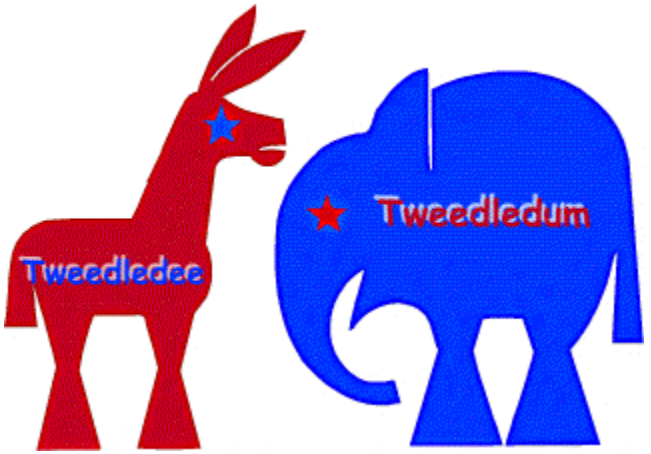
Political Parties and Congressional Leadership

17.251/252

Fall 2012



Lecture Organization

- Natural history of political parties in the U.S.
- Why do parties exist?
  - What explains varying levels of party cohesion
  - When are leaders “strong” and when are they “weak”?

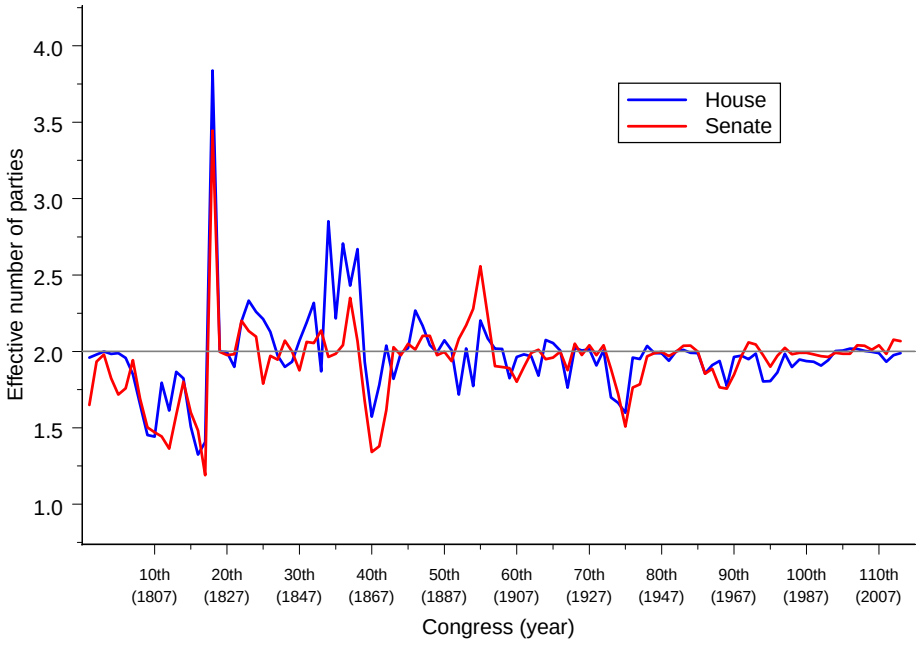
Interesting (and Important) Historical Aside

- Party membership originally arose in the chamber and spread to the electoral arena
- Now, party membership arises in the electoral arena and spreads to the institution

Natural History of Political Parties

Period	**Party of the "right"**	**Party of the "left"**
1789—1823 (1st—17th Cong.)	Federalists	Republicans
1823—1837 (18th—24th Cong.)	Multifactionalism based on old party labels & new individual alliances	
1837—1857 (25th—34th Cong.)	Whigs	Democrats
1857—present (35th—112th Cong.)	Republicans	Democrats

Effective number of parties (Figure 7.1, revised to 2012)



110th/111th Cong:

Senate

51/53D

47/45R

2/2I

House

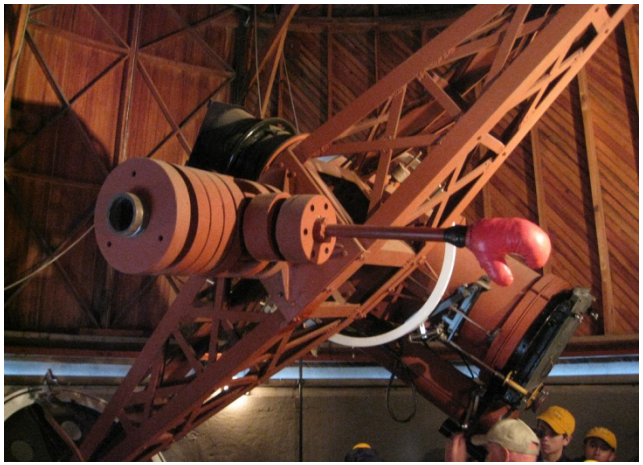
193/242D

205/234R

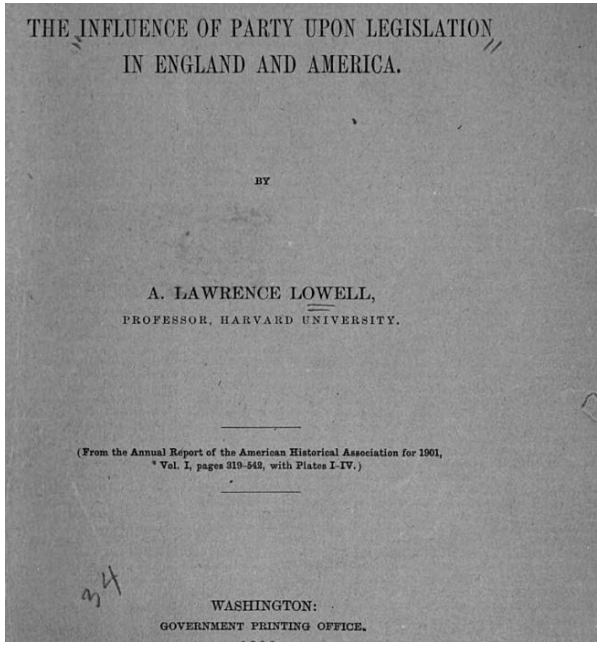
0/1 Und.

