
ESSAYS ON AMERICAN PARTY FACTIONS

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Abstract

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This research investigates the role of American party factions in legislative affairs. In short, I argue that organized blocs of legislators manufacture party sub-brands to more effectively appeal to niche markets of donors and party activists. Institutionalized factions can efficiently capture valuable political resources to blunt significant instruments of party power. By establishing their own resource networks, factions loosen the bonds of two-party government and increase the likelihood of party infighting.

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1 Introduction

In 2015, the highly organized and deeply secretive House Freedom Caucus brought the influence of congressional factions into sharp relief. Just months after formally organizing, the nascent group of conservative lawmakers was widely credited with overthrowing the Speaker of the House. Since then, they continued to grab headlines in policy skirmishes over Planned Parenthood, the Export-Import Bank, the federal budget, and the stunning withdrawal of the American Health Care Act. The rise of the Freedom Caucus raises an important question for political scientists. How can a new faction — lacking the agenda powers of more senior party leaders — claim so much influence in such a short period of time?

While the Freedom Caucus has routinely been the subject of political commentary and, more recently, presidential tweets, the organization is only one of many such groups to emerge over the last fifty years. Modern House factions span both parties and the breadth of the ideological spectrum, but despite the proliferation of sub-partisan institutions, very little research has systematically analyzed their effect on political outcomes. This is particularly surprising, as factions allow congressional scholars to analyze relatively new, elaborate institutions that mirror those of political parties — a subject that has received tremendous attention. Factions construct intricate whip systems, membership hierarchies, and binding rules on voting behavior. Most pool resources through the collection of obligatory dues and set up extensively-staffed research operations. Factions recruit, endorse, and interview congressional candidates, fill the coffers of associated Super PACs, and regularly coordinate media

events. Yet we know very little about the development and political import of these endogenous institutions.

I provide three essays that systematically analyze American party factions in the House of Representatives. While each may be read in isolation, the collection of research is better understood as an empirical gambit in a broader strategy to make sense of these fascinating organizations. I employ a blend of qualitative, econometric, and experimental methods as a means of building a general, empirically informed theory of faction influence. In short, I argue that organized blocs of legislators manufacture party sub-brands to more effectively appeal to niche markets of donors and other party elites. By developing factional institutions, lawmakers can efficiently capture valuable political resources (e.g., media mentions and campaign contributions) to blunt daunting instruments of party power. Strong factions thus loosen the bonds of two-party government and increase the likelihood of party infighting by drawing on a carefully cultivated network of activists.

Each of the following chapters contribute to this theory building exercise from perspectives that reflect the rich and diverse underpinnings of political science. The first essay takes a distinctly economic perspective. More specifically, I consider the extent to which nine ideological factions engage in a party sub-branding campaign. Four of these groups are Democratic (the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the Populist Caucus, the New Democrat Coalition, and the Blue Dog Coalition) while the remaining five are Republican (the Republican Main Street Partnership, the Republican Study Committee, the Tea Party Caucus, the House Liberty Caucus, and the House Freedom Caucus). I find that all nine factions are ideologically distinct from their co-partisans, with considerable variation in the extent of this divergence. This descriptive finding is important insofar as it allows political observers to quickly identify centrist and non-centrist fault lines within both parties. More importantly, however, I examine the

relationship between the strength of faction institutions and donation patterns. Here I find that conservative factions that more closely resemble political parties are able to draw upon a more conservative group of supporters. By contrast, groups that lack the institutional capacity to police their party sub-brand fail to change the ideological composition of their members' donor base.

It is difficult, however, to isolate the direct effect of party sub-brands with observational data. Consequently, I draw upon the psychological foundations of the discipline and examine the heuristic capacity of faction affiliation in two waves of controlled survey experiments. Respondents are provided with some general information and prompted to estimate candidate ideology, and in both surveys, a treatment group is randomly assigned an additional party sub-brand. Consistent with the findings in the first essay, I find that identifying as a Blue Dog seems to work, while Tea Party Caucus members continue to be seen as generic Republicans. Simply put, those exposed to faction affiliations change their perceptions of candidate ideology — but only if that faction has strong institutions.

While my final essay is quantitative, the paper was conceptualized after long hours combing the Democratic Study Group archives in the Library of Congress. Here I examine the developmental path of modern ideological factions. In particular, I consider legislative service organizations (LSOs), which, until their abolition in 1995, provided factions with official House resources. LSOs were swiftly dismantled in the wake of the new Republican majority's reform agenda, and as a result, factions were stripped of readily accessible office space, staff, and administrative funds. I show that leaders of these institutions became significantly less influential lawmakers after their abolition, and at the same time, a 'placebo' group of uncertified, informal blocs were unaffected by the change. I argue that Republican leaders inadvertently encouraged factions to

build independent resource networks that would ultimately change the nature of intraparty bargaining. Starved of public provisions, factions re-calibrated their institutions to more effectively capture resources from extra-legislative patrons. As a result, ideological factions in the U.S. House have shifted from wonkish research operations to branding machines that offer a blend of legislative and electoral services.

It is my hope that these essays demonstrate the rich opportunities for researchers willing to look underneath the hood of political parties. By taking the complex array of new, sub-partisan institutions seriously, political scientists stand to improve our understanding of lawmaking and coalition-building in a polarized climate.

2 Factional Institutions and the Politics of Resource Capture

Scholars and pundits have long held that parties are central to American democracy. Parties link citizens to their representatives, bind legislators to a common electoral fate, and provide valuable logistical support to ambitious candidates. Simply put, modern democracy is “unthinkable save in terms of the parties,” (Schattschneider, 1942, p.1), and American legislative and electoral institutions heavily favor a two-party system. First-past-the-post, single member electoral districts privilege the two major parties by inducing strategic voting among citizens (Cox, 1997), while party leaders, keen to preserve their advantaged position, suppress new issues from jeopardizing the two-party duopoly (Aldrich and Lee, 2015). American representation is thus constrained by Duverger’s law (Duverger, 1959), and while the Republican and Democratic Parties are among the most significant and enduring institutions in U.S. history, they present citizens with broad coalitions that inexactly reflect the ideological positions of the electorate.

From this perspective, the success of American parties creates a problem of imperfect representation. Over the last three decades, ideological differences between the two parties have deepened. Today, Americans choose between a conservative and liberal party, which sharply contrasts with the muddy ideological fault lines of the mid-20th century. This clarity strengthens party branding efforts — the process of defining what the party means to the public. Sharp interparty ideological differences

have enabled the two major parties to sell an ideological brand to the electorate. Because these brands convey a *central tendency* in the perceptions of the national party, however, heterodox partisans are anchored to a strong, ill-fitting party brand (Cox and McCubbins, 2007). These legislators must sell a generic party brand to ideologically-motivated citizens in the best position to advance their political career.

This presents a puzzle for scholars of American politics. How can politicians differentiate themselves from their co-partisans without losing the immense benefits that come with membership in the Republican or Democratic Party? Politicians who can more clearly define their ideological position, or party type, may capture valuable political resources from sympathetic donors and activists, but in order to do so, they must overcome strong, polarized party brands in a two-party system of government. Put differently, how can politicians effectively advertise themselves to a niche ideological market under Duverger's law?

I argue that ideological factions in the U.S. House of Representatives provide candidates with complementary party sub-brands, and candidates use these sub-brands to appeal to party activists, media officials, and political donors. Because American electoral institutions typically preclude politicians from looking *beyond* their political party, entrepreneurial legislators create new ideological institutions *beneath* the traditional pockets of congressional power. As a result, members of Congress have created an assortment of factions that largely mirror political parties.

Ideological factions can be complex and highly organized. Factions hold competitive leadership races, establish extensive whip systems, and pool their resources to employ research divisions and public relation experts. They selectively recruit, endorse, and screen political candidates. Factions pay for professionally designed logos, meet regularly, and write their own policy proposals. Several have binding rules on

voting as a legislative bloc. They establish political action committees (PACs), coordinate fund-raising efforts, and distribute money to their most vulnerable members. In short, ideological factions are endogenous institutions that neatly borrow from the logic of party formation put forward in Aldrich (1995):

Ambitious politicians turn to the political party to achieve such goals only when parties are useful vehicles for solving problems that cannot be solved as effectively, if at all, through other means. (p. 5)

Politicians turn to factions precisely because parties have created effective brands; the residual problem of brand fit incentivizes the creation of new sub-party institutions that have received relatively little scholarly attention.

In the next section, I outline two hypotheses on ideological factions in Congress and the literature on political brands. Two empirical sections follow. First, I analyze patterns in congressional voting behavior to evaluate if factions provide a political product that lends itself to party sub-branding campaigns. Second, I evaluate changes in the composition of political donor bases to estimate the payoff of faction membership.

The results contribute to a growing literature on party factions (Cox and Rosenbluth, 1993; Koger, Masket, and Noel, 2009; Sin, 2014; Dewan and Squintani, 2015), as well as a rich and diverse body of research in comparative politics (Lupu, 2013; Adams, Ezrow, and Wlezien, 2015), marketing (Sirianni et al., 2013), and congressional representation (Grynaviski, 2010; Grimmer, 2013; Grose, Malhotra, and Parks Van Houweling, 2015). More broadly, this research moves beyond a dichotomous view of American political representation. Factions that effectively communicate party sub-brands are able to construct a donor base beyond the party fund-raising apparatus. Consequently, these institutions can loosen the bonds of two-party government and offset a significant instrument of party power.

Political Brands

I argue that legislators create factional institutions as a means of clarifying their ideological position; but we cannot understand sub-branding campaigns without first clarifying what is meant by the term “brands.” Political brands are frequently defined as reputations, but “reputations” emphasize personal character (i.e., valence), rather than ideology. The marketing literature provides a more general understanding of brands as revelatory mechanisms:

To establish a brand is to define what a product is and how it differs from alternatives. Those differences matter strategically, for they ground reasons for customers to prefer one product over another. This is why branding is the heart not just of marketing, but of nearly every aspect of a company, political or ideological campaign. (Jones and Bonevac, 2013)

Following this literature, I understand brands as *definitions*.¹ This perspective requires only that brands differentiate products from competitors within a well-established category.

To understand how sub-branding efforts succeed, I build on the extensive literature on party brands. Party brands are useful because they provide valuable information (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991) in an otherwise complex political environment (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). As a political heuristic, brands allow individuals to group “discrete bits of information into a meaningful cognitive structure” (Lodge and Hamill, 1986, p. 506) and effectively “reduce the infinite variability of the world into a manageable number of categories,” (Rahn, 1993, p. 472-3). Ironically, brands are more effectively used by sophisticated voters (Lau and Redlawsk, 2001). Individuals can

¹The American Marketing Association (1960) offers a more detailed definition: a brand is a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.” This certainly applies to parties and, I argue, factions, but for parsimony, I adopt the compact and general definition put forward by Jones and Bonevac (2013): brands are definitions.

infer much from a simple party label, because brands implicitly promise a standard of quality (Grynaviski, 2010).

Effective brands require an underlying product. Congressional scholars have argued that party brands rest on the party's legislative record. In fact, this record is so important that partisan institutions evolved to protect the majority of party members from the desire to defect and, particularly among vulnerable members, vote their individual electoral incentives. In the U.S. Congress, the party's legislative record was preserved in two steps. First, a coalition of legislators organized to control the selection of officers in the the House of Representatives (Jenkins and Stewart, 2012). Second, party leaders used their control of the selection process to set the legislative agenda (Cox and McCubbins, 2005, 2007). By consolidating gate-keeping power on legislative proposals, parties are able to manipulate and protect their legislative record. Procedural power thus leads to a refined political product. The majority party is able to differentiate itself from the minority party and avoid roll call votes that harm their members' electoral fortune.

Ideological factions typically lack the procedural capacity to control the legislative agenda, but they do consolidate political resources as a means of unifying their voting bloc.² Faction members pay dues, contribute staff to faction events, and tie themselves to the collective reputation of their organization. Some groups (e.g., the Blue Dog Coalition, the House Freedom Caucus) create binding rules; if a super-majority of faction members agree on a policy position, all members are expected to vote the faction-line.³ By providing faction leaders with political resources, members aim to clarify their coalition as a distinct political product. Jones and Bonevac (2013) emphasize this point:

²But see Jenkins and Monroe (2014) for evidence of an interparty coalition wielding negative agenda power.

³Such faction rules are at least *ostensibly* binding and have not, to my knowledge, been empirically investigated. This provides a fruitful avenue for future research.

Brands are built on the merit of the product. The nature and quality of the product matters. Marketing is not magic. If you want to pull a rabbit out of a hat, it helps to have a rabbit (p.117).

For factions to effectively communicate party sub-brands, they must first have an identifiable political product. Any member of Congress can state their ideological position, but credible sub-brands are built upon readily observable legislative behavior. Legislators must demonstrate their ideological position through salient political action. This provides my first hypothesis:

Political Product Hypothesis: Faction members are ideologically distinct from their co-partisans.

This hypothesis provides a descriptive test of conventional wisdom by answering a simple question: does faction behavior correspond with the organization's stated ideology? Ostensibly conservative (liberal) factions should be demonstrably more (less) conservative than their unaffiliated co-partisans.

Importantly, political brands must be learned by their target market. Grynaviski (2006) and Lupu (2013) formalize Bayesian learning models to explain the transmission of party brands from rational choice (i.e., utility maximization) and social identity (i.e., self-categorization) perspectives, respectively. These models provide an intuitive understanding of learning among the electorate. Voters observe political behavior, and over time, individuals update their understanding of party positions. Each new observation is thus a weighted average of individuals' prior and recent observations of partisan politics. The logic of these models suggests that there are two key components to the brand. First, brands communicate an average ideological position. Second, these positions are estimated with uncertainty. As individuals observe consistent partisan behavior, they solidify their understanding of the party's ideological position.

Effective brands thus require consistent position-taking, and highly developed political institutions allow legislators to better coordinate their branding efforts. To create party sub-brands, I argue that factions follow the partisan model. They pool and centralize resources in the hands of elected faction leaders in an effort to prevent defections from official faction position. Organizations that fail to develop whip systems, research divisions, and PACs are ill-equipped to execute sub-branding campaigns. By contrast, hierarchical organizations that require dues and regular participation will more closely reflect the structure of political parties and more effectively communicate party sub-brands.

Note, however, that partisan and faction branding efforts are naturally in tension, as the informational value of party brands increases in product homogeneity (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991). Because brands categorize and distinguish products, parties that dilute their brand (i.e., muddy their definition) can experience disastrous political consequences (Lupu, 2014). At the same time, factions organize to communicate a divergent ideological position. This raises a critical question. How do factions compete with party brands? In short, the answer is that they do not. Party brands communicate an overwhelmingly clear ideological position to the mass public. Individuals learn faction ideology with a strong prior about that organization's party ideology. Party sub-brands are not substitutes for the party brand. Instead, they offer a complementary identity, anchored to the political party, that allows legislators to appeal to niche, possibly heterodox, markets of political supporters.

Factions create party sub-brands to target donors, party activists, and the media to capture political resources. Their goal is to establish an independent political network and increase their legislative influence.⁴ By providing a supplement to traditional party resources, factions liberate their members to vote counter to the party

⁴For example, Hendry and Sin (2014) show that Tea Party Caucus membership can be predicted from legislator's location in partisan campaign finance networks.

line, structure the way issues are written into concrete policy proposals, and in rare instances, block votes on issues that harm the faction. Parties maintain more potent, namely procedural, powers to rein in faction influence, but by blunting an instrument of their party's positive agenda power (i.e., advancing, rather than preventing, legislative proposals), factions are able to more effectively protect their members' political interests. This leads to my second and final hypotheses:

Faction Donor Base Hypothesis: Joining a conservative (liberal) faction will lead to a more conservative (liberal) donor base, conditional on the institutional strength of the faction.

This hypothesis focuses on an important payoff of faction membership. By creating effective party sub-brands, ideological factions are able to market their members' partisan type and capture political resources from individuals sympathetic to their cause. However, this relationship is conditional on each faction's institutional capacity. Groups that ask little of their members (e.g., no dues) and lack the ability to facilitate political coordination (e.g., no whip systems or PACs) may claim to be heterodox partisans, but lacking strong faction institutions, donors are more likely to observe an unfocused and less credible ideological position. By contrast, factions that more closely mirror political parties are more likely to transmit disciplined policy positions corroborated by coordinated legislative action. Institutionally strong factions are better equipped to market their members to donors eager to support a particular type of Democrat or Republican.

Taken together, these claims outline a path to faction influence. Identifiable blocs of legislators can create institutions that facilitate the communication of their shade of party politics. These sub-brands allow faction members to appeal to a niche market of donors and construct a network of political support independent of party influence. Party sub-branding is thus a crucial element in the factional politics of resource capture. In what follows, I analyze each hypothesis in turn.

Political Products

To test the *Political Product Hypothesis*, I collected individual-level data on nine organized factions in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each organization is identifiable without complex measurement strategies. Factions that engage in party sub-branding should publicize their organizations, and each of the nine groups publicly register with the Committee on House Administration as a congressional membership organization, or caucus. Table 2.1 provides a summary of the faction data. I primarily relied upon CQ's *Politics in America* and the archived websites of faction leaders.⁵ I supplemented these data in two steps. First, I interviewed faction-affiliated staffers and elected officials. Second, I combed journalistic accounts of these groups from 1990 to 2016.⁶ This data set contains the complete membership of five ideological factions (the Populist Caucus, the New Democrat Coalition, the Blue Dog Coalition, the Republican Main Street Partnership, and the House Freedom Caucus) and a nearly-complete record of four others (the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the Republican Study Committee, the House Liberty Caucus, and the Tea Party Caucus).⁷

Several of these factions have been studied individually.⁸ For example, Feulner (1983) provides an exhaustive, qualitative account of the development of the Republican Study Committee; Medvic (2007) explores the ideological composition of the New Democrat Coalition in the 106th Congress; and Lucas and Deutchman (2007) argue

⁵More specifically, I used the Internet Archive: WayBack Machine (<https://archive.org/web/>)

⁶I was fortunate enough to conduct both telephone and in person interviews with affiliates of the House Freedom Caucus *prior* to the tremendous political attention that followed House Speaker John Boehner's resignation in fall of 2015. These data were cross-checked with journalistic accounts and adjusted for members that resigned from the faction mid-session (e.g., <http://blogs.rollcall.com/218/house-freedom-caucus-forms-fight-club/>)

⁷I lack data for the Progressive Caucus before the 107th Congress, the Republican Study Committee prior to the 108th Congress, the House Liberty Caucus in the 112th and 114th Congress, and the ostensibly-revived Tea Party Caucus in the 113th and 114th Congresses. I have found data on the House Liberty Caucus in the 112th and 114th Congress, but the data source is far less reliable.

⁸Lucas and Deutchman (2009) present an exception to this pattern, as they analyze four of the nine factions considered in this paper.

that the Republican Main Street Partnership “developed as a mechanism for articulating a centrist message,” (p.4) using interest group and party unity scores. Among these factions, the Tea Party has received the most scholarly attention to date, both as a movement (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012) and a formal congressional membership organization (Bailey, Mummolo, and Noel, 2012; Hendry and Sin, 2014; Gervais and Morris, 2012), while other groups (i.e., the modern Populist Caucus, the House Liberty Caucus, and the House Freedom Caucus) remain unstudied by political scientists. This research joins the growing faction literature by considering the full set of ideological factions in the US House of Representatives between 1995 and 2016.⁹

These nine factions were chosen because they represent the complete set of congressional membership organizations that explicitly claim (left-right) ideological objectives. Most congressional caucuses exist to advance a single issue (e.g., the “Out of Iraq Caucus”), promote the economic welfare of a particular region (e.g., the Sunbelt Caucus), or serve as a voice for particular group of Americans (e.g., the Congressional Hispanic Caucus) (Hammond, 2001). Leading research on non-ideological caucuses argues that groups provide valuable information for legislators (Ringe, Victor, and Carman, 2013; Ainsworth and Akins, 1997) and serve as flexible instruments of democratic representation (Miler, 2011). This literature typically considers the much larger, non-ideological subset of congressional membership organizations, and while some non-ideological groups (e.g., the Congressional Black Caucus) have developed strong institutions similar in kind to the nine factions analyzed below, I leave the work of integrating these two bodies of work to future research.

⁹Congressional membership organizations did not exist prior to 1995, and this new legislative institution provides a clean break for data collection.

Faction	Party	Years	Size (Average)	Proportion of Party (Average)
Congressional Progressive Caucus	Dem	2001 - 2016	63	0.30
Populist Caucus	Dem	2009 - 2012	31	0.13
New Democrat Coalition	Dem	1997 - 2016	55	0.26
Blue Dog Coalition	Dem	1995 - 2016	30	0.14
Republican Main Street Partnership	GOP	1999 - 2016	50	0.22
Republican Study Committee	GOP	2003 - 2016	125	0.55
Tea Party Caucus	GOP	2009 - 2012	44	0.18
House Liberty Caucus	GOP	2011 - 2012	14	0.06
House Freedom Caucus	GOP	2015 - 2016	39	0.16

TABLE 2.1: Overview of Congressional Faction Data

I compare these groups with (1st-Dimension) DW-NOMINATE scores (Poole and Rosenthal, 2011). These scores summarize revealed ideological preferences by scaling roll call votes in Congress. Figure 2.1 includes density plots for both parties and all seven ideological factions of the 111th Congress (2009 - 2010). Here the x-axis corresponds with ideology; greater values indicate more conservative voting patterns. As expected, factions that describe themselves as conservative vote in a more conservative manner than their co-partisans; ostensibly progressive groups do, in fact, appear more liberal than other Democrats; and the voting patterns of groups that claim to be centrist are relatively close to the opposing party. At a glance, each faction differs from the next, and the full system of House factions spans the breadth of the ideological spectrum.

