

**Maiden Speeches and Apprenticeship:
Continuity and Change in the U.S. Senate**

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Abstract

When asked in confidential interviews about the continuity of the apprenticeship norm, former U.S. Senate leadership and junior members alike routinely raise the maiden speech tradition. However, no published study of the old “rite of passage,” empirical or otherwise, exists. In this paper, I provide the first historical and quantitative analysis of the maiden speech tradition and the apprenticeship norm held to underlie such behavior. Using duration analysis of the timing of senators’ speeches between the 80th–117th Congresses, I first refute decades of conventional wisdom surrounding the tradition: Senators never waited nearly as long as purported. I then employ the maiden speech variable to test for the political dynamics that underscore adherence to the norm. Although the data corroborate Sinclair’s (1989) observation that apprenticeship had died by the late 1980s, I observe a dramatic uptick in adherence to the norm in recent years—such behavior appears almost entirely attributable to Republicans under Senator Mitch McConnell’s leadership, who has expressed reverence for the tradition, perhaps bespeaking the power of party leadership to impress normative behavior upon first year senators.

The U.S. Senate’s maiden speech tradition is based upon a broader convention dictating that new members undergo a waiting period—a time of deference and learning. Matthews (1959) formalized this behavior as “apprenticeship,” the first of six folkways which govern senatorial behavior. In some ways, apprenticeship is imposed by senior members: freshmen receive undesirable committee assignments and are made to perform many mundane tasks, such as presiding over floor debate. In other ways, apprenticeship is self-imposed, through restraint in legislative activity and floor speech. As a former Senate Majority Leader advised, “You ought to serve an apprenticeship. You come in here, start right away... grandstanding, making speeches, you’re really hurting yourself” (Anonymous 2019a).

Conventional wisdom surrounding the maiden speech and the few, sporadic reports which exist on the subject suggest that the tradition has been declining for decades and is virtually nonexistent in the modern Congress, and that senators today are only expected to wait around three months before addressing the chamber. However, no published study or measure of the old “rite of passage” exists, so these claims have not been tested. As with maiden speeches, most twentieth century scholars who have investigated apprenticeship as a behavioral pattern found that the folkway as it stood during the so-called “Textbook Era” of the 1950s had all but vanished by the 1980s, as the chamber grew more individualistic and members sought to make a big enough splash upon their arrival in Washington.¹

But norms don’t just erode— they can evolve and, sometimes, reemerge. The Senate has changed in the modern Congress, and its institutional norms warrant reassessment. The maiden speech tradition allows us to consider such changes in relation to the apprenticeship norm using a

¹ Matthews (1959, 1960); Ripley (1969); Foley (1980); Loomis (1996); Rohde et al. (1985); Sinclair (1989); Smith (1989); Choate (2003)

new indicator. In this paper, I provide the first historical and quantitative analysis of the maiden speech tradition and the first assessment of the apprenticeship norm held to underlie such behavior in the twenty-first century. Using duration analysis of the timing of senators' speeches between the 80th–117th Congresses, I first refute decades of conventional wisdom surrounding the tradition: Senators never waited nearly as long as purported. I then employ the maiden speech variable to test for the political dynamics that underscore adherence to the norm. Although the data corroborate Sinclair's (1989) observation that apprenticeship had died by the late 1980s, I observe a dramatic uptick in adherence to the norm in recent years—such behavior appears almost entirely attributable to Republicans under Senator Mitch McConnell's leadership, who has expressed reverence for the tradition, perhaps bespeaking the power of party leadership to impress normative behavior upon first year senators.

Maiden Speeches: Historical Perspective

Former Senate Historian Richard A. Baker (2005) wrote “from the Senate's earliest days, new members have observed a ritual of remaining silent during floor debates for a period of time— depending on the era and the Senator— that ranged from several months to several years.” Likewise, throughout much of the institution's history, new members have been expected to serve an apprenticeship period, limiting their legislative activity and speech. As Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) (2003) put it, “by waiting a respectful amount of time before giving their so-called ‘maiden speeches,’ freshmen Senators hoped their senior colleagues would respect them for their humility.”

Upon earning the admiration of their colleagues and familiarizing themselves the manners and mechanisms of the institution, new senators deliver a ceremonial speech on a matter

of personal importance, after which they are accorded an informal esteem by their fellow members and welcomed to the chamber. “The first speech by any member,” Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND) (1999) remarked, “is one of the most important.”

The unstated time frame members are expected to wait before speaking has varied greatly with each Congress, as new members enter the body, institutional norms evolve, and alternative legislative styles emerge. A former Senate Majority Leader (speaking on the condition of anonymity) advised: “You don’t jump out on the floor of the Senate and start making a speech on your first day, your first week, or even your first month.... you should wait three months” (Anonymous 2019a). Similarly, in response to Senator George Allen’s (R-VA) hasty maiden speech, Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) (2001) remarked “usually, we wait three months.” By comparison, when Senator Robert La Follette (R-WI) waited three months to deliver his maiden speech in 1905, his Republican colleagues immediately left the chamber as he rose to speak (Baker 2005).

Today, former members and senior staff often reference the maiden speech tradition without prompting when asked what members must do to gain the respect of their senior colleagues. As one former senior Senate staffer remarked “most new senators, regardless of their party, do recognize that before you make that maiden speech, you’ve got to get the respect of your fellow members” (Anonymous 2019b). In the modern Congress, some members have even more directly tied the tradition of remaining silent in floor debates with the apprenticeship folkway, by invoking the “seen and not heard” language used by Matthews (1959), including:

Senator James B. Allen (D-AL) (1969):

“I rise with some degree of hesitancy to take the floor of the Senate so soon after having been sworn in on last Friday, because I subscribe to the policy and the custom which provides that a new Senator shall work hard, shall study long, and that while he may frequently be seen... he should seldom be heard on the floor of the Senate.”

Senator Max Cleland (D-GA) (1997):

“I rise to speak on the floor of the U.S. Senate for the first time. I do so with mixed emotions... I am poignantly aware that freshman Senators should be seen and not heard.”

And Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ) (2013):

“One of the time-honored and worthwhile traditions of this body is that new Senators, for at least the first few months of their service, are to be essentially seen and not heard until they deliver their maiden speeches on the Senate floor. This, Madam President, I am doing today.”

Some have also referred to apprenticeship, albeit not in name, to account for their reluctance to speak on the Senate floor, including Senators Paul Douglas (D-IL) (1949), John Foster Dulles (R-NY) (1949), Daniel Evans (R-WA) (1983), Robert Hendrickson (R-NJ) (1949), Ted Kennedy (D-MA) (1962), and Barack Obama (D-IL) (2005). Kennedy also emphasized that freshman should be seen and not heard in the limited interviews which he accepted early in his tenure; the restraint he displayed eventually became so wed to his senatorial legacy that Adam Clymer (2015) titled the third chapter of his recent biography “The Apprentice.”

However, members do not always agree about the present strength of the maiden speech tradition and broader apprenticeship norm; while some have praised the survival of what Senator Warren Rudman (R-NH) (1984) deemed a “rite of passage,” others have shown disregard for its observance. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) (2003) informed his colleagues in a floor speech that “with the encouragement of the Majority Leader and the Assistant Minority Leader, several of us intend also to try to revive the tradition of maiden address,” whereas two years later Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) told *CQ Magazine* “I think the moment of the maiden speech is over” (Retter 2005). Disagreement over the continued relevance of the tradition aside, members do appear to overwhelmingly agree that it is not as strong as it once was.

Indeed, in the modern Congress, senior members have even taken to the floor to lament the decline of the maiden speech. Self-appointed Senate historian Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) (1980, 1994) claimed a member of the Senate in the Textbook Era knew he was expected to be seen and not heard, and would wait “for months, even for years, before he made his maiden speech.” “Those days are gone,” he later remarked. Senator Lloyd Bentsen (D-TX) (1983) echoed Byrd’s comments, noting “when I came to the Senate in 1971, they had a custom that carried a lot more weight in those days, and that was a Senator’s maiden speech,” as did Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) (2001), who said “28 years ago, when I got here, one’s maiden speech was taken in a much more formal way.” As a renowned institutionalist who published a four-volume history of the body and the Senate’s longest-serving member to date, Byrd’s remarks are of unparalleled weight. Still, his nostalgic, romanticized sentiment for the traditions of the old Senate may have obscured the reality of the situation to the next generation of members such as Bentsen and Biden.