Parties Change in Their Cohesiveness

Parties Change in Their Cohesiveness



Parties Change in Their Cohesiveness



THE INFLUENCE OF PARTY UPON LEGISLATION IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA.

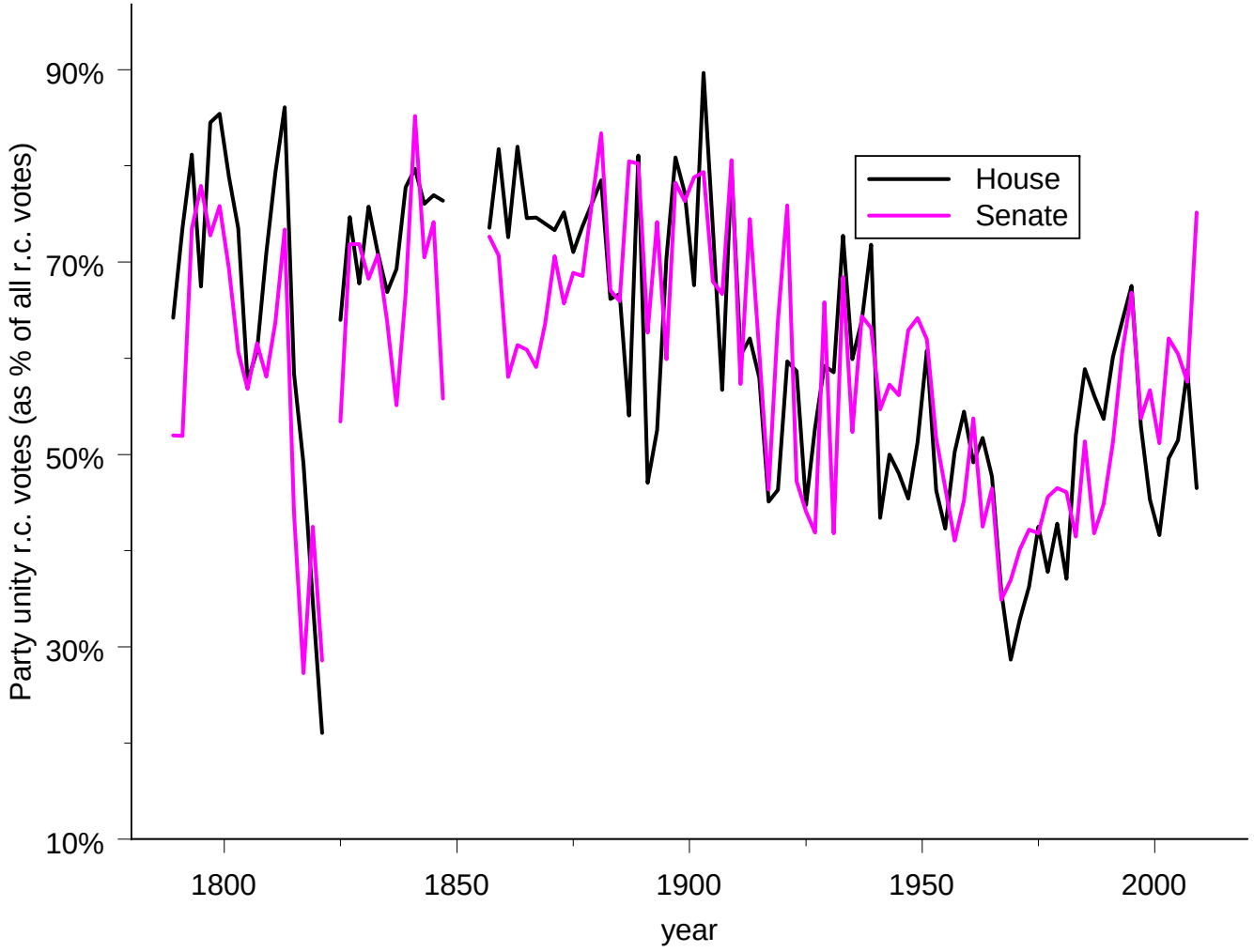
BY

A. LAWRENCE LOWELL,
PROFESSOR, HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

(From the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1901, Vol. I, pages 319-542, with Plates I-IV.)