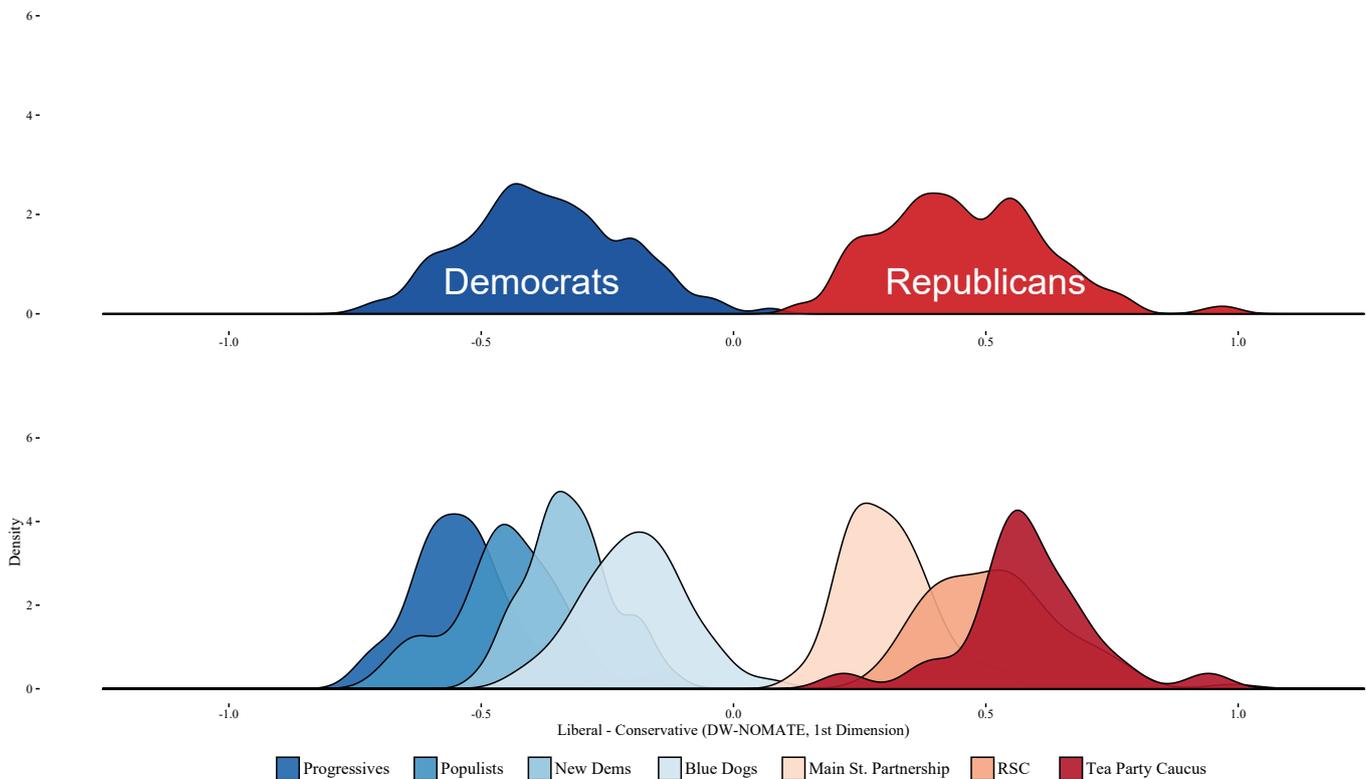


FIGURE 2.1: Ideological Factions in the U.S. House of Representatives (2009-10)

I proceed to estimate the ideological disagreement between faction members and their co-partisans. I regress DW-NOMINATE scores on each faction in a series of models with time fixed effects.¹⁰ Each model is faction-specific and pooled across all available congresses. All standard errors are clustered by legislator to account for serial correlation.¹¹ The results provide the mean level of ideological divergence between a faction (e.g., the Congressional Progressive Caucus) and their unaffiliated co-partisans

¹⁰Each of these models thus provides a “between” effect. In other words, the models answer the question, “Which House members are ideologically distinct from their co-partisans?”

¹¹For example, it is possible some exogenous shock affects a legislator in t , which affects estimates in t_{+1} , but not in t_{-1} . These results are purely descriptive — I do not attempt to capture pre-/post-membership changes in ideology. Consequently, I use DW-NOMINATE scores, which assume ideology changes linearly and monotonically. In later analyses, I turn to dynamic measures of ideology to account for the possibility of ideological drift in both directions.

(e.g., all Democrats *not* in the Progressive Caucus). Figures 2.2 and 2.3 display the faction coefficient from each of these models with 95 % Confidence Intervals.¹² The red line indicates no statistically discernible difference from Democrats (Republicans) that do not join a particular faction. Full tables of each regression analysis are available in the appendix.

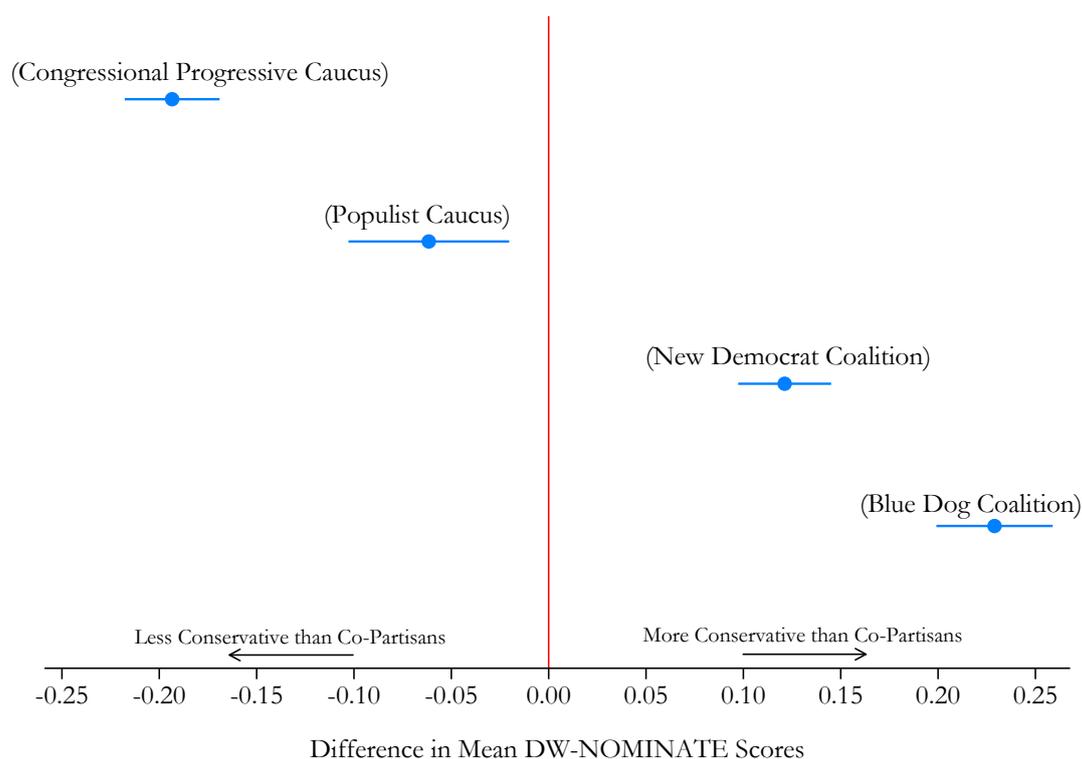


FIGURE 2.2: Democratic Factions are Distinct from their Co-Partisans

Each Democratic faction is statistically distinct from unaffiliated Democrats (i.e., all co-partisans not in that faction). Figure 2.2 shows the regression coefficients from each of the four Democratic faction regression models. Estimates to the right of the red line indicate that the organization is more conservative than other Democrats; estimates to the left suggest the converse. The Populist Caucus, which lasted only a few years,

¹²Confidence intervals describe the uncertainty around these coefficients. If I were to indefinitely re-sample and rerun these bivariate models, 95% of the estimated confidence intervals, on average, would cover the true faction coefficient.

diverges very little from Democrats that chose not to join their organization, while the Progressives and Blue Dogs occupy the liberal and conservative wings of the party, respectively. The New Democrats, consistent with journalistic accounts, are centrist relative to progressives in Congress but considerably closer to the party establishment than Blue Dogs. The difference between the left and right tails of the Democratic Party are particularly dramatic. The average Blue Dog is 0.31 points to the right of the average Progressive ($p < 0.001$). This amounts to over two standard deviations between the two factions. Taken together, this descriptive evidence suggests that Democratic factions occupy distinct regions of the ideological spectrum.

Members of Republican factions also vote differently from their co-partisans, although factions appear to cluster more heavily on the right-tail of the party's distribution. The Republican Main Street Partnership, which includes both the informal "Tuesday Group" and other moderate members, is a coalition of legislators "who believe in governing in a thoughtful and pragmatic manner."¹³ These results suggest that they are more centrist than other Republicans (i.e., all Republicans *not* in the Main Street Partnership). By contrast, the House Freedom Caucus, described by detractors as "bomb-throwing ideologues," typically occupy the right-wing of the Republican party.¹⁴ The difference between the Freedom Caucus and Main Street Partnership roughly reflects the gap between Progressive and Blue Dogs. In the 114th Congress, the average Freedom Caucus member is 0.34 points to the right of the average member of the Main Street Partnership ($p < 0.001$). Again, this is nearly double the standard deviation of DW-NOMINATE scores among Republicans in this time period.

¹³The Republican Main Street Partnership official mission: <http://republicanmainstreet.org/mission/>.

¹⁴"The Obsession of the House Freedom Caucus", *Politico*, October 15, 2015.

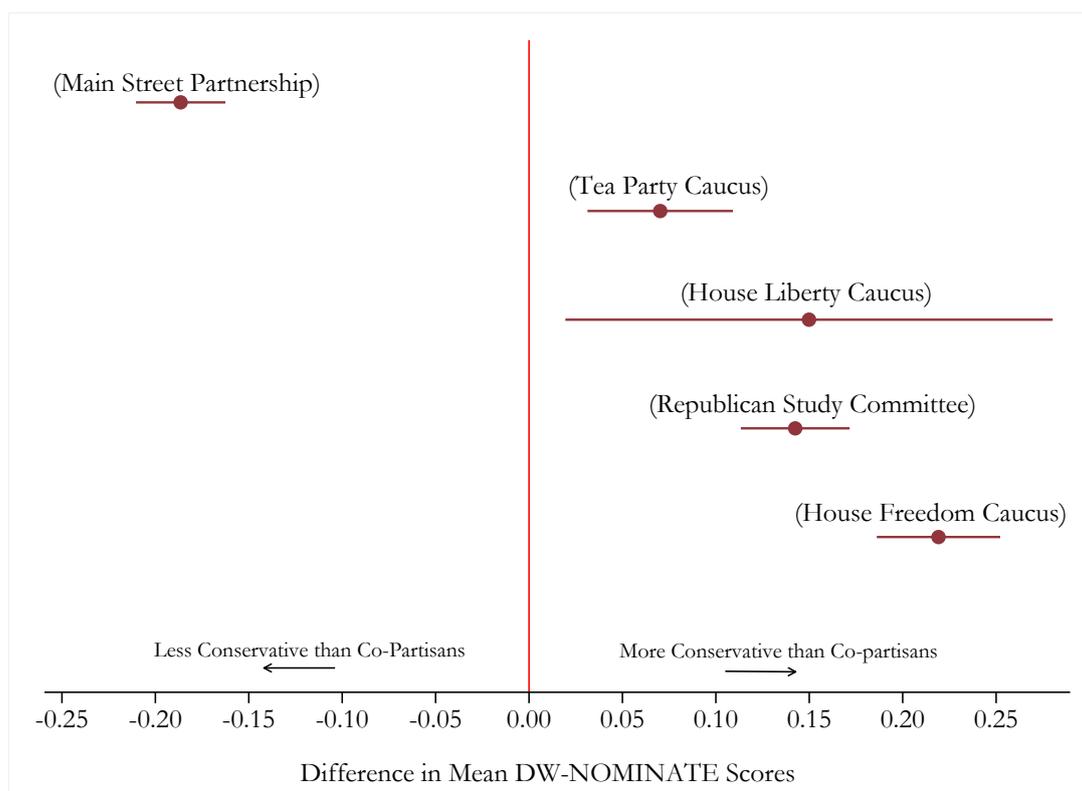


FIGURE 2.3: Republican Factions are Distinct from their Co-Partisans

Most Republican factions are non-centrist. This ideological clustering is consistent with the narrative of intra-GOP politics over the last half-century. The Republican Study Committee (RSC) was designed to be a conservative alternative to the relatively moderate, Nixon-era GOP.¹⁵ As the Republican Study Committee roster grew, however, new groups emerged to differentiate their members as “true” conservatives. The Tea Party Caucus formed to reflect the grassroots conservatism of 2010, but the organization stopped meeting only two years later.¹⁶ Shortly after, the founding members of the House Liberty Caucus established a small, invitation-only organization because,

¹⁵From 1994 - 1998, the Republican Study Committee changed its name to the Conservative Action Team (CAT).

¹⁶The Tea Party Caucus decline was contested several times by its rank-and-file. For example, Rep. Mick Mulvaney (R-SC) filed paperwork to create a new Tea Party Caucus in 2013. The leader of the original Tea Party Caucus, Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-MN), responded by rebooting the organization. The Tea Party Caucus quietly disbanded later in the 113th Congress, only to be nominally re-established by the recently defeated Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R-KS) in 2015.

in their view, the Republican Study Committee — once a bastion of House conservatism — had grown too large and was “no longer just the hard-core right-wingers” of the GOP.¹⁷ By January 2015, the House Freedom Caucus became the heir apparent among these conservative groups. The core members of the House Liberty Caucus were instrumental in creating the House Freedom Caucus, which expanded on the institutional features and membership requirements present in the Liberty Caucus. In short, one organization – the Main Street Partnership – represents the centrist wing of the Republican Party. The remaining four factions illustrate the fractured and evolving history of the party’s right wing.

Both the Democratic and Republican results support the *Political Product Hypothesis*. Factions in the U.S. House of Representatives are eager to distinguish themselves from their peers. These regressions are purely descriptive, and they are not intended to show that membership in an organized, ideological faction has any causal effect in legislative politics. Nevertheless, the voting patterns of each group suggest a political product ripe for party sub-branding campaigns.

Do Factions Actually Communicate Sub-Brands?

Inside the legislature, organized, congressional factions possess many institutional features conducive to political branding campaigns. Factions often have leadership systems in place to whip votes key to the group’s public image; they hire staff and employ research divisions charged with notifying members of key legislative opportunities. Factions also present their own budget proposals as a sort of sub-partisan platform. By centralizing collective resources in the hands of elected leaders, legislators more effectively create valuable position taking opportunities.

¹⁷“Conservatives Form Their Own Caucus Because the RSC Isn’t ‘Hard-Core’ Enough”, *National Journal*, January 15, 2014.

Outside the legislature, faction members work to define their organization in a way that resembles corporate branding strategies. All of these organizations adopt political symbols.¹⁸ Virtually all ideological factions in the modern House establish a social media presence, and some factions cap membership and impose an ideological litmus test to insure a minimum level of brand quality.¹⁹ More organized groups institutionalize this process; the House Freedom Caucus and the Blue Dog Coalition are invitation-only, requiring sponsorship from existing members and a formal vetting process by faction leadership. The consistency of faction membership reflects the logic of political branding. For example, Rep. Jim Matheson (D-UT) introduced a slate of Blue-Dog endorsed candidates as those that “fit the mold of a Blue Dog.”²⁰ And Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA) explicitly invoked the language of brands:

“That’s who the Blue Dogs are, and that’s why these candidates actively sought our endorsement. They know what the Blue Dog brand represents and wanted to share in it.”²¹

Factions express rhetorical differences from their co-partisans, and these differences significantly contribute to distortions in the party brand on issues most salient to faction members. For example, Goodman et al. (N.d.) find that centrists allocated significantly greater shares of their press releases to Blue Dog budget proposals, and Casas and Wilkerson (N.d.) find that Tea Party conservatives were more likely to emphasize policy issues during the 2013 government shut down.

Faction members almost never spend precious TV advertisement time mentioning their faction affiliations, and most Americans are probably unaware of the short-lived

¹⁸For example, the House Freedom Fund paid for graphic design work by an employee of a global brand design agency that has worked for large commercial brands (e.g., Pringles, Kellogg’s).

¹⁹The Progressive Caucus, for example, has nearly 29,000 followers on Twitter.

²⁰“Blue Dogs Announce First Slate of Endorsed Candidates for 2012,” *Blue Dog Coalition PAC*, December 14, 2011.

²¹*Ibid.*

Populist Caucus or the centrist Main Street Partnership.²² Nevertheless, legislators appear to use these organizations as a platform to identify themselves to individuals in a position to advance their political career (e.g., donors, the media, party activists). Faction identifications are frequently used in congressional newsletters, and the following examples illustrate this point:²³

- “as a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dogs, I believe this is an opportunity our nation cannot afford to miss. Everyone has heard the statistics on our health care spending ...”²⁴
- “As chair of the Tea Party Caucus, I joined Members of Congress and tea party activists at the Capitol to condemn this unacceptable abuse of power.”²⁵
- “I joined with my colleagues in the Congressional Progressive Caucus to introduce the Better Off Budget, our vision of how the federal government should raise revenue, provide services, and invest for the future.”²⁶
- “The Republican Study Committee, the caucus of House Conservatives, has released the American Health Care Reform Act (AHCR).”²⁷
- “I introduced the Rebuild America Act with my fellow Populist Caucus co-chair Rep. Rosa DeLauro [...] to rebuild the American middle-class”²⁸
- “I along with eight House colleagues formed the House Freedom Caucus. Our aim is to advance an agenda of a limited, constitutional government and give voice to those who feel Washington doesn’t represent them.”²⁹
- “This week I went on the radio to discuss my membership in the Liberty Caucus ...”³⁰

²²To investigate this, I combed the transcripts of every House television advertisement aired in 2002, 2004, and 2008. Factions are never explicitly mentioned.

²³All newsletter quotes are from the D.C. Inbox project. This terrific resource can be found at: <http://web.stevens.edu/dcinbox/Home.html>

²⁴Patrick Murphy (D-FL) in 2009 newsletter titled “A Blue Dog for Health Reform”

²⁵Michele Bachmann (R-MN) in 2012 newsletter titled “Honoring Our History and Holding D.C. Accountable”

²⁶Jerrod Nadler (D-NY), in 2014 newsletter titled “Does the Economy Work for You?”

²⁷Doug Lamborn (R-CO), in 2015 newsletter titled “Supporting the Republican Study Committee Obamacare Alternative”

²⁸Congressman Bruce Braley (D-IA), in 2012 newsletter titled “Working for You: May Update”

²⁹Raúl Labrador (R-ID), 2015 newsletter titled “Missing the Point: All legislative powers shall be vested in Congress”

³⁰Ken Buck (R-CO), in a 2015 newsletter titled “A Message from Congressman Ken Buck”

- “I was recently selected by my colleagues to chair the New Democrat Coalition, a moderate group of over 50 Democratic Members of Congress [...] The New Democrat Coalition will play an important role in reaching across the aisle and bringing our country back together again.”³¹

Factions use their organizations in an attempt to better define their partisan type, but the success of these sub-branding campaigns depend on the institutional strength of each faction. I turn next to an empirical analysis of three factions with distinct levels of institutional capacity.

Faction Donation Patterns

The *Faction Donor Base Hypothesis* argued that effective party sub-brands allow faction members to gain support from like-minded donors, conditional on the institutional strength of the faction. Candidates that join a well-organized conservative faction with strong institutions should see their donor base shift in the conservative direction. Membership in a conservative faction with weak institutions, however, should fail to change the composition of a candidate’s donor base. Organizations with middling levels of institutional capacity should see mixed results. To evaluate this hypothesis, I analyze the campaign contribution patterns of three factions with strong, weak, and mixed institutions, respectively: the Blue Dog Coalition, the Tea Party Caucus, and the New Democrat Coalition.

The Blue Dog Coalition is a highly organized, centrist faction in the Democratic Party. Blue Dogs are exclusive, with membership capped at 20% of the full Democratic Caucus. Aspiring Blue Dogs must be endorsed by the faction’s political action committee, sponsored by a sitting member of the organization, and vetted through a months-long interview process meant to evaluate ideological compatibility.³² Those

³¹Ron Kind (D-WI) in a 2012 newsletter titled “Moderate Democrats Ready to Deal”

³²Interview with Congressional Staffer, July 22, 2015.

that join the organization are expected to contribute time and resources to the faction, and in return, the faction doles out annual campaign contributions to its members.³³ Blue Dogs hold weekly meetings, collect mandatory dues, contribute personal staff to Blue Dog efforts, and if two-thirds of members agree on a policy position, members are expected to vote as a bloc. Blue Dog-sponsored policy initiatives, including an annual budget proposal, are led by a hierarchy of elected positions. There are Blue Dog policy task forces and whips directed by three co-chairs for communication, administration and policy. In short, the Blue Dog Coalition has cultivated a national party sub-brand by constructing a new, strong political institution within the Democratic Party.

By contrast, the Tea Party Caucus attempted to capitalize on a pre-existing conservative movement with a porous, underdeveloped political institution. The organization met infrequently, held only a handful of public events, failed to engage in legislative politics, and dissolved with Rep. Michele Bachmann's (R-MN) short-lived political fame. Activists constantly questioned the authenticity of the Tea Party Caucus. Some criticized the faction as "an establishment attempt to co-opt the grassroots" and compared caucus membership to a "Tea Party merit badge and undeserved political identity."³⁴ The Tea Party Caucus, as an institution, failed to convince grassroots tea party members that the organization, as a political product, was genuine. As one Fox News op-ed put it, "one would be hard-pressed to find a moderate, Blue Dog Democrat among the ranks of the Progressive Caucus. And yet the biggest of big spending Republicans have joined the Tea Party Caucus."³⁵ Unlike the Blue Dogs, the Tea Party Caucus never established a political action committee, whip system, or membership requirements. These weak institutions, which anecdotally failed to market a genuine political product, are not expected to produce a conservative shift in the donor bases

³³Vulnerable members receive a disproportionate share of Blue Dog funds.

³⁴"Richardson at Fox News: Memo to GOP: Stop Playing Tea Party", December 12, 2010.

³⁵*Ibid.*

of faction members.

The New Democrat Coalition provides a third case with mixed (i.e., weak, then strong) institutional strength. The New Democrats emerged with the popular wave of centrist, ‘Third Way’ politics that accompanied the election of President Bill Clinton, and like the Clinton administration, New Democrats focus on free trade, technology, and finance policy. Early on, the faction experienced many problems that later plagued the Tea Party Caucus. The authenticity of the organization was questioned by Democratic leaders, which dismissed the organization as “a political strategy masquerading as a policy.”³⁶ The faction lacked effective enforcement mechanisms and serious membership requirements for the first eight years of the organization. By 2005, however, the organization rebooted its institutional capacity and renewed efforts to publicly differentiate New Democrats from their co-partisans. Pooling these periods of varied organizational capacity thus provides a third, mixed-strength institution to test the *Faction Donor Base Hypothesis*.