At the start of the 99th Congress, Senator Al Gore, Jr. (D-TN) waited no time to give his maiden speech, introducing legislation on tobacco imports after his inauguration on January 3, 1985. In contrast, his father, Senator Al Gore, Sr. (D-TN), waited 53 days after he took office in the 83rd Congress, in 1953. At first glance, this anecdote affirms what Senate institutionalists have been claiming for decades—that the tradition withered over the course of the 20th century. On the contrary, the contrast between the two Senators Gore bespeaks something even more profound, which I later demonstrate: that the norm was never quite as strong as it was heralded in the first place. Gore, Sr. took office in 1953, during an era which marked the apex of adherence to Senate folkways, particularly apprenticeship, yet still spoke much sooner than the modern standard would suggest.² He was no outlier, either: six of the twenty new members that year

² See Choate (2003); Loomis (1996); Ripley (1969); Sinclair (1989); and Smith (1989).

delivered theirs even sooner than he did. Moreover, the freshmen of the 98th Congress—who had taken office the year that Bentsen made his juxtaposition—in fact waited approximately the same length of time, on average, to deliver their maiden speeches as his own class.

Why, then, did senators like Byrd long for the “old days” when the norm was supposedly adhered to? One explanation is that the time period immediately preceding Byrd’s 1980 remarks marked the lowest point for maiden speech waiting time throughout his entire career. Though members in the 1950s did not wait as long as conventional wisdom would suggest, they still waited substantially longer than the members in office when Byrd made those comments. Perhaps the old bulls still serving when Bentsen and Biden took office—such as Byrd, Long (D-LA), Magnuson (D-WA), Russell (D-GA), Stennis (D-MS), Thurmond (D/I/R-SC), and Young (R-ND)—also impressed a greater degree of pressure on new members to abide the convention than senior members today. It is also possible that this lament is a proxy for some other “loss,” namely the end of the “old boys club” Senate of the 1950s. As Matthews notes, there is a “tendency in any group for the old-timers to feel that the younger generation is going to hell in a handbasket” (Matthews 1960, 94).

Recently, Senator Ben Sasse (R-NE) (2015) renewed outside interest in the tradition by waiting to deliver his ceremonial maiden speech until a calendar year after his election. He alluded to the tradition and the norm of apprenticeship when doing so, remarking:

“This is the two-part posture I have adopted in my rookie year. Because of this goal of empathetic listening first, of coming to sit and privately interview many of you— and also because of the pledge I made to Nebraskans in deference to an old Senate tradition—I have waited.”

This anecdote points to another finding of the present study—a sizeable minority of members speak on the floor in a capacity which by all accounts meets the understood definition

of a maiden speech before delivering the ceremonial speech that they deem as such. Incredibly, Sasse began his third speech by saying “I rise to speak from the floor for the first time,” although he had in fact risen to speak at length in opposition to the Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA) and the Affordable Care Act during the two months before. Similarly, when Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) (2003) went to the floor to hear Lamar Alexander’s maiden speech, he congratulated him on his first speech on the floor, before quickly clarifying “actually, it was not his first speech on the floor, but we are calling it his maiden speech.”

This suggests, as does the data, that the ceremonial aspect of the maiden speech tradition has perhaps been separated from the norm of not speaking too soon. Indeed, as I explore below, it used to be more common in the past than it is today for senators to give floor speeches before presenting their ceremonial maiden speech. That suggests senators might have taken the ceremonial aspect of the tradition more seriously during the twentieth century, irrespective of views about serving an apprenticeship. This might also explain the disparity that exists between the conventional wisdom of the maiden speech tradition and the reality of its continuity over time.

Evolving Norm of Apprenticeship

Most Congressional scholars argue that the apprenticeship folkway of the Textbook Era was defunct by the 1980s.³ Even as he documented its importance, Matthews noted that apprenticeship—which predates the 17th Amendment and thus popular election of senators—was beginning to fade, as “the exigencies of the popularly elected official have placed it under considerable strain” (Matthews 1960, 94). As young, ambitious senators sought to make a big

³ See Choate (2003), Foley (1980), Loomis (1996), Ripley (1969), Rohde, Ornstein, and Peabody (1985), Sinclair (1989), Smith (1989).

enough splash upon their arrival in Washington to draw the attention of their constituents and hometown papers, apprenticeship began to weaken. The transformational political environment of the 1960s and 70s further contributed to the decline of the apprenticeship norm, as a host of new issues, from civil rights to Vietnam, rose to the forefront of debate and news media became much bigger players in the political sphere (Sinclair 1989).

In her work on the transformation of the Senate in the twentieth century, Sinclair (1989) measured the norm by the number and sponsor of amendments offered per Congress. She posited that if apprenticeship were to have existed in the 1950s as Matthews contends, most amendment sponsors should have been senior members. Her findings demonstrate that first term senators in the 1950s indeed exhibited the lowest rates of participation, but by the 1970s were by far the most active. “The data,” she argues, “strongly suggest the demise of apprenticeship as a behavioral pattern,” ultimately concluding that by the 1980s freshmen were no longer expected to remain on the sidelines, and that the norms of the 1950s had lost their hold (Sinclair 1989, 83).

Indeed, norms are susceptible to erosion (Loomis 1996). In their revisitations of Matthews’ folkways, scholars have concurred with Sinclair that apprenticeship as it stood during the Textbook Era no longer existed (Rohde et al 1985; Smith 1989). As a result, subsequent norms studies have often focused their efforts on Matthews’ other folkways. Choate (2003) remarked that it’s “widely argued that the apprenticeship norm no longer exists,” citing Sinclair and others, before promptly moving on to the other folkways (Choate 2003, 6). Rohde, Ornstein, and Peabody (1985), who divided norms into “general benefit” and “limited benefit” categories, similarly place apprenticeship in the latter, arguing that it had vanished by the 1970s. Others have focused retrospectively on the factors driving changes in institutional norms of behavior, attributing apprenticeship’s demise primarily to the emergence of a more individualistic Senate

after the 1950s (Ripley 1969; Loomis 1996). But norms don't just erode— they can evolve and, sometimes, reemerge. The Senate has changed in the modern Congress, and its institutional norms warrant reassessment.

Apprenticeship and maiden speeches are tightly connected. As Byrd (1986) remarked in a floor speech: “Almost 20 years ago... certainly no one thought about offering a major proposal on the floor until a maiden speech had been delivered and we went through a rather extended procedure like that.” A former senior Senate staffer similarly claimed that “most new senators, regardless of their party, do recognize that before you make that maiden speech, you've got to get the respect of your fellow members” (Anonymous 2019b).

Matthews linked the maiden speech tradition to the apprenticeship norm himself, noting “it is certainly wiser for a freshman to postpone his maiden efforts on the floor too long than to appear overly aggressive,” as “speaking too much tends to decrease a senator's legislative impact” (Matthews 1960, 93-96). Though Matthews does not use maiden speech wait times to measure adherence to apprenticeship, White (2001) contended that one could, remarking that “by calculating the length of time freshmen senators wait before speaking on the Senate floor... one can track the rise, the fall and/or fluctuations of one quantitative indicator of Senate apprenticeship” (White 2001, 22). In the following sections, I unpack my theoretical expectations concerning norm adherence and deploy evidence on maiden speeches to test my conjectures about the evolution of the norm.

Theoretical Expectations

Institutions affect behavior, but the inverse can hold as well: behavior affects institutions. Change in who gets elected to the Senate may fuel changes in legislative norms—whether by

strengthening or weakening institutional traditions and thus changing the character of the body. (Sinclair 1989; Rohde and Theriault 2011; Theriault 2013).

Members' stylistic choices and behaviors are partly molded by their ideal career trajectories, and scholars and members alike have taken a keen interest in the increased migration of members from the House to the Senate. The trend is almost universally met with dismay among institutionalists, as former members and staff worry the "world's greatest deliberative body" is acting too much like the lower chamber. As one veteran staffer noted "people come to the Senate increasingly from the House and they come with expectations of certain things they want to get done, and they can be quite aggressive from the start," while another remarked "as House members become members of the Senate, and staff from the House migrate to the Senate, it opens up the possibility that norms could become eroded" (Anonymous 2019b; Anonymous 2019c). Rohde and Theriault (2011) and Theriault (2013) corroborate this suspicion, linking the migration of members from the more contentious House directly to the erosion of Senate norms by empirically demonstrating that the 40 Republicans who were first elected to the House after 1978 and subsequently served in the Senate—the "Gingrich Senators"—almost single-handedly escalated partisan warfare in the chamber.

The House typically relies on more formal channels of power than on informal norms (Davidson et al. 2018), and though Asher (1973) identified some from interviews, an expectation of new member restraint in floor speech akin to apprenticeship in the Senate was not among them. In stark contrast to the Senate, freshmen are in fact more likely to make speeches on the floor of the House than their senior counterparts (Bernhard and Sulkin 2018).

These observations raise the question of whether House members bring some of the lower chamber's behaviors into the upper chamber. Moreover, the first speech a representative

delivers on the House floor is given in ceremonial fashion as in the Senate, suggesting the possibility that members coming from the House believe they need not abide the tradition, having already completed their apprenticeship by serving in the House.

