

**Exploring the Role of Sectionalism in Congressional Roll Call Votes, 1885-1908**  
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Abstract: Richard Bensei reinvigorated the debate concerning the defining role of sectional tensions in impacting political struggle. In his seminal work on the subject, *Sectionalism and American Political Development, 1880-1980* (1984), Bensei analyzed selected roll call votes in the House of Representatives and concluded that sectionalism is one of the “primal causes” of American political development. In this essay, I reanalyze the roll call votes of the 49<sup>th</sup>, 54<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> Congresses of the House of Representatives to test Bensei’s theories. I specifically group representatives according to the regional groups devised by Bensei. My preliminary results partly support Bensei’s theory. I find statistically significant support for region variables on roll call votes concerning matters Bensei emphasized – international affairs and “private” bills. However, while my results show sectionalism to be a key factor, it is not necessarily the “dominant” factor. Party identification, ideological disposition as well as policy content of the roll call vote may have as much or even greater impact on vote choice than sectionalism alone.

Sectional divides have long plagued the development of the American polity. Indeed, the sectional divide over slavery drove many of the key debates illuminating the framing of our very own Constitution. Richard BenseI advances a theory advocating the deterministic and continuing power of sectionalism in shaping political outcomes. As he puts it, “sectional influence has been clearly dominant” in influencing political development (BenseI 1984, 24). In *Sectionalism and American Political Development*, he purports to prove his point by noting relationships between congressional roll call votes and designated geographic regions on several highly selective and sectionally-charged issues ranging from 1880 to 1980. Is BenseI’s analysis convincing? In this paper, I will test BenseI’s claims in a more rigorous manner than previously employed by analyzing roll call votes in the House of Representatives during the period 1877-1910 using multivariate statistical analysis. The results indicate that BenseI’s claim is somewhat overstated. When analyzed in conjunction with the representative’s party/ ideology and district-level demographic characteristics as well as by issue content of the respective bill, the role of sectionalism is more nuanced than BenseI would have us believe. While sectionalism is an important lens in which to view the shaping of congressional preferences, issue content of the bill and the representative’s party and ideology play as much or even more of a role in foreshadowing congressional vote choice.

### **Why Sectionalism?**

Sectionalism has long been a force shaping the development of the American polity. Early American historians like Frederick Jackson Turner (an

inspiration to Bense) emphasized the importance of the frontier in American history.

Turner wrote:

The frontier and the section are two of the most fundamental factors in American history. The frontier is a moving section, or rather a form of society, determined by the reactions between the wilderness and the edge of expanding settlement; the section is the outcome of the deeper-seated geographical conditions interacting the stock that settled the region.” (Turner 1932, 183).

Turner believed sectional strife to be inevitable and saw sectionalism as rooted in economic expression. In particular, he saw Congress as the hotbed of sectional strife, with the resulting legislation arising from “sectional adjustments to meet national needs” (Turner 1922, 7). In particular, Turner emphasized the instrumental role that political parties had in fostering sectional demands. “National party...has been in America a flexible bond, yielding in extreme cases to sectional insurgency, yielding often, in the construction of bills, to sectional demands and to sectional interests, but always tending to draw sections together toward national adjustments by compromise and bargain.” (Turner 1932, 205). In another article, Turner describes sectionalism as a matter of degree. He noted that he recognizes sectionalism by the methods in which a region resists national uniformity and in the manifestation of social and economic separatedness. As the vast frontier faded, opportunities to move to sparsely populated areas with abundant job opportunities faded. These “physiographical conditions, economic interests and constituent stocks of settled societies” persisted in the form of sectionalism.

Turner’s writings inspired other scholars in his era to return to sectionalism as an animating theme to explain policy outcome. Like Turner, these scholars emphasized the economic roots of sectionalism. Turner’s contemporary Hannah Grace Roach found sectionalism in the 1870s to 1890s to be a product of the interaction

of 1) the rapid expansion of Western settlement; and 2) the greater industrialization of the older parts of the country (Roach 1925, 500).

Early scholars even applied a sectionalist lens to exploring roll call votes. Julius Turner and subsequently Edward Schneirer conducted elementary analyses of congressional roll call votes (separated by party) and found sectionalism to be one of among many factors, among them party, urbanism, ethnicity and racial composition, that influence roll call votes (Turner et al. 1970). In his work, *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups*, V.O. Key also explained how sectionally-rooted economic interests spur regions to adhere to divergent policy interests through, as Turner argued, the mechanism of the political party in the legislature (Key 1964, 238).

### **Sectionalism as a “Causal” Factor**

It is within this context that in 1980 Richard Bensele wrote *Sectionalism in American Political Development* (1984) (“*Sectionalism*”), reviving new light into a topic pushed to the backburner. In this book, he sets forth the main tenets of his theories regarding the deterministic role of sectionalism. As he puts it, “[t]he immutable alignment of sectional conflict... decisively shaped the institutional structures, political parties, and ideological belief-systems of American political life” (Bensele 1984, 411). Bensele focuses his argument by delimiting a continual struggle between the industrial “core” northern industrialized economy and the agrarian “periphery.” He analyzes close votes on so-called “key” policy areas in ten separate House of Representatives congresses between 1885-1980, grouping congressman into groups based on “urban trade areas” and their hinterlands. He then calculates an index for “sectional stress” that measures the cohesion of the designated congressional delegation for each “trade area.” Using

elementary descriptive analysis, Bensel claims that this divide between the “core” and “periphery” has remained steadfast based on sectional tensions. He refers to sectionalism as the “dominant” influence” and contends that “party competition and ideological belief-systems are subordinate factors in the evolution of American politics.” (17). He sees party and ideology as cross-cutting and argues that ideology only coincides with the sectional cleavage when party does not occupy that role (29).