Difference-in-Difference Analysis

Because candidates voluntarily join faction organizations (i.e., they are not randomly assigned), naive comparisons between faction-affiliated and unaffiliated co-partisans produce biased estimates for the impact of faction membership on changes in donation patterns. Candidate ideology, for example, may drive both the decision to join a faction *and* a donor’s decision to support that candidate — independent of party sub-branding effects. To account for this selection problem, I employ a difference-in-difference research design. This approach exploits the panel structure of my data and compares the ideological shift in each candidate’s donor base to shifts among non-faction members in the same party. More specifically, I estimate a model that includes

³⁶“Gephardt Speech on Party Angers Some Democrats”, *The Washington Post*, 12/06/1997.

both congress (δ_t) and candidate (α_i) fixed effects, which allows for faction membership “treatments” to occur at different times for different individuals.³⁷ This model, provided in the equation below, controls for both observed and unobserved (time- and unit-invariant) confounding influences.

$$\text{Median Donor Ideology}_{it} = \beta_1(\text{Faction}_{it}) + \alpha_i + \delta_t + \epsilon_{it}$$

Faction_{it} is my dichotomous treatment variable. Faction members (i.e., those in the Blue Dog Coalition, the New Democrat Coalition, or the Tea Party Caucus) are coded as 1, all other co-partisans are coded as 0. Factions are analyzed individually, and faction membership data are the same as those introduced in the Political Product analysis.

$\text{Median Donor Ideology}_{it}$, my dependent variable, is the median ideology among donors that support a House candidate (i) in a two-year period, or congress, (t). Constructing this variable required a series of steps, each made possible by the common-space campaign finance scores (CFscores) available in the Database on Ideology, Money in politics, and Elections (DIME) (Bonica, 2013). Common-space CFscores are estimated using correspondence analysis, which scales two-way frequency tables between contributors and recipients, and approximates an ideal point model at reduced computational cost. Like NOMINATE Scores, CFscores provide left-right (negative-positive) single-dimensional estimates of ideology. While individual scores are constant across time, the composition of candidate donor bases changes from cycle to cycle. I begin by sub-setting the DIME contributions data to the three million donors that choose to support House candidates between 1980 and 2012. This dataset includes repeated transaction between donors and legislators, so I collapse the data into donor-candidate dyads within each two-year period. Finally, I use these dyads to estimate the ideological median in each candidate’s donor base for each two-year period.

³⁷Note that congress fixed effects are equivalent to two-year fixed effects and thus overlap with campaign cycle fixed effects.

Faction fund-raising events allow legislators to network with industry leaders, PAC employees, and interested citizens. Consequently, I do not exclude any donor types. Individual donors made up 51% of the donor base, while Political Action Committees, organizations, and party committees make up the remaining 49%.³⁸

I also include a series of covariates to account for time- and unit-varying variables that may influence both faction membership patterns and the ideological composition of congressional donors. I include each candidate's share of the general-election vote, provided by the Legislative Effectiveness Project (Volden and Wiseman, 2014), as well as primary election vote shares, collected in Pettigrew, Owen, and Wanless (2014). Both variables are lagged to avoid post-treatment bias. I also include the Democratic presidential nominee's district vote share in the most recent presidential election (Bonica, 2013). This variable is used as a proxy for candidate's district ideology. Finally, I include Nokken-Poole NOMINATE Scores to account for ideological drift expressed by roll-call votes (Nokken and Poole, 2004). Unlike static DW-NOMINATE scores, these measures are estimated one legislative session at a time, providing a more dynamic estimate of voting behavior that allows ideology to move in either direction. The appendix provides a summary of my results with and without these control variables; results are robust to the exclusion of these covariates. Each model includes only faction members and their co-partisans to compare Democratic (Republican) faction members to Democrats (Republicans) that do not join the organization. All standard errors are clustered by candidate.

³⁸Most non-individual donations came from corporations. A plurality of donations (17%) came from Washington, D.C. In order to be included in the DIME dataset, donors must contribute to at least two candidates.

	DV: Median Donor Ideology		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Blue Dog Coalition (Strong Institution)	0.09** (0.03)		
New Democrat Coalition (Mixed Institution)		0.03* (0.02)	
Tea Party Caucus (Weak Institution)			-0.02 (0.03)
General Election Vote Proportion _(t-1)	0.12*** (0.03)	0.11*** (0.03)	-0.10*** (0.03)
Primary Election Vote Share _(t-1)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.02)
Dem. Pres. Nominee District Vote Share	0.14** (0.07)	0.12* (0.06)	-0.06 (0.07)
Nokken-Poole NOMINATE Scores	0.13** (0.07)	0.11** (0.06)	-0.03 (0.04)
Constant	-0.08* (0.05)	-0.08* (0.05)	0.52*** (0.05)
Congress Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Party	Democrats	Democrats	Republicans
Observations	3,507	3,508	3,022
R ²	0.84	0.84	0.79

Note: Linear Model Coefficients with Standard Errors Clustered by Candidate
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

TABLE 2.2: The Effect of Party Sub-Brands on Donation Patterns
(Difference-in-Difference Analysis)

The results, presented in Table 2.2, are consistent with the *Faction Donor Base Hypothesis*. Joining the Blue Dog Coalition leads to a more conservative donor base, as reflected by the median contributor. Future Blue Dogs begin with a donor base that is significantly more conservative than other Democrats. Enlisting in the centrist faction leads to an even greater difference between these Blue Dog and non-Blue Dog Democrats. The most liberal median donor, among Democrats, had a CFscore of -1.5.

The most conservative median contributor had a CFscore of 0.7. The impact of membership in the Blue Dog coalition is 0.09 ($p < 0.01$). This shift represents the growth in the gap between Blue Dog and non-Blue Dog Democrats. As otherwise conservative Democrats join the Blue Dog Coalition, their donor base shifts in an even more conservative direction.

Membership in the Tea Party has no such effect. Candidates that later join the Tea Party Caucus do begin with a more conservative base of contributors than other Republicans. But the differences between Tea Party and other Republicans do not significantly grow after joining the faction. The effect of Tea Party membership on the ideological composition of candidates' donor bases is statistically indistinguishable from zero.

Joining the New Democrat Coalition leads to a slightly more conservative donor base ($p < .1$), but this effect is of a smaller magnitude than that of joining the Blue Dog Coalition. The institutional strength of the New Democrat Coalition was somewhere between the exclusive, highly organized Blue Dog Coalition and the porous, unstructured Tea Party Caucus. The estimates in Table 2.2 support the claim that institutional strength is a critical element of constructing effective party sub-brands. To further support this claim, I turn next to an explicitly conditional analysis of New Democrat membership. New Democrats suddenly and publicly reconstituted their organization years after forming in the House of Representatives. This concerted effort to strengthen the faction's institution and rebrand the organization provides a unique opportunity to further evaluate the *Faction Donor Base Hypothesis*.

Rebranding the New Democrats

The New Democrat Coalition set out, according to their leadership, to “reconstitute” and “re-brand” the faction nearly a decade after organizing in the House of Representatives.³⁹ By the late 1990s, the New Dem roster had ballooned, and lacking serious membership requirements, a large share of newly elected Democrats joined the faction. But their numerical clout came at a cost. New Democratic “affiliation was self-proclaimed and the Coalition had no mechanism for enforcing ideological agreement” (Medvic, 2007, p.604). Like the Tea Party Caucus, political observers doubted the authenticity of the New Democrat Coalition sub-brand. To many, New Dems were mere “political marketeers.”⁴⁰ As an unorganized and ideologically diverse faction, members were viewed as “old Democrats with a new label.”⁴¹

In 2005, however, the faction sought to refine their institution. One political news organization summarized these efforts to clarify their centrist identity:

New Democrats engaged in structural and substantive reorganization to try to rebuild and carve out a new role within the Democratic Party. The 43-member organization elected a new cast of leaders, cut its size through new membership requirements and decided to narrow its policy focus.⁴²

The newly elected leadership created the New Democrat Coalition PAC and demanded that members take a more active role in the Coalition (e.g., participation in a majority of faction meetings). By “fine-tuning their political operation,” New Democrats hoped to improve their fund raising capacity.⁴³

The first stage of these efforts – thinning their ranks and clarifying their centrist position – seemed to succeed. Figure 2.4 displays the conservative vote probabilities of New Democrats before and after this rebranding effort in two key policy areas: trade

³⁹“New Democrats Say They’re Back”, Erin P. Billings. *Roll Call*, November 28, 2005.

⁴⁰“A Moment of Youth”, *The Washington Post*, August 15, 2000.

⁴¹“House New Democrats at Center of Influence”, *The Washington Post*, May 29, 2000.

⁴²“New Democrats Say They’re Back”, Erin P. Billings. *Roll Call*, November 28, 2005.

⁴³*Ibid.*

and finance (Fowler and Hall, N.d.). Conservative vote probabilities indicate the probability that a legislator votes more conservatively than the median member of the legislature. This measure is highly correlated with more traditional ideal point estimation techniques (e.g., NOMINATE Scores) but also offers simply constructed, issue-specific estimates. For years, New Democrats have positioned themselves as a pro-growth organization more friendly to corporate and Wall Street concerns than other Democrats. After 2005, the group increased their efforts to make technological investment, financial regulation, and free trade agreements central to their policy agenda, and Figure 2.4 illustrates this shift to the center.⁴⁴

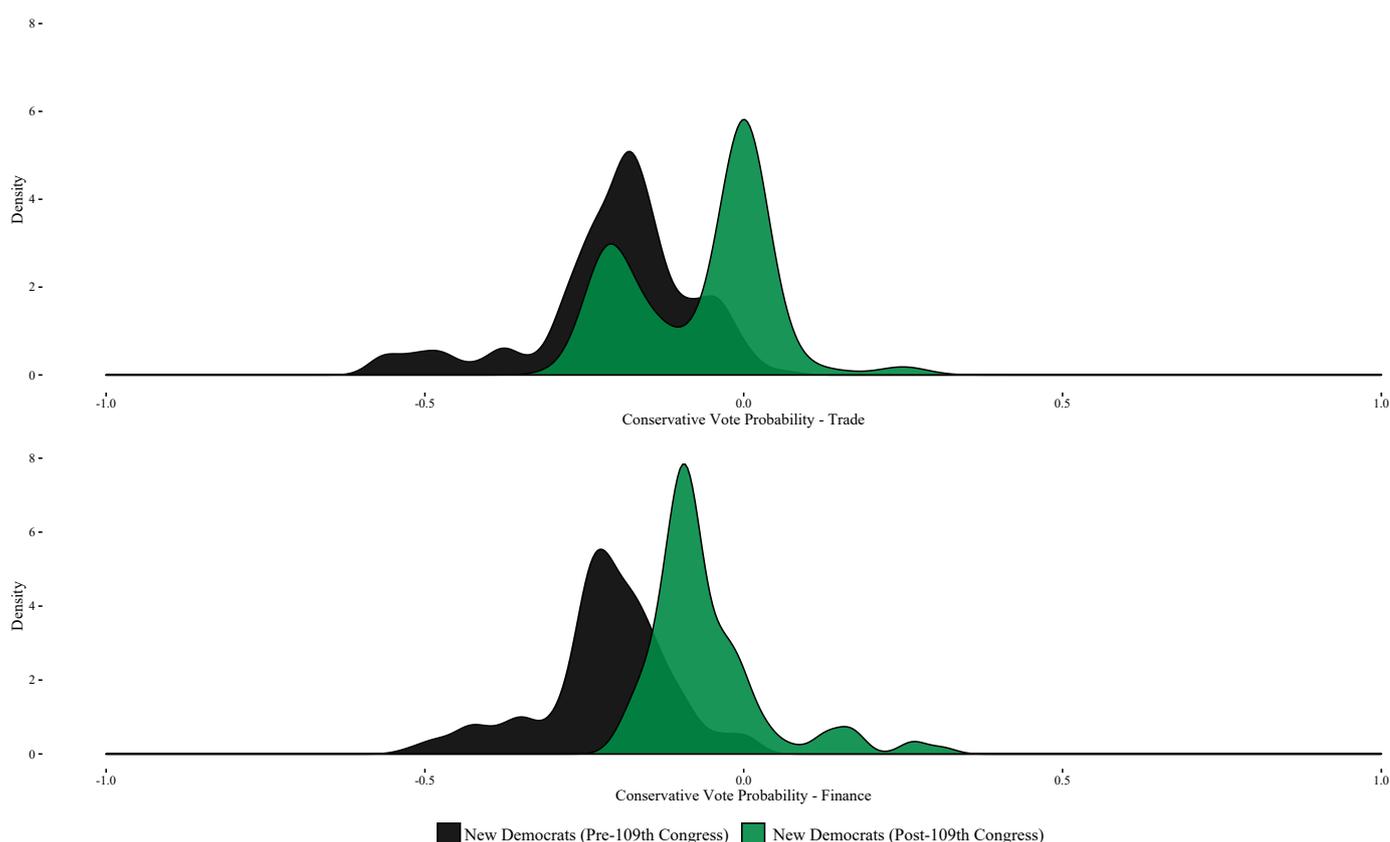


FIGURE 2.4: New Democrats Rebranded in the 109th Congress

⁴⁴See the New Dems (2016) American Prosperity Agenda for one such platform: <http://newdemocratcoalition-kind.house.gov/our-agenda/our-prosperity-agenda>

Did the New Democrat rebranding effort work? The *Faction Donor Base Hypothesis* claims that stronger institutions will improve the party sub-brand and increase the faction's ability to appeal to centrist donors. To evaluate this claim, I estimate the following model:

$$\text{Median Donor Ideology}_{it} = \beta_1(\text{New Democrat Coalition}_{it} \times \text{Post-2005}_t) + \beta_2(\text{New Democrat Coalition}_{it}) + \beta_3(\text{Post-2005}_t) + \alpha_i + \epsilon_{it}$$

Here the dependent variable, treatment variable, and control variables are identical to those employed in the difference-in-difference analysis. Unlike the prior results, however, I focus on *when* the shift in contributor ideology occurs.⁴⁵ Consequently, I interact the faction treatment variable with a dichotomous variable that indicates the period after New Democrat rebranding efforts. This variable, *Post-2005_t*, takes the value of 0 if before 2005 and 1 otherwise. Because this is a “within” analysis of when shifts in ideology occur, I include unit fixed effects.⁴⁶ Like the previous models, I cluster all standard errors by candidate. If the institutional development that took place in 2005 succeeded in clarifying the dilute, centrist brand, New Democrat membership should have relatively little impact on *Median Donor Ideology* before 2005 and a positive impact after 2005. The results for this conditional expectation are presented in Table 2.3.

⁴⁵Full tables of results for this analysis are available in the appendix.

⁴⁶I exclude time fixed effects (δ_t) because this is a “within” analysis (i.e., when well the shift occur). Nevertheless, including δ_t produces nearly identical results: the (*New Democrat Coalition_{it}* × *Post-2005_t*) interaction coefficient is 0.12 (p<0.001), and the constitutive term (*New Democrat Coalition_{it}*) is -0.001 (p>0.1).

DV: Median Donor Ideology	
New Democrat Coalition \times Post-2005 (β_1)	0.14 *** (0.03)
New Democrat Coalition (β_2)	-0.03 (0.02)
General Election Vote Proportion _(t-1)	0.12*** (0.03)
Primary Election Vote Proportion _(t-1)	0.05** (0.02)
Democratic Pres. Cand. Vote Share	-0.08 (0.05)
Nokken-Poole NOMINATE Scores (1st)	0.11* (0.06)
Post-2005	0.09*** (0.01)
Constant	0.05 (0.04)
Congress Fixed Effects?	No
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes
Observations	3,508
R ²	0.84
Post-Estimation Test ($\beta_1 + \beta_2 = 0$)	0.11*** (0.02)

Note: Linear Model Coefficients with Standard Errors Clustered by Legislator
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

TABLE 2.3: New Democrat Rebranding Effect
(Within Analysis)

Before the 109th Congress, the predicted median donor ideology of New Democrats (-0.38) and other Democrats (-0.39) were statistically indistinguishable. By contrast, those that joined the New Democrat Coalition *after* the faction strengthened their institutional capacity saw their donor base shift by 0.11 (p<0.01) more than other Democrats. The magnitude of the more formally organized New Democrat Coalition is similar to the Blue Dog Coalition results. These results are consistent with the journalistic accounts of the organization, and provide additional support for the conditional *Faction Donor Base Hypothesis*.

Discussion

Political scientists have long observed the constraints of two-party politics, but the growing distance between Republicans and Democrats crystallizes the dichotomous choice presented to politically engaged Americans. Citizens looking to support their “type” of partisan must decide among candidates bearing one of two generic, often unsatisfying, party brands. I have argued that politicians have taken Duverger’s law as an opportunity to construct innovative, endogenous institutions *within* parties. By organizing ideological factions in the House of Representatives, politicians are able to carve out a niche market among ideological donors.

To evaluate these claims, I began by testing the proposition that factions possess an underlying “product” conducive to party sub-branding. Toward this end, I employed a new dataset of ideological factions in the U.S. House of Representatives and found that faction voting patterns are distinct. That is, party factions span the breadth of the ideological spectrum, occupying distinct ideological real estate. Evidence from campaign-finance data suggest that factions are able to market this product and construct faction-specific donor bases. Faction resource capture is a viable political strategy, blunting a valuable instrument of party power, but to be successful, factions must build institutions that mirror political parties. My final analysis exploits a public, institutionally-driven rebranding campaign to support this claim. Organizations that restrict membership, elect whips, and establish political action committees effectively communicate party sub-brands; more informal groups that ask little of their members fail to produce similar effects.

To my knowledge, this is the first research to apply the logic of party brands to intraparty politics. These findings raise additional empirical and theoretical questions worthy of social science research. First, more detailed work is needed on brand *building* in this context. Well-documented faction archives allow researchers to understand

the developmental path of modern factions, and new methods in text analysis can utilize annual faction budgets and other policy proposals, providing a more in-depth consideration of rhetorical and legislative party sub-brands. Second, political donations are one important political resource, but an effective brand should capture a broad assortment of benefits for faction members. Highly organized factions should increase media coverage for their members and mobilize sympathetic party activists. Finally, new research is needed to understand how the politics of resource capture translate into faction influence within legislatures.

These results raise several normative questions about the clarity of two-party government, the value of political heuristics, and the nature of democratic representation. If party sub-brands truly lead to an independent source of political resources, the growth of organized ideological factions threaten the capacity of parties to pursue their legislative agenda — even if they maintain the procedural authority to prevent proposals from reaching the floor. Partisan vitriol is a widely loathed and accepted part of American politics. As factions continue to capture political resources, congressional insurrections and tumultuous policy fights *within* parties may soon become normal as well.

Appendix

Faction Product Analyses

<i>Faction</i>	DV: DW-NOMINATE Scores (1st Dimension)			
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Progressive Caucus	-0.19*** (0.01)			
Populist Caucus		-0.06*** (0.02)		
New Democrat Coalition			0.12*** (0.01)	
Blue Dog Coalition				0.23*** (0.02)
Constant	-0.36*** (0.00)	-0.37*** (0.01)	-0.41*** (0.01)	-0.40*** (0.01)
N	1,709	457	2,133	2,340
R^2	0.39	0.05	0.15	0.29
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Bivariate OLS Models - Democrats Only
(Std. Errors Clustered by Legislator)

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

TABLE 2.4: Democratic Factions as Distinct Political Products

<i>Faction</i>	DV: DW-NOMINATE Scores (1st Dimension)				
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Main St. Partnership	-0.19*** (0.01)				
Tea Party Caucus		0.07*** (0.02)			
Rep. Study Committee			0.14*** (0.01)		
Liberty Caucus				0.15** (0.07)	
Freedom Caucus					0.22*** (0.02)
Constant	0.50*** (0.01)	0.65*** (0.01)	0.47*** (0.01)	0.71*** (0.01)	0.45*** (0.01)
N	2,027	425	1,575	237	247
R^2	0.41	0.03	0.35	0.04	0.27
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Bivariate OLS Models - Republicans Only
(Std. Errors Clustered by Legislator)

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

TABLE 2.5: Republican Factions as Distinct Political Products

Donor Base Analysis

TABLE 2.6: Blue Dog Difference-in-Difference Analysis

	DV: Median Donor Conservatism				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Blue Dog Coalition	0.22*** (0.04)	0.08** (0.03)	0.07** (0.03)	0.08** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)
General Election Vote Proportion _(t-1)		0.15*** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)
Primary Election Vote Proportion _(t-1)			0.06*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)
Democratic Pres. Cand. Vote Share				0.14** (0.07)	0.14** (0.07)
Nokken-Poole NOMINATE Scores (1st)					0.13** (0.07)
Constant	0.14*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.09* (0.05)	-0.08* (0.05)
Congress Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,122	3,585	3,567	3,517	3,507
R ²	0.75	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84

Note: Linear Model Coefficients with Clustered Standard Errors (by Legislator)

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

TABLE 2.7: Tea Party Caucus Difference-in-Difference Analysis

	DV: Median Donor Conservatism				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Tea Party Caucus	-0.07** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)
General Election Vote Proportion _(t-1)		-0.12*** (0.03)	-0.09*** (0.03)	-0.09*** (0.03)	-0.10*** (0.03)
Primary Election Vote Proportion _(t-1)			-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.02)
Democratic Pres. Cand. Vote Share				-0.07 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.07)
Nokken-Poole NOMINATE Scores (1st)					-0.03 (0.04)
Constant	0.35*** (0.03)	0.45*** (0.03)	0.48*** (0.04)	0.52*** (0.05)	0.52*** (0.05)
Congress Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,541	3,076	3,059	3,027	3,022
R ²	0.64	0.79	0.79	0.79	0.79

Note: Linear Model Coefficients with Clustered Standard Errors (by Legislator)

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

TABLE 2.8: New Democrat Difference-in-Difference Analysis

	DV:Median Donor Conservatism				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
New Democrat Coalition	0.09*** (0.02)	0.03* (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.03* (0.02)	0.03* (0.02)
General Election Vote Proportion _(t-1)		0.15*** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.11*** (0.03)
Primary Election Vote Proportion _(t-1)			0.07*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)
Democratic Pres. Cand. Vote Share				0.12* (0.06)	0.12* (0.06)
Nokken-Poole NOMINATE Scores (1st)					0.11** (0.06)
Constant	0.14*** (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.08* (0.05)	-0.08* (0.05)
Congress Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,122	3,585	3,567	3,518	3,508
R ²	0.75	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84

Note: Linear Model Coefficients with Clustered Standard Errors (by Legislator)

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

TABLE 2.9: New Democrat Coalition Within Analysis

	DV: Median Donor Conservatism				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
New Democrat Coalition × Post-2005	0.15*** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.14*** (0.03)	0.14*** (0.03)	0.14*** (0.03)
New Democrat Coalition	0.01 (0.02)	-0.03* (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.03* (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
General Election Vote Proportion _(t-1)		0.14*** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)
Primary Election Vote Proportion _(t-1)			0.04** (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)	0.05*** (0.02)
Democratic Pres. Cand. Vote Share				-0.08 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)
Nokken-Poole NOMINATE Scores (1st)					0.11* (0.06)
Post-2005	0.06*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)
Constant	0.16*** (0.02)	0.04 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)
Congress Fixed Effects?	No	No	No	No	No
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,122	3,585	3,567	3,518	3,508
R ²	0.75	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84

Note: Linear Model Coefficients with Clustered Standard Errors (by Legislator)

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

3 Party Sub-Brands and Perceptions of Candidate Ideology

A growing body of political scientists have investigated the importance of *party brands* (Butler and Powell, 2014; Lupu, 2013; Grynaviski, 2010; Tomz and Sniderman, 2005). Brands are definitions; they are revelatory mechanisms that categorize and differentiate products from competing alternatives (Jones and Bonevac, 2013). Given the high stakes and cyclical volume of political consumers, congressional scholars have enthusiastically applied the logic of brands to parties. Party brands alleviate an immense informational burden placed on citizens (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). For Americans, Democratic and Republican affiliations serve a heuristic function, by reducing a complex decision into a simple, dichotomous choice (Lodge and Hamill, 1986; Rahn, 1993).