Bernhard and Sulkin (2018) group House members into five categories: policy specialists, party soldiers, district advocates, party builders, and ambitious entrepreneurs. As defined, ambitious entrepreneurs are fundamentally at odds with several Senate folkways; indeed, some of Congress' most well-known norm-breakers fall into the category, such as Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA), Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX), Tom Delay (D-TX), and James Traficant (D-OH). Though they comprise a small minority of representatives, ambitious entrepreneurs are more than twice as likely to pursue higher office than the others. Ambitious entrepreneurs score highest in money raised, show boating, and lawmaking activity, all behaviors looked upon unfavorably in the context of apprenticeship. Often steering their own individual courses to build reputations beyond the chamber, they are less loyal to their parties, policy priorities, and institutions. Using terminology more familiar to members and staff, ambitious entrepreneurs typically behave as show horses, explaining why this trend alarms Senate institutionalists.

House members of the “ambitious entrepreneurial” style are more than twice as likely to migrate to the Senate than their counterparts (Bernhard and Sulkin 2018). Coupled with the increase in the percentage of senators who previously served in the House, change in the makeup of the Senate likely shapes adherence to the apprenticeship norm. Thus, I expect that *former House members are less likely to abide by the apprenticeship norm*. On similar grounds, I hypothesize that *ideological outliers in the Senate are less likely to serve a lengthy apprenticeship period*, as measured by maiden speeches. I do not, however, hold the same

expectation for ideological outliers on DW-NOM Dim 2, as senators with deviant scores on the metric, at least in the Textbook Era, tended to be Southern Democrats who by all accounts were the most dedicated to preserving the hegemonic folkways of old. Finally—inspired by Matthews (1960) argument that the exigencies of popular elections disincentivized apprenticeship—I hypothesize that *senators from swing states are less likely to serve a lengthy apprenticeship period*, as their incentive to go public and seek out greater exposure early in the term is greater, due to an increased need for name recognition.⁴

Data and Methods

For my dependent variable, I need a measure that captures how long each senator since 1947 has waited until delivering their maiden speech. I consider the maiden speech not the proclaimed, ceremonial speech, but what members have always understood it to mean: the first speech delivered on the floor after being sworn into the Senate. Given that some members delivered lengthy floor speeches in a legislative capacity before delivering a ceremonial speech which they call their maiden speech, this study does not look at what members themselves deem a maiden speech, instead identifying in the *Congressional Record* the point at which members first spoke rhetorically on the floor. Once I identify each senator's first speech, I measure the number of days from their swearing in until they deliver their speech.

To identify each senator's first speech, I deploy the following parameters⁵:

⁴ 'Swing State Senators' are coded as those elected in the ten states with the closest margins of victory in the preceding or concurrent presidential election. I intend to adopt a more empirically sound measure at a later date.

⁵ Note these parameters exclude any participation that entails senators conducting routing parliamentary matters on behalf of leadership. Such remarks do appear in the *Congressional Record*, but they do not meet the conventional definition of a maiden speech.

- I. A “maiden speech” is a senator’s first rhetorical remarks delivered on the floor of the chamber. Generally, remarks made by newly elected members on the Senate floor can be divided into routine procedural motions, legislative debate, and ceremonial maiden speeches; only the latter two are counted as maiden speeches
- II. Parliamentary inquiries and procedural motions are not considered maiden speeches, such as: introducing resolutions (without speaking further in support of a particular position); suggesting the absence of a quorum; and yielding time.
- III. Words spoken while occupying the Presiding Officer’s chair are not counted, as new members of the majority party perform this task during most sessions.
- IV. Questions on a point of order or matter of clarity are not counted, but questions which have a clear rhetorical intent, are meant to advance an argument, or are used to pivot to a legislative speech.
- V. Requests made on the floor to have remarks printed in the record are not counted unless the member also speaks further and argues in favor of a particular position. Providing background on the person who made such remarks does not count.
- VI. Remarks submitted for the record or for the Extensions of Remarks, but not delivered on the floor, are not counted, regardless of whether they were written by the members themselves or another person.
- VII. Cases of unique or one-off anomalies are not counted, such as Sen. Blanche Lincoln’s (D-AR) clarifying comments to Chief Justice Rehnquist during President Clinton’s impeachment trial.
- VIII. The observance of institutional traditions, namely the reading of Washington’s Farewell Address from the rostrum on President’s Day, are not counted, as they require selection by the majority party and do not operate according to the procedure of a typical session.

Covariates

To test and account for political dynamics that might increase adherence to apprenticeship, I include the following covariates⁶ and controls across different iterations of the models. I have expanded *Table 1* for purposes of this course paper to include all additional variables gathered in my dataset (whether ultimately incorporated into any models or not) for clarity and transparency. For instance, I tested a handful of variations on the DW-NOM scores to

⁶ For the Kaplan-Meier, Cox Proportional Hazards, and Survival Random Forest (regression) Models, these variables are covariates; in the binary Random Forest (classification) models I run, they are predictors.

capture ideological outliers, such as deviation from the party and chamber means during a given Congress.

TABLE 1 HERE (pp. 28)

Using event history analysis, I build a series of duration analysis models to explore the dynamics of adherence to apprenticeship. In these models, I define the time of entry (i.e. start of observation) as the date in a given Congress on which a member was sworn in; time of exit/failure (i.e. end of observation) as the date on which a member delivered a floor speech for the first time; and status as whether or not a member delivered a floor speech during that Congress. For example, the (enter, exit, status) statistics (which comprise a survival object in the R package ‘survival’) for a member sworn in on January 3, 1971 and who delivered their first floor speech on March 23, 1971 would be (0, 78, 1), whereas a member inaugurated on September 18, 1975 who first spoke on October 9, 1975 is coded (258, 287, 1).

The first and simplest model I construct is a *Kaplan-Meier (KM) estimator*, which fits a non-parametric survival function $S(t)$: the probability that a subject survives (in this case, waits) longer than time t . While useful as a baseline and for juxtaposition against subsequent models, KM survival analysis cannot use multiple predictors, and can run only on a single categorical predictor. Accordingly, I construct a series of *Cox Proportional Hazards (PH) regressions*. Cox PH regressions allow for multiple and quantitative predictor variables, extending the log-rank test of KM estimators to additional covariates, better suiting the present research design and providing greater inferential strength.

Nevertheless, Cox PH regression models are linear models—assuming a single curve is sufficient to stratify groups or estimate survival times—and in some cases, tree-structured survival models have been demonstrated to give more accurate estimates than Cox models. Accordingly, using machine learning (ML) techniques I construct a third and final model, a *Survival Random Forest*. In doing so, I can compare the two inferential models (KM and Cox) against one based on classification and prediction and rank variable importance through permutation. In other words—rather than measuring the relationship between variables of interest and the DV—a Survival Random Forest model can measure which variables are most important predicting maiden speech wait times.

In sum, the three models establish a baseline survival function, regress additional covariates against the survival object and stratify them for group comparison and determine relative variable importance in predicting maiden speech wait times. I've separately included an *Aalen's additive regression model*, a variation on Cox's model in which covariates' effects are modeled as regression functions which can vary over time (*Appendix B*). Also in the Appendix, I have included summary statistics for several variations on the ML model (non-survival random forest, gradient boosting, and bootstrap ('bagging') aggregation) using both continuous (for regression) and binary (for classification) iterations of my dependent variable.

