, we call these senators “Gingrich Senators”.⁴

In this article, we examine two of the several reasons that the Gingrich Senators may exhibit such distinctive behavior. We find that their constituencies account for a portion of the effect; the circumstances of their election do not. Our article has two parts. First, we present evidence showing the uniquely polarizing voting behavior of the Gingrich Senators. Second, we analyze the underlying causes of their voting behavior. We conclude by considering additional factors that we intend to explore in future work.

The Effect of House Experience on Senator Ideology

Those scholars who study party polarization in both chambers of Congress find that the Senate has polarized almost as much as the House. Fleisher and Bond (2004) find that from the 1960s to the 1990s the number of moderate and liberal Republicans went from 87 to 11 in the House and from 22 to 7 in the Senate. Likewise for moderate and conservative Democrats, who went from 109 to 52 in the House and 23 to 3 in the Senate. Theriault (2006, 2008) finds that on votes common to both chambers (adoption of conference committee reports and attempts to override presidential vetoes), the House is 6.3% more polarized than the Senate. McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2006) in studying a longer time period reach a similar conclusion. They find that the difference between the parties in the House and Senate has a correlation coefficient of 0.91. The trend lines are probably even more correlated in the post-1970s era.

⁴This name may be a bit unfair—two other likely names may come to mind. First, Gingrich would claim that he was only reacting to Speaker Wright's tyrannical reign in the late 1980s. The problem with labeling these former House members in the Senate, “Wright Senators,” is that moniker would invoke the image of Democratic senators instead of Republicans. Second, the timing of their election to the Senate also coincides with Reagan's victory in the 1980 presidential election. To call them “Reagan Senators,” however, would suggest that it was all Republican senators elected in the Reagan era who have polarized the Senate. It isn't. Republicans elected after Reagan who had not served in the House do not vote any differently than Republicans who were elected prior to 1980. The term “Gingrich Senator” is not used to cast blame or to put a spotlight on Speaker Gingrich, rather it is a short-handed way of saying “Republicans who served in the House after 1978 and who were subsequently elected to the Senate.”

³See the various chapters in Monroe, Roberts, and Rohde (2008) for a more in-depth discussion.

Despite the similar polarization levels, the Senate has prided itself on not being the House. Collegiality, deference, and civility have long characterized the Senate (Matthews 1960). Even as the textbook Senate began to break down, senators devolved power to the individual legislator rather than initiating a partisan war (Sinclair 1990; Smith 1989). As stories of rancor, partisanship, and legislative gamesmanship in their beloved Senate began making the news, senators were quick to blame the House. Senator Alan Simpson commented, “The rancor, the dissension, the disgusting harsh level came from those House members who came to the Senate. They brought it with ’em. That’s where it began.” Thad Cochran, who lost the majority leader’s race to a former House member, Trent Lott, claims, “It’s just a matter of age. I’m not going to use the word ‘maturity.’” As George Voinovich, a former governor of Ohio, added, there are “too many” former House members and not enough “other people.”⁵

Political scientists, without the venom of the politicians, have added their voices to the senators’ claims linking House polarization with Senate polarization. Evans and Oleszek argue that both Democrats and Republicans “increasingly have sought to structure floor action to publicize partisan messages” (2001, 107) in the Senate and that many of these legislative tacticians worked closely with Gingrich and Gephardt prior to being elected to the Senate. Sinclair maintains, “The 1990s saw an influx of ideologically committed conservatives into the Senate, with many of them being veterans of the highly partisan House” (2001, 75). Finally, Rae and Campbell add, “Many came to the House, after having been baptized by former minority whip Newt Gingrich (R-Ga) into relentless and combative partisanship. Most of them saw the Senate as another forum to advance the cause of the Republican party and their conservative philosophy on a national scale” (2001, 8).

Figure 1 shows the number of senators since the 93rd Congress (1973–74) who previously served in the House. The figure shows that House veterans comprised the greatest share of the Senate at the beginning of the series when polarization was the lowest and at the end of the series when polarization was the highest. Given the prevalence of former House members in the Senate has occurred in the least and most polarized congresses since the early 1970s, the mere presence of former House members cannot solely be the cause of party polarization in the Senate.

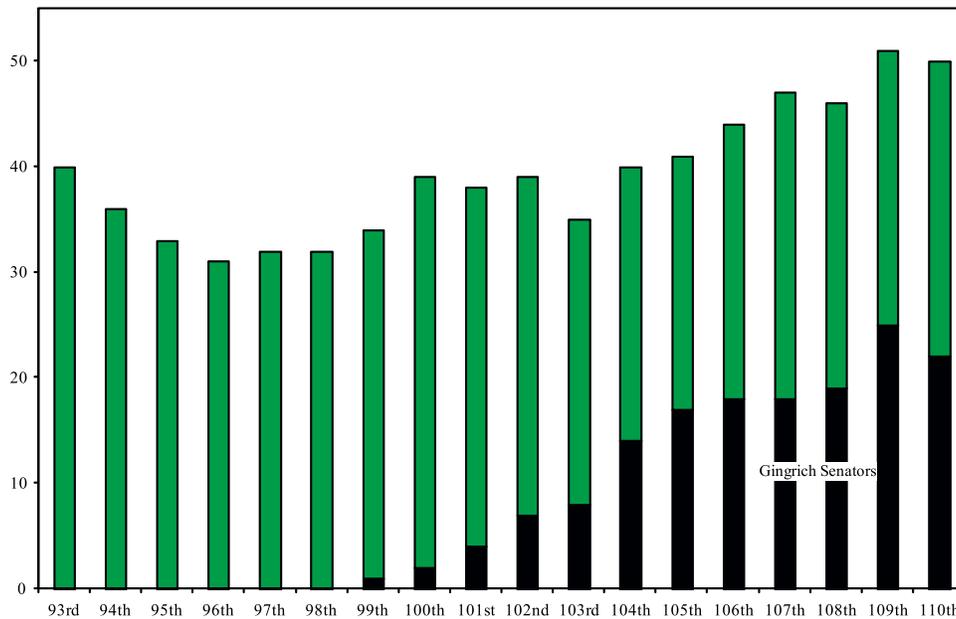
The black part of the bars shows the number of Gingrich Senators in each congress.