Nevertheless, party brands are imperfect instruments of democratic representation. For example, they communicate only a central tendency in the political behavior of partisans (Cox and McCubbins, 2007) which may be disproportionately manipulated by extremists (Goodman et al., N.d.). Ironically, the heuristic capacity of brands is most effectively used by citizens that need informational shortcuts the least (Lau and Redlawsk, 2001). These distortions and inefficiencies create a significant problem for legislators anchored to an ill-fitting party brand, but what can legislators, unsatisfied with the generic party identity, do to more clearly signal their ideological type?

I argue that lawmakers organize factions to communicate complementary *party sub-brands* to party activists, donors, and politically-engaged citizens. To test this

claim, I execute two survey experiments to estimate the impact of faction membership on perceptions of candidate ideology. My results provide conditional support for party sub-branding strategies in American politics. Membership in a faction — independent of policy preferences and individual attributes — can lead respondents to move candidates away from the party position on an ideological scale, but only when the faction possess strong institutions (e.g., whips, membership requirements) conducive to disciplined branding campaigns.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, I introduce a simple hypothesis that follows existing research on party brands. Next, I introduce the experimental design used to evaluate the impact of faction membership (i.e., Blue Dog and Tea Party Caucus sub-brands) on perceptions of candidate ideology. Finally, I report the results of two experiments and conclude.

Hypothesis

How can factions effectively communicate party sub-brands? Recent theoretical work has formalized Bayesian learning models to explain the transmission of party brands from rational choice (i.e., utility maximization) (Grynaviski, 2010) and social identity (i.e., self-categorization) (Lupu, 2013) perspectives. In these models, individuals observe political behavior and update their perceptions of parties. Observing new political events updates the citizen beliefs through a weighted average of previous and current experiences. The logic of this model implies two core features of party brands: an average position and uncertainty around that position. Parties succeed in branding campaigns when they powerfully communicate a consistent and favorable position.

Many, but not all, ideological factions possess important institutional features that facilitate political branding. While some factions are little more than informal labels,

others pool their resources to hire communications staff, employ research divisions, purchase professionally designed logos, and host faction fund raising events. Faction political action committees (PACs) are now common, and all ideological factions in the House of Representatives have a social media and web presence. Moreover, several factions are exclusive and tight knit; they establish strict membership requirements and bylaws that ostensibly require the faction to vote as a bloc when a super-majority agree on a policy position. In short, ideological factions have varied institutional capacity, but the strongest of these organizations seem well-equipped to engage in party sub-branding.

Factions do not create party sub-brands for the mass public.¹ Instead, they advertise their members to niche markets of ideological donors, party activists, and the media. Sub-branding allows faction members to credibly signal their party type to individuals with valuable political resources. By separating themselves from their co-partisans, faction members are able to better engage with sympathetic individuals willing to contribute money, resources, and press coverage to the faction cause.

To more precisely define their ideological position, factions should lead activists, donors, and media officials to perceive conservative (liberal) faction members as more conservative (liberal) than they would if they had never joined the organization. Effective party brands imply that rank-and-file legislators are anchored to the reputation and ideological position of the national party. Adding a party sub-brand should thus alter the way individuals perceive candidate ideology at the margins. This party sub-branding effect is the subject of this research:²

¹This assertion is consistent with research skeptical of party brands (Bawn et al., 2012). Factions do not even bother bamboozling average general election voters. Instead, they selectively engage with politically-engaged citizens in a position to advance the interests of their members.

²I do not expect dramatic shifts in perceptions of candidate ideology. Following the Bayesian learning models described above, brands are the product of repeated and consistent messaging; factions are unable to surpass the volume of observed partisan behavior.

Party Sub-Brand Hypothesis: Membership in a conservative (liberal) faction increases perceptions of candidate conservatism (liberalism).

Membership in an ideological faction — independent of personal, professional, and geographic characteristics — will lead individuals to view candidates as more conservative if the faction is conservative and less conservative if the faction is liberal. As an informational question with complicated problems of observational equivalence, I turn to an experimental design, which I describe in the next section.

Experimental Design

Following recent research on party brands (Lupu, 2013; Butler and Powell, 2014), I execute two experiments to isolate the effect of faction membership on perceptions of candidate ideology. By randomly and exogenously assigning party sub-brands, I am able to more tightly compare legislators in factions to a key counterfactual: the same legislator with the same political beliefs and no faction affiliation. Two factions are selected for experimental analysis: one centrist, Democratic faction (the Blue Dog Coalition) and one non-centrist Republican faction (the Tea Party Caucus).

Experimental analysis increases internal validity at a cost. Whereas observational analysis stumbles with clean counterfactual comparisons, experimental analysis struggles to map results taken in an artificial testing environment to a more general population of interest. In the present context, the problem is compounded by challenges recruiting donors, party activists, and members of the media. By settling for a convenience sample that roughly approximates the American population, my results are admittedly removed from the argued market for party sub-brands. Consequently, all my experimental results reflect the effect of party sub-brands on a population *less* familiar with ideological factions.³

³In other words, this should make it *more* difficult to reject the null hypothesis.

Both survey samples were acquired by contracting with Survey Sampling International (SSI), which is frequently employed in political science research (Broockman and Ryan, 2015; Kertzer and Brutger, 2016). Unlike other convenience samples (e.g., MTurk), SSI provides a national panel and permits demographic quotas to be set as they target respondents in various online communities. The Blue Dog experiment (Study 1) took place from November 19-24, 2014. The Tea Party experiment (Study 2) was conducted from April 9-12, 2015. In the appendix, I compare the survey samples of both studies to the American National Election Studies (2012).

Study 1 analyzes membership in the Blue Dog Coalition. Blue Dog Democrats are self-described fiscal conservatives in the House of Representatives. Respondents were randomized into a control (n=334) and treatment group (n=307). Individuals were then asked to view a screen-shot of an organization's website with information about Congressman Kurt Schrader (D-OR). In both treatment conditions, the website identified Schrader as a Democrat from Oregon and a fiscal conservative eager to work on moderate commonsense solutions such as deficit reduction and job creation. The image differs in only one respect: the control group views Schrader as a Democrat featured on the House Democrats web page, while the treatment sees Schrader as a Blue Dog Democrat on the Blue Dog Coalition web page.⁴ In short, the two conditions display fiscally conservative versions of a (real) incumbent Democrat that differ only in emphasis on party brand and party sub-brand.⁵

After viewing the treatment image, respondents are asked to choose a point along a 0 to 100 scale of conservatism that best represents the views of Republicans in Congress,

⁴A Blue Dog Coalition web page was used as the original template and the text was maintained whenever possible. The Blue Dog image, as displayed, is also genuinely used by members of the organization.

⁵Rep. Schrader is, in fact, a co-chair of the Blue Dog Coalition. While conducting background research, I was able to share the results of the experiment with a Blue Dog affiliate.

Rep. Kurt Schrader, and Democrats in Congress.⁶ The task is executed across three policy areas: taxes and government spending, defense, and immigration. Because Blue Dogs have historically focused on fiscal policy (e.g., Pay-As-You-Go legislation), examining three dimensions also provides an opportunity to test for policy spill-over effects. In keeping with the *Party Sub-Brand Hypothesis*, I expect that individuals randomly assigned to receive the Blue Dog treatment will perceive Congressman Schrader as *more* conservative than those assigned to control group.

Study 2 manipulates membership in the Tea Party Caucus. Unlike the Blue Dogs, the Tea Party Caucus was accused of co-opting, rather than creating, a conservative brand.⁷ This provides an empirical opportunity to benchmark the effect of a faction-created brand with a movement that emerged more organically (i.e., outside of the House of Representatives). Respondents are thus randomized into a control group (n=468), a “grassroots” tea party treatment group (n=562), and a Tea Party Caucus treatment group (n=483). In contrast to Study 1, I present a fictional Republican — “Sarah Miller”—modeled on a centrist Republican incumbent.⁸ All three treatment conditions include the House Republicans logo, and both tea party conditions include the “Gadsden” flag, a common symbol of the tea party movement. All images also include identical policy preferences (e.g., lower taxes, improve higher education), committee assignments (e.g., Armed Services), and non-partisan credentials (e.g., graduated with honors from Harvard University). While the control group emphasizes the Republican party brand exclusively, the two treatment groups emphasize distinct

⁶Following Butler and Powell (2014), I use sliders with the ends labeled as “liberal” or “conservative.” The appendix provides an example of the survey instrument.

⁷<http://www.politico.com/story/2010/08/tea-party-vs-tea-party-caucus-040528>

⁸While this study was being reviewed by the IRB, a concern was raised that the survey would spread misinformation among constituents. To address this concern, I replaced Congresswoman Elise Stefanik’s (R-NY) with Congresswoman Sarah Miller. A disclaimer was included at the end of the final survey explaining the fictional information provided to all respondents.

forms of tea party association. The “grassroots” treatment indicates praise and endorsement from activists and grassroots tea party organizations, while the Tea Party Caucus treatment highlights the legislator’s role in the congressional faction. Respondents are once again asked to locate the legislator on a 100 point scale of conservatism. All treatment images can be found in the appendix.⁹

Results

The *Party Sub-Brand Hypothesis* asserted that membership in an ideological faction can causally affect the way individuals perceive candidate ideology. Because both Blue Dogs and Tea Party Republicans are more conservative than their co-partisans, I expect that individuals exposed to the faction treatment conditions will view the legislator (i.e., Congressman Schrader or Congresswoman Miller) as more conservative than those in the control group. I conduct three tests to evaluate this relationship. First, I analyze the proportion of respondents placing the legislator to the right of his or her respective party. Second, I conduct conventional difference in means tests to estimate how far respondents shift candidate ideology to the right.¹⁰ Finally, I conduct Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) tests to identify differences in the location and shape of the distribution of responses across treatment conditions.¹¹

⁹Inclusion of demographic covariates does not change results for either experiment. Because the utility of randomization checks has been questioned recently, I omit these tables from the appendix (Mutz and Pemantle, 2011). All results are available upon request.

¹⁰Because Study 2 includes a third treatment condition as a benchmark, I also run ANOVA analyses with pairwise Scheffé tests. For simplicity, I report only the t-tests between Tea Party Caucus and the control group. Full results are reported in the appendix.

¹¹K-S tests evaluate the null hypothesis that responses are drawn from identical distributions. Because K-S tests compare (empirical) cumulative distribution functions, results are sensitive to both the shape and location of observations. K-S tests provide a p-value and a test statistic, where the test statistic indicates the maximum distance between the CDFs of the two samples. This statistic ranges from 0 to 1, where 1 indicates higher likelihood that the two samples were drawn from distinct distributions.

Blue Dog Brand Results

I begin by testing the proportion of respondents that perceive the legislator as more conservative than Democrats in Congress. As Figure 3.1 shows, Congressman Schrader — a self-described fiscal conservatism in both treatment and control groups — is viewed by most respondents as more conservative than his co-partisans. The difference in proportions between treatment and control groups ranges from 0.06 ($p>0.1$) for defense policy to 0.09 ($p<0.01$) for tax policy.¹² While the effects are strongest in the policy dimension most relevant to the Blue Dog Coalition’s political objectives, the effect of the sub-brand appears to spill over into other policy areas. Over half of the respondents in each treatment condition views Congressman Schrader as more conservative than Democrats in Congress, although far fewer view him as more conservative across all three policy dimensions. Both aggregated and policy-specific estimates suggest a similar pattern: more respondents view Rep. Schrader as conservative relative to his co-partisans in the Blue Dog treatment condition. Just under one in ten additional respondents are likely to move “Blue Dog Schrader” to the right of Democrats in Congress.

¹²All results are described using two-tailed tests, but strictly speaking, the *Party Sub-Brand Hypothesis* provides a directional prediction.

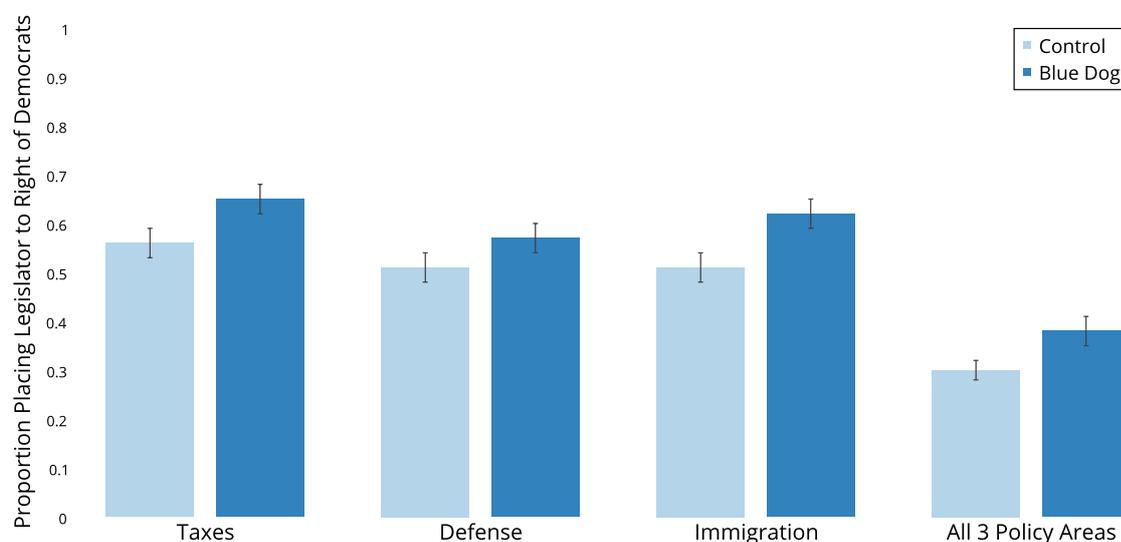


FIGURE 3.1: Differences in the Proportion of Respondents Placing Congressman Schrader to the Right of Democrats in Congress

These differences in proportions provide an informative but strictly directional measure of sub-branding effects. Consequently, I analyze the differences in the mean conservatism of Congressman Schrader across control and treatment groups. Figure 3.2 depicts the density of responses in both treatment conditions along with the mean for each group.¹³ Both groups peak around the scale's mid-point, but the Blue Dog treatment appears to have shifted the density of responses to the right. These results suggest that the control group internalizes the self-described fiscal conservatism of the featured legislator. Respondents place Rep. Schrader just left of center — between 47 and 49 on a 100 point scale of conservatism — compared to Democrats in Congress, which are typically placed around 41. Those exposed to the Blue Dog brand, however, place the congressman to the *right* of the scale's midpoint. In general, the Blue Dog brand increases respondents' perception of conservatism by about 6 points ($p < 0.01$). In sum, Congressman Schrader is viewed as more conservative across the board if the

¹³Figure 3.2 uses the average of all three policy dimension, but disaggregating this figure into policy-specific density plots provides virtually identical patterns.

Blue Dog brand is present — despite the fact that the Blue Dog Coalition historically focuses on *fiscal* conservatism.

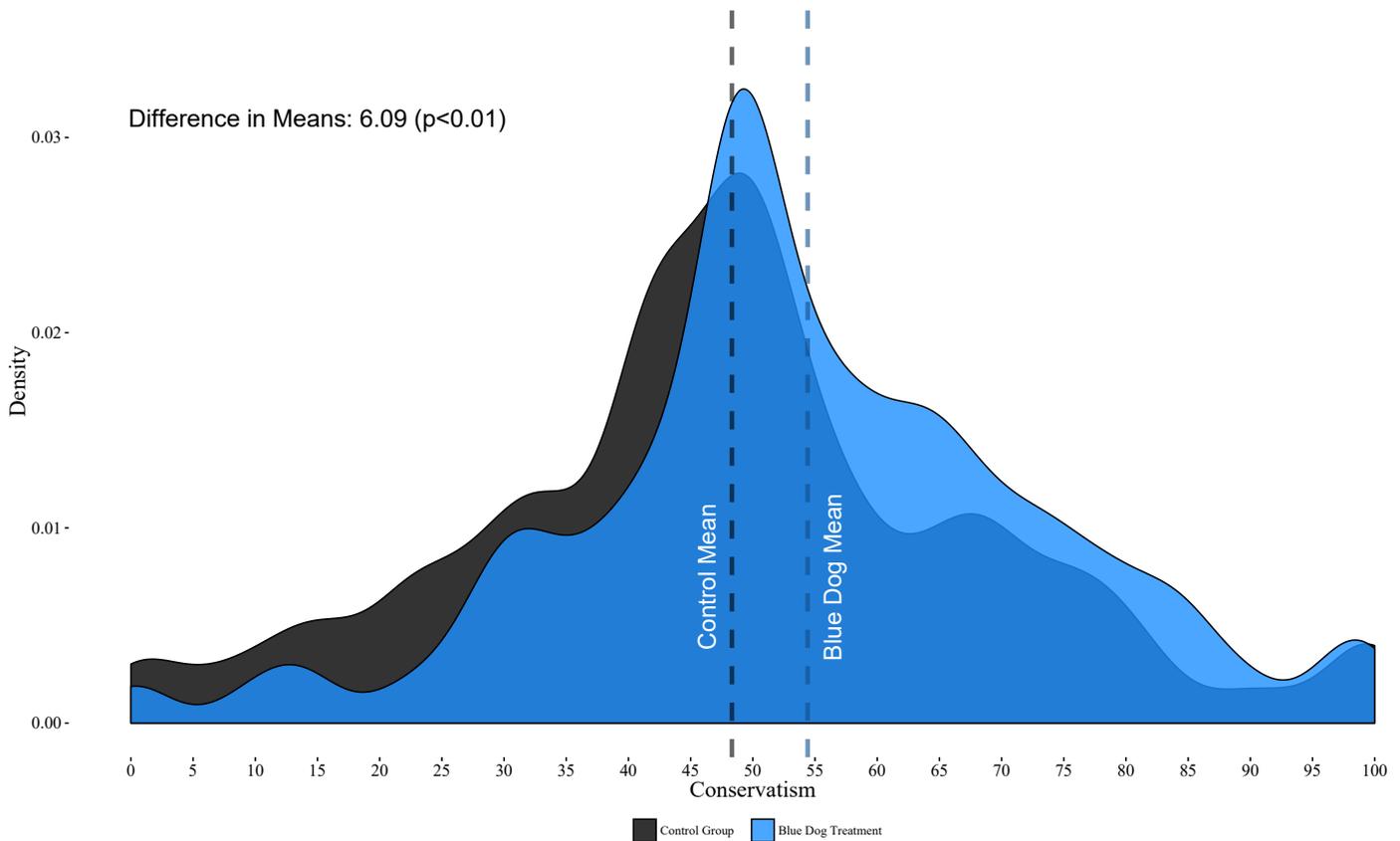


FIGURE 3.2: Differences in the Mean Conservatism of Congressman Schrader, with a Density Plot of Responses by Treatment Condition

Finally, I consider the cumulative distribution of responses to each of the three policy questions, and compare both the location and shape of these distributions across treatment conditions. The results for the K-S tests suggest that the empirical CDF of the treatment group is significantly lower than the control group as you move from low to high levels of conservatism. The maximum distance between the two distributions (0.18) is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), allowing us to reject the null hypothesis that these responses were drawn from the same distribution. These results are illustrated in Figure 3.3. Put simply, the Blue Dog respondents tend to cluster more heavily

on the conservative side of the scale.¹⁴

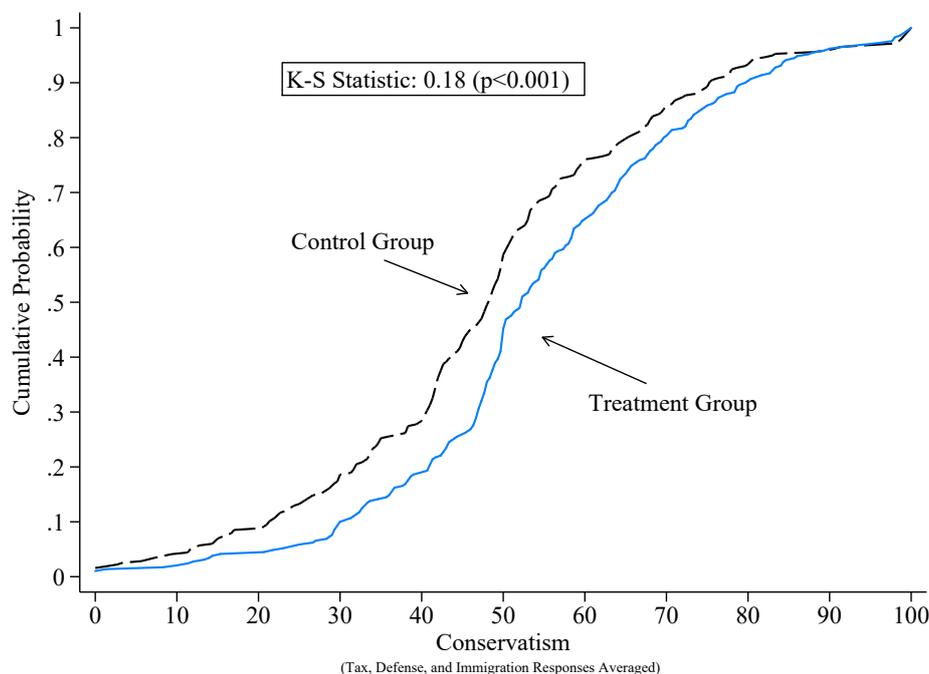


FIGURE 3.3: Empirical Cumulative Density Function of Responses in Blue Dog Experiment

After testing the results from Study 1 three different ways – differences in proportions, means, and cumulative distributions – I find meaningful differences in the way individuals perceive the conservatism of Congressman Kurt Schrader. Individuals exposed to the Blue Dog brand viewed the legislator as significantly more conservative than the control group, which was virtually identical in stated policy preferences, party affiliation, and other personal attributes. Moreover, these effects spill over into policy domains that are tangential to the Blue Dog mission. This provides robust support for the *Party Sub-Brand Hypothesis*.