Results

Figure 1

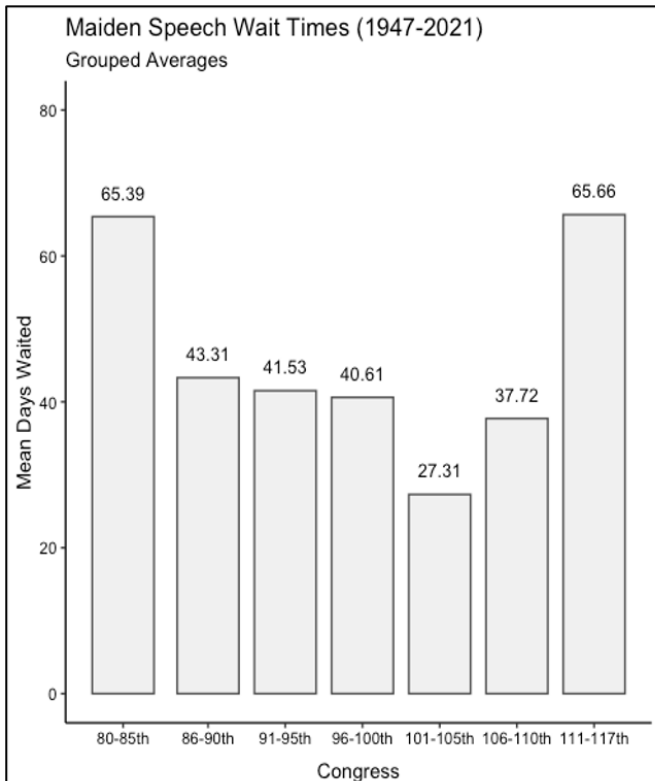
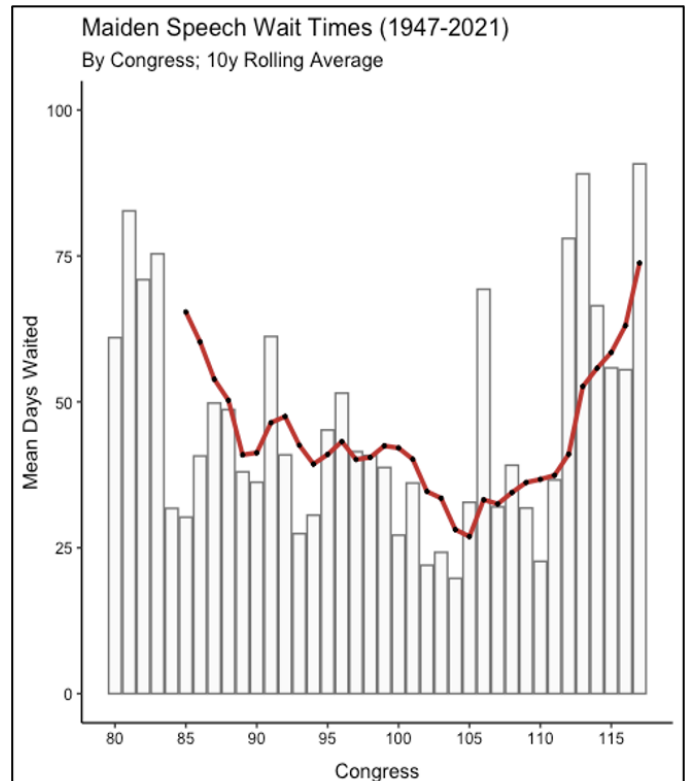


Figure 2



As shown in Figures 1 and 2, Senators never waited months or years before speaking on the floor—the average between the 80th and 117th Congresses is 49 calendar days or 21 legislative days. Though conventional wisdom holds that in the modern Congress, members are expected to wait three months, no freshman class over the last seventy years has *ever* met that standard. Of the 528 senators included in this study, only 11.93% (63) waited 90 days or longer.

Equally fascinating, the old ritual is not in decline, but rather has resurged in an unprecedented fashion in the twenty-first century. When Byrd said “those days are gone” in 1994, he was not wrong—the freshmen of the 103rd Congress waited a mere 24 days to deliver their first floor speeches. Since his death in 2010, however, new members have waited longer than at any point during his five decades in the Senate, peaking at 89 days in the 113th and 117th

Congresses, the closest any freshman class has come to meeting the supposed three-month standard.

At the outset, we see that the data generally correspond with the timeline of apprenticeship’s decline as articulated by Sinclair. During the so-called “Textbook Era,” members waited significantly longer than those who succeeded them. Further, we observe a fairly consistent, negative trend in maiden speech wait time between the 86th Congress—the freshman class which both Sinclair and Matthews cite as the beginning of the end of apprenticeship—and the 101st, when Sinclair declared apprenticeship dead.⁷

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE⁸ (pp. 26)

Figure 3 aggregates and plots survivability functions $S(t)$ for each of the three models.⁹ Across all models, we see that the probability a member has ‘survived’ (not yet delivered a maiden speech) drops to 0.5 at around $t = 45$. Notably, across all models, the probability a member endures for the purported three month standard, is less than 0.15.

FIGURES 4 – 7 ABOUT HERE (pp. 27)

⁷ In the absence of the late Sinclair’s own data to compare the maiden speech variable against, I substitute another available measure of floor activity: bills introduced per member, per Congress. I find the correlation between the measure and our maiden speech variable is 0.2715, and that the data skews toward the former, as shown in the Quantile-Quantile Plot included in *Appendix B*. In accordance with scholarship on apprenticeship, however, we wouldn’t expect the bills per member measure to be a particularly strong one, as senior members who have served their apprenticeship period—the vast majority of the body—would not be expected to show restraint. In order to give this test more explanatory power, I would need to aggregate bills per member data at the individual level.

⁸ Confidence intervals omitted on *Figure 3* for easy model aggregation. For individual model plots with confidence intervals, see *Appendix*. Cox PH model includes covariates.

⁹ For the Cox model, the survivability function is the inverse of the cumulative hazards function.

Table 2 provides the results for three iterations of the Cox regression model, with varying covariates, and *Table 3* (pp. 30) replicates the models using linear regression for simpler interpretation. Figures 4, 5, 6, and 7 stratify the Cox model and plot subgroup survival functions to better visualize my hypotheses. As they and the regression results show, my hypotheses that prior House members, ideological outliers/extremists (D1), and swing state senators serve shorter apprenticeship periods are not supported.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE (pp. 29)

For extremists on D2, we observe a modest association, the directionality of which I anticipated, given that Southern Democrats tended to score the most extreme on the metric and were the most interested in upholding apprenticeship. Interestingly, however, this relationship holds even when including a dummy variable for ‘southerner’. Perhaps, the “culture warriors” of today, on both sides of the aisle, wait longer to speak because the incentive to go public is diminished by the comparatively uncompetitive seats. This supposition inspired the eventual inclusion of the ‘swing state senator’ variable, though I find that it too does not alter the finding for extremists (D2) in any meaningful way and that the ‘swing state senator’ variable itself is not significant.

Though my application of ML techniques and methods onto my dataset has not rectified the empirical difficulties I have faced since this project’s inception—that theoretically relevant variables explain little of the variation on the dependent variable—it has unearthed some unexpected findings which I can incorporate into subsequent iterations of the paper. Most

notably, institutional factors which I included as controls— votes per Congress, days in session, and new members per Congress—and did not form hypotheses around are, in fact, some of the strongest explanatory variables.

This might suggest that much of the variation we see on the DV over time (*Figures 1 and 2*) is attributable to institutional factors as opposed to individual ones. Votes per Congress, for instance, measures aggregate legislative activity; perhaps some of the variation we observe in maiden speech wait time over time is simply attributable to differences in the legislative calendar early in the session. Or, similarly, maiden speech wait time may be strongly associated with the number of new members elected in a given Congress because members tend not to deliver their maiden speech on days when their colleagues plan to do so.

Apprenticeship Today: The McConnell Factor

That more recently elected members wait longer for their maiden speeches is a surprising finding, and there aren't any immediately obvious explanations in the existing literature or theory. All implicit hypotheses drawn based on conventional wisdom and scholarship are thus far rejected; much like this study's qualitative analysis of maiden speeches, the maiden speech data often contradict what we might expect. It is possible that party leaders—wielding unprecedented influence over their caucuses in the modern Congress—have impressed a greater deal of emphasis upon senatorial tradition today than in decades past.

When McConnell's name is mentioned in conversations on legislative norms, it is almost uniformly negative; as Norm Ornstein put it, “[McConnell] will go down in history as one of the most significant people in destroying the fundamentals of our constitutional democracy...

There's nobody as corrupt, in terms of violating the *norms* of government" (Ornstein 2020).¹⁰

While this case can certainly be made with respect to unorthodox lawmaking, legislative obstruction, and the judiciary confirmation process, McConnell does present himself as a Senate institutionalist who values the folkways and traditions of the Textbook Senate. The type of norm-breaker Ornstein deems McConnell relates more closely to precedent, procedure, comity, and bipartisanship than Matthews' folkways; he is wholly different than the rabble-rousing norm-breakers like Sens. Ted Cruz (R-TX) and James Traficant (D-OH).

Though his aggressive, majority-driven legislative style shuns convention and reciprocity, McConnell's behavior does not conflict with all of Matthews' folkways. After all, he served his apprenticeship under some members of the Textbook Era. Accordingly, he reflects the standard of those members in some ways, behaving as a work horse, remaining silent, and routinely espousing institutional patriotism.¹¹

Any study of the modern Congress—particularly one that addresses institutional norms—ought to study the effect of McConnell's leadership. In June 2018, he became the longest-serving Republican leader in Senate history, and by all accounts exerts more control over his caucus than his predecessors. Admittedly, though, the inspiration for this subsection comes not from McConnell's unprecedented stature, but the maiden speech data. Summary statistics suggest that the uptick we observe in the modern Congress is almost entirely attributable to Republicans during the McConnell's tenure in GOP leadership (Whip 2003-2007, Leader 2007-Present). This,

¹⁰ Jane Mayer, "How Mitch McConnell Became Trump's Enabler-in-Chief," *The New Yorker*, April 12, 2020.