Bensel then chronologically goes from the 1880s to 1980s to illustrate how the core/periphery distinction shapes the American polity. This paper focuses on his analysis of the period 1880 to 1910. He points out three economic policies that he says decisively support his argument: tariffs, elections and imperialism. These policies, he says “reflect[ed] the dominance of the northeastern-midwestern core in a struggle with the Southern periphery and the mountain West for control of the state apparatus” (60). The first issue, the tariff, sparked sectionalist tensions between the industrializing core and the agrarian periphery. In particular, because Union pensions were paid out of the proceeds of the tariff, debates between the core and the periphery often were reflected in heated debates in the halls of the 49<sup>th</sup> Congress concerning private pension bills. The second issue, federal election laws, came to a head in the 54<sup>th</sup> Congress, when northern Republicans saw their chance to reverse consolidation of southern political power (75). Finally, the third issue, imperialism, was reflected in debates particularly in the 59<sup>th</sup> Congress concerning territorial expansion.

Although *Sectionalism* is his seminal work on the topic, Bensel also wrote on sectionalist themes in two other books. In *Yankee Leviathan* (1990), Bensel sets forth his theory of state formation and hypothesizes about the role that sectionalism had in

influencing statist policies concerning finance and the tariff. He finds a sectional pattern to such support, with Republicans from Northern finance and industrialized centers as instrumental in fostering legislation to underpin central state growth. He also divides the political economy into four sectors in order to ascertain the influence of “finance capital” in hastening the Northern abandonment of Southern Reconstruction. He then analyzes ten congressional roll vote votes on “key” financial concerns and concludes that Northern finance capitalists opposed many of these measures, causing their demise and/or affecting their implementation.

In his most recent work, *Political Economy of Industrialization, 1877-1900* (2000), Bensel uses sectionalism as a means in which to understand the process of industrialization. Whereas in his other books he primarily analyzed sectionalism in legislative terms, in *Political Economy*, he expands the reach of sectionalism’s importance by placing it front and center in facilitating industrialization and accumulation of wealth. He explains how the gold standard, the unregulated national market and the tariff facilitated uneven economic development across regions. He also shows how the South and West suffered at the expense of Northern hegemony in such things as per capita manufacturing value added, per capita wealth, literacy, interest rates and patent activity. His analysis further underscores the interregional movement of wealth and capital from the “core” to the “periphery,” thereby underscoring the theme of core/periphery cleavage he noted in *Sectonalism*.

Bensel’s three works on the subject are an important – and needed – contribution to the literature. Whereas other scholars before him “brought the state back in” to the study of American political development, Bensel “brought sectionalism back

in.” However, although one can admire Bense’s accomplishments, his underlying thesis – that sectionalism is *the* defining causal factor in American political development – should be closely examined. This is especially true in light of the availability of more sophisticated statistical techniques that were in its infancy in the early 1980s when Bense first wrote *Sectionalism*. It is this task that I turn to in this paper.

### ***Critique of Sectionalism and American Political Development***

Bense’s analysis should be reevaluated in light of 1) his assumptions, 2) the data upon which he relies and 3) his statistical techniques. Bense did not do a comprehensive or even a statistically rigorous random analysis of roll call votes in his *Sectionalism* analysis. To the contrary, he reviewed only a small subset of votes (approximately ten per congress) in select congresses. Further, he deliberately chose votes that had sectional underpinnings. As he notes, “[t]he sampling procedure unavoidably bias the analysis . . . toward policies which provoked high levels of sectional stress in their respective periods” (Bense 1984, 31). Analyzing sectionalism by studying votes on issues characterized as animating sectionalist concerns is circular. While such a cursory and selective example could be instructive in showing *examples* of sectionalist influence, it is optimistic to believe that such an analysis can really be the basis in which to launch a statistically rigorous theory on the *causal* importance of sectionalism in actually influencing American political development.

The distribution and content of policies that Bense examines in *Sectionalism* also seems misplaced. Indeed, eight of the ten votes Bense analyzed in the 49<sup>th</sup> Congress had to do with private union pensions --- an admittedly sectionally-charged issue that pitted Northern Union veterans against Southern former Confederates. The

remaining roll calls in that Congress analyzed passage of the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 and adoption of a Senate amendment to grant the public printer and his employees fifteen annual days of leave. In the 54<sup>th</sup> Congress, Bensel analyzed one bill on a private military pension and another two dealing with appropriations for Howard University and miscellaneous charitable institutions. Other bills referenced the establishment of a national bankruptcy code as well as legislation to provide for federal enforcement of laws governing imitation dairy products (73). The remaining five dealt with contested elections. Similarly, the bills Bensel analyzed for the 59<sup>th</sup> Congress dealt with predictably sectional issues. He analyzed four votes connected with the statehood of Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona and the Indian Territory. Four others concerned the registration of foreign-built naval vessels In the United States, government manufacture of supplies purchased for the Navy and a construction cost differential that would have allowed West Coast shipbuilders better compete with the East (88). Other roll calls concerned whether to exempt aliens from hour laws on work on the Panama Canal as well as a roll call concerning whether the District of Columbia should allow free evening lectures. If a theory is only good at analyzing some of the issues some of the time, how robust can it really be?