¹⁴Disaggregated CDF plots provide the same interpretation. These plots can be made available upon request.

Tea Party Brand Results

By contrast, I find little evidence that Tea Party Caucus membership influenced the way individuals perceive the conservatism of Congresswoman Sarah Miller. Across all three treatment conditions, less than half of respondents considered Congresswoman Miller to be more conservative than her co-partisans. Recall that the fictional legislator was modeled on a centrist Republican. The *Party Sub-Brand Hypothesis* claimed that membership in a non-centrist Republican faction would increase the legislator's conservative credentials. Respondents exposed to a Tea Party sub-brand should have been more likely to locate the legislator in the party's right wing. Counter to this expectation, approximately four out of every ten respondents in the Tea Party Caucus treatment group placed the congresswoman to the right of Republicans in Congress, and this estimate was statistically indistinguishable from the results in both the Grass-roots Tea Party condition and the Control condition.¹⁵ As Figure 3.4 shows, less than half of respondents place Congresswoman Miller to the right of her co-partisans, irrespective of faction membership, and these patterns are consistent across questions of overall policy preferences and tax policy in particular.

¹⁵The appendix contains the full results of the Scheffé's test comparing each of the three treatment conditions.

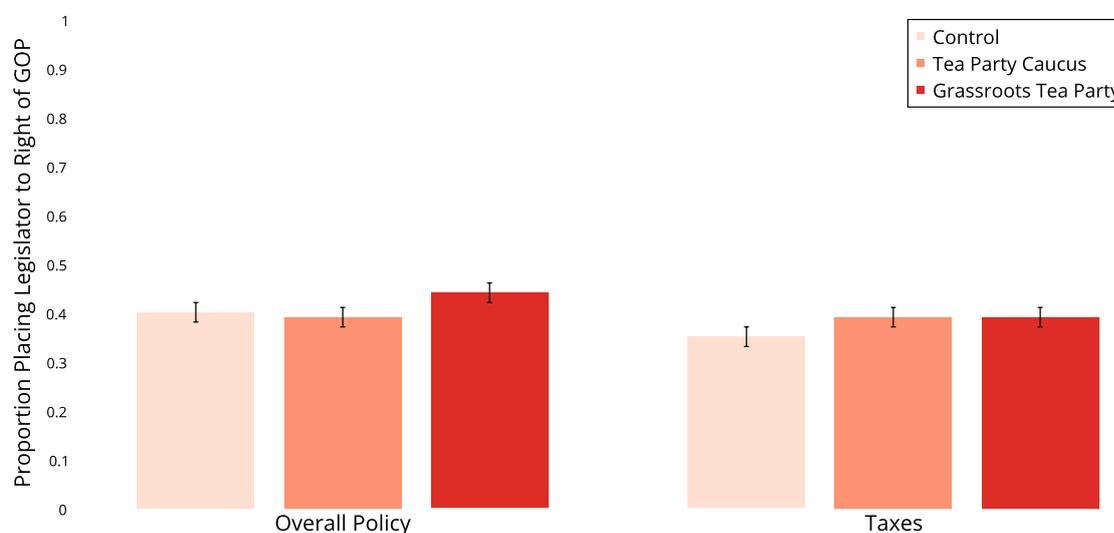


FIGURE 3.4: Proportion of Respondents Placing Congresswoman Miller to the Right of Republicans in Congress, by Tea Party Treatment Condition and Question

This null result is even more starkly illustrated in Figure 3.5. On average, respondents placed Republicans in Congress at 68 on the 100 point scale of conservatism. Respondents exposed to the Tea Party Caucus brand placed Congresswoman Sarah Miller, on average, at 65; those assigned to the control group *also* located the congresswoman, on average, at 65. In short, the faction manipulation did not allow us to reject the null hypothesis of no difference between treatment and control groups.¹⁶

¹⁶The Grassroots Tea Party condition did increase individuals perception of Congresswoman Miller's conservatism by about 4 points, but only on the tax policy question. See the appendix for details.

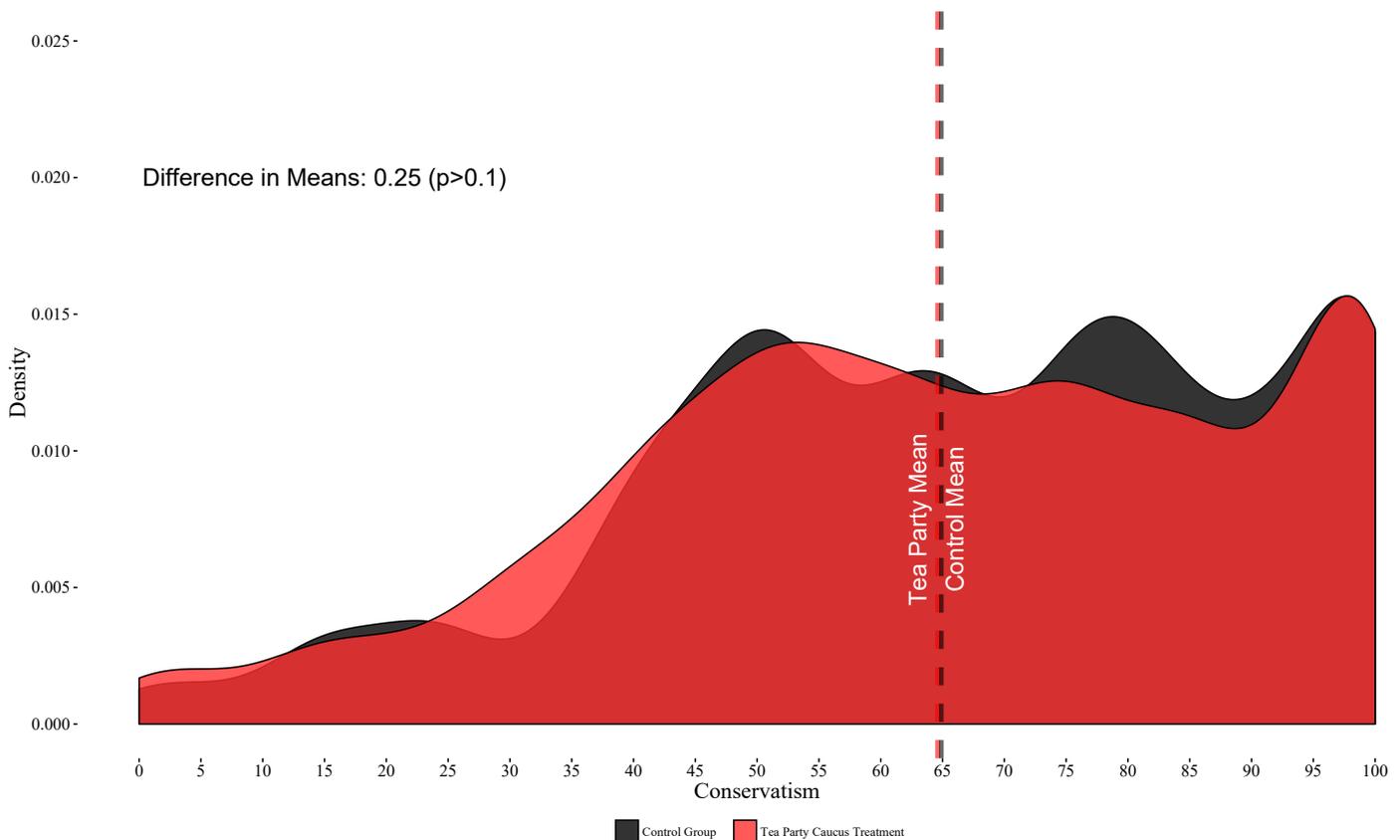


FIGURE 3.5: Differences in the Mean Conservatism of Congresswoman Miller, with a Density Plot of Responses for Tea Party Caucus Treatment and Control Group

As the density plots in Figure 3.5 suggest, these results are not the product of heavily skewed responses. Figure 3.6 forcefully reinforces this point. There is little difference in the cumulative density functions of responses. We see very little differences between the two groups, even after taking into account the full shape and location of responses across the Tea Party Caucus and Control groups.

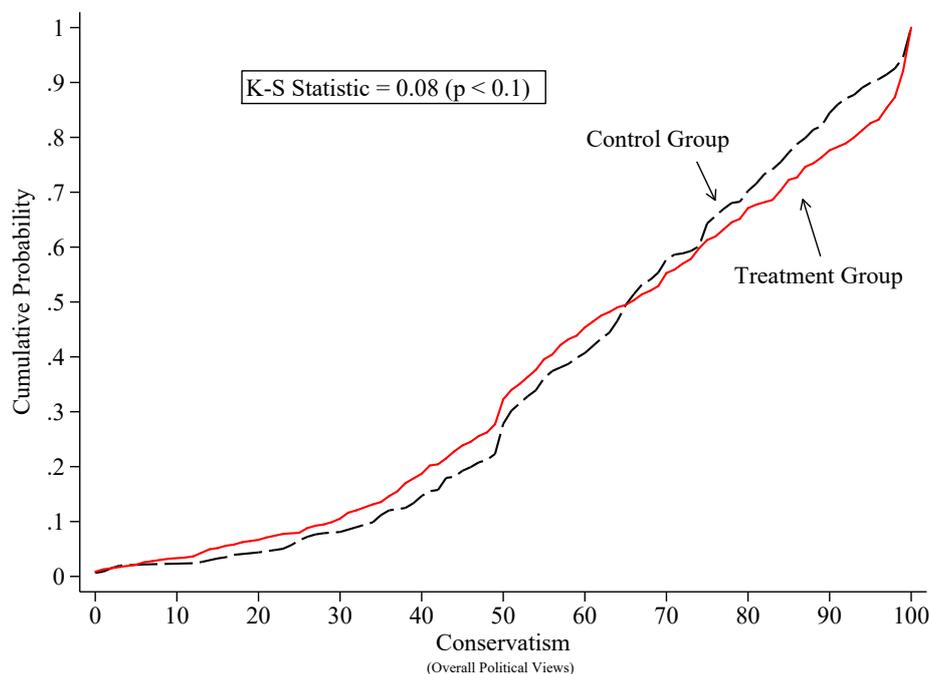


FIGURE 3.6: Empirical Cumulative Density Function of Responses in Tea Party Experiment

How do we make sense of the mixed results across these two experiments? On the one hand, membership in the centrist Blue Dog Coalition consistently increases the conservative credentials of Democratic Congressman Kurt Schrader. These effects spill over across policy dimensions largely unrelated to the stated mission of the Blue Dog Coalition. On the other hand, (fictional) Congresswoman Sarah Miller remains a main-stream Republican despite claiming Tea Party Caucus membership. Across three different tests, we fail to reject the null hypothesis of meaningful differences across treatment conditions.

One possibility is that the Tea Party Caucus failed to develop the necessary political institution to facilitate party sub-branding. Where the Blue Dog Coalition has existed for over two decades with a fully operational whip system, communications team, and fund raising operation, the Tea Party Caucus largely remained the creature of once-presidential candidate Michele Bachmann (R-MN). The Blue Dog Coalition

consistently produces policy alternatives, holds coordinated fund raising events, and selectively recruits members. Moreover, Blue Dogs capped their membership to preserve the purity of the brand. The Tea Party Caucus, by contrast, had a porous roster, no independent fund raising capacity, and did not coordinate legislative efforts in the House.

To explore this result in greater detail, I analyze the Tea Party treatment effects among a sub-sample of respondents that correctly identify the relative ideological location of the Tea Party Caucus. At the end of the survey, I asked respondents to place the Tea Party Caucus, the Republican Party, and the Democratic Party on the same ideological scale.¹⁷ For the subsequent analysis, I keep only those respondents that place the Tea Party Caucus to the right of the Republican Party and the Republican Party to the right of the Democratic Party.¹⁸ Only 28.29% of respondents correctly identified this ideological ordering. Note, however, that the drastic reduction in the sample highlights the failure of the Tea Party Caucus as a faction institution. A sweeping majority of respondents fail to identify the Tea Party Caucus as an extreme faction, indicating a failure in party sub-branding. These results should thus be taken as an artificial proxy for the effect of Tea Party Caucus association *among those that understand the Tea Party Caucus brand*.

The results, presented in Table 3.1, suggest that respondents randomly assigned to either treatment condition view Congresswoman Stefanik as more conservative than those assigned to the (simply Republican) control group. More specifically, the Tea Party Caucus group viewed her as nearly five points to the right of the control group ($p < 0.1$, two-tailed test).

¹⁷Unfortunately, I am unable to conduct a similar analysis in the Blue Dog survey.

¹⁸i.e., Democrats in Congress < Republicans in Congress < Tea Party Caucus

TABLE 3.1: Tea Party Experimental Analysis - Difference in Means

DV: Perceived Conservatism of Legislator	
Tea Party Caucus	4.64* (2.43)
Grassroots Tea Party	4.88** (2.32)
Control	72.88*** (1.69)
Observations	421
R ²	0.01

Note: OLS Regression Coefficients with Standard Errors

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01, two-tailed tests

Similarly, respondents were much more likely to place Congresswoman Stefanik to the right of the Republican Party. The linear probability model presented in Table 3.7 show a 0.15 increase in the probability of placing the legislator in the right wing of the party (p<0.05, two-tailed test). In short, respondents that view the Tea Party Caucus as a conservative organization — relative to both major parties — are more likely to react to the treatment condition in a way consistent with my hypothesis. Moreover, the effect sizes of these results are nearly identical to those in the Grassroots Tea Party condition, suggesting that legislators may be viewed as authentic tea party conservatives through their faction association alone *if* they are able to convince individuals that the Tea Party Caucus is a genuinely non-centrist, conservative organization.

TABLE 3.2: Tea Party Experimental Analysis - Difference in Proportions

DV: Legislator is More Conservative than Republicans {0, 1}	
Tea Party Caucus	0.15** (0.06)
Grassroots Tea Party	0.16*** (0.06)
Control	0.40*** (0.04)
Observations	428
R ²	0.02

Note: Linear Probability Coefficients with Standard Errors

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$, two-tailed tests

In sum, party sub-brands are capable of changing the way individuals perceive candidate ideology, but this relationship may be conditional on the strength of faction institutions. Lacking brand-building organizational features, factions are unlikely to credibly signal divergent ideological positions. Nevertheless, future work is needed to more explicitly test the role that faction institutions play in party sub-branding campaigns.

Discussion

Parties are among the most durable and important institutions in Congress, and scholars have duly studied the strategies legislators employ to define themselves to voters and political elites. Parties are not, however, the only ideological institutions in American politics. A growing number of scholars has turned their attention to the study of American party factions (Medvic, 2007; Koger, Masket, and Noel, 2009; Lucas and Deutchman, 2009; Skocpol and Williamson, 2012; Sin, 2014; Hendry and Sin, 2014). Following the experimental designs of Butler and Powell (2014) and Lupu (2013), I

have investigated the impact of party sub-brands on perceptions of candidate ideology.

My results call for further investigation of the role of institutions in party sub-branding campaigns. I found that membership in the Blue Dog Coalition significantly shifted perceptions of candidate ideology in the conservative direction, and these effects applied to policy areas both central and tangential to the Blue Dog mission. By contrast, affiliation with the Tea Party Caucus produced no such effect. Respondents viewed members of the Tea Party Caucus as no more conservative than an (non-Tea Party) member of the Republican Party. The substantial differences in organizational capacity between these two factions provide one plausible explanation for these findings, but a thorough and explicitly conditional analysis of observational data is needed to further understand party sub-branding strategies.

Appendix

Blue Dog Coalition Experiment

	Study 1 (%)	ANES 2012 (Weighted %)
Gender		
Male	48	48
Female	52	52
Education		
High School or Less	33	40
Some College	33	30
College Degree	22	19
Graduate Degree	12	10
Race		
White Non-Hispanic	68	71
Black Non-Hispanic	12	12
Other	8	6
Hispanic	12	11
Party		
Democrat	42	35
Independent	35	38
Republican	23	27
Ideology		
Liberal	31	24
Moderate	37	31
Conservative	29	36
Other	3	9
Age		
Under 35	29	30
35-44	16	16
45-54	18	17
Over 55	37	37

TABLE 3.3: Blue Dog Experiment Sample and the 2012 ANES

The image shows a screenshot of the House Democrats website. The header features the text "House ★ Democrats" in white on a dark blue background. Below the header is a navigation bar with links for "HOME", "ON THE ISSUES", "NEWSROOM", and "CONTACT", along with a search box. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a red header for "Member Spotlight" with a white star icon. Below this, there are two paragraphs of text about Congressman Kurt Schrader. The right column has a blue header for "About the House Democrats" with three buttons: "About", "Members", and "Mission Statement". Below these buttons is a portrait of Congressman Schrader, social media icons for Twitter, YouTube, RSS, and Facebook, and contact information for his office.

House ★ Democrats

HOME ON THE ISSUES NEWSROOM CONTACT SEARCH

Member Spotlight ★

About the House Democrats

About

Members

Mission Statement

Congressman Kurt Schrader (Dem. - Oregon) was recently elected as the House Democratic Caucus' Co-Chair for Communications. He is widely regarded as a loyal member of the party and an effective advocate for moderate, commonsense solutions within the Democratic Party.

Congressman Schrader strongly supports the House Democrats' efforts to pass a balanced deficit reduction and jobs package. "Everything must be on the table," he said in a press conference last week. "That means discretionary spending cuts, tax reform, entitlement reform, and more." Schrader says he will work tirelessly with other fiscally conservative Democrats to put the country back on a path of long-term fiscal sustainability.

DEMS.GOV
HOUSE DEMOCRATS

Office of Congressman
Kurt Schrader, Co-Chair
108 Cannon House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-5711

FIGURE 3.7: Blue Dog Experiment: Control Image

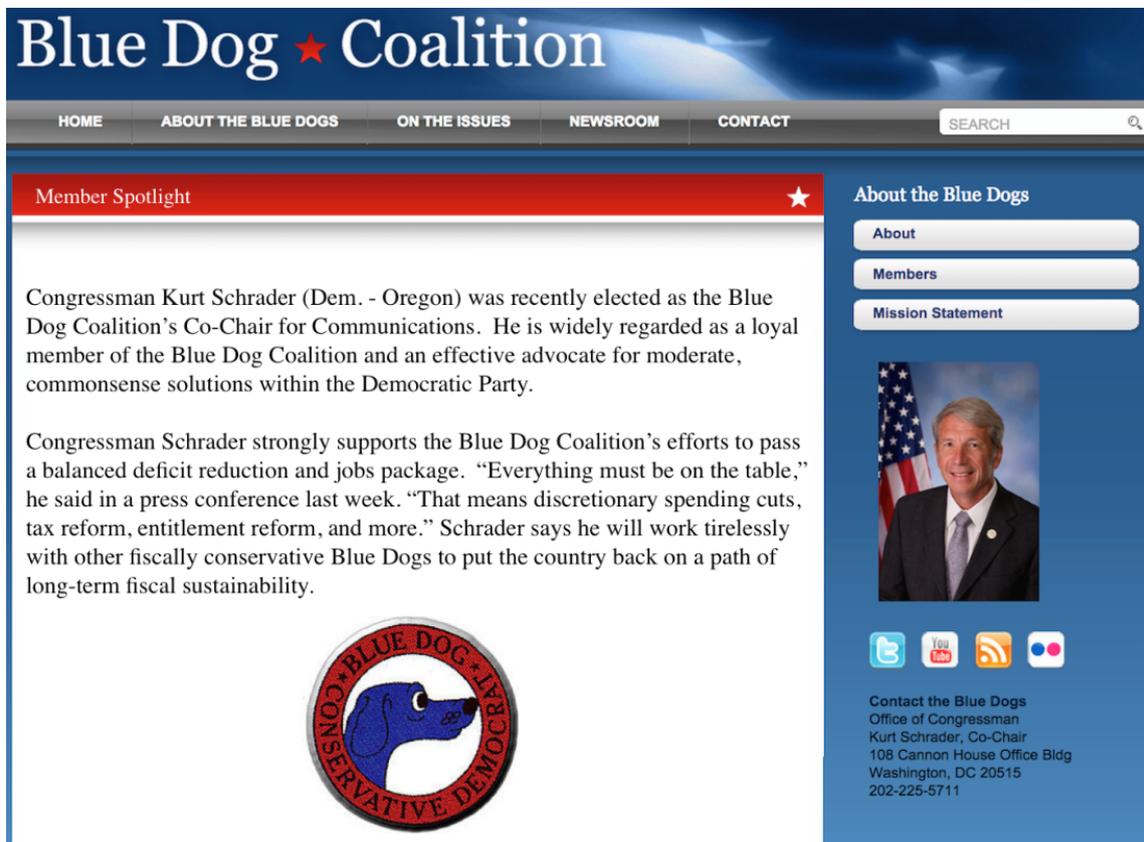


FIGURE 3.8: Blue Dog Experiment: Treatment Image

For each of the following, please choose a point along the scale that you think best represents their views on **taxes and government spending**.