¹¹ I specifically recall McConnell reiterating the "greatest deliberative body in the world" talking point and referencing Washington's famed "saucer" analogy within the first thirty seconds of my U.S. Senate Page Program graduation.

coupled with the remark cited from Senator Alexander articulating McConnell's and Frist's desires to revive the tradition, inspired the following analysis.¹²

FIGURE 8 HERE (pp. 28)

An accompanying Cox Proportional Hazards regression identifies a significant relationship between the DV and the dummy McConnell variable at $p < 0.001$. Simple two-tailed *t*-tests comparing Republicans under McConnell's leadership and a) members prior, b) Republicans prior, and c) Democrats during McConnell's leadership also all show a significant difference-in-means at $p < 0.01$. Moreover, the relative variable importance plot for the Random Forest model shows this is the strongest predictor of maiden speech wait time of any variables tested.

Perhaps the newfound strength of the apprenticeship norm can be explained partly by the landmark transition from the committee and subcommittee dominated Senate of the 1960s and 70s into one which consolidates power into party leadership. The regularity with which leaders of both parties have articulated the importance of Senate norms and traditions suggests that they may be using their stature to impress these concepts upon new members. In a time when party leaders run a tight ship, a Majority/Minority Leader who cares about the traditions of the old Senate could conceivably motivate his caucus to make the maiden speech great again. After all, it was McConnell who ordered the maiden speeches of the 108th Congress printed and published as an official Senate document for the first time.

¹² In this model '0' includes all Democrats and Republicans whose inaugural term predates McConnell's ascension to leadership.

These observations do far more than suggest the relevancy of additional variables—they motivate reevaluation of the very core of my theory. In the previous sections, I’ve theoretically defended my connection between the maiden speech tradition and the norm of apprenticeship and demonstrated that fluctuations therein correspond with previous scholars’ contentions about the latter’s decline in the twentieth century. But if further investigation shows that fluctuations in maiden speech wait time are driven primarily by changes in external institutional factors and not in norm adherence among new members, I may have to go back to the drawing board. Both can conceivably be true at the same time—maiden speeches offer a proxy to study apprenticeship (hence the variable’s conformity to other measures of the norm), but the uptick we observe in the modern Congress is not caused by a resurgence in apprenticeship as a behavioral pattern.

Moving forward, I intend to reconceptualize my dependent variable in order to address this counterfactual (i.e. that new members don’t wait longer). Specifically, I will gather a sample of non-freshmen senators in each Congress and calculate how long they waited to deliver their first floor speech, and then compute the difference between the two groups for each Congress. In doing so, I can track the disparity between new members and their counterparts, more accurately capturing apprenticeship as a behavioral pattern and accounting for those institutional factors which might explain its contemporary resurgence.

Conclusion

By coupling a qualitative study of remarks made by members about the maiden speech tradition with a quantitative analysis of the ritual over time, I challenge the conventional wisdom that the norm has disappeared from the modern Senate. First term senators in the modern Congress are undertaking the old rite of passage no differently than their peers did during the so-

called Textbook Era. I also find that the maiden speech was never quite what it has been made out to be—most members never waited three months, and many delivered legislative speeches days, weeks, or months before their ceremonial address.

When employed as a proxy for the apprenticeship norm, the maiden speech tradition corroborates the findings of scholars such as Matthews, Sinclair, and Smith that the norm began to lose its foothold by the end of the 1950s. But it also suggests that apprenticeship is alive and well today; that former House members, Gingrich Senators, and other groups criticized for their indifference to norms are in fact adhering to them.

My findings could be strengthened by pairing the maiden speech variable with other existing quantitative indicators of apprenticeship, such as Sinclair's (1989) on senators' offering of floor amendments. Furthermore, I could strengthen my analysis by simply addressing the counterfactual of the very existence of apprenticeship—whether new members in fact wait longer to speak than their more tenured colleagues. In doing so, I could track how the disparity between freshmen and non-freshmen wait times changes over time, thus addressing a potential counterargument, that members today speak on the floor less often in the aggregate.

Moving forward, I also intend to test the maiden speech data against Volden and Wiseman's (2021) Legislative Effectiveness scores. If serving an apprenticeship is indeed still a norm in the Senate today—and members who restrain themselves are held in greater esteem by their more senior colleagues—we might expect that those who wait longer to deliver their maiden speeches prove more effective lawmakers later in their careers. In such a model, I could use the maiden speech variable as a predictor—with career-long legislative effectiveness as the dependent variable—and compare how well serving an apprenticeship predicts effectiveness downstream relative to more conventional covariates.

Perhaps this is just a blip, or a fluke on one data point. Or, alternatively, perhaps members adhere to the ritual out of respect for the institution's history and not to observe a period of restraint. One could certainly argue that the regularity with which the maiden speech data refute conventional wisdom suggests its relative weakness as a quantitative indicator. Nevertheless, it is clear through speaking with members themselves and reading floor remarks from senators like Byrd that the maiden speech tradition is directly linked to the apprenticeship norm. This study both offers the first full account of the maiden speech tradition of the U.S. Senate, rectifying a gap in contemporary scholarship by offering new perspectives on the history of the ritual and its continued relevance.

TABLES AND FIGURES

Figures 1 and 2 are imbedded in the text (pp. 17)