In addition to omitting potentially relevant information concerning roll call votes, Bensel neglects to consider the impact of other variables and actors that may contribute to, influence or even play an independent causal role more important than sectionalism in shaping political development. Indeed, he examines sectional concerns independent of party and ideology, even though he concedes there is some relationship

(24-25). Moreover, while he emphasizes the economic underpinnings of sectionalism based on a rural/urban dichotomy, he makes no analysis of whether the extent of manufacturing or farm production in a congressional district could impact the congressman's vote. Further, his analysis of political concerns being determined by "core"/"periphery" struggle masks the impact that race had in informing outcomes. Without a full and complete analysis of any additional independent variables as well as interaction effects of such variables together with each other and with section, Bensel's analysis can serve as no more than an illustrative *example* of sectionalism's operation in practice.

Concerns also arise as to the way in which Bensel structures his analysis. In *Sectionalism*, rather than using state lines, Bensel uses "trade areas" devised by the Commerce Department and Rand McNally as his unit of analysis for his primary independent variable. He defines a "trade area" as "composed of two interdependent parts: an urban center and a surrounding hinterland made up of rural areas and subordinate cities" (417). He does so without a robust explanation of why such a division is appropriate. Within each "trade area," there could be a multiplicity of interests and Bensel fails to do any statistical analysis to explain why "trade areas" are more appropriate than state lines or other sectoral lines in predicting House votes. Indeed, in *Political Economy*, he employs both "trade areas" and districts as the unit of analysis. Similarly, in *Yankee Leviathan*, he classifies Congressional representatives according to the economic pattern of their district, without explaining why such a measure is appropriate.

As another example of a questionable assumption, in *Sectionalism*, Bensel

collects data from the roll call votes on Congresses in the middle years of each decade. However, nearly all of his time periods covered a presidential election year, or a year immediately preceding or after an election. With the sectional nature of the Electoral College, one could hypothesize that sectional concerns could be particularly heightened during a presidential campaign or during presidential “honeymoons” as payback for electoral support. This is just one example of an issue that should have been controlled for in any statistical analysis in order to properly gauge sectionalism’s influence in influencing political outcomes. Indeed, the 49<sup>th</sup> Congress sitting in 1895-1897 was an active congress, while the 54<sup>th</sup> Congress, sitting 1895-1897 right before the so-called realignment produced little substantial legislation. Further, Bensel “grades” each session of Congress on a measure of sectional stress. In the period 1880-1910, the three Congresses he focuses on – the 49<sup>th</sup>, 54<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> – had the highest sectional stress scores of the period. Indeed the 53<sup>rd</sup> Congress had a score of just 19 while the 59<sup>th</sup> had one of the highest scores at 69.1

### **Data and Methods**

I turn now to addressing some of these concerns in a revised statistical analysis. To test Bensel’s claims, I study three Congresses during the post-Reconstruction era: the 49<sup>th</sup>, 54<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup>. I choose the 49<sup>th</sup>, 54<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> Congresses because they are the ones Bensel explicitly studies in *Sectionalism* in Chapter 3 entitled “Tariffs, Elections and Imperialism, 1880-1910” as supporting his main thesis concerning the causal effect of sectionalism. Unlike Bensel, in my initial statistical analysis, I analyze *all* roll calls.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In future versions, I may conduct separate analysis by broad issue area instead of analyzing all roll calls in a given Congress as a group.

The dependent variable is the specific individual roll call vote, recoded as a binary variable 1 for yes, 0 for no, with missing, abstaining or not present votes dropped from the analysis. During this period in history, votes were occasionally recorded as “paired yes” or “paired no.” Paired votes are an agreement by members to be recorded on the opposite side of the issue. I counted paired votes in my analysis because it still reflects the individual’s congressman’s intention and thus it would be fruitful for the analysis. Data concerning individual roll call votes was gathered from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (“ICPSR”) Study 9822. On the surface, whether a Congressman registers a “yes” or “no” vote may not signify vote preference. It may be the case that on certain bills, a liberal Democratic Congressman could vote yes on some bills and no on others. In order for the results to be meaningful, I am assuming that as a general matter, the party holding majority control of the congressional session controls the agenda, and few bills, and virtually no “important” bills, will likely make it onto the agenda that are opposed to the desires of the majority party. For instance, the Democrats held a fairly narrow majority over the Republicans in the 49<sup>th</sup> Congress. By contrast, the Republicans enjoyed almost a 70 percent advantage over the Democrats in the 54<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> Congresses. Obviously, this assumption may be stronger on a regression of each individual policy area or on individual roll calls than on a regression on the aggregate roll calls from every policy dimension.

Region is the primary independent variable of interest. I gathered region-level data from ICPSR 9822. I measure region in 2 ways. In order to test Bense’s theories concerning how representatives from the “core” may differ from those of the “periphery,” I created a dummy variable “core.” Members from “core” regions were

coded “1” and members from “periphery” regions were coded “0.” In the 49<sup>th</sup> Congress, where Democrats held majority control, one would expect the “core” dummy to be negative. We would expect the opposite to be true in the 54<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> Congresses, where Republicans held control. To identify “core” and “periphery” regions, I first had to sort out the specific congressional districts within each “trade area” as identified by Bensel in maps in his book. To do this, I tried to match up as much as possible historical maps of each congressional district in the United States as gathered by Kenneth Martis in *The Historical Atlas of United States Congressional Districts, 1789-1983*. I did this by comparing Martis’s maps with Bensel’s maps of “core” and “periphery” areas that he lists in his book. As a general matter, “core” areas consisted of Northern states and the Midwest while “periphery” regions consisted of the South. However, because the distinction between “core” and “periphery” is based on Bensel’s self-described “trade area,” normal geographic boundaries are of no importance. Further, between the three congresses under study, regions shifted between “core” and “periphery.” Most of New York state is listed as “periphery” in the 49<sup>th</sup> Congress, while for the 54<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> Congresses, it is listed as “core.” By contrast, most of California is listed as part of the “core” for the 49<sup>th</sup> Congress but as part of the “periphery” for the other two congresses under study.