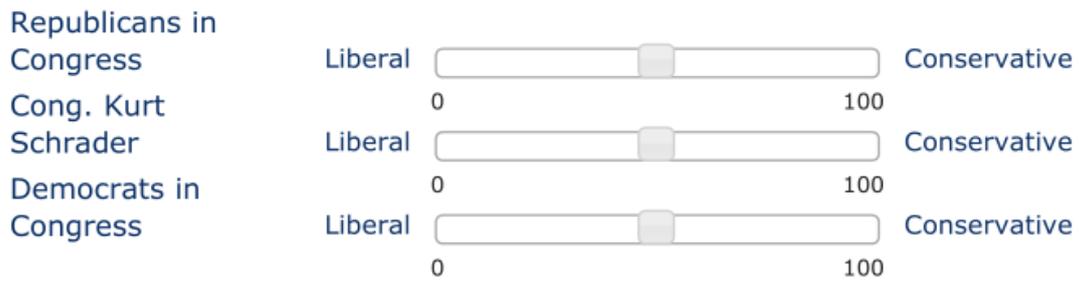


FIGURE 3.9: Question Example

TABLE 3.4: Blue Dog Experimental Analysis - Difference in Proportions

DV: Legislator is More Conservative than Democrats				
	All Policy Areas	Taxes	Defense	Immigration
Treatment	0.38 (0.03)	0.65 (0.03)	0.57 (0.03)	0.62 (0.03)
Control	0.30 (0.02)	0.56 (0.03)	0.51 (0.03)	0.51 (0.03)
Difference in Proportions	0.09** (0.04)	0.09** (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)	0.11*** (0.04)
Observations	607	625	612	620

Note: T-Test Results with Standard Errors

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

TABLE 3.5: Blue Dog Experimental Analysis - Difference in Means

DV: Perceived Conservatism of Legislator				
	Overall	Taxes	Defense	Immigration
Treatment	54.41 (1.18)	55.36 (1.30)	54.52 (1.32)	53.35 (1.32)
Control	48.32 (1.14)	49.18 (1.36)	48.64 (1.29)	47.22 (1.39)
Difference in Means	6.09*** (1.64)	6.17*** (1.89)	5.88*** (1.85)	6.13*** (1.92)
Observations	607	625	612	620

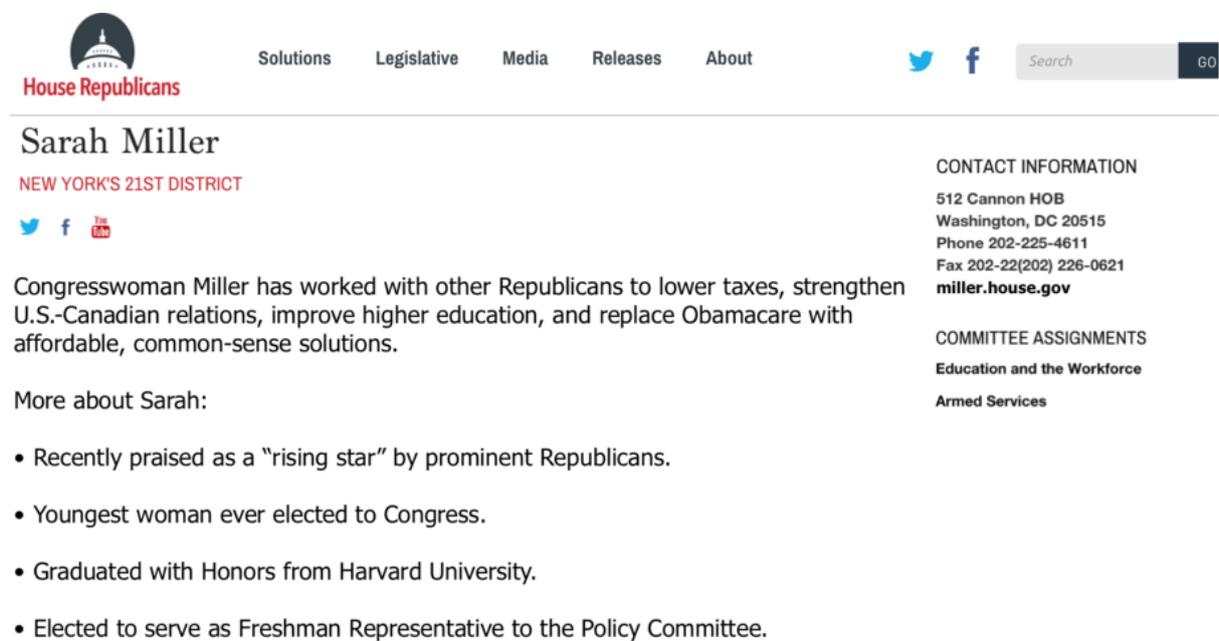
Note: T-Test Results with Standard Errors

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Tea Party Experiment

	Study 2 (%)	ANES 2012 (Weighted %)
Gender		
Male	50	48
Female	50	52
Education		
High School or Less	35	40
Some College	32	30
College Degree	21	19
Graduate Degree	12	10
Race		
White Non-Hispanic	76	71
Black Non-Hispanic	10	12
Other	7	6
Hispanic	7	11
Party		
Democrat	40	35
Independent	37	38
Republican	22	27
Ideology		
Liberal	36	24
Moderate	29	31
Conservative	30	36
Other	5	9
Age		
Under 35	29	30
35-44	22	16
45-54	18	17
Over 55	32	37

TABLE 3.6: Tea Party Experiment Sample and the 2012 ANES



The image shows a screenshot of a website for Sarah Miller, a House Republican from New York's 21st District. The page features a navigation menu with links for Solutions, Legislative, Media, Releases, and About. Social media icons for Twitter and Facebook are present, along with a search bar and a 'GO' button. The main content area includes Sarah Miller's name, her district, and a brief biography. A list of bullet points highlights her achievements, such as being a 'rising star' and the youngest woman ever elected to Congress. On the right side, there is a section for contact information and committee assignments.

House Republicans

Solutions Legislative Media Releases About

Twitter Facebook Search GO

Sarah Miller

NEW YORK'S 21ST DISTRICT

Twitter Facebook YouTube

Congresswoman Miller has worked with other Republicans to lower taxes, strengthen U.S.-Canadian relations, improve higher education, and replace Obamacare with affordable, common-sense solutions.

More about Sarah:

- Recently praised as a "rising star" by prominent Republicans.
- Youngest woman ever elected to Congress.
- Graduated with Honors from Harvard University.
- Elected to serve as Freshman Representative to the Policy Committee.

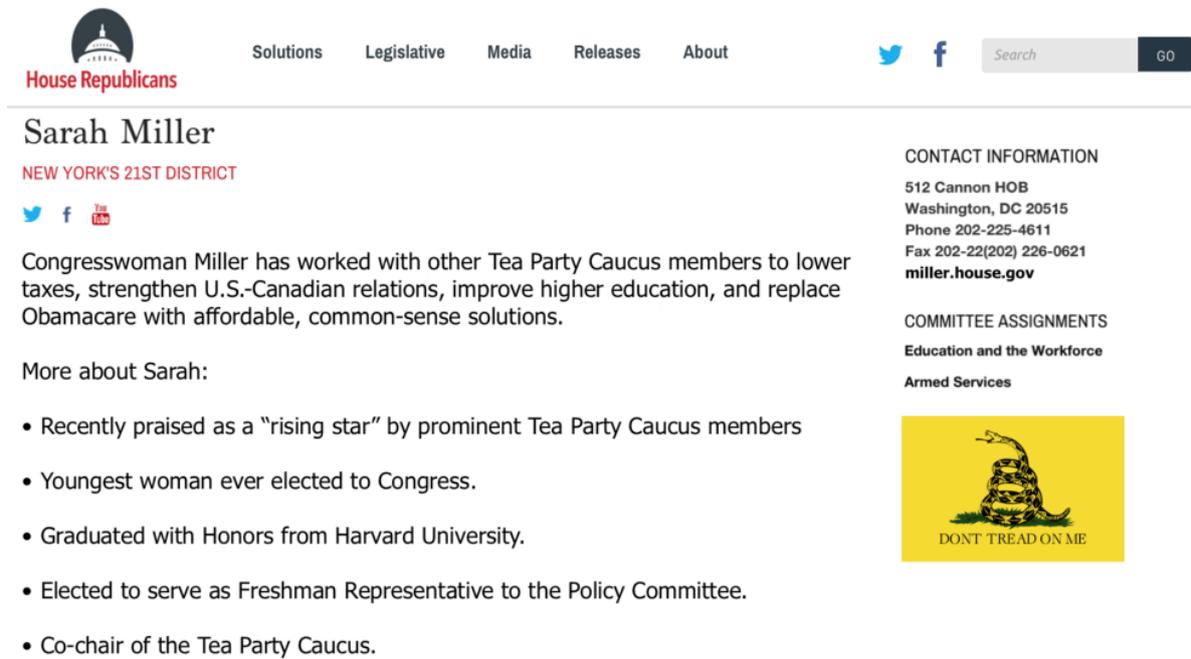
CONTACT INFORMATION

512 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Phone 202-225-4611
Fax 202-22(202) 226-0621
miller.house.gov

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Education and the Workforce
Armed Services

FIGURE 3.10: Tea Party Control Image



The image shows a screenshot of a website profile for Sarah Miller, a House Republican from New York's 21st District. The page features a navigation menu with links for Solutions, Legislative, Media, Releases, and About. Social media icons for Twitter and Facebook are present, along with a search bar. The profile text describes her work with the Tea Party Caucus and lists her committee assignments: Education and the Workforce, and Armed Services. A prominent yellow banner with a snake and the text "DON'T TREAD ON ME" is displayed on the right side of the page.

House Republicans

Solutions Legislative Media Releases About

Twitter Facebook Search GO

Sarah Miller

NEW YORK'S 21ST DISTRICT

Twitter Facebook YouTube

Congresswoman Miller has worked with other Tea Party Caucus members to lower taxes, strengthen U.S.-Canadian relations, improve higher education, and replace Obamacare with affordable, common-sense solutions.

More about Sarah:

- Recently praised as a "rising star" by prominent Tea Party Caucus members
- Youngest woman ever elected to Congress.
- Graduated with Honors from Harvard University.
- Elected to serve as Freshman Representative to the Policy Committee.
- Co-chair of the Tea Party Caucus.

CONTACT INFORMATION

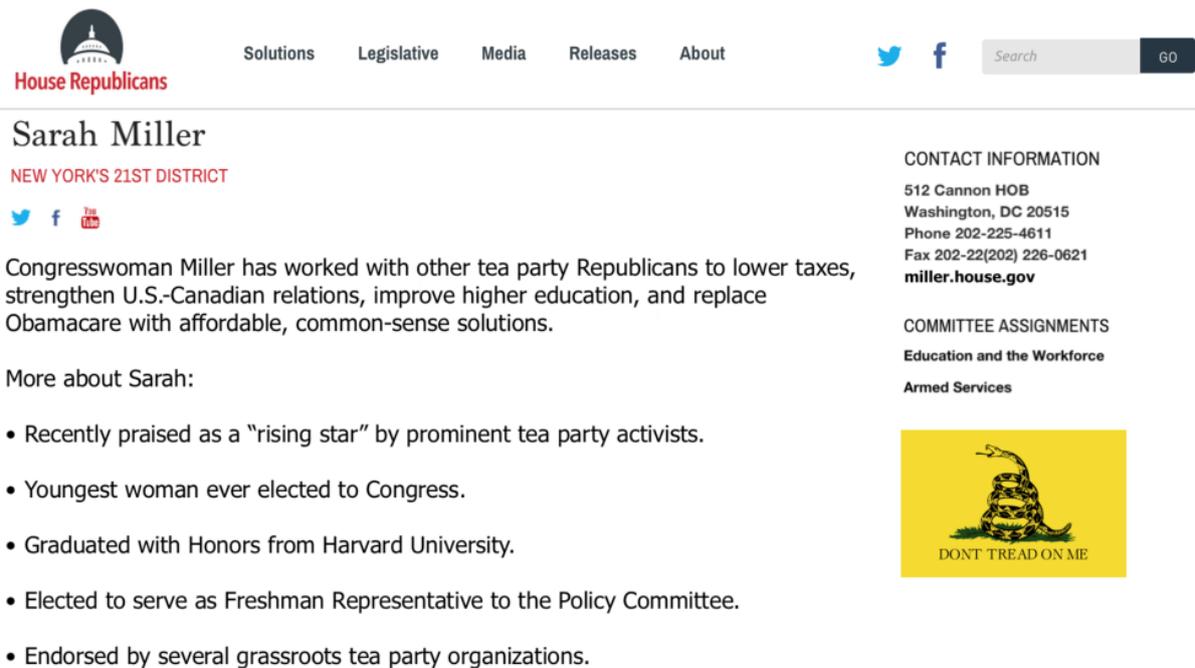
512 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Phone 202-225-4611
Fax 202-22(202) 226-0621
miller.house.gov

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Education and the Workforce
Armed Services



FIGURE 3.11: Tea Party Caucus Treatment Image



The image is a screenshot of a website for Sarah Miller, a House Republican from New York's 21st District. The page features a navigation menu with links for Solutions, Legislative, Media, Releases, and About. Social media icons for Twitter and Facebook are present, along with a search bar and a 'GO' button. The main content area includes a header for Sarah Miller, her district, and social media links. A paragraph describes her work with other tea party Republicans. A list of bullet points provides more details about her background and endorsements. On the right side, there is a 'CONTACT INFORMATION' section with her address, phone, fax, and website, and a 'COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS' section listing Education and the Workforce and Armed Services. A yellow graphic with a snake and the text 'DONT TREAD ON ME' is also visible.

House Republicans

Solutions Legislative Media Releases About

Twitter Facebook Search GO

Sarah Miller

NEW YORK'S 21ST DISTRICT

Twitter Facebook YouTube

Congresswoman Miller has worked with other tea party Republicans to lower taxes, strengthen U.S.-Canadian relations, improve higher education, and replace Obamacare with affordable, common-sense solutions.

More about Sarah:

- Recently praised as a “rising star” by prominent tea party activists.
- Youngest woman ever elected to Congress.
- Graduated with Honors from Harvard University.
- Elected to serve as Freshman Representative to the Policy Committee.
- Endorsed by several grassroots tea party organizations.

CONTACT INFORMATION

512 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Phone 202-225-4611
Fax 202-22(202) 226-0621
miller.house.gov

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Education and the Workforce
Armed Services



DONT TREAD ON ME

FIGURE 3.12: Tea Party Grassroots Treatment Image

For each of the following, please choose a point along the scale that you think best represents their views on tax policy.

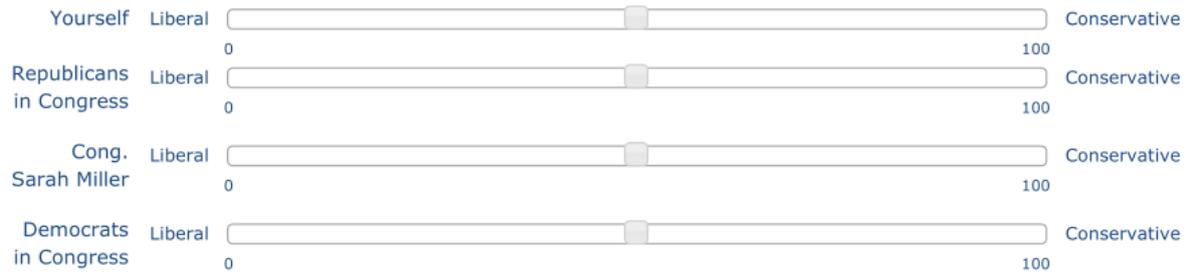


FIGURE 3.13: Tea Party Question Example

TABLE 3.7: Tea Party Experimental Analysis - Difference-in-Proportions

DV: Legislator is More Conservative than Republicans {0, 1}		
	Overall	Taxes
Tea Party Caucus	0.39 (0.02)	0.39 (0.02)
Grassroots Tea Party	0.44 (0.02)	0.39 (0.02)
Control	0.40 (0.02)	0.35 (0.02)
Difference in Proportions (Caucus - Control)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Difference in Proportions (Grassroots - Control)	0.05 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Difference in Proportions (Caucus - Grassroots)	-0.06 (0.03)	-0.0004 (0.03)
Observations	1463	1462

Note: Scheffé's Method Results with Standard Errors

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

TABLE 3.8: Tea Party Experimental Analysis - Difference-in-Means

DV: Perceived Conservatism of Legislator [0, 100]		
	Overall	Taxes
Tea Party Caucus	64.61 (1.23)	64.81 (1.20)
Grassroots Tea Party	67.14 (1.02)	67.51 (1.00)
Control	64.86 (1.10)	63.65 (1.10)
Difference in Means (Caucus - Control)	-0.25 (1.62)	1.16 (1.60)
Difference in Means (Grassroots - Control)	2.27 (1.56)	3.86** (1.54)
Difference in Means (Caucus - Grassroots)	-2.52 (1.55)	-2.71 (1.53)
Observations	1463	1462

Note: Scheffé's Method Results with Standard Errors

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

4 The Abolition of Legislative Service Organizations

Today, Congress hires fewer staffers, for lower pay, in an increasingly complex policy-making environment.¹ While congressional staff numbers have stagnated, the average congressional district population has increased by 52% since 1970.² Consequently, think tanks, political scientists, and lawmakers have raised concerns over the “decimation and marginalization of staff and research capacity” in Congress.³ To these observers, an impoverished legislative branch raises the specter of constitutional imbalance and invites lobbyists to fill a vacuum of expertise.⁴

Despite these concerns, political scientists face significant challenges if they wish to understand the consequences of an under-resourced legislature. While new studies of congressional capacity rely upon staff as a significant causal mechanism (Bolton and Thrower, 2015), few political scientists have directly analyzed the value of congressional staff to lawmaking outcomes (Nyhan and Montgomery, 2017, 2015). Research on congressional capacity is scarce for good reason; personnel allowances are, with

¹“Letter to the U.S. House of Representatives on Congressional Capacity from the New America Foundation, R Street Institute, Brookings Institution, American Enterprise Institute, and Campaign Legal Center,” March 9, 2016

²“The Evolving Congress”, *The Committee on Rules and Administration*, December 2014

³R Street Policy Study, No. 50, January 16, 2016.

⁴These concerns have been echoed by sitting legislators. On September 20th, 2016, a bipartisan “Dear Colleague” letter announced a “major and historical reform” initiative to improve congressional capacity.⁵

few exceptions, uniformly distributed across lawmakers, and office expenses equitably reflect geographic differences across electoral districts. Moreover, reductions in congressional resources tend to be rare, chamber-wide events, which leaves researchers with little individual-level variation and few empirical strategies to evaluate the political implications of an underfunded legislature.

To overcome this challenge, I analyze the abolition of *legislative service organizations* (LSOs) in the wake of the ‘Republican Revolution’ of 1994. LSOs were voluntary membership organizations in the House of Representatives that, like modern caucuses (e.g., the Blue Dog Coalition), organized to advance their collective political ambitions.⁶ Unlike modern caucuses, however, LSOs received official congressional resources. Crucially, the abolition of LSOs stripped legislative resources from a *subset* of legislators *within* the House of Representatives, providing an opportunity to estimate the individual-level impact of losing congressional staff, office space, and administrative services.

By investigating the abolition of legislative service organizations, this research also speaks to a growing body of research on congressional factions (Dewan and Squintani, 2015; Sin, 2014; Koger, Masket, and Noel, 2009). While contemporary legislators and journalists viewed the abolition of LSOs as a significant power grab, this watershed moment in the history of faction institutions has not yet received scholarly attention. I argue that depriving legislative blocs of congressional resources pushed factions to look beyond Congress for political support. As a result, organized blocs of lawmakers have deemphasized their role as research operations and constructed new institutions that more effectively appeal to donors and outside groups. In this sense, the developmental path of modern factions, such as the House Freedom Caucus, can be traced to

⁶The term “caucus” is used to describe many political institutions. Legislative Service Organizations (LSOs) represent a subset of congressional caucuses (i.e., voluntary membership organizations). These groups should not be confused with official party organizations (e.g., the Democratic Caucus) or electoral events (e.g., the Iowa caucuses).

the abolition of LSOs.

To evaluate the consequences of dismantling an entire category of political institutions, I employ a within-member difference-in-difference design. Using archived Congressional Research Service reports, I estimate the cost of abolition to former LSO chairs. I find that LSO leaders became less influential lawmakers after their institutions were dismantled, while other, more informal caucuses (i.e., those that never received official resources) were unaffected by the Republican reform efforts.

Legislative Service Organizations

Informal legislative coalitions have long played a role in American politics and policymaking. In 1979, however, a subset of congressional caucuses were granted access to official resources in the U.S. House of Representatives. The certification of these *legislative service organizations* (LSOs) marked a new period of institutional development for congressional factions, such as the Democratic Study Group. LSOs were formally defined as “any congressional caucus, committee, coalition or similar group” which [1] was composed of legislators, [2] solely provided legislative services, [3] ran on public resources, and [4] maintained a minimum level of sponsorship from House members (Richardson, 1987, CRS-2). In short, LSOs facilitated the public policymaking efforts of legislative blocs. In contrast to more informal coalitions of legislators (e.g., the Congressional Boating Caucus), these organizations were generally well-funded institutions with full-time staff and official by-laws and internal procedures.

Caucuses that received LSO certification were able to construct a more direct system for collecting revenue from members. During this time period, lawmakers were afforded three distinct categories of funds — clerk-hire, official allowances, and the

congressional frank — to support their legislative and representational duties.⁷ LSO members were able to directly funnel these House-appropriated resources towards the collective ambitions of their legislative bloc. As a result, certification created a flexible, efficient means for redistributing official House funds. For example, LSO leaders could employ no more than 18 full time staffers to run both their personal district and D.C. operations, but through LSOs, these individuals could draw on contributed clerk-hire funds to hire staff committed to the bloc’s collective ambitions. Moreover, LSO members with surplus funds, which did not roll over annually, could simply redirect money to the group. These organizations were thus able to transfer official House resources towards the administrative costs of legislative coordination.⁸

LSOs were particularly valuable to legislators, because these resources financed custom sources of information — often independent of traditional sources of congressional power — and a forum to coordinate parliamentary maneuvers. As a member of the Congressional Steel Caucus put it, “it takes a formal mechanism” to accomplish group goals in congressional politics, and LSOs provided reliable dues, staff, and meeting space.⁹ In this respect, LSOs had an advantage over the vast majority of informal associations in Congress (e.g., the Mushroom Caucus) that lacked an institutional framework.

Caucuses, broadly defined as voluntary congressional membership groups, have been the subject of political science research for decades (Ringe, Victor, and Carman, 2013; Miler, 2011; Lucas and Deutchman, 2009; Hammond, 2001; Vega, 1993; Caldwell,

⁷Clerk-hire funds employed personal staff. Official allowances covered ordinary and necessary business expenses. The congressional frank covered postage and other communication expenses. In 1995, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act consolidated these distinct categories of resources into the more flexible Members Representational Allowance (MRAs).

⁸The archival records of the Democratic Study Group suggest that considerable resources were diverted towards staff, printing expenses, and caucus events. Many of these events enticed member participation with presentations by outside experts, political campaigning advice, and an abundance of alcohol.

⁹John P. Murtha (D-PA) quoted in “Cut Back, Caucuses Struggle to Go Forward”, March 23, 1995, *The Washington Post*

1989). By establishing new endogenous institutions, the most prominent LSO chairs circumvented traditional paths to legislative influence.¹⁰ By the early 1990s, congressional leaders viewed the growing system of LSOs as a threat to their legislative influence: “a lot of committee chairmen are not happy with the increase in caucuses,” according to one lobbyist, because LSOs “almost compete with the committee system.”¹¹

LSOs varied in strength, size, policy domain, and institutional capacity (Vega, 1993).¹² Smaller, issue-specific groups often remained dormant until legislation emerged that affected their narrow agenda. Larger groups routinely provided summary memos of complicated legislation, circulated talking points for salient issues, publicized alternative policy platforms, and advanced their own budget proposals.¹³ Naturally, LSOs received variable support for their political operations. For example, Figure 4.1 illustrates contributions to LSOs during Fiscal Year 1987. In sum, 26 LSOs raised over \$3.1 Million (1987 dollars), with about one third of those funds coming from clerk-hire contributions.¹⁴

¹⁰These accounts are consistent with the argument presented in Ainsworth and Akins (1997). Ainsworth and Akins (1997) analyze an impressive, hand-coded dataset of policy-oriented caucuses in the 103rd Congress. In contrast to this research, their work deliberately excludes prominent “party” caucuses, such as the Democratic Study Group and the Republican Study Committee.