Figure 3

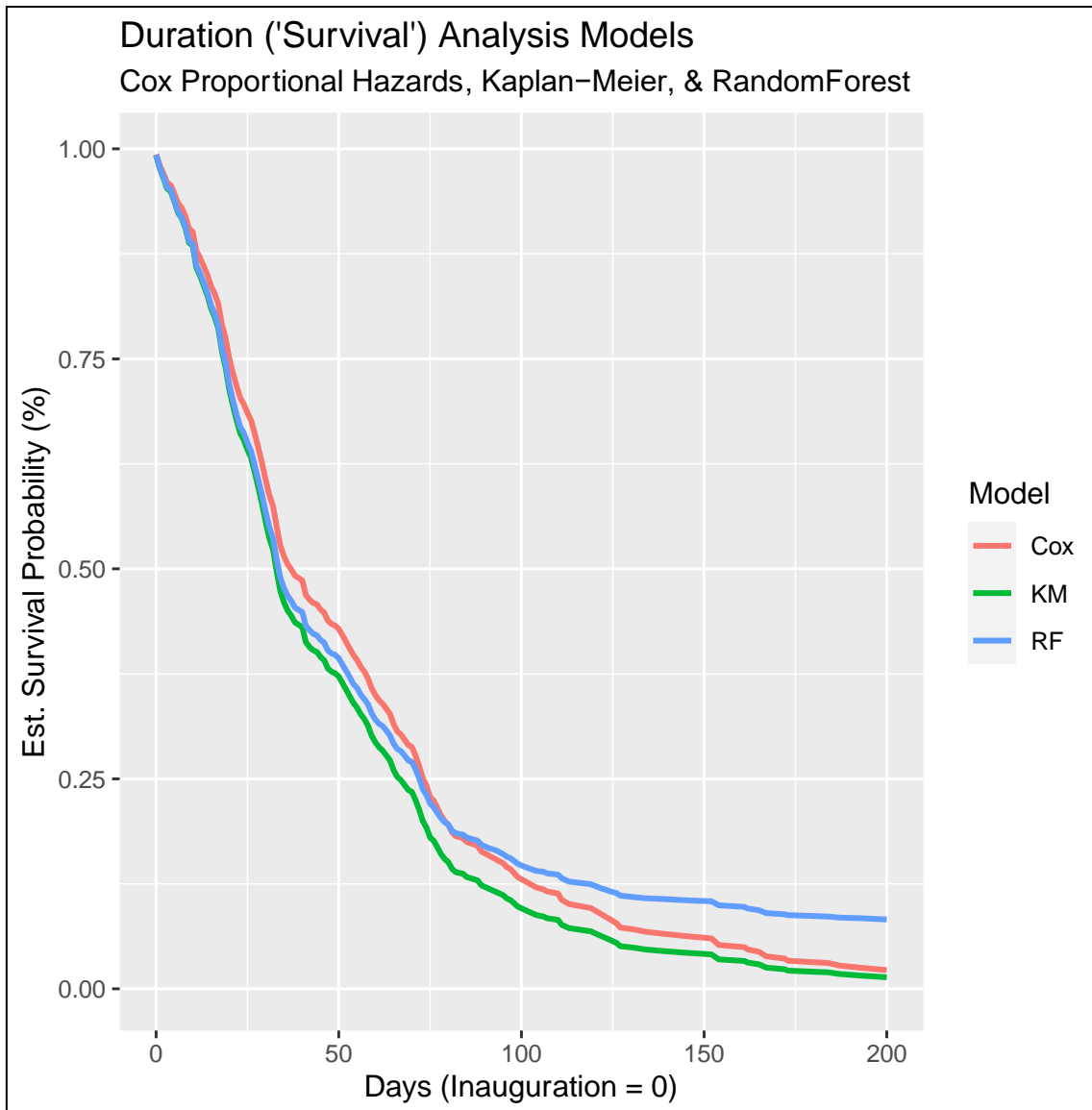


Figure 4

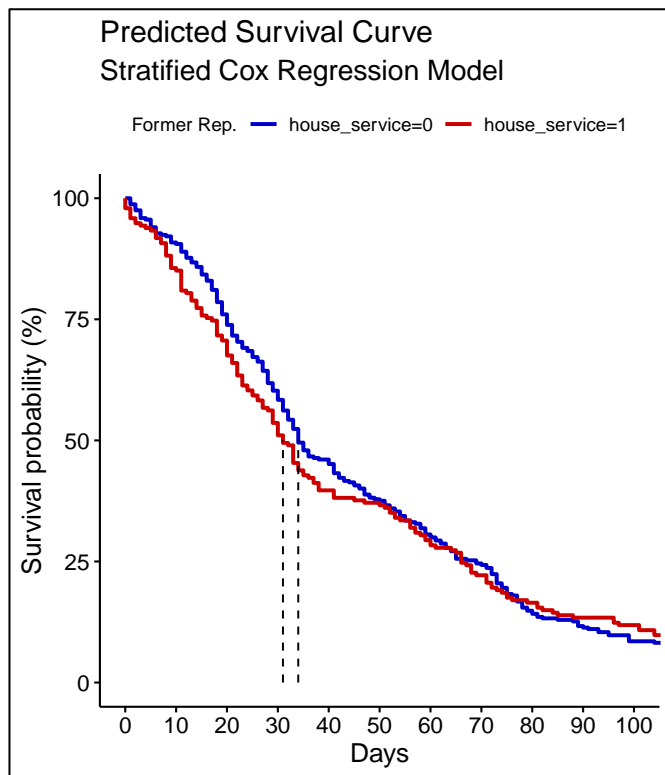


Figure 5

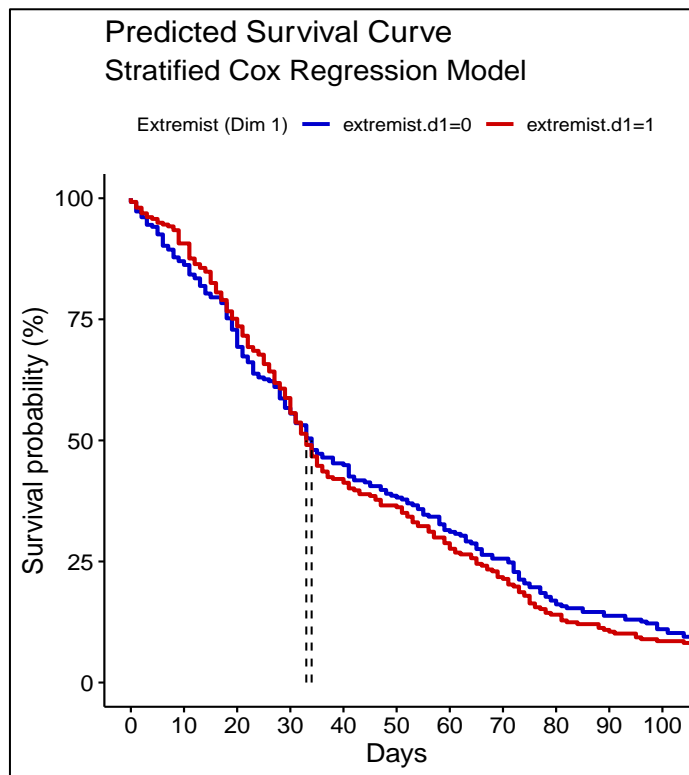


Figure 6

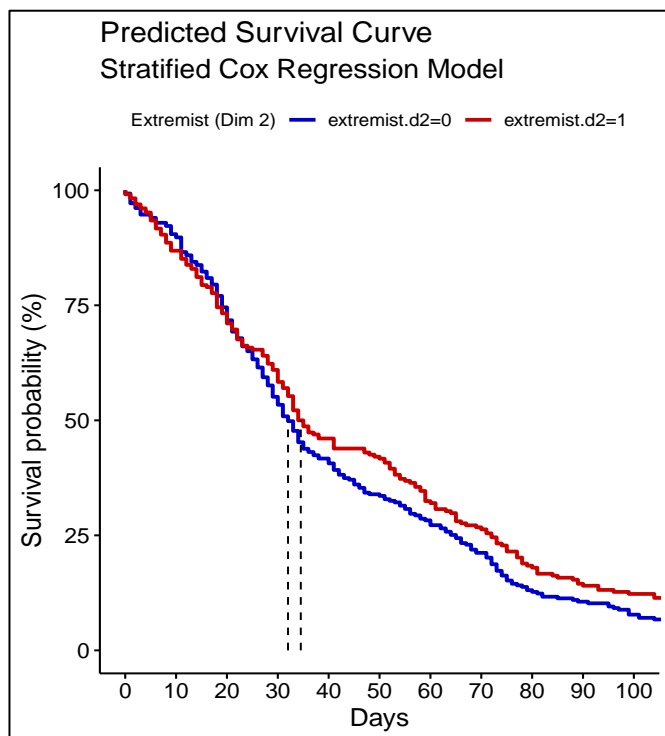


Figure 7

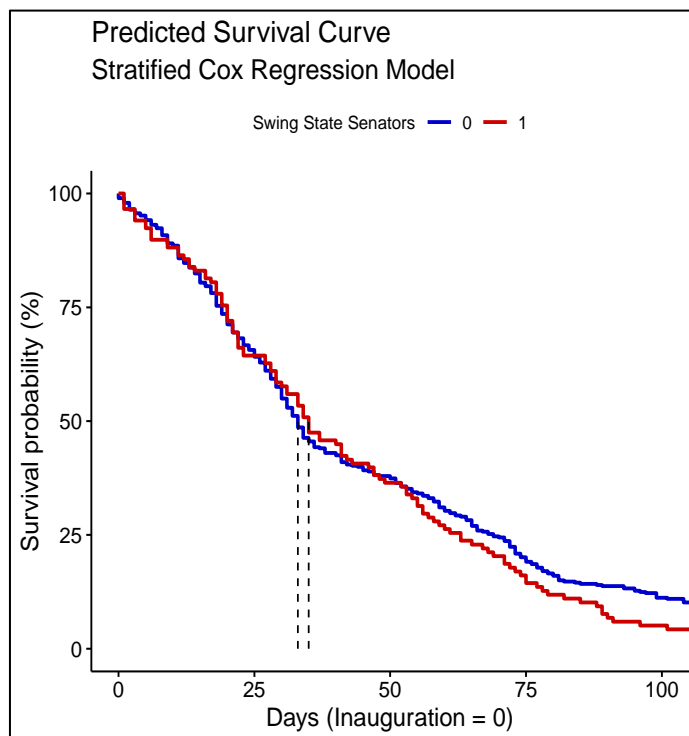


Figure 8

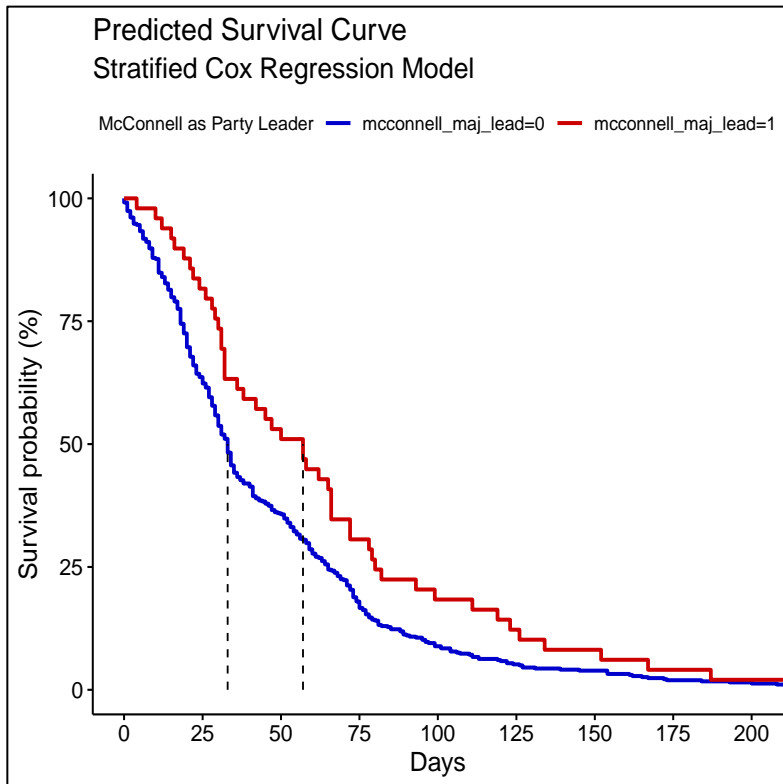


Table 1***Covariates/Controls***

Party	Binary	= 1 if Republican
Majority Party (Chamber)	Binary	= 1 if the GOP is the majority party
Majority Party (Member)	Binary	= 1 if a member of the majority party
Gender	Binary	= 1 if woman
House Service	Binary	= 1 if member previously served in the U.S. House of Representatives
Swing State Senator	Binary	= 1 if member is from one of the ten states with the smallest margins of victory in the preceding or concurrent presidential election.
McConnell as GOP Leader	Binary	= 1 if member is a Republican inaugurated during McConnell's tenure in GOP leadership
McConnell as Majority Leader	Binary	= 1 if member is a Republican inaugurated during McConnell's tenure as Senate Majority Leader
Extremism (DW-NOM D1)*	Continuous	= Absolute value of DW-NOMINATE Dim. 1. *Also calculated using Abs value of deviation from party and chamber means in a given Congress
Extremism (DW-NOM D2)	Continuous	= Same as above
Votes per Congress	Discrete	= Number of roll call votes taken in a given Congress
Number of Votes	Discrete	= Number of roll call votes cast by a given member in a Congress
Days in Session	Discrete	= Number of days in session in a given Congress
New Members per Congress	Discrete	= Number of first-term senators inaugurated
Extremist (DW-NOM D1)	Binary (ML)	= 1 if the absolute value of a member's score on Dimension 1 during their first year in office is greater than the mean for all new senators. Also tested using mean deviation from party in a given Congress
Extremist (DW-NOM D2)	Binary (ML)	= Same as above