The “House did it” explanation is wanting for two reasons. First, as Figure 1 shows, the Senate has always had a healthy number of former House members in it. Second, Matthews (1960) argues that former House members usually adapted better to the Senate norms than the senators without House experience. Rather than the mere presence of former House members, perhaps it is the type of House member being elected to the Senate that has changed. One way to measure the influence of former House members on Senate polarization is to compare the polarization scores of senators who served in the House to those senators who did not serve in the House. From the 93rd to the 110th Congress (1973–2006), Democrats who had House experience were slightly more liberal than their non-House counterparts from the 93rd (1973–74) to the 101st (1989–90) Congresses (see Figure 2). Since the 102nd Congress, little has separated the two groups.

Up until the 100th Congress (1987–88), Republicans who had served in the House were more moderate than Republicans who did not serve in the House. Beginning in the 100th Congress, however, the Republicans who came to the Senate from the House were more conservative than their non-House counterparts. The 100th Congress was Newt Gingrich’s fifth term in the House. The Conservative Opportunity Society that he formed as a constant thorn in the side of the House Democratic leadership was by that time four years old. In the next congress, he would be elected minority whip. In four congresses, he would be elected Speaker of the House. Dividing the former House Republican polarization scores into two groups—those with House experience prior to Gingrich’s first election and those elected after Gingrich—reveals a stark pattern (see Figure 3). Gingrich’s former colleagues are almost twice as conservative as their fellow Republicans ($p = 0.0000$). In fact, only two Gingrich Senators—DeWine (0.202), a former House member who served one term as Ohio lieutenant governor in between his House and Senate tenures, and Talent (0.297), whose Senate service was only four years—had a lower polarization score than the average Republican senator over this entire time period. Moreover, as Figure 3 demonstrates, this trend is not simply a function of the ideological tendencies of members who were newly elected in the polarized era; the Gingrich Senators have substantially more conservative voting records than those senators who entered the Senate at the same time as the Gingrich Senators, but who had not previously served in the

⁵All the senators were quoted in *CQ Weekly* (December 13, 2003, 3069–70).

FIGURE 1 The Number of Senators with House Experience, 93rd to 110th Congresses (1973-2008)



House. The 33 Gingrich Senators had an average DW-NOMINATE of 0.51. Their counterparts arriving in the Senate after the 97th Congress, who had not served in the House, were much more moderate at 0.34 ($p=0.000$).

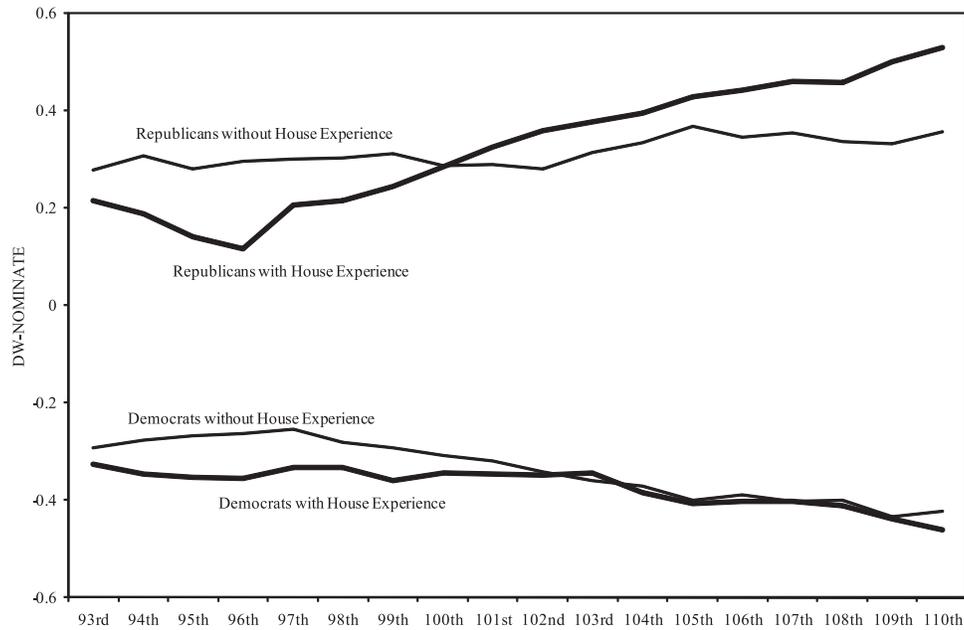
To ensure that this effect is specific to Republicans in the House, we test if those Democratic senators who served either with Representative Richard Gephardt or under Speaker Wright voted differently than those Democrats who came to the Senate before Gephardt's first election to the House.⁶ As it turns out, Gephardt Senators vote similarly to the non-House veterans and House veterans serving before Gephardt's election who subsequently served in the Senate. Since the 96th Congress, the first Senate that could have had a Gephardt Senator (the first actually served in the 100th Congress), Democratic senators that entered the House after Gephardt are somewhat more liberal (-0.426) than the other Democrats (-0.331; $p=0.0001$). While this liberal pull cannot be dismissed, it is less than one-third as big as the conservative pull by the Gingrich Senators.