I also devised a measure of region to reflect more traditional understandings of regional influence. Perhaps Bensel is correct about sectionalism’s importance but he is misidentifying the method in which sectionalism operates in this period in history. In his later book, *Yankee Leviathan*, Bensel conducts a roll call analysis of the postbellum House of Representatives based on whether the representative

was from the “financial” North, the iron-rich West, the Midwest or the South. Accordingly, I separated the representatives so as to indicate their home state: North, South, Midwest and West. “North” is defined as states in the Mid-Atlantic and New England region, excluding Delaware and Maryland. “Midwest” consists of states in the upper Midwest excluding Missouri. At this time in history, the “West” largely consists of the West Coast and Colorado. Consistent with Farhang and Katznelson (2005), I defined “South” to include the eleven ex-Confederate states, Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware, Missouri and West Virginia. Indeed, although Maryland, Delaware and Missouri may seem that they fit “better” with other categories, I felt including them as part of the “South” was justified as the period under study follows closely after Reconstruction. Missouri, Delaware and Maryland had slave codes legalizing slavery prior to the Civil War. Further, during at least the 49<sup>th</sup> Congress, most of the representatives from these states belonged to the Democratic party, which particularly had its stronghold in the South.

I added additional variables to control for other influences. Party identification of course probably is the most important factor to control. A congressman’s ideological disposition is also important and indeed, it is often the interaction between party and ideology that can be crucial in deciphering vote choice. Although I tried numerous specifications, I settled on a model that uses Poole and Rosenthal’s Poole and Rosenthal (1997) DW-Nominate scores. DW-NOMINATE scores are calculations based on the relative ideological position of each congressman based on all the roll call votes in each Congress so that the scores are comparable over time and cross-sectionally. The first dimension of DW-NOMINATE is a left-right dimension

determined by support for government intervention in the economy. The second dimension of DW-NOMINATE is determined by roll call votes on a limited number of issues related to slavery, civil rights, and other race related issues. The larger the DW-Nominate score, the more liberal the Congressman is. In several models, I included either party identification (whether Democrat or Republican), either alone, with DW-Nominate scores, or as part of an interaction term with DW-Nominate scores. There is an extremely high level of multicollinearity between partisan identification and DW-Nominate scores (i.e. .95). This is to be expected as DW-Nominate scores are more than just simple measures of ideology. As such, I believe that including both of them in the regression could result in the coefficient estimates being less efficient. Further, since DW-Nominate scores are in a sense broader I felt that including them would be most appropriate for the model and my desire to have a measure to “control” for party/ideology. This essay is not an attempt to enter the debate concerning whether Congressman vote on preferences or party (Krehbiel 1991; Cox et al. 1993).

I used data from the United States Census for certain district-level demographic variables. Specifically, I gathered data concerning the total value of manufacturing in the district and the total value of farm products. Whether a region consisted part of the manufacturing-belt core or whether it was part of the agrarian periphery figures prominently in Bense's analysis and thus I felt it was relevant to include in the regressions to account for whether demographic differences may be masquerading as sectionalism. As noted before, the economic underpinnings of sectionalism would indicate that these values would be especially important to consider. I then collected district-level population values and devised a per capita measure of value

of manufacturing and value of farming. Data is sparsely available for the period under study here, and most demographic data in the U.S. Census is based on county-level data. This data does not neatly correspond to congressional-district level data because most congressional districts contain multiple counties. Further, particularly in urban areas, county lines may crossover into many different congressional districts. As such figuring out district-level characteristics in this period under study can be quite challenging. Fortunately Parsons et al. (1986) have reformatted the Census Data in ICPRS 2896 on a district-level basis for certain characteristics, including the ones I am employing in this study. Also, data from a small number of urban areas is either missing or based on a random sample because of the difficulty of disaggregating county data into district subsets.<sup>2</sup>

Each roll call was grouped to correspond with policy content. Policy issue content is “theoretically and empirically a very important consideration” (Clinton and Lapinski 2006, 235). Data for the policy issue content of each roll call vote in the period under study was collected from the American Institutions Project. Each roll call is coded according to a three tier nested system, Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3. Only Tier 1 is of interest in the present analysis. Tier 1 codes votes according to one of seven dimensions: sovereignty, organization and scope, international relations, domestic affairs, District of Columbia matters, “housekeeping” matters, quasi-private bills (which addresses particularized economic benefits to individuals) and public quasi-private bills. A detailed description of the coding system is in Clinton and Lapinski (2006). Because of the large

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<sup>2</sup> As a preliminary solution to this problem, I used data from the city in general (i.e., Philadelphia, Boston, etc. statistics as a proxy for districts within the city). I believed this is appropriate because city-level data gives a general picture of what the social and economic landscape of the district is like. In future revisions of this paper, I will look more closely at the actual census data and historical congressional-level maps to see if the data can be better analyzed at the district level.

number of “private” bills relation to pension benefits, particularly in the 49<sup>th</sup> Congress, I found it advantageous to use the eight code system, instead of just the four “major” categories of sovereignty, organization, international relations and domestic affairs.