¹¹Joan Pryde, “Rep. Anthony May Find Caucuses a Tough Sell As He Tries to Establish Public Finance Group”, September 4, 1991, *The Bond Buyer*.

¹²See the appendix for a snapshot of this variation.

¹³“Rejecting Reagan’s Budget; House Weighs Options, *The Washington Post*, April 5, 1984.

¹⁴This is roughly the equivalent of \$6.5 Million in 2016 dollars. These totals exclude cash reserves maintained by LSOs throughout this time.

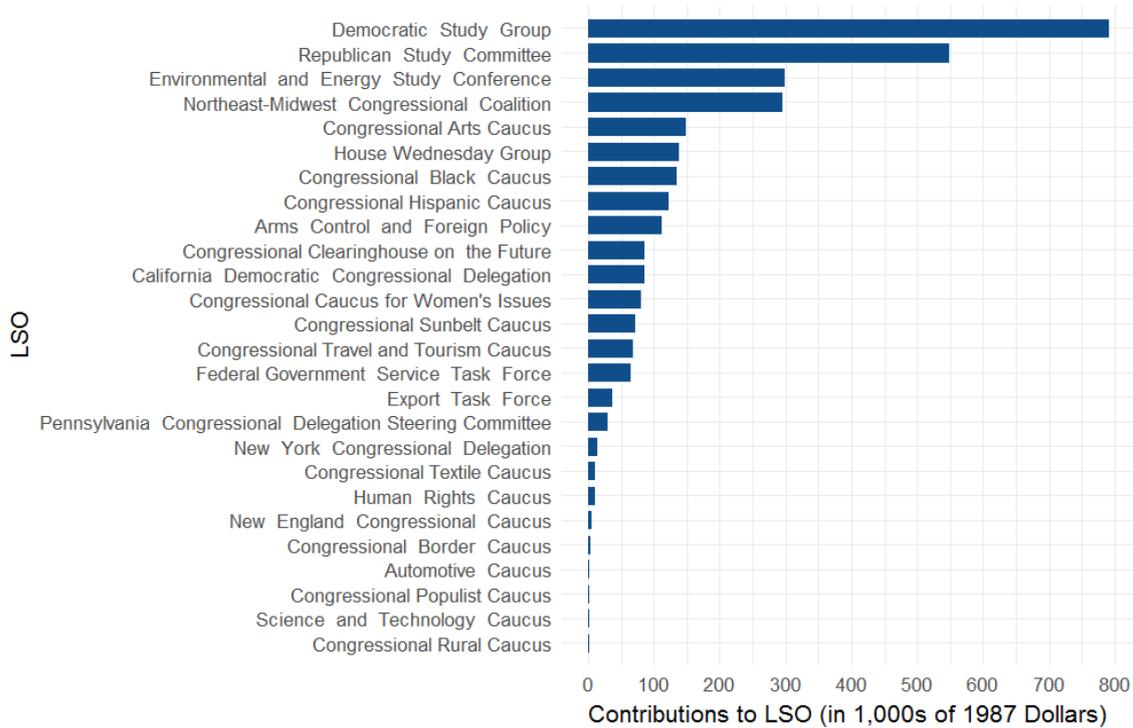


FIGURE 4.1: Variation in Contributions Across LSOs
(Source: CRS Report, FY 1987)

Unsurprisingly, the flexible financing of legislative groups raised new legal questions. As early as 1981, reformers targeted several LSOs on charges of waste and unethical behavior. For example, the Better Government Association found that several groups had used the ambiguous legal status of LSOs to effectively circumvent the House ethics code. Individual legislators could receive no more than \$100 in gifts from lobbyists and other outside groups at the time, but several LSOs (e.g., the Travel and Tourism Caucus) had raised hundreds of thousands of dollars *as an organization* — while maintaining a steady stream of public funding.¹⁵ In response to these allegations, the House implemented regulations for all LSOs, including a prohibition on outside funds. LSOs, particularly larger, ideological groups, continued to operate as an

¹⁵Edward T. Pound. “Tougher Fund Rules Sought for Caucuses Organized in the House,” September 20, 1981, *The New York Times*

integral set of policymaking institutions for over a decade. But as the ‘Republican Revolution’ swept through the American political landscape in 1994, these organizations would abruptly lose their primary means of funding staff and legislative research.

The Abolition of Legislative Service Organizations

The new Republican majority removed LSOs almost immediately. On December 7, 1994, House Republicans voted to cut LSO funds. Days into the 104th Congress, the Rules were adopted with a section titled “Abolition of Legislative Service Organizations” (H.Res. 6, Section 222):

The establishment or continuation of any legislative service organization (as defined and authorized in the One Hundred Third Congress) shall be prohibited in the One Hundred Fourth Congress. The Committee on House Oversight shall take such steps as are necessary to ensure an orderly termination and accounting for funds of any legislative service organization in existence on January 3, 1995.

With that, the primary institutions for ideological, regional, and special interest factions were swiftly abolished.

Republicans offered several justifications for their decision. Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA) described the move as one important component of a plan to “decisively shrink Congress.”¹⁶ To the new Republican majority, the ties between LSOs and their ostensibly independent foundations – despite the regulations implemented in the 1980s – also threatened a congressional scandal in a key moment for conservative policymakers. Moreover, abolishing LSOs would make it easier to sell the Gerald Ford House Office building, demonstrating the frugal character of the new majority. Abolition was thus a low-cost gesture of good governance, careful budgeting, and ethical house keeping that would make for positive press.

¹⁶Nolan Walters, “House Republicans Target Caucuses Funding”, December 7, 1994, *San Jose Mercury News*

Unlike earlier reform attempts, however, many lawmakers and journalists viewed the abolition of LSOs as an attempt to concentrate power in the hands of Republican leadership. LSO leaders were outraged. The chairman of the Democratic Study Group, for example, claimed that Speaker Gingrich had fundamentally upended House politics: “the centralization of control that the speaker has done such a good job of accomplishing included a centralization of information.”¹⁷ Others echoed these concerns, arguing that the abolition of LSOs would reduce the quality of the information available to legislative blocs: “It’s like taking a functioning operation and putting it out in a shed. Everything is done in a less professional manner because we have no money, no staff.”¹⁸ Other LSO leaders felt “really hamstrung,” because they “lost [their] own sources of information.”¹⁹ Importantly, prominent allies of the Speaker did not dispute the centralization of information that would follow LSO abolition. According to John Boehner (R-OH), “it is the responsibility of leadership to provide such information,” and Pat Roberts (R-KS) agreed: “We have subcommittee information, committee information, leadership information.”²⁰ In short, the new Republican majority cut off public funding for key legislative coalitions in the House immediately prior to one of the most active periods of lawmaking in modern history, and LSO leaders contested that the decision was intended to neutralize their influence in public policymaking.²¹

In retrospect, it is clear that the abolition of LSOs spared few, if any, taxpayers

¹⁷David E. Skaggs (D-CO) quoted in “Cut Back, Caucuses Struggle to Go Forward”, March 23, 1995, *The Washington Post*

¹⁸*ibid*

¹⁹*ibid*

²⁰*ibid*

²¹There are many other examples of LSO protest. Archival records of the DSG suggest there was a bipartisan effort to preserve the set of institutions. The leader of the Congressional Black Caucus claimed that, “the motivating factor behind all of this is a genuine desire to limit the effectiveness of racial and ethnic minorities here in the House.” (Kweisi Mfume (D-MD), quoted in “Money, Power at Issue in Caucus Cuts”, December 11, 1994, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*) The Co-Chair for Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues called the abolition a “misguided attempt to silence free association and debate” under “the guise of congressional reform.” (Patricia Schroeder (D-CO), December 8, 1994, “Not So Fast; They’re Useful” *USA Today*.)

dollars. The Ford House Office Building — which was used to justify the removal of LSO office space — was never sold, and contributions to LSOs were never actually cut from congressional expenditures. Instead, money spent on LSO dues were rolled back into individual accounts. Over time, some groups found ways to circumvent these rules by employing a few “shared staffers” to perform research and other duties. According to Ernest Istook (R-OK), the Republican Study Committee quickly “set up a structure of rotating the payroll for [former RSC] employees from one office to the next, so that everyone was, in effect, sharing the cost but working within the new rules.”²² While fewer House resources were directed to the operational expenses of these blocs, the remaining funds were buried in a complicated rotation of personal accounts and, over time, supplemented by outside donations.

Nevertheless, Republicans had abruptly dismantled a system of directly funded political institutions in the 104th Congress, and LSO chairs, accustomed to directing considerable resources towards their organization’s legislative agenda, were sent scrambling for alternative financial arrangements. While the Republican Study Committee still operates today, other blocs buckled under their new political constraints. The Democratic Study Group, for example, attempted set up as DSG Publications, a nonprofit with a \$5,000 annual subscription fee and 18 full-time staffers.²³ However, the House Oversight Committee quickly ruled that House members should not exceed \$500 in subscriptions for such services, closing an alternative institutional option.²⁴ In the end, the Democratic Study Group sold its research operations to *Congressional Quarterly* and was otherwise subsumed in the larger Democratic Caucus.

²²Quoted in Tim Alberta, “The Cabal That Quietly Took Over the House”, May 24, 2013, *The Atlantic*.

²³Guy Gugliotta, “GOP Plans to Expel Democrats’ Cliff Notes,” January 3, 1995, *The Washington Post*.

²⁴“Cut Back, Caucuses Struggle to Go Forward”, March 23, 1995, *The Washington Post*

By sharply disbanding a system of legislative institutions, the Republican leadership effectively stripped LSO chairs of resource thought to improve lawmaking capacity. The abolition of LSOs is thus expected to diminish LSO chairs' relative influence in legislative politics. This largely exogenous moment of reform thus provides my central hypothesis:

LSO Abolition Hypothesis: LSO leaders will become less effective lawmakers after losing congressional resources (i.e., post-LSO abolition).

Data and Design

To test this hypothesis, I employ a within-member difference-in-difference design similar to those used in recent scholarship on congressional committee chairs (Berry and Fowler, 2016). Using roughly three decades (1985-2014) of data on legislative effectiveness, I analyze the impact of reduced congressional resources on relative influence in the House of Representatives. More specifically, I estimate the following linear model:

$$\text{Legislative Effectiveness Ranking}_{(it)} = \beta_1 \text{Treatment}_{(it)} + \beta_2 \text{Placebo}_{(it)} + \alpha_{(i)} + \delta_{(t)} + \varepsilon_{(it)}.$$

To understand the consequence of losing LSO resources, I begin with Volden and Wiseman (2014)'s Legislative Effectiveness Project. Volden and Wiseman scrape every public bill (H.R.) in the House of Representatives from 1973-2014 to construct a summary statistics of legislative productivity. Their measure — Legislative Effectiveness Scores (LES) — begins with a count of five key legislative outcomes: bill sponsorship, the number of sponsored bills that receive action in committee, the number of sponsored bills that receive action beyond committee, the number of sponsored bills that pass the House, and finally, the number of sponsored bills that become law. They then proceed to weight each of these counts by their impact on public policy outcomes. Commemorative bills are given lower weight than substantive bills, which, in turn,

are given lower weight than substantive and significant bills.²⁵ This weighted metric is then normalized so that the average LES in each Congress is exactly 1.

To provide an intuitive interpretation of these scores, my primary dependent variable is a transformed version of Volden and Wiseman's measure. More specifically, I rank order the LES for each House member in each Congress. Members with higher *Legislative Effectiveness Rankings*_(it) are more effective, and negative coefficients indicate a relative decline in legislative influence.²⁶ In a second round of analyses, I use the five underlying legislative outcomes (e.g., number of total sponsored bills) to better understand the nature of my results. Finally, I replicate my primary findings in the appendix using both raw and logged LES.

My primary independent variable, *Treatment*_(it), is a binary indicator for any legislator that experienced the 'treatment' of reduced resources following the abolition of Legislative Service Organizations (LSOs). More specifically, former LSO leaders serving after LSOs are abolished (1995-2014) are coded as 1. While complete membership data would provide a more precise estimate of the consequences of resource loss, LSOs were not required to maintain full membership data for their organizations. To maintain their LSO certification, however, leaders of these legislative blocs — those most likely to benefit from official group resources — were required to file paperwork with the Committee on House Administration. This data was later collected and supplemented in a series of Congressional Research Service analyses.²⁷ These reports were largely published by Sula P. Richardson between 1986 and 1999, which provides the foundation for a dataset covering a majority of the years that LSOs operated in

²⁵These weights require the authors to draw upon contemporary congressional analysis. More specifically, they use annual CQ Almanac write-ups, which, unfortunately, prevents the instantaneous scoring of legislators.

²⁶I do not adjust for ties in Legislative Effectiveness Scores, which allows legislators to have identical Legislative Effectiveness Rankings.

²⁷In addition to sifting through quarterly filings with the Committee on House Administration, the CRS cross-checked their data through a series of interviews with LSO leaders and their staff.

Congress.²⁸

LSOs were the only subset of congressional caucuses to receive official House resources, but these organizations co-existed with a far larger number of unofficial groups (i.e., caucuses that were not certified as LSOs). Drawing on the same, underlying CRS analyses, I code informal caucus leadership data to construct a $Placebo_{(it)}$ variable. Generally speaking, caucuses provide useful social networks and valuable sources of information to lawmakers (Ringe, Victor, and Carman, 2013). Like LSOs, informal groups vary in their apparent influence. For example, the Conservative Democratic Forum, or “Boll Weevils,” proved to be a key legislative bloc in securing President Reagan’s defense spending increases and tax cuts (Kriner and Reeves, 2015). On the other hand, a large number of informal caucuses were thought to be far less important by contemporary journalists. For example, the *St. Petersburg Times*, writing in 1995, remarked, “Unlike legislative service organizations that Congress sharply restricted this year, the [Congressional Cowboy] Boot Caucus has no staff or funding, and no ideological cohesion. It’s simply a bunch of legislators who amble around in cowboy boots.” Nevertheless, many informal caucuses are thought to have provided a valuable network of legislators between 1979 and 1995. Crucially, these groups did not rely upon House resources. As a result, LSO and informal caucuses share common features, but only LSOs received the largely exogenous “treatment” of reduced resources in 104th Congress.

In the model above, $\alpha_{(i)}$ and $\delta_{(t)}$ indicate legislator and time fixed effects, respectively. Given the panel structure of my data, all standard errors are clustered by individual legislator. By including $\alpha_{(i)}$, the model accounts for both observed and unobserved *time-invariant* attributes of lawmakers (e.g., innate political talent or ambition).

²⁸This is an imperfect measurement strategy. However, coding rank-and-file LSO members as zeros for this variable is likely to bias *against* a negative effect; these ‘treated’-but-unmeasured lawmakers are likely to blunt the true consequences for LSO influence.

Similarly, $\delta_{(t)}$ control for observed and unobserved *unit-invariant* confounding variables (e.g., changes to the political environment that consistently affect all members of the House). The inclusion of both $\alpha_{(i)}$ and $\delta_{(t)}$ amounts to a generalized difference-in-difference design. Importantly, this modeling strategy allows for systematic, pre-treatment differences between my ‘treatment’ and ‘control’ groups. Difference-in-difference designs provide an average treatment effect for the treated, conditional on a key “parallel paths” assumption. In this case, the assumption requires that the average trends in legislative effectiveness of LSO leaders should run parallel to those that never led a congressional caucus prior to the abolition of LSOs.

Finally, I use the coarsened exact matching algorithm presented in Iacus, King, and Porro (2011) to pre-process my data. More specifically, I specify a vector of time- and unit-varying variables that are likely to affect both legislative effectiveness and individual prospects of LSO leadership. The coarsened exact matching algorithm uses this vector of possible confounding variables to pair observations across values for the $Treatment_{(it)}$ variable. Observations without a good match are pruned from the dataset in an attempt to provide a cleaner estimate of the causal effect of LSO abolition.²⁹ I include a fairly standard battery of variables believed to influence legislative effectiveness. Dichotomous indicators for *Committee Chairs*, *Sub-Committee Chairs*, and members of *Power Committees* (i.e., Appropriations, Rules, and Ways and Means) are included, as these positions provide congressional resources, procedural authority, and prestige among political elites. To account for the distinct data generating processes of the two major parties as congressional control shifts, I also include a *Majority Party Member*_(it) indicator, where values of “1” indicate legislator i is a member of the majority party in Congress t . All control variables are provided by the Legislative

²⁹The basic idea here is to reduce the dataset to those observations with common support. Observations that are irrelevant to the analysis may inflate the number of observations, but coarsened exact matching intuitively incorporates the potential outcomes framework without requiring the modeling decisions necessary in other matching strategies.

Effectiveness Project. I rerun my analysis in the appendix using a traditional control variable approach.³⁰

I turn next to my results. To recap, the LSO Abolition Hypothesis provides a directional prediction for the $Treatment_{(it)}$ variable; because former LSO chairs are stripped of valuable staff and resources, β_1 should be negative, indicating a reduction in relative legislative effectiveness. By contrast, the β_2 coefficient should not be significant. Informal caucus leaders — my $Placebo_{(it)}$ group — should not experience a shock to their legislative capacity after the 104th Congress.

Results

Before proceeding to the results of the difference-in-difference model, I consider the parallel paths assumption previously discussed. Figure 4.2 depicts two sets of linear trends with the x-axis denoting time and the y-axis denoting the average legislative effectiveness ranking of former LSO leaders and legislators without LSO leadership experience from 1987 - 2014.³¹ The parallel paths assumption seems to have some support. LSO leaders had a slight advantage over their House colleagues, but both groups followed, roughly, the same trajectory before the abolition of LSOs. After the 104th Congress, the relative advantage afforded to LSO leaders significantly decreased.

³⁰The magnitude of the effect decreases, but the general inferences (and statistical significance) remain basically the same under this specification.

³¹Technically, Figure 4.2 plots the relative effectiveness of the Control, Treatment, and Placebo group. The Placebo group is omitted to emphasize the appropriateness of the parallel paths assumption. Placebo group legislators become relatively more effective after the 104th Congress. This makes sense, given that the dependent variable is a *relative* effectiveness score among legislators. These groups may have put themselves in a position to gain where LSOs lost ground, as they were already positioned to operate without House resources.

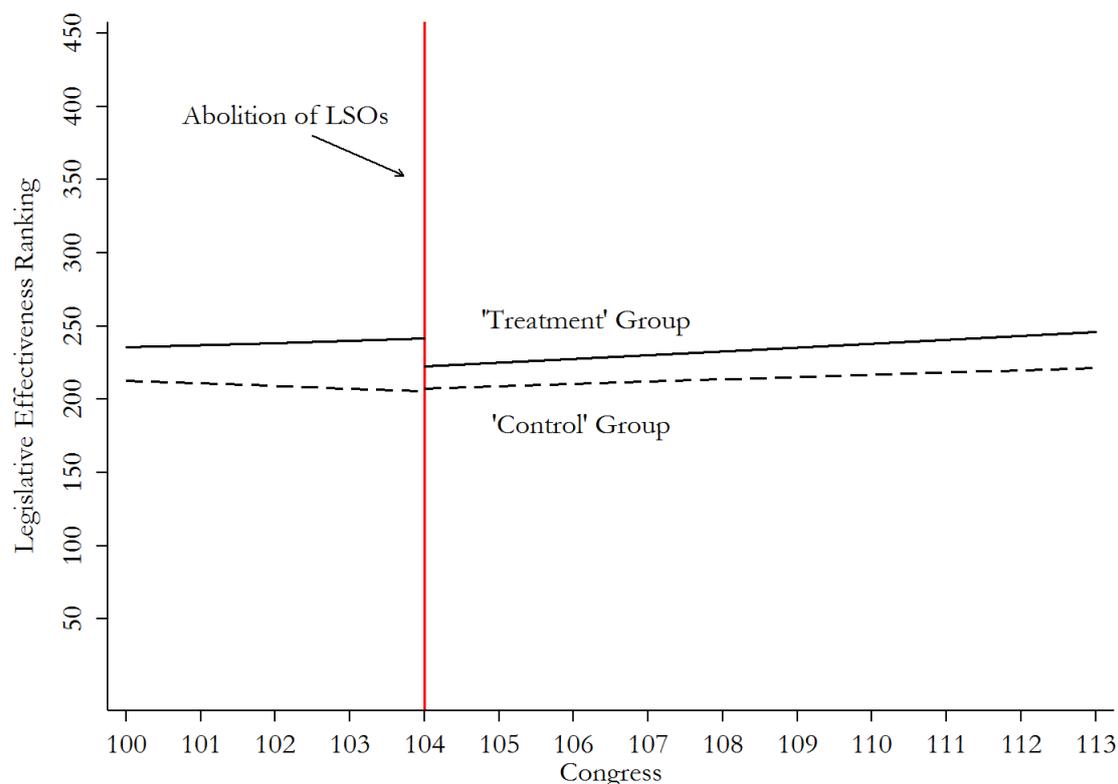


FIGURE 4.2: Trends in Average Legislative Effectiveness Ranking
(Data: 1987-2014)

The results of the difference-in-difference analysis, presented in Figure 4.3, further support the LSO Abolition Hypothesis. The abolition of LSOs significantly decreased the relative legislative effectiveness of former LSO chairs. More specifically, leaders of these previously funded blocs dropped approximately 85 positions in a rank ordering of the most effective lawmakers in the House ($p < .05$, 1-tailed test).³² By contrast, former leaders of informal congressional caucuses — i.e., those that were never certified LSOs — remained unaffected by the dramatic institutional changes implemented in the 104th Congress. Post-estimation tests reveal that the difference between these coefficients is statistically significant. In short, former LSO leaders were significantly

³²1-tailed tests are employed because of the directional nature of my hypothesis. Figure 2 actually displays 2-tailed tests. The effect is still significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

less influential after their organization lost office space, direct congressional funding, and the status of leading a recognized bloc of legislators in the House.