⁶Gephardt was first elected in 1976, two years before Gingrich's election. Three Democrats (Daschle, Bill Nelson, and Shelby) were elected with Gingrich and after Gephardt. The inclusion or exclusion of these members does not affect the results.

The Effect of Gingrich Senators on Senate Polarization

Because of their uniquely polarizing presence in the Senate, we analyze the effect of Gingrich Senators separately while aggregating the other groups across parties. For ease of interpretation, we analyze polarization scores, which are simply the absolute value of the DW-NOMINATE scores, instead of discussing the liberalness of Democrats and the conservativeness of Republicans. As such, a nonpartisan chamber would have a score of 0 and a perfectly partisan chamber would have a score of 1. The polarization resulting from non-Gingrich Senators has increased slightly over the 18 congresses (see Figure 4). Because Gingrich was not elected to the House until 1978 and because none of his colleagues who entered the House after him won a Senate election until 1984, the Gingrich Senators necessarily had a zero polarization effect on the Senate until the 99th Congress (1984–85). From Reagan's second term through George W. Bush's second term, the Gingrich Senators' polarization score steadily increased. By the 110th Congress (2007–08), they contributed 0.122 points to the Senate polarization score. Given that the Senate polarization score has only increased 0.144 points since the 99th Congress and 0.162 percentage points since the 93rd Congress, the Gingrich Senators alone can account for 75% of the entire Senate polarization under consideration in

FIGURE 2 The Effect of House Experience on Senate Ideology, 93rd to 110th Congresses (1973-2008)



this analysis and 85% of the polarization since the first of their ranks entered the Senate.

Another cut at the same data presented in Figure 4 shows how clearly the Gingrich Senators have polarized the Senate. Not only did no Gingrich Senator serve in the first six congresses of the figure, but also the total party polarization from the 93rd to the 98th

(1973–84) was essentially unchanged. From the 99th Congress to the 110th Congress (1985–2008), the contribution of non-Gingrich Senators increased 0.2 percentage points each congress. The contribution attributed to Gingrich’s former colleagues, however, was five times greater (1.0 percentage points each congress). Again with this measure, the Gingrich

FIGURE 3 The Effect of House Experience on Republican Senator Polarization, 93rd to 110th Congresses (1973-2008)

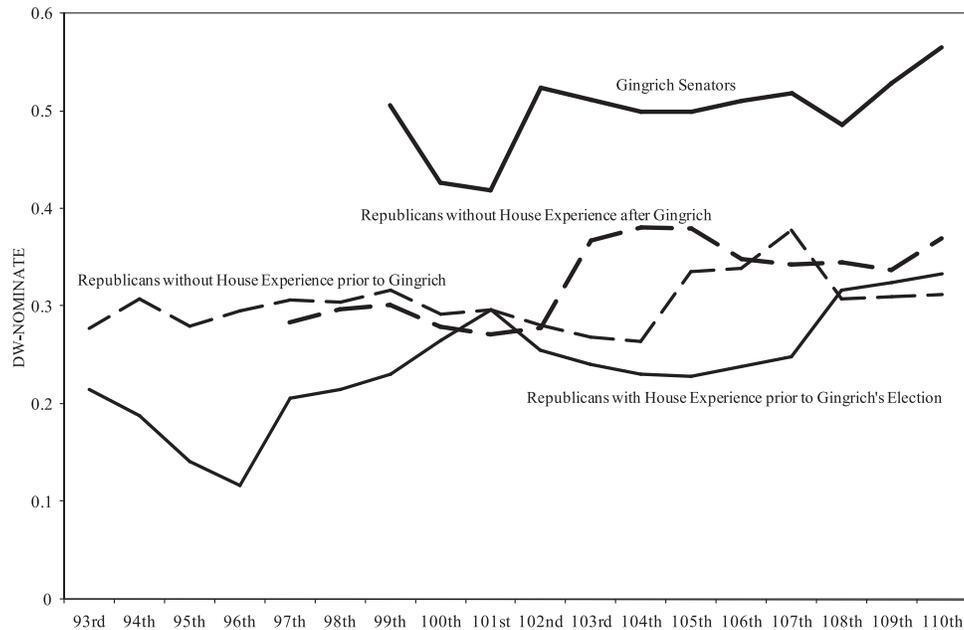
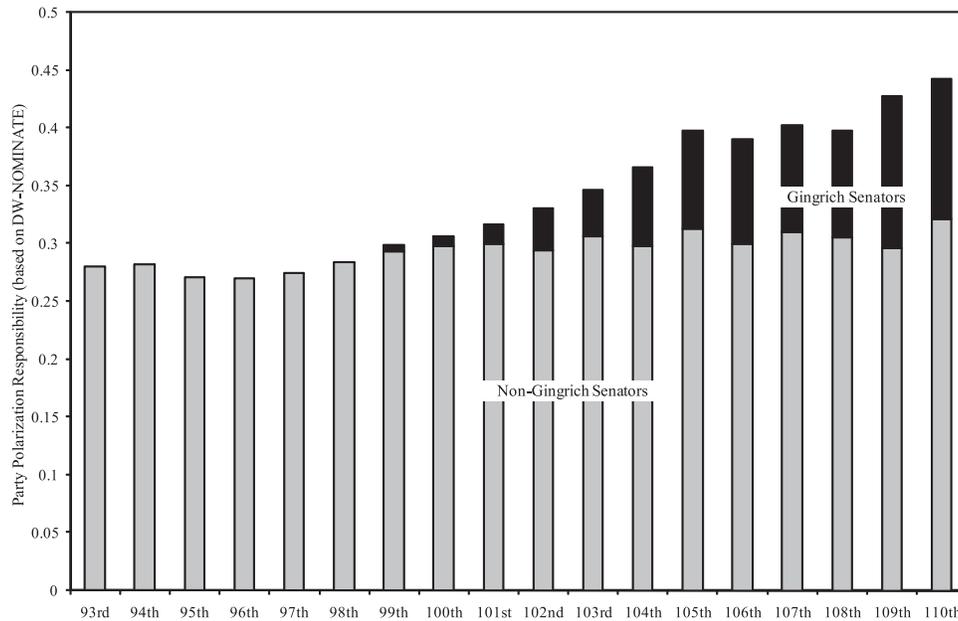