Table 2

Aggregated Cox Proportional Hazards Models¹³

<i>Predictors</i>	Surv 1			Surv 2			Surv 3		
	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
DW-NOM D1 (mean dev.)	0.85	0.47–1.51	0.57	0.78	0.42–1.28	0.43	0.94	0.50–1.77	0.85
DW-NOM D2 (mean dev.)	0.84	0.57–1.22	0.36	0.78	0.52–1.17	0.23	0.73	0.49–1.09	0.13
GOP Majority				0.85	0.74–1.12	0.16	0.88	0.70–1.11	0.28
Majority Sen.				1.08	0.87–1.35	0.48	1.14	0.91–1.42	0.26
Woman				0.90	0.66–1.24	0.51	1.08	0.67–1.27	0.63
Republican				1.13	0.89–1.41	0.30	1.32	1.03–1.69	0.03*
Swing State				1.14	0.91–1.43	0.27	1.14	0.89–1.40	0.34
Fmr. House				1.05	0.87–1.29	0.60	1.03	0.81–1.31	0.46
Southerner							0.97	0.79–1.21	0.79
McConnell as GOP Leader							0.63	0.45–0.86	~ 0 ***
Observations	528			528			528		
Concordance	0.556 (se = 0.016)			0.527 (se = 0.017)			0.515 (se = 0.017)		
Likelihood ratio test	13.57 on 10 df, p = 0.2			5.02 on 8 df, p = 0.8			0.92 on 2 df, p = 0.6		
Wald test	13.28 on 10 df, p = 0.2			4.98 on 8 df, p = 0.8			0.91 on 2 df, p = 0.6		
Score (logrank) test	13.37 on 10 df, p = 0.2			4.99 on 8 df, p = 0.8			0.91 on 2 df, p = 0.6		

*' p<0.1 * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001*

¹³ 'Estimates' denotes the Hazard Ratio (the inverse of the Survival function; smaller values mean greater odds of 'survival')

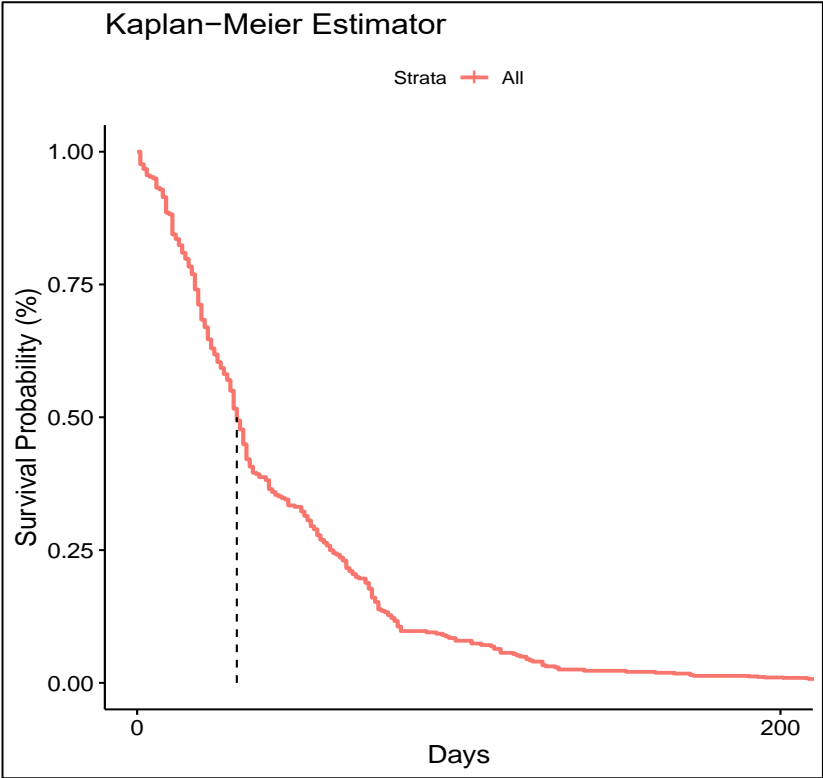
Table 3

Aggregated OLS Models

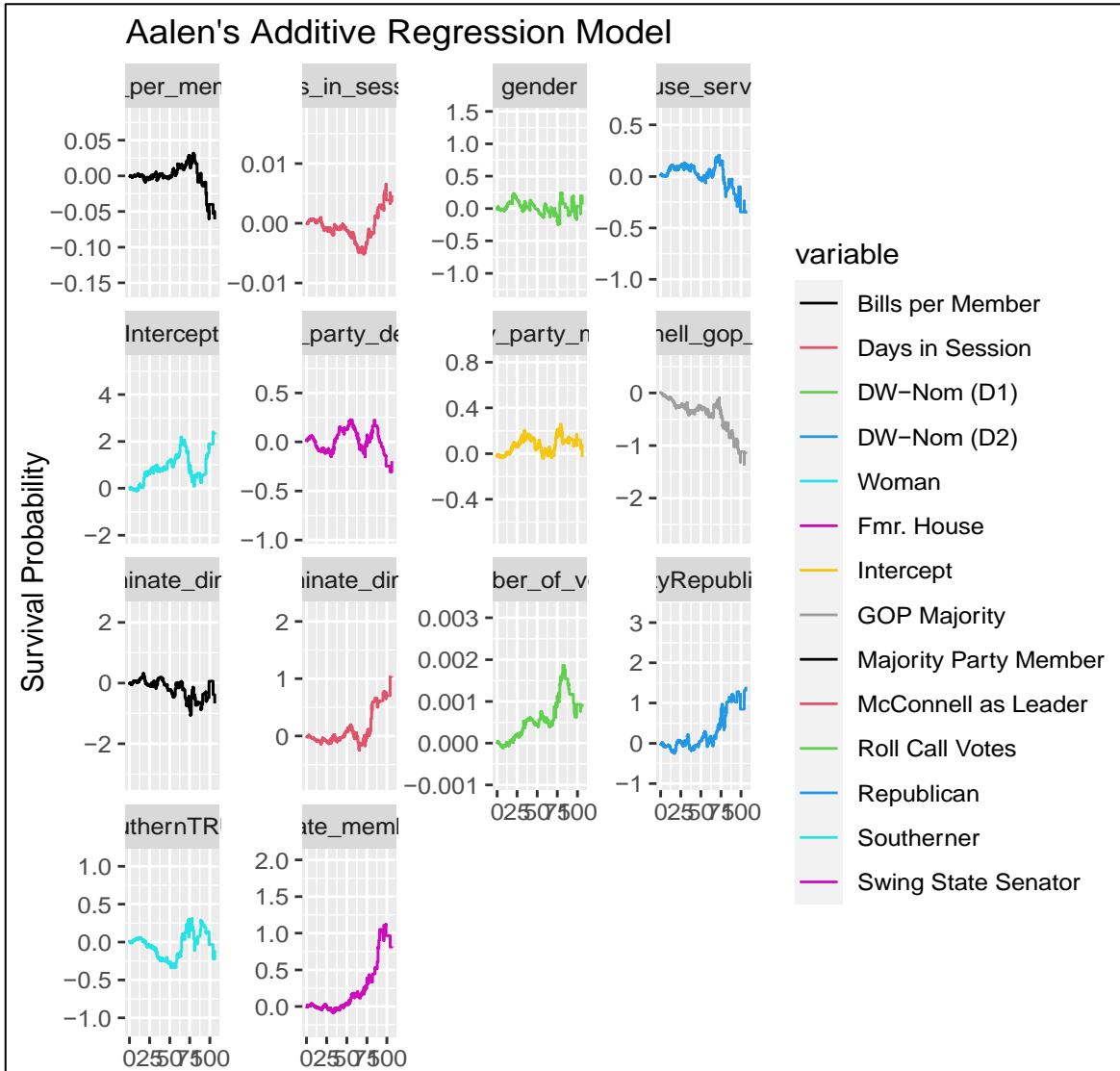
<i>Coefficient</i>	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI (95%)</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI (95%)</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI (95%)</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Intercept	43.02	31.47 – 54.57	<0.001	50.01	34.47 – 65.56	<0.001	51.62	35.83 – 67.41	<0.001
DW-NOM D1	4.17	-20.24 – 28.57	0.738	4.59	-21.32 – 30.50	0.728	0.42	-25.67 – 26.52	0.975
DW-NOM D2	12.18	-2.42 – 26.77	0.102	12.11	-3.35 – 27.57	0.124	14.47	-1.03 – 29.97	0.067
Maj. Party				5.70	-3.50 – 14.90	0.224	3.92	-5.32 – 13.16	0.405
Maj. Party Member				-5.76	-14.82 – 3.31	0.213	-7.59	-16.68 – 1.51	0.102
Woman				-1.80	-15.04 – 11.43	0.789	-2.95	-16.14 – 10.25	0.661
Republican				-5.21	-14.50 – 4.08	0.271	-10.02	-19.96 – -0.09	0.048
Swing State				-4.75	-13.94 – 4.45	0.311	-4.44	-13.58 – 4.70	0.341
Fmr. House				-3.85	-11.88 – 4.18	0.347	-3.98	-12.00 – 4.04	0.330
Southerner							3.10	-6.47 – 12.66	0.525
McConnell GOP							18.08	4.56 – 31.60	0.009
Observations	528			528			528		
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.005 / 0.001			0.013 / -0.002			0.029 / 0.010		