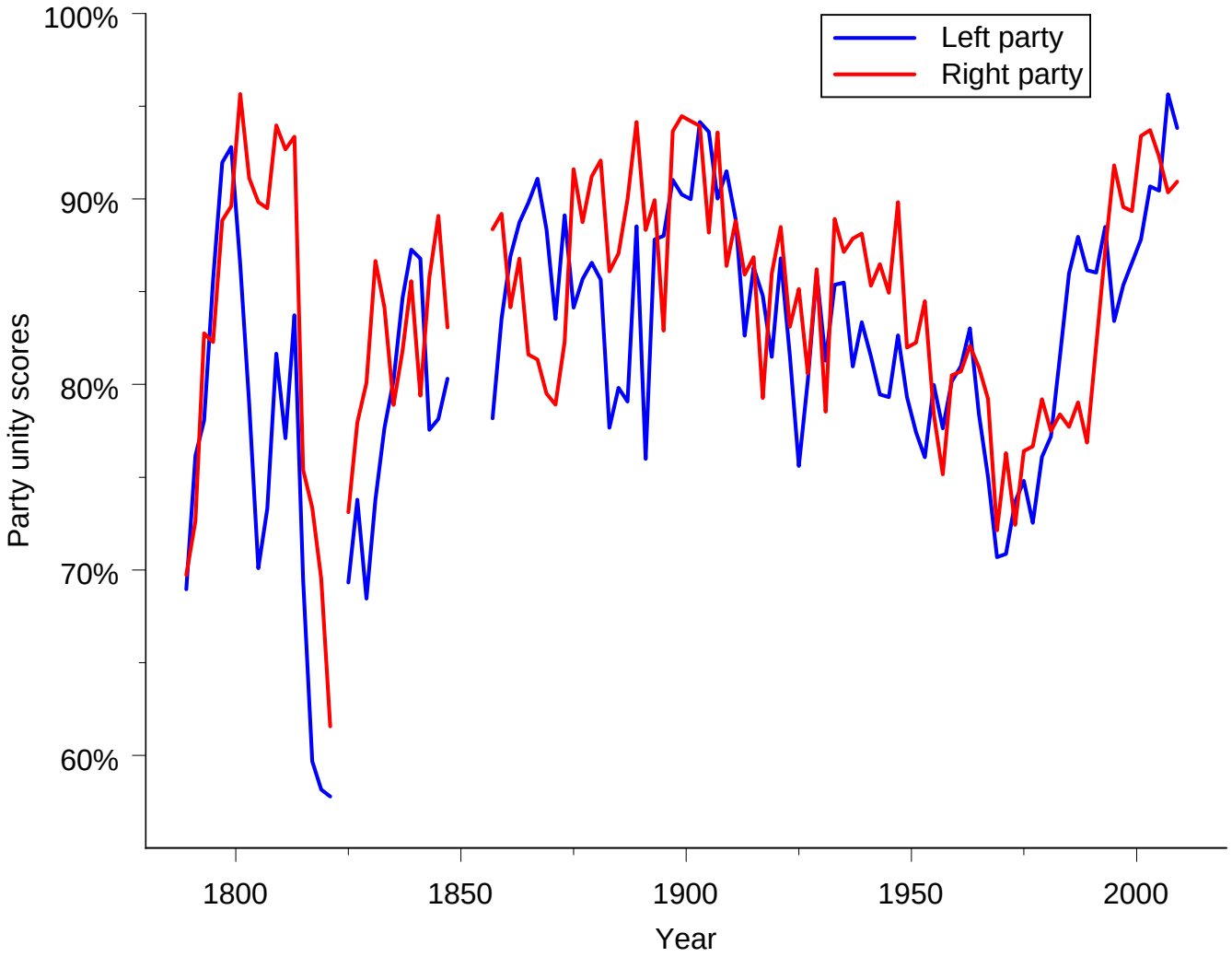
WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

Party Unity Votes in Congress



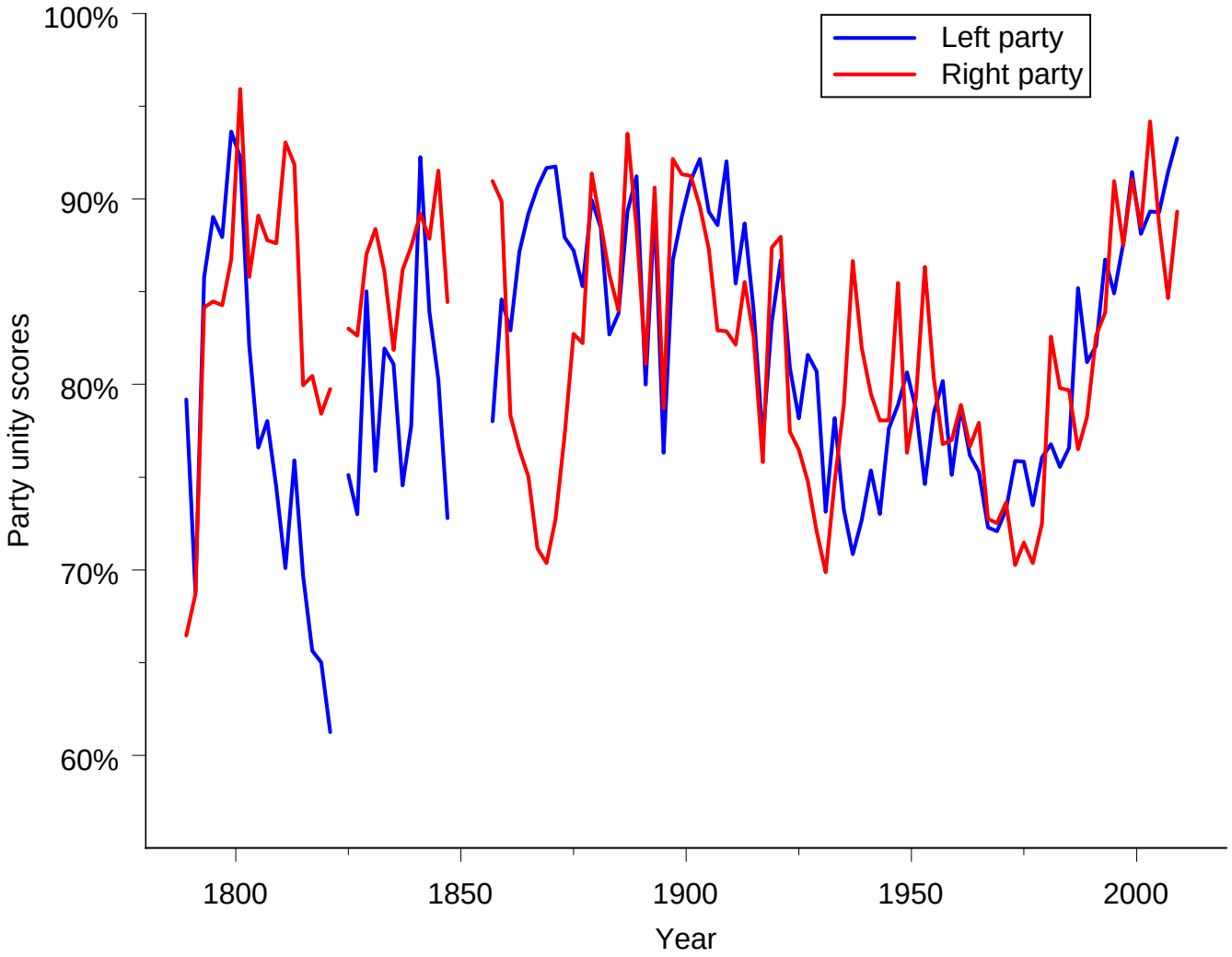
Party unity = 50% of one party voting against 50% of the other party