FIGURE 4 The Effect of Gingrich Senators on Senate Polarization, 93rd to 110th Congresses (1973-2008)



Senators can account for the lion's share of the Senate polarization over the last 36 years.

While the Gingrich Senators do contribute substantially to overall Senate polarization, they do not operate in a vacuum. Certainly, their behavior has influenced their fellow Republicans as well as their opposition, the Democrats. As Figure 2 shows, the Democrats have increasingly liberal voting records over the last 20 years. The Gingrich Senator effect is so pronounced for two reasons. First, their voting behavior is much more distinctive. On average, Gingrich Senators are 0.23 more conservative than other Republicans. Gephardt Senators, on the other hand, are only 0.08 more liberal than their fellow partisans. Second, their ranks have grown much more quickly. While 33 Gingrich Senators have served in the Senate, only 18 Gephardt Senators have served.

The Gingrich Senators

As of the 110th Congress (2005–06), 33 Republican senators had previously served in the House of Representatives after Newt Gingrich's election in 1978. Another 10 served with Gingrich in the House, but were elected prior to or with Gingrich.⁷ Table 1

⁷The 10 senators who were elected to the House prior to or in the same election as Gingrich's first election in 1978 were less conservative than the average Republican senator (0.291 and 0.328, respectively), but both are about two-thirds less conservative than the 33 senators who were elected to the House after Gingrich's election in 1978 (0.472).

lists the senators, their states, the congresses they served in the House and Senate, and their DW-NOMINATE scores in the House and Senate. Although only one Gingrich Senator served in the 99th Congress, their numbers grew steadily so that by the time Gingrich became Speaker of the House, 14 of his former House colleagues were in the Senate. In the 109th Congress, the Senate had 25 Gingrich Senators. Because of the poor showing by Republicans in the 2006 and 2008 elections, only 18 Gingrich Senators served in the 111th Congress.⁸

⁸The Gingrich Senator argument is consistent with an older debate in the literature between member conversion (or adaptation) and member replacement. Previous scholars find mixed results in trying to understand dynamic change in Congress. Burnham (1970), Brady and Lynn (1973), Ginsberg (1973, 1976), Brady (1978, 1991), and Fleisher and Bond (2004) attribute changes in Congress to the replacement of members. On the other hand, Asher and Weisberg (1978, 393–94), Brady and Sinclair (1984), Burstein (1978, 1980), and Jones (1974) find small, but pervasive, member conversions lead to change. Asher and Weisberg (1978), Sinclair (1977, 1982), Brady and Sinclair (1984), and Theriault (2006) find a healthy mix of each. The Gingrich Senators were more polarizing than the members they replaced. On average, each switch to a Gingrich Senator led to an increase of 0.137 in the polarization score for that Senate seat. The increase in polarization was especially great when the Gingrich Senator took over from a Democrat (0.217). Only 15 Gingrich Senators have completed their Senate service. When they left the Senate, their seat became more moderate (0.024), though losing only about one-fifth the polarizing increase that they brought to the Senate when they were first elected. Senators Allard, Craig, and Sununu, who left the Senate in 2008 are deleted from this analysis because their successors do not yet have DW-NOMINATE scores.

TABLE 1 The 33 Gingrich Senators

Name	State	Senate		House of Representative	
		Tenure	Ideology ¹	Tenure	Ideology
Allard	Colorado	105-110	0.622	102-104	0.600
Allen	Virginia	107-109	0.418	102	0.478
Brown	Colorado	102-104	0.575	97-101	0.475
Brownback	Kansas	105-present	0.473	104	0.519
Bunning	Kentucky	106-present	0.616	100-105	0.505
Burr	North Carolina	109-present	0.589	104-108	0.436
Chambliss	Georgia	108-present	0.516	104-107	0.419
Coats	Indiana	102-105	0.403	97-100	0.311
Coburn	Oklahoma	109-present	0.890	104-106	0.804
Craig	Idaho	102-110	0.521	97-101	0.496
Crapo	Idaho	106-present	0.498	103-105	0.512
DeMint	South Carolina	109-present	0.832	106-108	0.679
DeWine	Ohio	104-109	0.202	98-101	0.349
Ensign	Nevada	107-present	0.573	104-105	0.609
Graham	South Carolina	108-present	0.498	104-107	0.476
Gramm ²	Texas	99-107	0.583	98	0.568
Grams	Minnesota	104-106	0.542	103	0.529
Gregg	New Hampshire	103-present	0.460	97-100	0.411
Hutchinson	Arkansas	105-107	0.467	103-104	0.418
Inhofe	Oklahoma	104-present	0.706	100-103	0.475
Isakson	Georgia	109-present	0.501	106-108	0.463
Kyl	Arizona	104-present	0.649	100-103	0.533
Mack	Florida	101-106	0.410	98-100	0.520
McCain	Arizona	100-present	0.376	98-99	0.312
Roberts	Kansas	105-present	0.388	97-104	0.417
Santorum	Pennsylvania	104-109	0.393	102-103	0.294
Smith	New Hampshire	102-107	0.796	99-101	0.549
Sununu	New Hampshire	108-110	0.458	105-107	0.595
Talent	Missouri	108-109	0.297	103-106	0.440
Thomas	Wyoming	104-110	0.545	101-103	0.407
Thune	South Dakota	109-present	0.479	105-107	0.356
Vitter	Louisiana	109-present	0.633	106-108	0.520
Wicker	Mississippi	110-present	0.434	104-110	0.458