## **Methods**

Because the individual roll call vote is a dichotomous variable, I used logistic regression. Specifically, employing the methods similar to the ones used by Schlichter and Pearson (2006) in their analysis of discharge petitions, I used a “pooled logit” analysis with the various votes by each congressman as the independent variable. I first set up a pooled logit analysis with the individual member as the basis for the panel. A pooled logit analysis assumes independence over  $i$  ( the panel variable, which in this case was the individual congressman), and  $t$  (the time variable, which here was each bill), leading to potential efficiency loss (Cameron et al 609). To somewhat reduce the seriousness of this problem, I used robust standard errors clustered by congressman. All categorical independent variables were standardized by subtracting the mean and dividing by two standard deviations (Gelman and Hill 2008). I conducted eight separate regressions for each period by specific issue area (i.e., domestic policy, foreign policy, etc.) using the same independent variables. Although not reported here for space/time constraints, to test for robustness, I reestimated the model using a fixed effects model where I grouped the analysis by petition with fixed effects for each individual congressman. I also reestimated models using party as an independent variable, either on its own, or in conjunction with DW-Nominate scores. In the future, I hope to devise a multilevel model that can best decipher the impact that regionalism can have in effecting choice. Although not reported here as the work on this is ongoing, I also conducted a

micro-level analysis of specific bills that are listed within each policy area as “landmark legislation.” (Stathis 2003).

### **Aggregate Analysis on All Roll Call Votes**

I first conducted an aggregate analysis on roll call votes in each of the respective congresses.<sup>3</sup> Although, as mentioned above, such an analysis has its share of problems, it will at least give us a preliminary indication of how regionalism can impact vote choice.

### **The 49<sup>th</sup> Congress.**

I proceeded to conduct logit regressions by policy area.<sup>4</sup> Table A-F lists the results for the logit regressions using the dataset of roll call votes grouped by policy area. The results in Table A indicate that the core dummy variable is only significant for roll call votes on “domestic” issues and “private” bills (which in this case, primarily consists of private bills on pensions). This is not entirely unexpected given Bensele’s analysis but it does serve to point out the limited applicability of Bensele’s theories to a wider subset of cases. Indeed, for the vast majority of roll call votes, region does not turn out to be statistically significant – at least when assessing whether representatives from the “core” differ from those in the “periphery.” Interestingly, DW-Nominate scores, second dimension achieved significance on regressions of most of the policies. This may explain why the region dummy does not appear significant as the second dimension of these scores reflects regional divides between agrarian and industrial areas.

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<sup>3</sup> Although not reported here, I estimated logit regressions using all roll call votes and generally found the region variables to be significant. However, simulation of probabilities indicated that DW-Nominate scores were often more important.

<sup>4</sup> I also did a regression on all roll call votes using policy dummy variables as controls. I found that region dummy variables were statistically significant but that D-Nominate or party scores had a greater effect than region.

I then proceeded to reestimate the results using a broader definition of region, consisting of the “traditional” definition of North, South, Midwest and West (Table B). In the expanded analysis, region was significant on roll calls related to not only international relations matters but also on legislation related to the District of Columbia, “private” bills and “quasi-public” bills. The effect of region was especially acute in matters related to international affairs. On roll call votes related to international relations matters, the Southern dummy variable has a negative sign, indicating that Southern representatives were more likely to vote “no” on such matters as compared to the reference category, Northerners. Midwest and Western representatives in turn were likely to join their Northern colleagues. Interestingly, the same voting pattern also holds true with respect to roll call votes concerning District of Columbia matters. In all other matters, region played less of a role than other variables like party or ideological disposition. Even on votes related to “private” bills – charged by Bense to be highly sectionalist -- region appeared to have less of an effect than DW-Nominate scores, although both the South and West dummy variables were highly statistically significant. Similarly, votes on “quasi-public” policies were highly statistically significant for all three regional dummies. Further, again, on most of the regressions, DW-Nominate scores, second dimension achieved significance, though the second dimension had less of an effect than the first dimension scores.

### **54<sup>th</sup> Congress**

The statistical results for the votes in the 54<sup>th</sup> Congress also indicate mixed results for sectionalism’s importance (Tables C and D). The core dummy variable is highly statistically significant for matters related to housekeeping matters and private

bills. As Bensei notes, members from the “core” are more likely to support private bills and as such the positive coefficient on private bills is consistent with Bensei’s analysis. Region, however, has less of an effect for international relations matters. Nonetheless the effect of sectionalism is dwarfed in comparison to DW-Nominate scores. The results for the policy-specific regressions are largely consistent with the results from the 49<sup>th</sup> Congress --- DW-Nominate scores appear to play the biggest role.

The results are similar when we expand the definition of region to include North, South, Midwest and West. As shown in Table D, the South dummy variable was only significant for private and public bills – hardly a large part of the Congressional agenda by the turn of the century as most of the pension issues had been resolved nearly 40 years after the Civil War. The Western dummy variable reflects significance for international relations legislature and quasi-public bills. The Midwest dummy had the most policy areas in which it was significant: organization policy, domestic policy, international relations policy and private ‘bills.’ Compared to DW-nominate scores however, the regional dummies pale in comparison. However, as mentioned before, the significance of the second dimension scores may indicate that regionalism does have some impact, though importantly the first dimension scores have greater effect than the second dimension scores. Further, the microanalysis shows that perhaps Midwest sectionalism has been undertheorized.