Avg. Party Unity Scores in the House



Party unity score = % of time a party member voted with his/her party on party unity votes

Avg. Party Unity Scores in the Senate



Party unity score = % of time a party member voted with his/her party on party unity votes

Current Organization of Congress

- Party responsibilities
  - Scheduling business
  - Distributing leadership among and within committees
  - Promoting attendance and spreading information
  - Facilitate bargaining
- Resources that parties possess
  - Knowledge of rules
  - Access to tangible benefits

Some notes about historical development

- Party control
  - Until roughly the Civil War, parties don't "organize" the chambers
  - After the Civil War, they do (first the House, then the Senate)
  - Even so, party control of committees is a 20th century phenomenon
- Over time formal party positions have proliferated and institutionalized
  - Institutionalization mostly a 20th century phenomenon (see Gamm and Smith chapter in D&O)

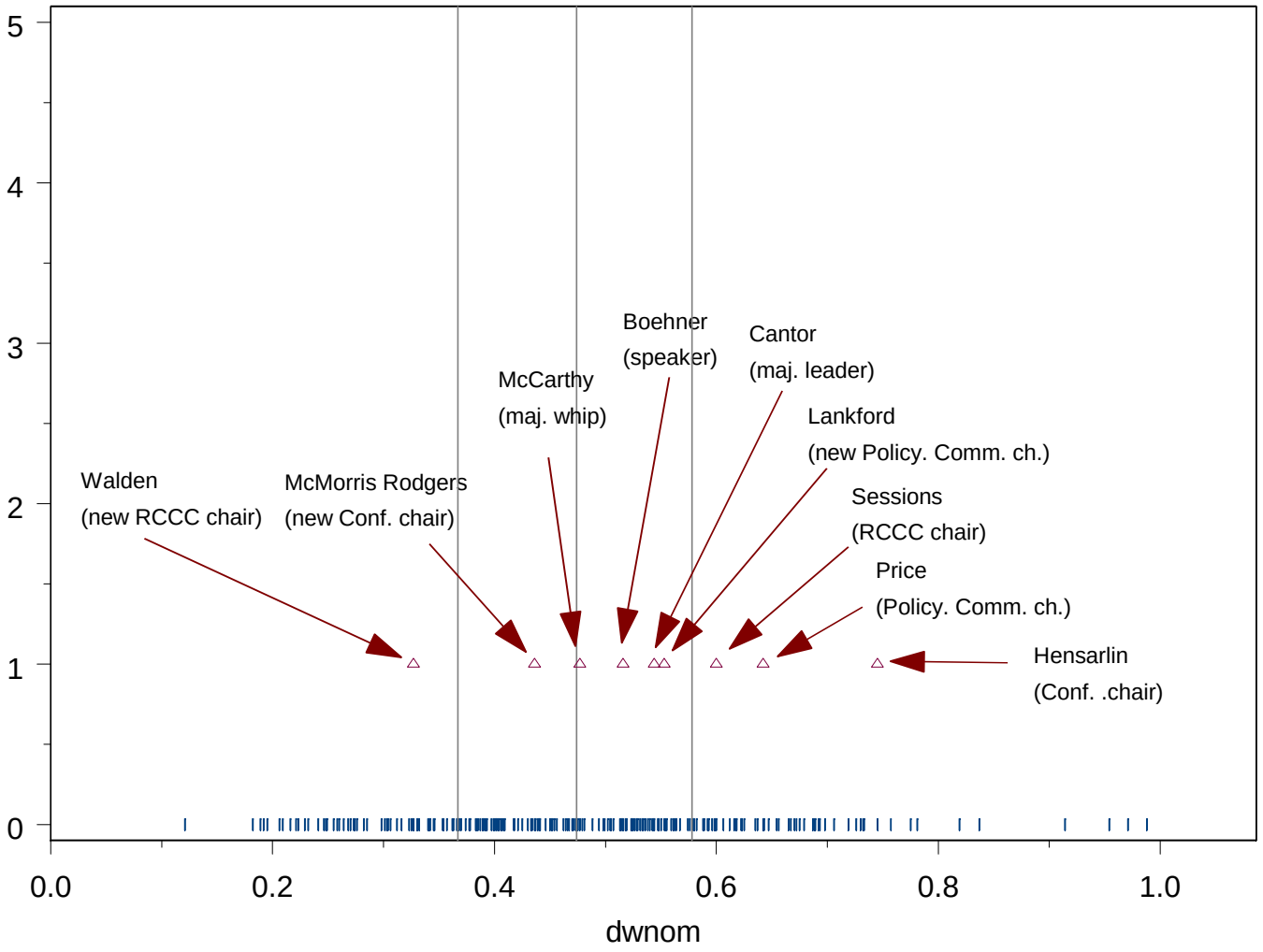
Current Org Chart

Position	House	Senate
Constitutional head	Speaker	V.P./ President *pro tempore*
Floor leader	Majority/ minority leader	Majority/ minority leader
Whip	Majority/ minority whip	Majority/ minority whip
Caucus	Chair, v.chair, secy.	Chair, secy.
Policy committees		
Committees on committees		
Campaign committees		