¹Ideology is measured by the average DW-NOMINATE scores.

²Gramm was first elected as a Democrat to the 96th Congress. In January 1983, he resigned his seat, switched parties, and won reelection as a Republican. The data includes only his service as a Republican.

To confirm the uniqueness of the Gingrich Senators and to set the stage for explanations of their effect, we create a baseline multivariate regression model. The dependent variable in this analysis is the senators' polarization score.⁹ We include nine inde-

⁹We recognize that the linearity constraint of the DW-NOMINATE may corrupt our analysis. To be certain that our results are robust, we have performed the analysis on DW-NOMINATE that remove the restriction permitting maximum movement of members across congresses (see Nokken and Poole 2004 for further information on these data). We present the complete statistical results for this analysis in part A of our online appendix.

pendent variables, though most of them are to develop the triple interaction necessary for isolating the Gingrich Effect, which is comprised of the three indicator variables: senators that entered Congress (either the House or the Senate) after the 96th Congress (1979–80), Republicans, and former House members. To get a true read on the triple interaction, we also include the three double interactions. To control for the increasing polarization in the Senate, we include a time trend and an interaction between Republican senators and the time trend, and to account for the panel nature of the dataset, we

include senator random effects. The overall regression performs well (see table 2). The R² is 0.156, and four of the nine independent variables are statistically significant.¹⁰

The baseline multivariate analysis indicates that the “Gingrich Effect” is largely a one-party phenomenon. The predicted polarization score for a non-House Republican who served before Gingrich (see Figure 5) is 0.26, and for a similar member who began service after Gingrich, it is 0.29. The predicted score for a Republican senator with House experience prior to Gingrich’s election is 0.20, and for a Gingrich Senator is 0.43. A Gingrich Senator’s score is 73%

¹⁰In order to be confident that the post-96th Congress is the correct cutoff between the former House Republicans who moderated the Senate and the former House Republicans who polarized the Senate, we checked various alternatives. In multivariate regression models that test different cutoffs and, hence, different interaction terms, we found that the post-96th Congress yields the highest overall R², and the second highest magnitude on the interaction term—the only reason that the interaction term is higher for the 105th Congress is because it is isolating the cases of three Republicans (Isakson, Vitter, and DeMint) who are particularly polarizing. No senator has yet been elected who first served in the House after the 106th Congress. The interaction terms and overall R² for all the cutoffs are listed below:

	Gingrich Senator Coefficient	Standard Error	Overall R ²
93rd	0.151	0.07	0.118
94th	0.204	0.05	0.165
95th	0.198	0.07	0.162
96th	0.206	0.07	0.190
97th	0.186	0.05	0.169
98th	0.196	0.07	0.172
99th	0.176	0.07	0.146
100th	0.129	0.07	0.106
101st	0.125	0.07	0.099
102nd	0.124	0.08	0.093
103rd	0.177	0.08	0.089
104th	0.192	0.11	0.085
105th	0.266	0.14	0.087

Incidentally, the cutoff that worked best for Democrats was the post-101th Congress (1989–90). The coefficient on the interaction term on this Congress (and, incidentally, all the other congresses) does not come close to statistical significance and the overall R² barely reaches 0.1.

TABLE 2 The Baseline Model for Determining the Effect of Gingrich Senators on Polarization Scores

Independent Variables	
Time Trend	0.005** (0.0003)
Republican	0.005 (0.04)
Former House Member	0.051* (0.04)
Post 96th Congress	0.039 (0.04)
Time Trend * Republican	-0.0001 (0.001)
Republican * Former House Member	-0.113** (0.06)
Republican * Post 96th Congress	-0.011 (0.05)
Former House Member * Post 96th Congress	0.008 (0.06)
Republican * Former House Member * Post 96th Congress (Gingrich Senators)	0.202** (0.09)
Constant	0.260** (0.03)
Member Random Effects	Yes
N	1829
R ² Within	0.216
R ² Between	0.787
R ² Overall	0.793