### **59<sup>th</sup> Congress**

Bensei contends that expansionist concerns caused sectional tensions to rise in the beginning of the twentieth century. Contrary to Bensei’s predictions, however, the core dummy variable was only statistically significant with respect to regressions

concerning roll call votes on sovereignty and organizational issues (Table E). Unlike the regressions for the 49<sup>th</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> Congresses, the region variable for the roll calls on foreign policy issues or private bills were not even significant. Reliance on the core dummy to measure sectionalist effect, however, may not tell the whole story. First, as mentioned before, the DW-Nominate scores, second dimension is significant, and this could mask the true influence of section. Further, perhaps we can get a better picture of sectionalism's influence if we look more broadly. This is indeed what appears to be the case. In the regressions using the region specific dummy variables (south, west and Midwest, with North as the reference category), sectionalist variables are statistically significant with respect to domestic and foreign policy, private bills as well as sovereignty and organization policy (Table F). Of the 3 congresses under study here, the 59<sup>th</sup> Congress seems to be the most sectionally divisive, which is consistent with Bense's analysis giving the 59<sup>th</sup> Congress the highest sectional stress score. Sectionalism in this era appears to take a different form from the sectionalist tendencies apparent in earlier Congresses. Unlike the immediate post-Reconstruction Congresses where sectionalist strife mainly occurred between North and South, in the 59<sup>th</sup> Congresses, the regressions indicate that sectionalism (at least in congressional roll call behavior) was most apparent between Westerners and those in other parts of the country. As the core/periphery distinction largely divides up the nation along a North/South axis, it is thus not surprising that the core dummy variable was not significant for many of the policy types. Nevertheless, even though sectionalist tensions may play some role, DW-Nominate scores, particularly DW-Nominate first dimension scores, appear to explain more than section alone.

## Conclusions

What importance do the preliminary results reached in this paper have for the usefulness of sectionalism as an analytical lens in American political development? While the results noted in this paper cast suspicion on Bense's assignment of so deterministic a role for sectionalism, sectionalism is by no means dead as an important element to analyze in considering political change. Roll call votes are but one indication of congressional action; as Roach notes, sectional tendencies may be more apparent in earlier committee meetings than in the final roll call bill where "party discipline may whip the recalcitrants into line or when differences may have been reconciled by a compromise.. [that] conceals the real conflicts of interests" (Roach 1925, 502). Congressional self-interest can also mask true intention (502). Sectional tendencies may not necessarily arise from the legislature. In recent years, the blue state red state presidential elections map belies any notion that sectionalism is dead. Scholars have also found sectional divides on matters of foreign policy, with the "manufacturing belt" pitted against the "sunbelt" (Trubowitz 1992).

Indeed, it may be the case that economic sectionalism does not exist (in the past, present or future) in the way Bense envisioned it as a fight between the manufacturing "core" and the agrarian "periphery. The results call into question whether it is actually economic sectionalism that influences congressional vote. Sectionalist voting could take many forms. For instance, rather than being rooted in economic concerns, sectionalism could have a cultural or social dimension. Thus, even if Bense has it right about sectionalism being an important influence, is he correct in his specification of the method by which sectionalism comes to influence congressional vote

choice? If economic concerns were at the root of sectionalism, one would expect value of manufacturing per capita and farm value per capita to be much more significant than they were in the individual roll call analysis. To the contrary, the results of the individual logistic regressions show these factors to be less important than party and ideology and in fact these factors achieved statistical significance in only a few of the regressions. More work needs to be done to understand the inner workings of how sectionalism operates to impact choice: is it cultural? Is it social? Are congressmen just guided by the economic concerns of their districts? What then explains why one congressional session can be characterized as highly sectional and the next session can have a low sectional stress score?

Additional statistical analysis would need to be conducted in order to fully attack Bense's claims. One problem with the current analysis is that it is quite difficult to separate out the effect of section independent of party. Parties during this time period (or even during the present time for that matter) are largely sectionally based. What is the causal direction? Does sectionalism influence party formation and cohesion or is party largely independent of section? In further work I would like to look at cohesion scores between and among regionally based divisions of parties. For instance, how alike are non-Southern Democrats and Southern Democrats? Non-Western Democrats and Western Democrats? Further, not only may the policy content of the bill matter but the procedural context of the bill too may play a key role. How does section impact voting on close call votes? Are there votes when a distinct block of congressmen from a specific region are needed? Finally, as hinted before, looking at the macroanalysis is not enough. In future work on this project, I will do a microanalysis and look at specific roll call votes

and see how section impacted votes. So far I have reviewed votes on many roll calls deemed to concern “landmark” matters and thus far I have found few in which section appeared to be the driving mechanism behind vote choice. Further, additional statistical analysis may discount the findings in this paper. Because each congressional vote is not independent of each other as congressman vote multiple times in any given congress, observations in the dependent variable used in this pooled analysis are not necessarily independent. Finally, to effectively challenge Benseal as well as to avoid the charge of selecting on the dependent variable, one should analyze all roll call votes over an extended period of time.

It is also important to assess when sectionalism is important. As evidenced by Benseal’s selective roll call votes, Congress has behaved in a sectional matter in certain circumstances. Roach proposes that representatives are more likely to behave in a sectionalist manner during an economic recession (Roach 1925, 504). She also argues sectional voting is more prevalent during divided government (522). Any full critique of Benseal should thus assess what he did get right about sectionalism and what implications those findings can have in helping us understand decisionmaking in the Congress.