APPENDICES

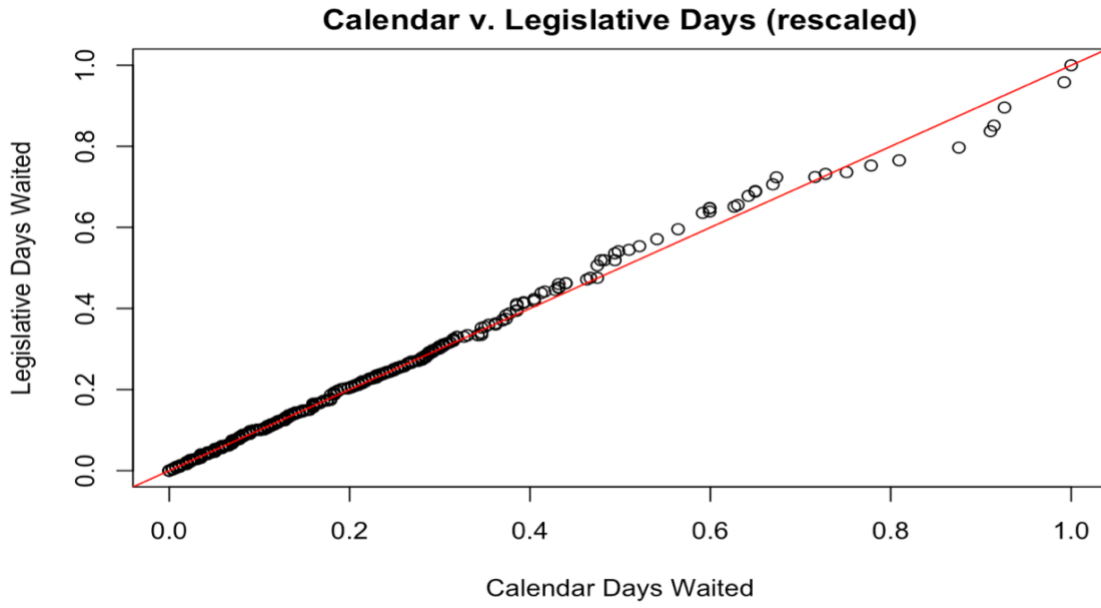
Appendix A: Survivability Function—Kaplan-Meier Estimator



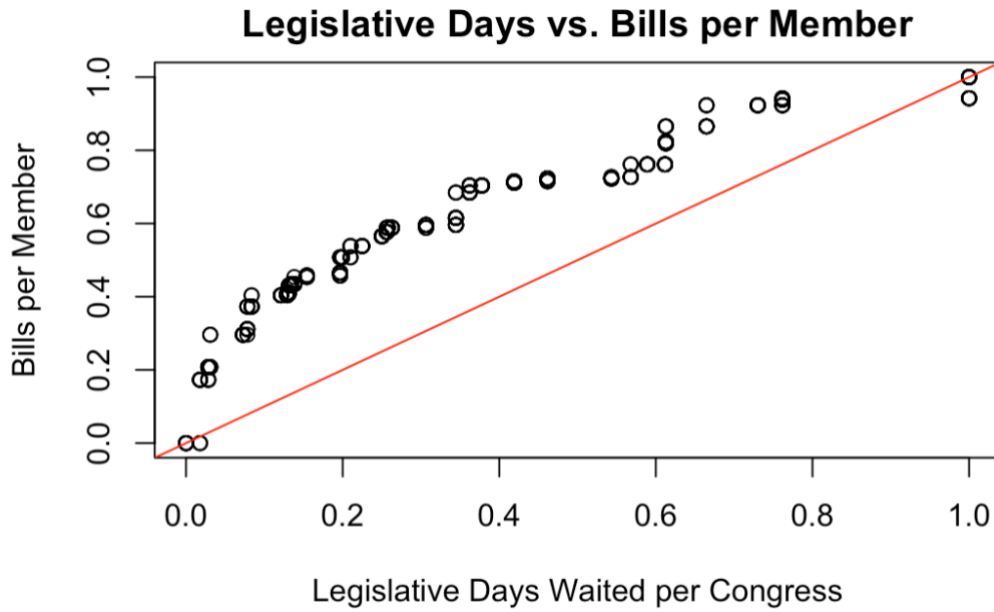
Appendix B: Aalen's Additive Regression Model



Appendix C: Quantile-Quantile Plot—Calendar Days Waited vs. Legislative Days Waited



Appendix D: Quantile-Quantile Plot—Legislative Days Waited vs. Bills per Member



Appendix E: Aggregated Machine Learning (ML) models

Model	Type	Pred. error	RMSE	Accuracy	NIR	Kappa	p[Acc > NIR]
Bagging: Survival	Regression	0.352					
Bagging (opt mtry): Survival	Regression	0.370					
Random Forest: Survival	Regression	0.372					
Boosting: Survival	Regression		40.04				
Bagging	Regression		40.36				
Bagging (opt mtry)	Regression		39.97				
Bagging (caret)	Regression		45.82				
Random Forest	Regression		39.45				
Boosting	Regression		36.67				
Bagging	Classification (DV 1)		0.39	0.8333	0.8409	-0.01	0.6482
Bagging (opt mtry)	Classification (DV 1)		0.34	0.8864	0.8864	0	0.5682
Random Forest	Classification (DV 1)		0.40	0.8788	0.8864	-0.01	0.67
Boosting	Classification (DV 1)		0.41	0.8258	0.8864	-0.08	0.9753
Bagging	Classification (DV 2)		0.71	0.4545	0.5	-0.09	0.8711
Bagging (opt mtry)	Classification (DV 2)		0.66	0.4848	0.553	-0.03	0.9515
Random Forest	Classification (DV 2)		0.69	0.5227	0.553	0.05	0.7849
Boosting	Classification (DV 2)		0.66	0.4242	0.553	-0.14	0.9989

The table above shows relevant accuracy statistics for the ML models constructed.¹⁴ My dependent variable (maiden speech wait time) is discrete and not particularly well suited, at least theoretically, for dichotomization; nevertheless, since random forest algorithms work particularly

¹⁴ We do not calculate RMSE for Survival Random Forests because the model does not predict survival time, rather, the distribution of survival time.

well on binary data, I have constructed a series of classification models. In the first group (denoted ‘DV 1’ in the table above), norm breakers are defined as those who delivered their maiden speech before $t = 90$ (in accordance with the purported three-month standard), whereas in the second they are defined as those who delivered their maiden speech before the median $t = 34$. As the table shows, neither DV classification method produces a model with predictive power; none have greater accuracy rates than the no information rate (NIR). Accordingly, for the remainder of this section I focus on the regression models.

As with the Cox Proportional Hazards and OLS regression models (*Tables 2 and 3*), the variables included do little to explain the variation across the DV. Though relative variable importance varies modestly across the models, in all cases, only around half contribute; the rest score negatively, detracting from the model. Constructing the dependent variable as a survival object (R package ‘ranger’) as opposed to simply days waited does not appear to have a significant effect on model error nor variable importance scores. In the random forest model, dummy variables for party, majority/minority status, southerner, gender, and former service in the U.S. House score negative on variable importance, and are removed.

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