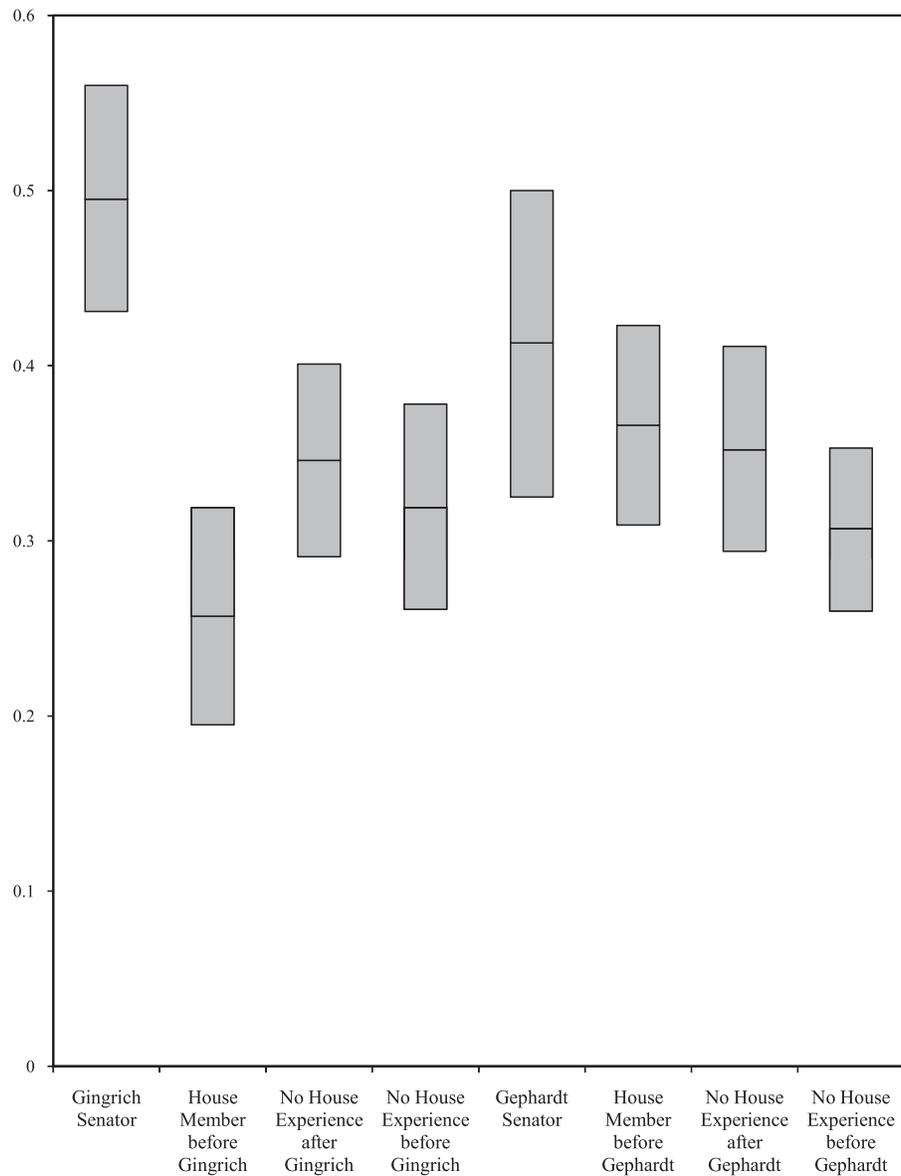
*Statistically Significant at 0.10; **Statistically Significant at 0.05.

more polarizing than the average of the other three Republican types.¹¹

On the other hand, the predicted polarization score is 0.27 for a non-House Democrat who served before Gephardt, 0.29 for a Democrat with similar background after Gephardt, 0.31 for a Democratic senator with House experience prior to Gephardt’s first election, and 0.33 for a Gephardt Senator. The Gephardt Senators are 12% more polarizing than the other types of Democrats, which is about one-sixth the Gingrich Effect on Republican senators. While the

¹¹These estimates are determined by changing the values in the indicator variables as well as the double and triple interactions. As such, they incorporate the total effect of the interaction terms as well as the primary effects. Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006) provide clear directions for how interaction terms should be analyzed. They emphasize that the terms should not be considered independently from their principal components—in other words, we cannot evaluate the effect of the Gingrich Senator variable without also considering the three principle indicator variables and the three double interaction variables. All of our analysis and ensuing discussion of the results is consistent with the prescriptions in their article.

FIGURE 5 Predicted Polarization Scores for Selected Types of Senators



95% confidence interval for the predicted polarization score for the Gephardt Senators overlap with that of the Gingrich Senators, their actual and predicted scores are statistically and significantly smaller (both have a $p < 0.0001$). The increasing party polarization in the Senate since the 1970s lies overwhelmingly at the feet of previous House Republican members who started serving in the House after 1978.¹²

¹²The overall thrust of our findings is robust to the precise time definition of Gingrich and Gephardt Senators. If we include in this definition only those who enter after 1978 (as we do in the analysis), we do not get substantively different results if we include those who enter after 1976 for either Democrats or Republicans.

Explanations for the Gingrich Effect

In this section, we examine several explanations for the Gingrich Effect. First, their more conservative ideology may have roots in their constituencies. The voters in the states that produced Gingrich Senators may be more conservative than the voters in states that elected non-Gingrich Senators. In addition there may be regional or state-level influences beyond those preference measures that advantage more extreme members with House service.

Second, electoral influences may also affect senator ideology. Quality candidates generally do

better than those who have not won elective office (Jacobson 2008). It would seem that winning a House election may provide the best path to winning a Senate election, especially in low population states. The easier elections experienced by former House members may have consequences on their voting. Furthermore, the differences among states in their primary electorates may also affect their senators. Two states might have the same overall distribution of political preferences, but one of them may have more polarized primary electorates than the other, which may lead to the selection of a more polarized pair of candidates in that state, and in turn to more polarized representation in the Senate.