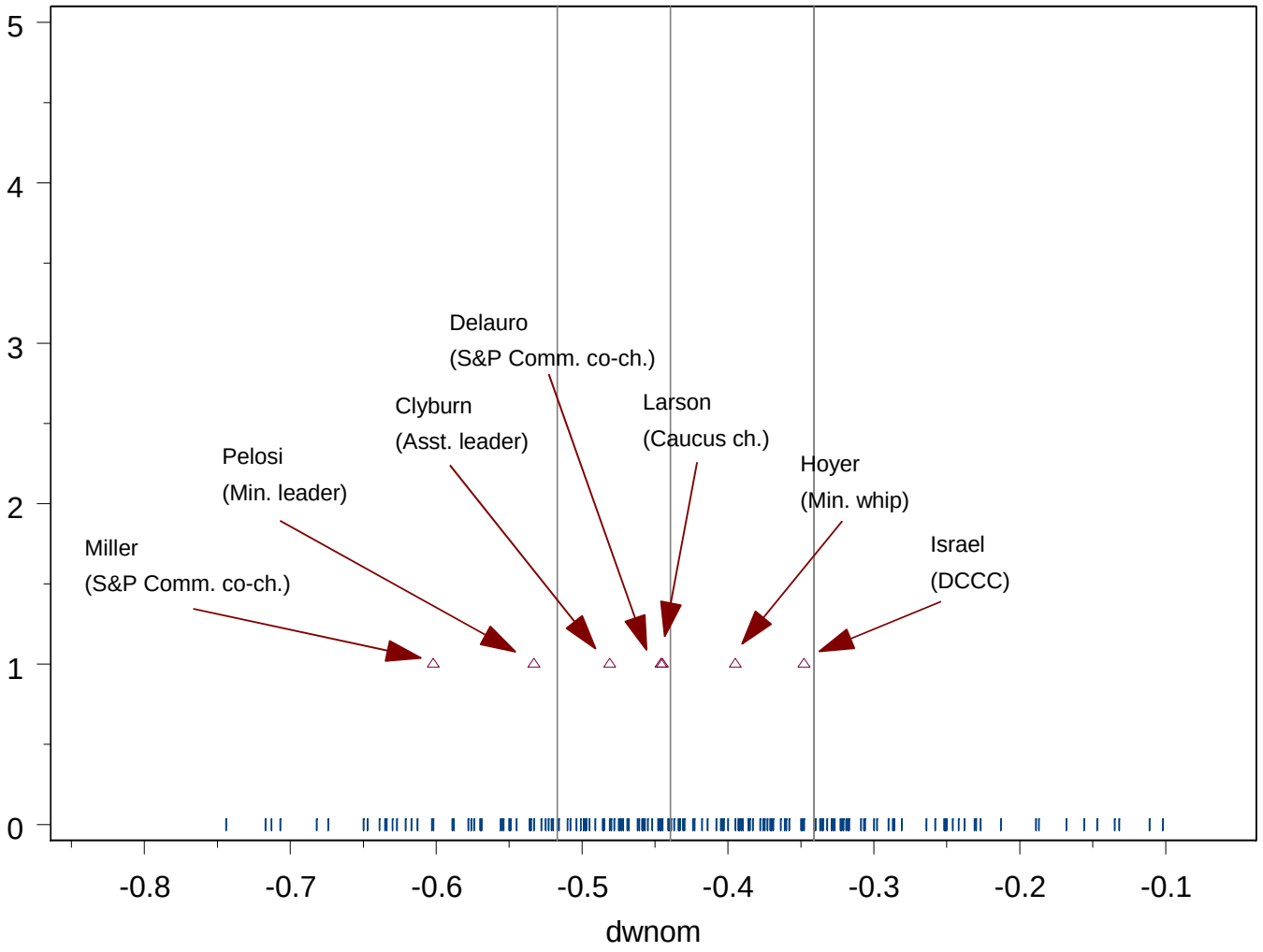
112th House

Position	Rep	Dem
Constitutional head	**Speaker** John Boehner (OH)	
Floor leader	**Majority. Leader** Eric Cantor (VA)	**Minority Leader** Nancy Pelosi (CA)
Whip	**Maj. Whip** Kevin McCarthy (CA) **Chief Deputy Whip** Peter Roskam (IL)	**Min. Whip** Steny Hoyer (MD) **Asst. Leader** James Clyburn (SC) **Senior Chief Deputy Whip:** John Lewis (GA)
Caucus/Conference	**Chairman:** Jeb Hensarling (TX) **Vice ch:** Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA) [chair in 113th Cong.][Lynn Jenkins (KS) in 113th Congress] **Secy:** John Carter (TX) [Virginia Foxx (NC) in 113th Congress]	**Chairman:** John Larson (CT) [term-limited out in the 113th Congress.] **Vice chairman:** Xavier Becerra (CA)
Committees on committees	**Steering Committee** **Chair:** Speaker	**Steering and Policy Committee** **Co-Chairs:** Rosa DeLauro (CT), George Miller (CA)
Policy Committee	**Chairman**: Tom Price (GA) [James Lankford (OK) in 113th Congress]	
Campaign committees	**Nat. Rep. Campaign Comm.** **Chair:** Pete Sessions (TX) [Greg Walden (OR)in 113th Congress]	**Dem. Cong'l Campaign Comm.** Chair: Steve Israel (NY)