**Table A - Pooled Logistic Regression with Robust Clustered Standard Errors on Roll Call Votes Grouped by Policy Using Core Dummy – 49<sup>th</sup> Congress**

Variable	Sovereign	Organization	Domestic	IR	DC	House	Private	Public
Core	.08067 (.0905)	-.0296 (.0456)	.1245*** (.0519)	.0368 (.0302)	-.0222 (.1060)	.03619 (.0790)	.0854* (.0581)	.1280 (.1455)
DW-Nominate (1 <sup>st</sup> )	-.4344** (.0860)	-.5466** (.0417)	.7562*** (.0477)	.1273*** (.0311)	-.2663*** (.1048)	-.6465 *** (.0800)	1.552 *** (.0606)	2.373*** (1.666)
DW-Nominate (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	-.1676 *** (.0777)	-.0878** (.0368)	-.2270 *** (.0489)	-.0097 (.0270)	-.0294 (.0902)	-.2941 *** (.0734193)	-.2014*** (.0488)	-.1297 (.1474)
Manu. Value	.1089206 (.0837)	.05817 (.0435)	.0267 (.0489)	-.0259 (.0263)	.1180 (.1055)	.0339 (.0756)	.0233 (.0523)	-.1656 (.1500)
Farm Value	-.0825 (.0814)	.0807 *** (.0363)	.0205 (.0460)	.0493*** (.0273)	-.0248 (.0865)	-.0550 (.0820)	.0759 (.0493)	-.1516 (.1592)
Con_	.7412*** (.0535)	.3778 (.0284)	.3709 (.0326)	.4003*** (.0174)	.2439 *** (.0660)	-.2511 (.0487)	.1224 (.0372)	.5262 (.0893)
N	2022	9581	6755	30838	2420	2402	12827	1874

\*\*\* .01 level; \*\* .05 level; \* .10 level

**Table B - Pooled Logistic Regression with Robust Clustered Standard Errors on Roll Call Votes Grouped by Policy Using Region Dummies – 49<sup>th</sup> Congress**

Variable	Sovereign	Organization	Domestic	IR	DC	House	Private	Public
South	.8601 (.6764)	.0755 (.3260)	-.15600 (.4352)	-.3795*** (.1540)	-.8189* (.5116)	-.4618 (.6206)	-1.087*** (.2584)	-3.580*** (1.280)
West	-.2914 (.2243)	-.0710 (.1077)	.0527 (.1410)	.1325*** (.0505)	.3239** (.1742)	.1070 (.2042)	.3211*** (.0877)	1.338*** (.4234)
Midwest	-.0572 (.1040)	.0186 (.0498)	-.0562 (.0565)	.0580*** (.0327)	.3021*** (.1070)	.0295 (.0944)	.0272 (.0796)	.3087*** (.1712)
DW-Nominate (1 <sup>st</sup> )	-.3842*** (.0822)	-.6259*** (.0408)	.8297*** (.0530)	.1502*** (.0316)	.3017*** (.1031)	-.6915*** (.0794)	1.540*** (.0642)	2.577*** (1.595)
DW-Nominate (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	-.1538*** (.0847)	-.1245*** (.0383)	-.1992*** (.0482)	-.0207 (.0298)	-.1060 (.1005)	-.3256*** (.0805)	-.2207*** (.0523)	-.0993 (.1495)
Manu. Value	.1429 (.1024)	-.0118 (.0470)	.0612 (.0615)	-.0285 (.0298)	.1006 (.1138)	-.0486 (.0866)	-.0482 (.0622)	-.0070 (.1835)
Farm Value	-.0311 (.0918)	.0459 (.0451)	.0509 (.0497)	.0278 (.0290)	-.1170 (.0965)	-.1047 (.0846)	.0181 (.0608)	-.1989 (.1884)
Con_	.8071*** (.0704)	.4131 (.0318)	.4442 (.0395)	.3936 (.0214)	.0928 (.0770)	-.1911 (.0592)	.1943 (.0466)	.3254 (.1039)
N	2022	9581	6755	30838	2420	2402	12827	1874

\*\*\* .01 level; \*\* .05 level; \* .10 level

**Table C - Pooled Logistic Regression with Robust Clustered Standard Errors on Roll Call Votes Grouped by Policy Using Core Dummy – 54<sup>th</sup> Congress**

Variable	Sovereign	Organization	Domestic	IR	DC	House	Private	Public
Core	-.0779 (.0866)	-.0600 (.0402)	.0320 (.2020)	-.0877* (.0553)	-.0877* (.0553)	-.2880*** (.1267)	.2236*** (.0981)	-.5592 (.5539)
DW-Nominate (1 <sup>st</sup> )	.7931*** (.0751)	.3681 (.0368)	-.1356 (.1971)	1.032 (.0519)	1.032*** (.0519)	-.1031 (.1208)	1.307*** (.0905)	-3.061*** (.5149)
DW-Nominate (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	.0396 (.0396)	-.1096 (.0296)	1.105*** (.1667)	-.0459 (.0373)	-.0459 (.0382)	-.3790*** (.0883)	.3216*** (.0795)	-2.474*** (.4614)
Manu. Value	.0294 (.0780)	.0058 (.0311)	-.1305 (.1490)	-.0270 (.0381)	-.0270 (.0380)	.0794 (.0883)	.0215 (.0809)	.5105 (.3973)
Farm Value	-.0494 (.0690)	.0148 (.0223)	.0731 (.1134)	.0961* (.0644)	.0961 (.0644)	.1253*** (.0604)	.0205 (.0806)	.2888 (.3381)
Con_	.1841 (.0645)	.2670 (.0288)	1.807 (.1547)	.2635 (.0530)	.2635 (.0429)	.1894 (.0843)	.0431 (.0694)	.8527 (.3382)
N	2259	10665	1275	12323	2259	3056	3443	183

\*\*\* .01 level; \*\* .05 level; \* .10 level

**Table D - Pooled Logistic Regression with Robust Clustered Standard Errors on Roll Call Votes Grouped by Policy Using Region Dummies– 54<sup>th</sup> Congress**