Third, the nature of House service in the era after Gingrich's first election may independently affect polarization in the Senate. Gingrich Senators may truly have been baptized in the partisan waters of Newt Gingrich. His Conservative Opportunity Society abandoned the old mantra, "Go along to get along," in an attempt to become the majority party. Although it took the better part of a decade for the new confrontational strategy to work, the Republicans eventually triumphed in 1994. Having witnessed and having participated in the strategy may have made the Gingrich Senators true believers not only for the "People's Chamber" but also the "Greatest Deliberative Body in the World." As we control for other explanations, the persistence of the Gingrich Effect would provide evidence for this hypothesis.

Finally, the conservative ideology of the Gingrich Senators may be the result of something unique about them as individuals. This explanation would, of course, be the most difficult to measure and demonstrate. A few scholars attempt to include personal attributes in analyses of the behavior of elites. Burden (2007) analyzes how experience with smoking, for example, affects members' votes on tobacco legislation. Additionally, in the study of progressive ambition, Rohde and his coauthors (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1987; Rohde 1979) included a variable for the actor's propensity to take risk in their analyses. It is not obvious, however, what indicator could be used to capture the personal ideology of the kinds of candidates who became Gingrich Senators.

Because of the difficulty of measuring the third and fourth explanation, the remainder of our analysis will focus on how well constituency and electoral factors explain the Gingrich Effect. At this point, any residual effect in for the Gingrich Senators can be

interpreted as at least interim evidence for "the House did it" explanation.

Constituency Factors

We employ three different measures for the constituency. First, we include the partisan inclination of the state. The Gingrich Senators may be more conservative because they represent more conservative states. Indeed, their more conservative ideology may have nothing to do with their service in the House. Gingrich Senators come from states where Republican presidential candidates do on average 4.0% better than they do nationwide. In contrast, non-Gingrich Republican senators, since the 96th Congress came from states where Republican presidential candidates do a statistically significant smaller 1.9% better than they do nationwide ($p=0.0005$). Although the difference between the two—2.1%—is small, about 25% of all the states over all the presidential elections yields a result where the winning presidential candidate in that state won by less than 2%.

Gephardt Senators, like Gingrich Senators, come from friendlier territory, though not as friendly as the territory of Gingrich Senators. Gephardt's former House colleagues come from states that, on average, give Democratic presidential candidates 3.5% more votes than their nationwide average. Those Democratic senators since the 96th Congress who did not serve in the House with Gephardt come from states that on average gave Democratic presidential candidates 2.2% more votes than their nationwide average ($p=0.067$).

To control for the more partisan constituencies of former House members in the Senate, we amplify our baseline multivariate regression analysis by including the partisan advantage of the senator's constituency, which is the percentage points that the senators' presidential candidate received in their state above or below their 2-party national average—sometimes called the "normalized vote"—averaged across the presidential contests by decade. For example, from 1992 to 2000, the Democratic presidential candidates did 6.7% better in California than they did nationwide. As such, the partisan advantage for the California Democratic senators, Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein, from the 103rd to the 107th Congresses (1993–2002) was 0.067.¹³

¹³We average the elections across the decade to smooth out the effect of state and region specific outcomes. Using the straight normalized vote (without averaging across the decade) does not change the results at all.

TABLE 3 The Effect of Gingrich Senators, Constituency Characteristics, and Electoral Considerations on the Polarization Scores

Independent Variables	(A) Baseline	(B) Constituency	(C) Electoral	(D) Full
Time Trend	0.005** (0.0003)	0.005** (0.0003)	0.005** (0.0003)	-0.005** (0.0003)
Republican	0.005 (0.04)	-0.104** (0.03)	0.005 (0.04)	-0.104** (0.03)
Former House Member	0.051* (0.04)	0.035 (0.03)	0.051* (0.04)	0.035 (0.03)
Post 96th Congress	0.039 (0.04)	0.010 (0.03)	0.039 (0.04)	0.010 (0.03)
Time Trend * Republican	-0.0001 (0.001)	-0.0002 (0.001)	-0.0001 (0.001)	-0.0003 (0.001)
Republican * Former House Member	-0.113** (0.06)	-0.085* (0.04)	-0.113** (0.06)	-0.085* (0.04)
Republican * Post 96th Congress	-0.011 (0.05)	0.022 (0.05)	-0.011 (0.05)	0.023 (0.04)
Former House Member * Post 96th Congress	0.008 (0.06)	-0.024 (0.05)	0.008 (0.06)	-0.024 (0.05)
Republican * Former House Member * Post 96th Congress (Gingrich Senators)	0.202** (0.09)	0.185** (0.07)	0.202** (0.09)	0.185** (0.07)
Presidential Vote Advantage (PVA)		0.249** (0.04)		0.256** (0.04)
South		-0.233** (0.03)		-0.233** (0.03)
Republican * South		0.375** (0.04)		0.375** (0.04)
State Population		0.020** (0.01)		0.020** (0.01)
State Population * Republican		-0.060** (0.01)		-0.059** (0.01)
Victory Margin			0.003 (0.01)	0.001 (0.01)
Elected to Seat			0.006 (0.01)	0.006 (0.01)
Constant	0.260** (0.03)	0.339** (0.02)	0.260** (0.03)	0.333** (0.02)
Member Random Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1829	1829	1829	1829
R ² Within	0.212	0.225	0.212	0.225
R ² Between	0.158	0.384	0.157	0.385
R ² Overall	0.156	0.398	0.155	0.399

*Statistically Significant at 0.10; **Statistically Significant at 0.05.