House Rep. Leaders



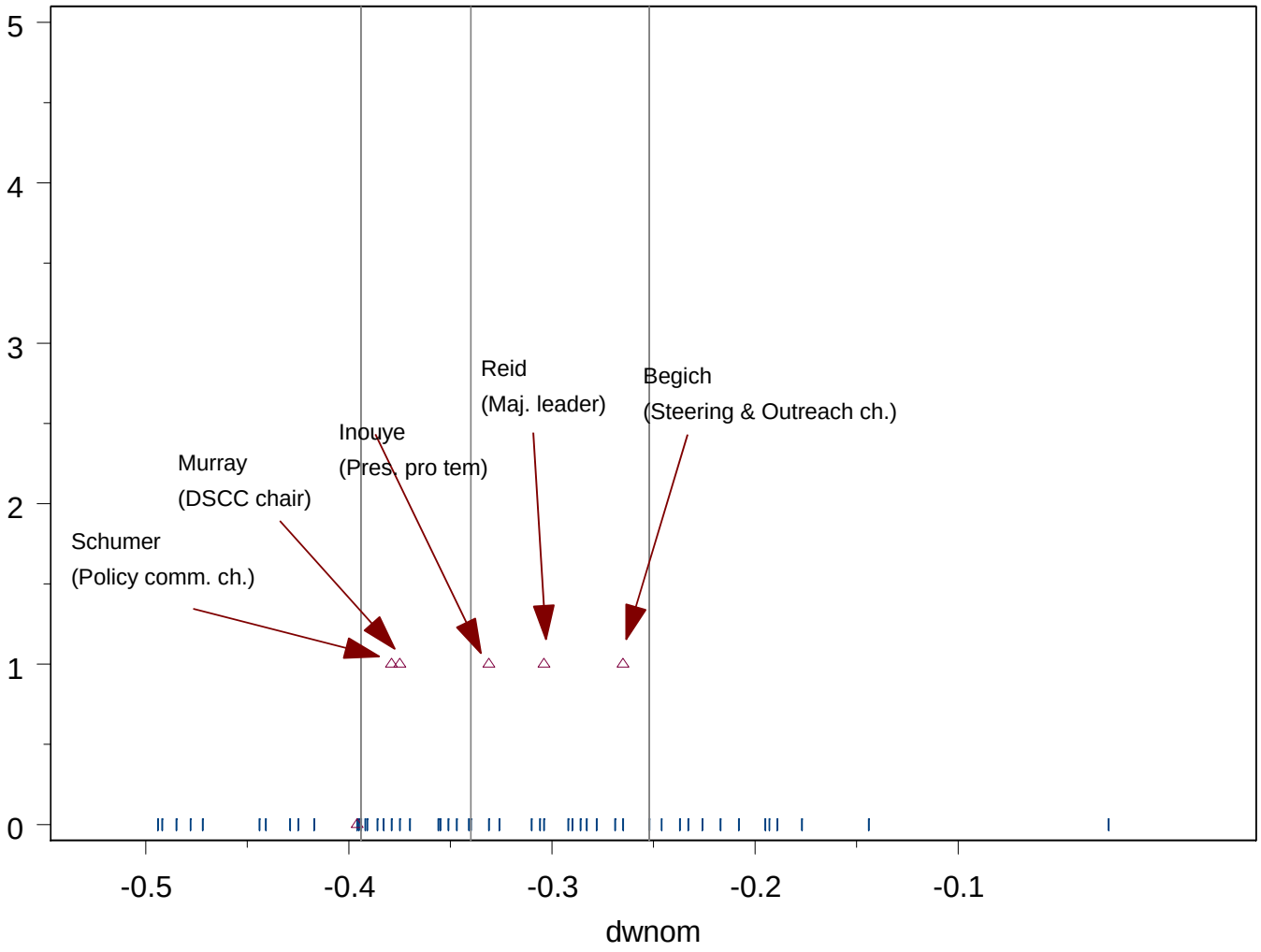
House Dem. Leaders



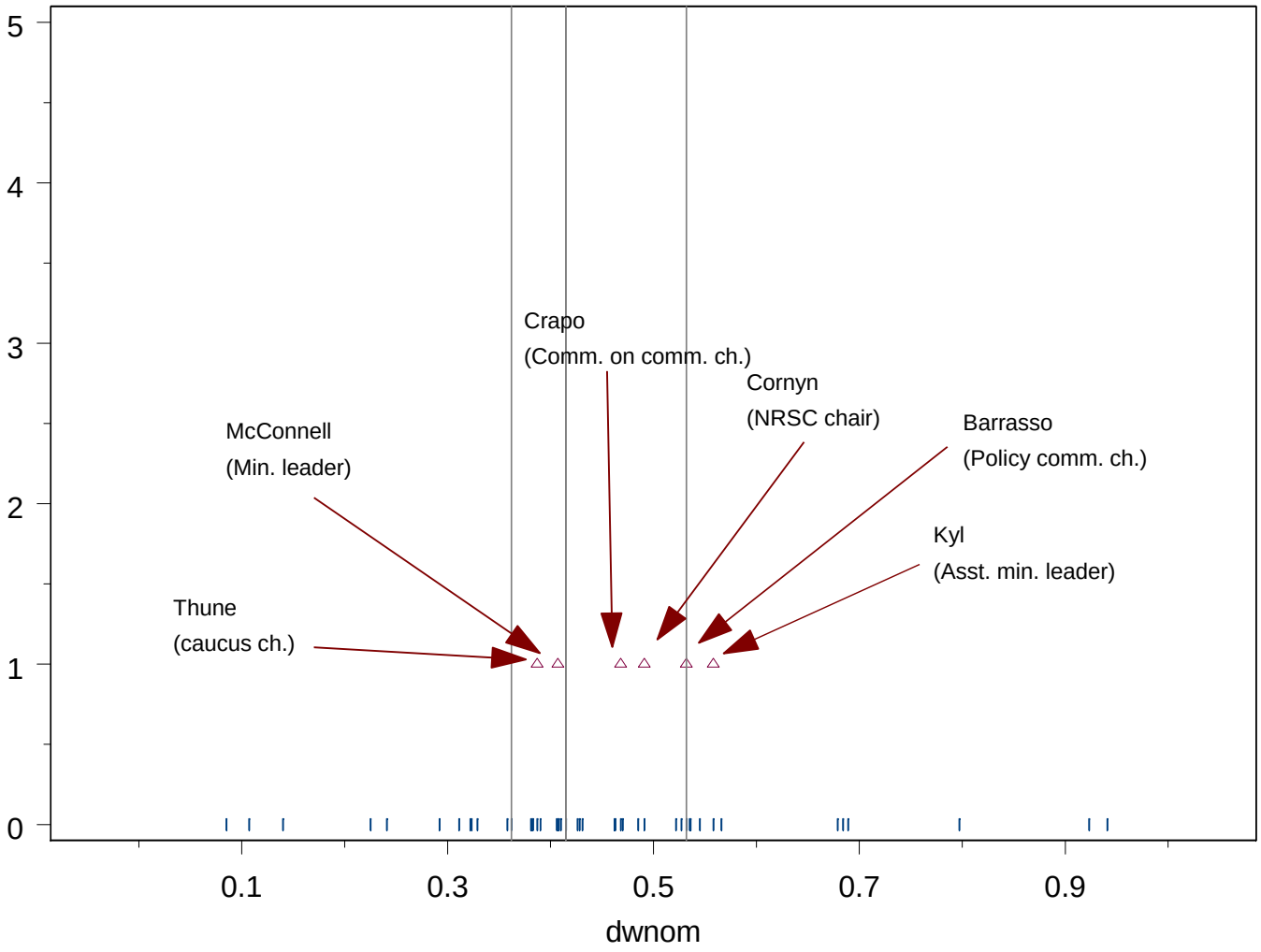
112th Senate

Position	Rep	Dem
Constitutional head		**Vice President:** Joe Biden **President *pro tempore:*** Daniel Inouye (HI)
Floor leader	**Republican Leader** Mitch McConnell (KY)	**Majority leader** Harry Reid (NV)
Whip	**Asst. min. leader:** Jon Kyl (AZ)	**Asst maj. leader:** Richard Durbin (IL) **Chief dep. whip:** Barbara Boxer (CA)
Caucus	**Conf. chair:** John Thune (SD)	**Chair:** Dem. Leader **V. Chair:** Charles Schumer (NY) **Secretary:** Patty Murray (WA)
Policy committees	**Chair:** John Barrasso (WY) **v. chair:** Roy Blunt (MO)	**Chair:** Chuck Schumer (NY) **V. chair:** Debbie Stabenow (MI)
Committees on committees	**Committee on Committees** Chair: Mike Crapo (ID)	**Steering & Outreach Comm.** **Ch:** Mark Begich (AK) **V. ch:** Daniel Akaka (HI)