Variable	Sovereign	Organization	Domestic	IR	DC	House	Private	Public
South	-.0307 (.2958)	.0448 (.0622)	.1542 (.2644)	.0289 (.0634)	-.0343 (.1388)	.2368 (.1692)	-.2707*** (.1452)	1.447*** (.8566)
West	.2978 (.3834)	.0133 (.0844)	.1353 (.3190)	.3038*** (.1097)	.0814 (.1187)	.1243 (.2017)	-.0754 (.1947)	2.144*** (.9704)
Midwest	-.1760 (.2278)	-.0846*** (.0453)	.6229*** (.2123)	.1281*** (.0527)	-.0307 (.0915)	-.1365 (.1427)	-.2030*** (.1100)	.1826 (.6189)
DW-Nominate (1 <sup>st</sup> )	.8280*** (.1996)	.0527 (.0462)	-.1566 (.2107)	.9530*** (.0561)	.7371*** (.0970)	-.0749 (.1271)	1.345*** (.1075)	-2.713*** (.5942)
DW-Nominate (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	-.1165 (.1745)	.0267 (.0384)	.8111*** (.2098)	-.1161*** (.0493)	.0541 (.0719)	-.2719*** (.1110)	.3744*** (.0990)	-2.717*** (.6832)
Manu. Value	.1763 (.2148)	.0188 (.0306)	.1778 (.1540)	-.0570* (.0346)	-.0098 (.0796)	.1017 (.0984)	.0247 (.0850)	.7385*** (.4167)
Farm Value	-.0921 (.0914)	.0307 (.0257)	.0341 (.0769)	.0578 (.0451)	-.0622 (.06845)	.1552*** (.0612)	.0252 (.0901)	.3501 (.3444)
Con_	1.155 (.1969)	.2453 (.0346)	1.563 (.1647)	.1345 (.0395)	.1503 (.0721)	-.0224 (.1061)	.3546 (.0862)	.1307 (.4845)
N	1328	10655	1275	12323	2259	3056	3529	183

\*\*\* .01 level; \*\* .05 level; \* .10 level

**Table E - Pooled Logistic Regression with Robust Clustered Standard Errors on Roll Call Votes Grouped by Policy Using Core Dummy – 59<sup>th</sup> Congress**

Variable	Sovereign	Organization	Domestic	IR	DC	House	Private
Core	.6321*** (.2690)	-.2929*** (.1434)	-.0297 (.0695)	-.1009 (.0836)	.1616 (.1212)	-.0204 (.1265)	.0905 (.1222)
DW-Nominate (1 <sup>st</sup> )	3.753*** (.2116)	3.129*** (.1439)	1.700*** (.0615)	2.318*** (.0722)	-.4225*** (.1164)	.7937*** (.1169)	2.589*** (.1233)
DW-Nominate (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	.5645*** (.1911)	-.4155*** (.0959)	-.2013*** (.0618)	-.0640 (.0591)	.0257 (.0749)	-.0468 (.0890)	.1619*** (.0873)
Manu. Value	-.3304 (.2530)	.1189* (.0760)	-.0088 (.0462)	-.0965 (.1007)	.1908*** (.0815)	.1056 (.0825)	.0792 (.0562)
Farm Value	-.7021*** (.2706)	.0544 (.0735)	.0968* (.0576)	.1491*** (.0702)	.0282 (.0812)	.2364*** (.0990)	-.0048 (.0730)
Con_	.0928 (.1909)	1.813 (.1073)	.4189 (.0473)	1.163 (.0584)	.4439 (.0777)	.8936 (.0870)	.7684 (.0693)
N	2956	2623	9099	10848	2132	1714	2700

\*\*\* .01 level; \*\* .05 level; \* .10 level

**Table F - Pooled Logistic Regression with Robust Clustered Standard Errors on Roll Call Votes Grouped by Policy Using Core Dummy – 59<sup>th</sup> Congress**

Variable	Sovereign	Organization	Domestic	IR	DC	House	Private
South	-.2533 (.3586)	.2848*** (.1803)	-.5632*** (.1865)	-.7406*** (.2784)	-.1377 (.1530)	.2321* (.1495)	-.1125***
West	-2.307*** (.2651)	1.626*** (.5414)	-.2435*** (.0968)	-.6900*** (.2736)	-.0046 (.1571)	.3559** (.1548)	.4646***
Midwest	-.6689*** (.2591)	.1735 (.1747)	-.6385*** (.1798)	-.5094*** (.1446)	.1134 (.1140)	.1742 (.1259)	.1041 (.0913)
DW-Nominate (1 <sup>st</sup> )	4.429*** (.2968)	2.973*** (.1445)	1.670*** (.0581)	2.280*** (.0775)	-.4479*** (.1211)	.8504*** (.1195)	2.496*** (.1489)
DW-Nominate (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	.4821*** (.1911)	-.4174*** (.118)	-.1307*** (.0644)	-.1427*** (.0619)	-.0137 (.0828)	-.0783 (.1007)	.1888*** (.0892)
Manu. Value	-.1189 (.2059)	.1227*** (.0755)	-.0148 (.0482)	-.0719 (.0859)	.1832*** (.0806)	.1416* (.0914)	.0633 (.0541)
Farm Value	-.0575 (.1881)	-.0194 (.0795)	.0892* (.0570)	.0902*** (.0547)	-.0004 (.0799)	.1958*** (.1091)	-.1090 (.0793)
Con_	1.027 (.1762)	1.410 (.1264)	.9515 (.1775)	1.888 (.2692)	.5569 (.0943)	.7228 (.0850)	.7936 (.0940)
N	2956	2623	9099	10848	2132	1714	2700

\*\*\* .01 level; \*\* .05 level; \* .10 level

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