An alternative measure of the nature of constituencies is region. Party alignment of the southern states has had a strong impact on the ideological orientation of the Republican party in Congress (see, e.g., Black and Black 2002). It could be that the Gingrich Effect is due to the increase in Republican control of House and Senate seats in the South, and the more conservative ideological orientation of that region's Republicans.¹⁴ To keep the effect of region separated by party, we include an interaction of region with partisanship.

A third aspect of constituencies that might be important in our explanation is the size of the state. Rohde (1979) finds that representatives in small states are more likely to seek and secure Senate nominations than representatives in large states. Furthermore, the primary and general-election constituencies in large states are likely to be more heterogeneous than those in small states, creating opportunities for more moderate Republicans to secure nominations. Thus the Gingrich Effect could be due to smaller states being more likely to nominate very conservative Republican representatives. To capture this effect we introduce a variable for the state's population.¹⁵ To keep the effect of state size separated by party, we include an interaction of state size and party.

Including these variables improves the overall fit of the model, though the results are pretty disparate. For comparison, we include the results of Table 2 in column A of Table 3. Each of these variables has an effect on senators' polarization (see column B of Table 3). Taking a Gingrich Senator in a Democratic state (with a -0.09 PVA) and placing her in a safe Republican state (with a 0.13 PVA) increases her polarization score from 0.57 to 0.63.¹⁶ Southern Democrats are 0.23 more conservative than their northern counterparts.

Southern Republicans are only 0.14 more conservative than their northern counterparts. Finally, moving a Republican senator from the biggest state to the smallest state increases their polarization score by 0.16. Although each of the constituency variables is statistically significant and substantively large, the Gingrich Effect persists, though the coefficient on the triple interaction slightly shrinks from 0.20 to 0.19.

Electoral Factors

We also test for the electoral circumstances leading to the seating of a would-be senator. We include the senator's victory margin in their last election. Nine people have been appointed to the Senate since the 93rd Congress. To keep these individuals in the data set, we include an indicator variable if the senator was elected to the seat. In so doing, the victory margin variable becomes an interaction between this indicator variable and the victory margin variable.

As the Table 3 column C results show, neither variable is statistically significant. Furthermore, the inclusion of both variables does not affect the Gingrich Senator triple interaction. When we include both the constituency and electoral variables in the same model (Table 3, column D), we see that the results do not change from when we considered them individually.

The statistical insignificance of the election variables surprises us. Before completely discarding the electoral hypothesis, we test the robustness of this nonresult. It could be that only the electoral circumstances of a senator's first election to the Senate matter. As such, we isolate our analysis to the first congress served by the 118 Republican senators who began their service in the Senate after the 92nd Congress (1971–72). We present the results from this analysis, which are largely consistent with the results presented in Table 3, in part B of an online appendix.

When we include the constituency and electoral variables in predicting the polarization scores for our eight groups of senators the results change only marginally from those presented in Figure 5. The predicted polarization score for the Gingrich Senators declines from 0.49 in the baseline model to 0.44 in the full model. In each of the other three groups of Republicans, the change is less than 0.02. In the full model, the Gingrich Senators are 53% more polarized than their fellow Republicans. The Gephardt Senators, incidentally, become virtually indistinguishable from other Democrats once the constituency and electoral factors are included in the model.

¹⁴For the region indicator we follow the common practice of including the eleven former Confederate states, plus Kentucky and Oklahoma. The inclusion of the latter two seems particularly appropriate here because of the high proportion of white voters in their electorates and the related extreme conservatism of their congressional delegation.

¹⁵The population variable is standardized by congress so that the natural population increases do not track with more polarized congresses.

¹⁶These RPVAs represent the 5th and 95th percentile of the RPVA for Republican senators.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, we demonstrate that the Senate's increased polarization is due mostly to the effect of former representatives who had entered the House after the first election of Newt Gingrich in 1978, a group we term the "Gingrich Senators." Our regression analyses of constituency and electoral factors show that only the former reduce the magnitude of the Gingrich Senator Effect.

In the baseline model, we found that Gingrich Senators were 62% more conservative than non-House Republican who first entered the Senate prior to Gingrich's House career. Once we include the variables operationalizing the constituency factors, we find that Gingrich Senators are only 56% more conservative. As such, the inclusion of the constituency characteristics reduces the Gingrich Effect by 10%. The inclusion of the electoral factors only increases the Gingrich Effect.

We think that the current analysis offers significant findings related to Senate polarization and its link to the House. While we think this article is a significant step in this line of research, we do not think it is the final step. Our findings move the question of interest back a step. All of our results show that Gingrich Senators are different, both compared to Democrats and to other Republicans. If it is true, as we have argued, that this is due in part to differences in their constituencies, why is it that those constituencies are more likely to choose very conservative Republican representatives as their senators? Furthermore, what is it about Gingrich's baptizing in the House that so radicalizes his former colleagues in the Senate? Yet despite these important remaining issues, we think this article's isolation of the effect of Gingrich Senators on Senate polarization and its explanations for that effect have made a substantial contribution to our understanding of ideological polarization in the Senate.

The voting behavior of the Gingrich Senators may help explain why the modern Senate more closely resembles the U.S. House, where partisanship has been more prominent since at least the breakdown of the conservative coalition in the 1960s. As the Gingrich Senators become more numerous and more powerful in the Republican caucus, the polarization trend will continue. As Democrats respond and react to this new tone in the Senate, the prospects for bipartisanship are grim. The restoration of the Senate as a legislative body where its

members were senators first and only Republicans or Democrats second is not likely in the foreseeable future.

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