Campaign committees	**NRSC** **Ch:**John Cornyn (TX) [Jerry Moran (KS) 113th Cong.)	**DSCC** Ch: Patty Murray (WA)

Senate Dem. Leaders



Senate Rep. Leaders



Note some things about historical development

- Regional/ideological balancing
- Emergence of career ladder

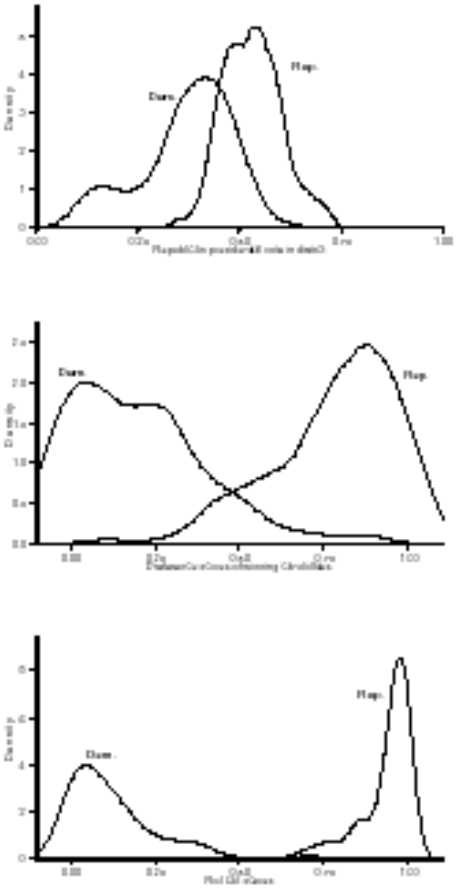
Why Do Parties Exist?

- Anomalous position of parties in spatial models of legislatures
  - The chamber median should rule. Party is just a label
  - Who governs? Do leaders “boss” followers (common view) or do followers terrorize leaders?

Some perspectives on this question

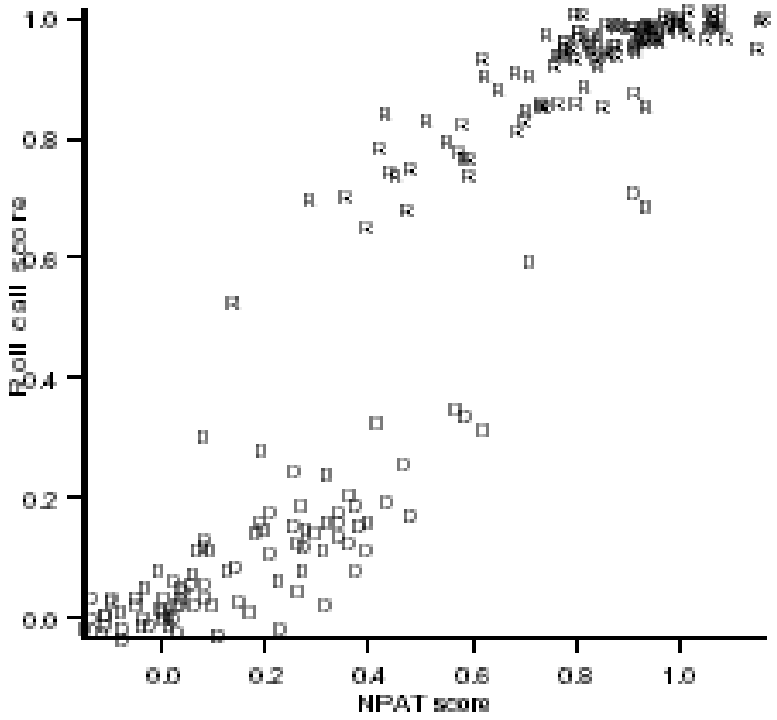
- Rohde: Conditional party government
- Krehbiel: Where's the party?
- Calvert: Parties coordinate
- Aldrich, Cox, and McCubbins: Parties help members get elected

Evidence that Parties Push Members Apart

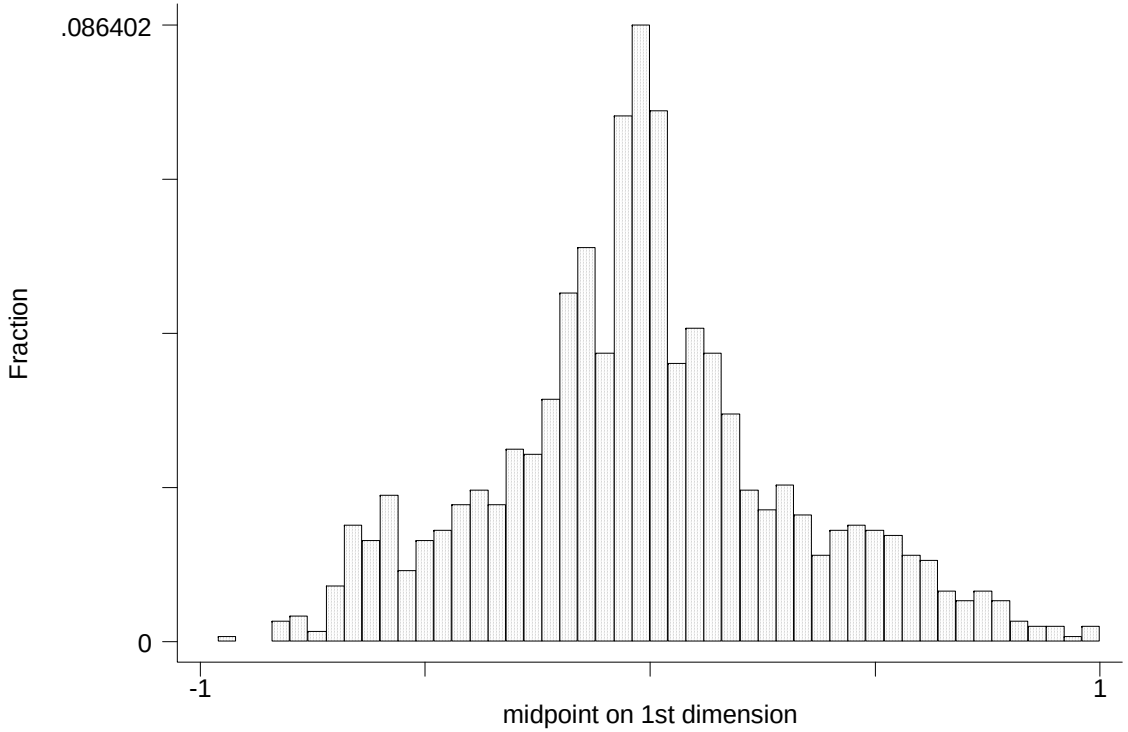


Source: Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001)

Further Evidence



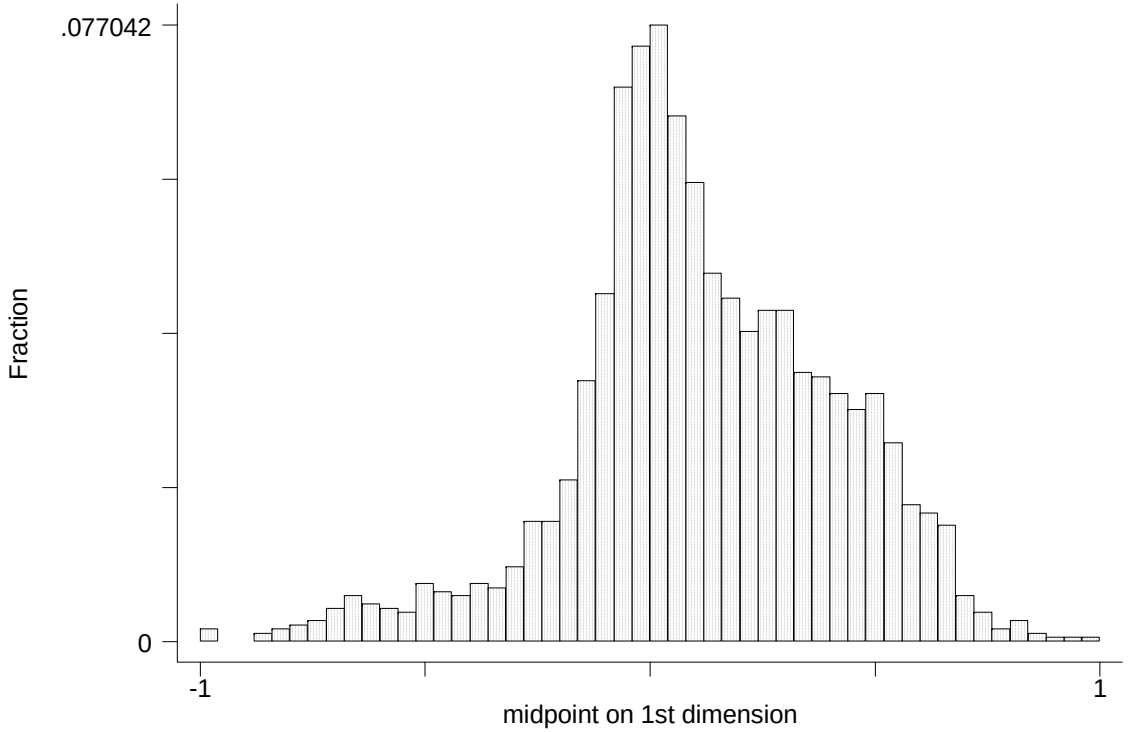
Evidence from cut points: 109th Cong.



Med. cutpoint: -.020
3rd quartile cutpoint: .152

Median house member: .039
Median Rep: .420
Median Dem: - .409

110th Congress



Med. cutpoint: .089
1st quartile cutpoint: -.05

Median house member: -.176
Median Rep: .429
Median Dem: - .397