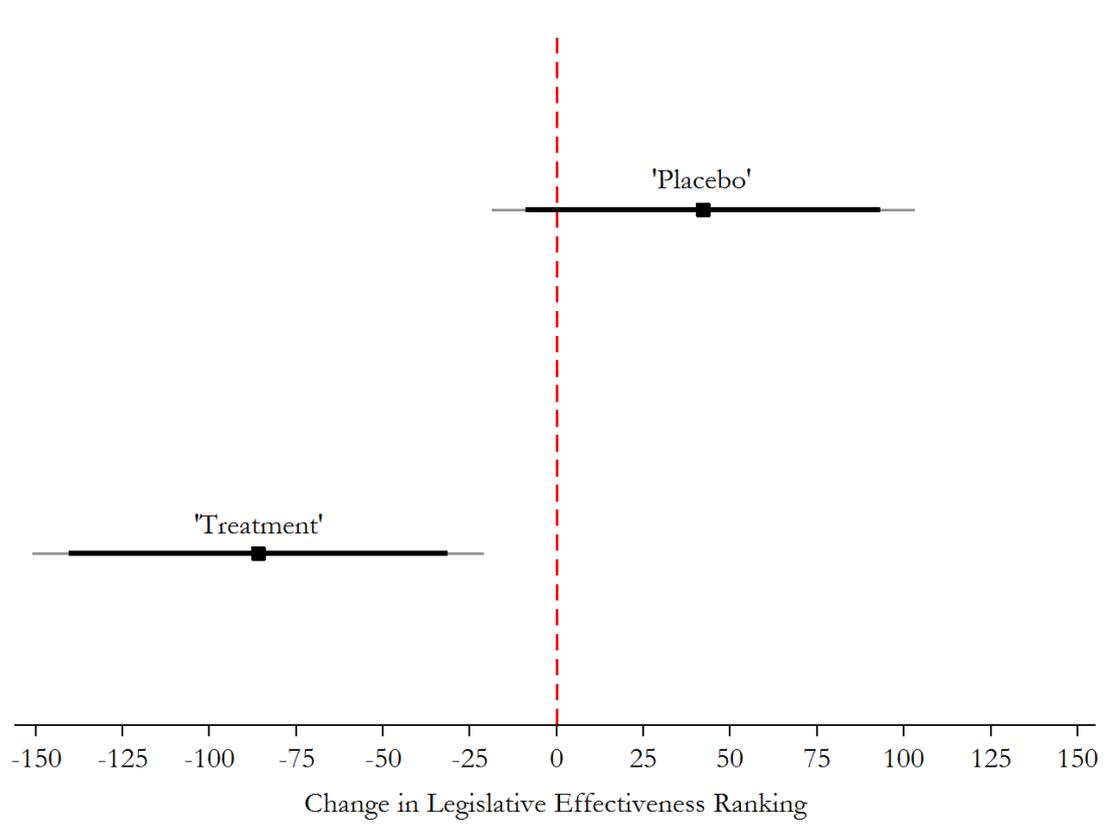


FIGURE 4.3: Former LSO Leaders Dropped in Legislative Effectiveness Rankings
(Difference-in-Difference Analysis with Coarsened Exact Matching)

Next, I unpack the summary statistic provided by Volden and Wiseman (2014) and analyze the effect of LSO abolition on individual indicators of legislative productivity. Figure 4.4 reports the result of five models that use the same specification outlined in the previous section, with the exception of the dependent variables.³³ After being

³³Because I employ the *total* counts provided in the Legislative Effectiveness Project, my sample size is slightly smaller, as this variable is not provided in later congresses.

stripped of LSO resources, former LSO leaders sponsor fewer bills, although this is estimated with large standard errors.³⁴ Moreover, the bills they do sponsor have less success. These lawmakers are less likely to see their sponsored proposals receive action in committee or find success on the floor. Across all five alternative dependent variables, the “Placebo” coefficient is, in general, indistinguishable from zero; the “Treatment” coefficients are negative and, in general, statistically significant. These results suggest that the cost of LSO abolition wasn’t specific to drafting legislation. Losing congressional resources appears to have diminished LSO leaders’ ability to enact changes to public policy.

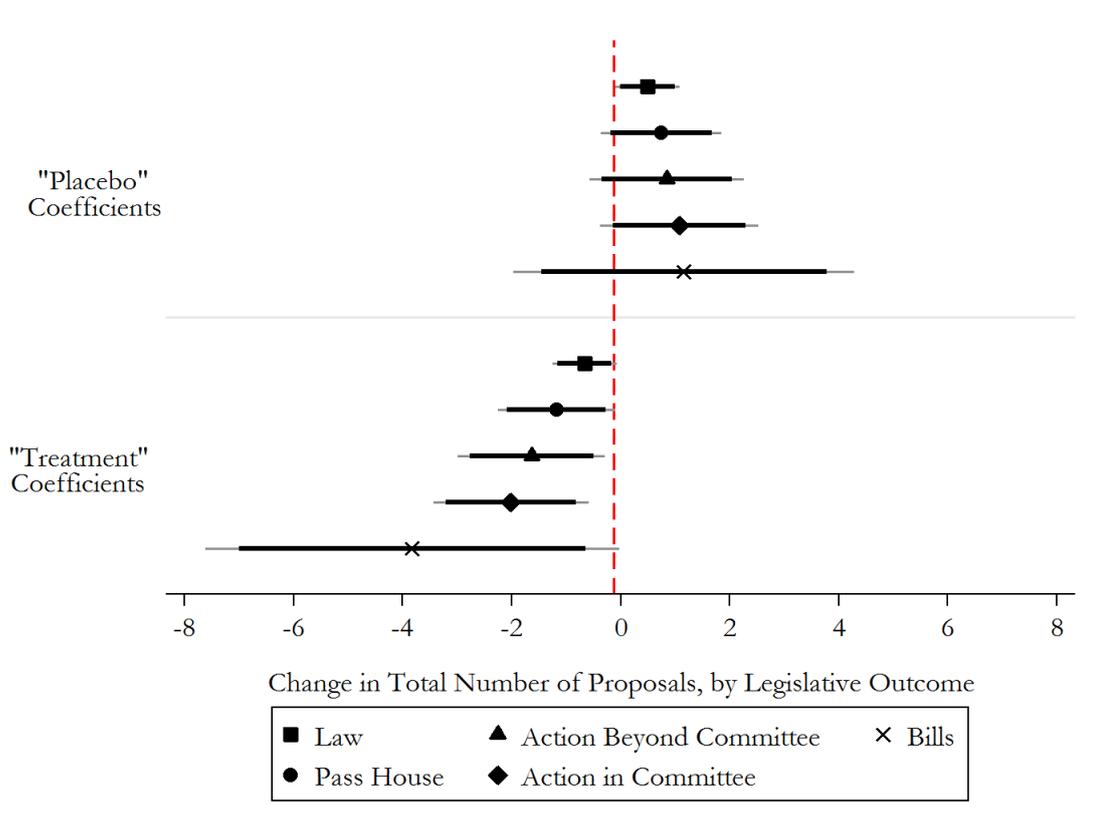


FIGURE 4.4: Former LSO Leaders Became Less Productive Lawmakers (Difference-in-Difference Analysis with Coarsened Exact Matching)

³⁴p<0.05, 1-tailed test. Note, again, that the figures provide two-tailed tests, while my hypothesis is directional.

Taken together, these results suggest that the reforms of the 104th Congress had a significant impact on power dynamics in the House of Representatives. By swiftly abolishing a category of legislative institutions, party leaders diminished the influence of those that led legislative blocs. Moreover, congressional caucuses that did not rely upon House resources appear to have been unaffected by these reforms, suggesting that congressional resources were a primary mechanism of LSO influence.

Discussion

As the executive branch continues to expand its influence over public policy, political scientists have been more willing to weigh in on the consequences of an under-resourced legislative branch. This research examines a unique opportunity to evaluate the individual-level impact of congressional resources on legislative outcomes. I have found that the abolition of legislative service organizations — an entire system of institutionalized legislative blocs — significantly reduced the relative influence of lawmakers invested in these organizations. These results are consistent with contemporary concerns as the reforms of the ‘Republican Revolution’ were rolled out.

Understanding the life-cycle of political institutions can shed light on present political conditions, but more research is still needed to understand the role of legislative coalitions in the House of Representatives. As Figure 4.5 illustrates, congressional caucuses became *more* common *after* the abolition of LSOs. The explosive growth of caucuses deserves further scholarly attention, and this puzzling trend is further underscored by dramatic moments of party infighting in recent legislative sessions (e.g., the overthrow of Speaker Boehner). Journalists routinely draw on factions to understand congressional politics, but to date, political scientists lack a comprehensive theory of faction power in the U.S. House of Representatives.

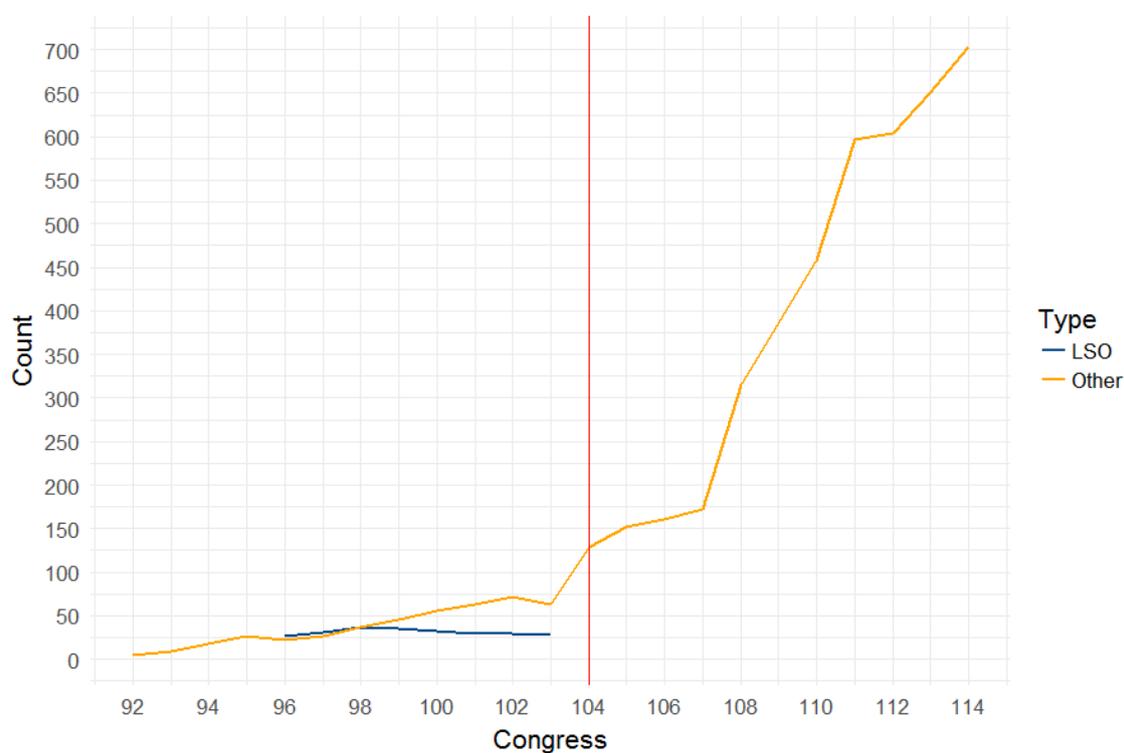


FIGURE 4.5: The Explosive Growth of House Caucuses After the Abolition of LSOs
(Data Source: Glassman (2017). Red line indicates LSO abolition.)

So long as the United States has had political parties, congressional leaders have had to manage fault lines within their governing coalitions. Nevertheless, there is relatively little research on the development of faction institutions. This research provides a quantitative analysis of a watershed moment in the evolution of modern ideological factions. By investigating the abolition of LSOs, we are better equipped to understand intraparty politics in the House of Representatives. As the House Freedom Caucus continues to threaten insurrection within the ranks of the Republican majority, a solid understanding of faction institutions will allow us to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of sub-partisan institutions in legislative politics.

Appendix

LSO Abolition Analyses

TABLE 4.1: The Effect of LSO Abolition
(Data: 1987-2014)

	Δ in Legislative Effectiveness (Rank)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Treatment ($\beta_1 < 0$)	-64.25*** (23.6)	-26.13** (14.29)	-85.87** (33.13)
Placebo (β_2)		-2.48 (12.47)	42.22 (31.03)
Committee Chair (β_3)		120.21*** (10.53)	✓
Subcommittee Chair (β_4)		73.21*** (6.32)	✓
'Power' Committee Member (β_5)		9.36 (7.07)	✓
Majority Party member (β_6)		73.53*** (5.3)	✓
Constant	372.03*** (4.03)	228.39*** (6.71)	374.92*** (4.59)
Congress Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Coarsened Exact Matching?	No	No	Yes
Observations	6,182	6,181	6,177
R ²	0.43	0.61	0.45

Note: OLS Point Estimates with Standard Errors Clustered by Legislator
(two-tailed tests, except where directional hypothesis is indicated)

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

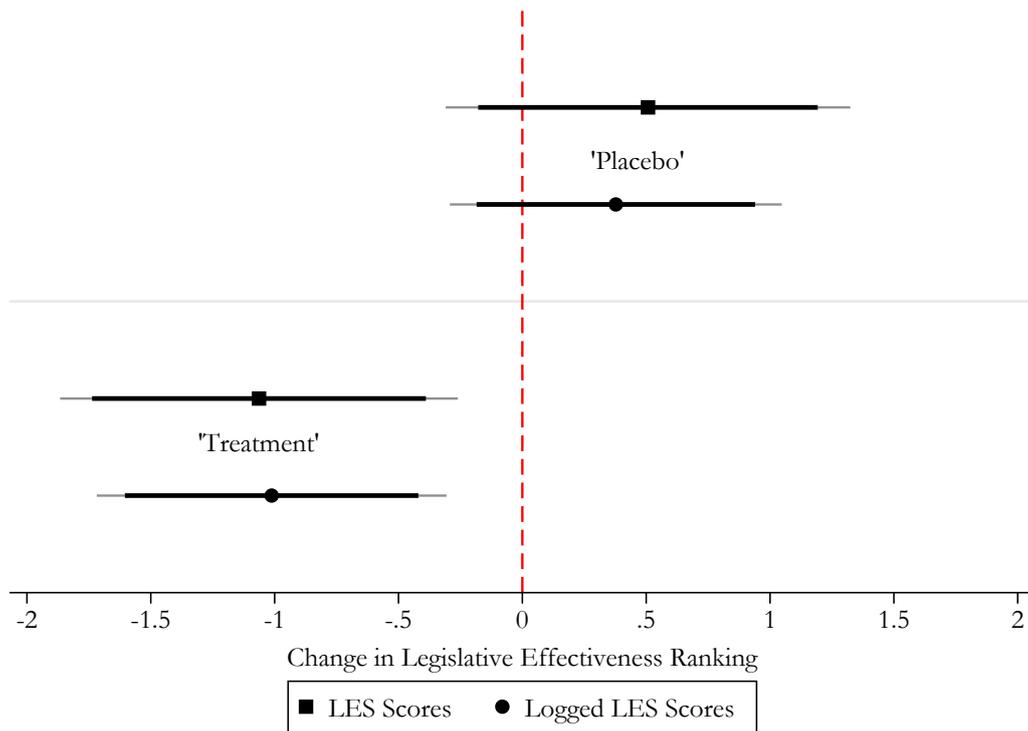
TABLE 4.2: The Effect of Abolishing LSOs on Legislative Productivity, by Outcome
(Data: 1987-2006)

	Δ in Total Number of Legislative Proposals				
	Bill	AIC	ABC	Pass	Law
Treatment ($\beta_1 < 0$)	-3.82** (1.93)	-2.01*** (0.73)	-1.63** (0.69)	-1.18** (0.55)	-0.66** (0.30)
Placebo (β_2)	1.16 (1.59)	1.08 (0.74)	0.85 (0.72)	0.74 (0.56)	0.49 (0.30)
Constant	51.74*** (0.35)	9.31*** (0.11)	3.61*** (0.08)	2.64*** (0.07)	1.71*** (0.05)
Congress Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Coarsened Exact Matching?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,846	4,846	4,846	4,846	4,846
R ²	0.73	0.56	0.52	0.49	0.45

Note: OLS Point Estimates with Standard Errors Clustered by Legislator
(two-tailed tests, except where directional hypothesis is indicated)

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

FIGURE 4.6: Former LSO Leaders Were Less Effective Post-1994
(Difference-in-Difference Analysis with Coarsened Exact Matching)



Overview of LSOs in 1987

TABLE 4.3: Legislative Service Organizations in 1987

Legislative Service Organization	Formed	Members	Contributions	
			Clerk Hire	Off. Allowance
Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus	1966	130	✓	✓
Cong. Arts Caucus	1981	230	✓	✓
Cong. Automotive Caucus	1981	38	X	✓
Cong. Black Caucus	1971	23	✓	✓
Cong. Border Caucus	1983	17	X	✓
California Democratic Cong. Delegation	1979	29	✓	✓
Democratic Study Group	1959	235	✓	✓
Environ. and Energy Study Conference	1975	235	✓	✓
Export Task Force	1978	70	✓	✓
Federal Government Service Task Force	1981	50	✓	✓
Cong. Clearinghouse on the Future	1976	100	✓	✓
Cong. Hispanic Caucus	1976	13	✓	✓
Cong. Human Rights Caucus	1983	150	✓	✓
Cong. Long Island Caucus	?	8	X	X
New York State Cong. Delegation	1979	36	✓	✓
Ninety-eighth Democratic Caucus	1983	59	X	X
Northeast-Midwest Cong. Coalition	1976	197	✓	✓
Pennsylvania Cong. Delegation	1979	25	X	✓
Cong. Populist Caucus	1983	29	X	✓
Republican Study Committee	1973	126	✓	✓
Cong. Rural Caucus	1973	110	X	X
Cong. Caucus for Science and Tech.	1981	35	✓	✓
Cong. Space Caucus	1981	150	X	X
Cong. Steel Caucus	1977	94	✓	✓
Cong. Sunbelt Caucus	1979	105	✓	✓
Cong. Territorial Caucus	1981	3	✓	✓
Cong. Textile Caucus	1978	83	✓	✓
Cong. Travel and Tourism Caucus	1979	165	✓	✓
House Wednesday Group	1965	38	✓	✓
Cong. Caucus for Women's Issues	1977	120	✓	✓

5 Conclusion

Since the collapse of the Southern Democrats, political scientists have generally treated the two major parties as monolithic blocs. The neglect of American party factions makes sense, particularly as congressional scholars worked their way through devilish problems of observational equivalence in the literature on party power. Counter to this perspective, however, I argue that *inter*-partisan polarization has fostered a political environment ripe for factional politics, as heterodox legislators seek influence through innovative *intra*-partisan institutions. Today, Republican and Democratic leaders that wish to advance their legislative agenda must pick off well-supported, unified coalitions — rather than individual lawmakers — within their own ranks.

This dissertation has provided a series of empirical essays on the nature of ideological factions in the U.S. House of Representatives. While each chapter may serve as a stand-alone article, the collection is better understood as a theory building exercise in the spirit of “normal” political science. My results indicate that [1] factions are ideologically distinct from their co-partisans; [2] joining an ideological faction can lead to a more conservative donor base, conditional on the strength of factional institutions; [3] joining an ideological faction can change perceptions of candidate ideology, conditional on factional institutions; and [4] the abolition of publicly funded legislative service organizations reduced the relative effectiveness of former faction leaders. Taken together, these findings point to a more general understanding of factions as sub-branding institutions.

The argument advanced in this dissertation can be broken down into a series of discrete claims. First, ideologically similar lawmakers with positions that diverge from

party leaders construct formal institutions. These institutions are designed to unify the bloc and clarify a party sub-brand for sympathetic activists. By defining their partisan type, these blocs are able to capture valuable political resources, which, in turn, free factions from the “golden handcuff” of partisan support. Armed with a faction-specific activist base, blocs of lawmakers can more aggressively advance their legislative agenda.

While I draw heavily on a rich literature of endogenous institutions, none of the three essays produces a complete theory of faction influence in legislative affairs. This is the final objective of the project. The empirical findings suggest that strong factional institutions can change political behavior, but several critical questions remain. Which factions develop strong institutions, and why? When should we expect faction influence to wax and wane? How, exactly, do faction resources translate to policy outcomes? Answers to these questions can be found scattered throughout the three essays, but a more complete theoretical discussion is sorely needed. These outstanding topics provide a road-map for future research on American party factions, and I am excited by the prospect of studying new political institutions in real time.

Future Directions

The Nature of Faction Institutions

First, a book-length project would be enriched by a “deep dive” into the guts of factional institutions through purely descriptive means. Each of the three essays was enriched by a mixture of qualitative investigations. I am indebted to the lawmakers, legislative staffers, and former political operatives that agreed to several off-the-record interviews. The rich archival records of the Democratic Study Group provided key insights into the developmental path of modern factions, and I benefited immensely from the numerous journalistic accounts that covered the minutia of hard-to-measure

parliamentary maneuvers. A purely quantitative approach is unlikely to capture the way key institutional decisions were made, the process by which new candidates are screened, and the dissolution of nascent factions. A qualitative section that analyzes the emergence of faction budgets, several key policy skirmishes, and notable primary conflicts would improve our knowledge of partisan politics.

Faction Unity and Party Sub-Brands

Following leading theories of party brands, factions ought to unify their bloc if they are to succeed in a sub-branding campaign. Future work should more directly address this subject, by analyzing both the legislative and rhetorical behavior of lawmakers following faction formation. Elsewhere, my experimental work suffers from a significant shortcoming: the SSI sample employed clearly fails to map onto the theoretical audience advanced in this dissertation. As a result, greater experimentation is needed, and a good place to start would be among politically active, conservative social media users.

Resource Capture

The first paper in this dissertation analyzes changes in candidate donor base ideology after joining (or forming) an institutionalized faction. This work would best be complemented with more explicit network analysis and an investigation of raw transfers of faction resources. These analyses should follow predictable patterns if political resource capture helps counteract the carrots and sticks of party leaders.

Legislative Influence and Intraparty Conflict

The critical test of my argument must speak to the legislative power of factions, but the dissertation is largely silent on conditions of intraparty conflict and faction success. Spatial models of partisan lawmaking (e.g., the Cartel Agenda Model) can readily be extended to identify conditions of internal discord. If my argument holds, factions

that create resource networks that significantly diverge from party leaders should improve their members clout in legislative affairs. As the withdrawal of the American Health Care Act demonstrates, identifying these effects can pose significant measurement challenges, but recent advances in both data and estimation techniques make this an exciting avenue for future research.

For scholars interested in political factions, partisan infighting is good for business. By this standard, it is a great time to study groups like the extreme House Freedom Caucus, the centrist Main Street Partnership, and the resurgent New Democrat Coalition. Not for the first time, a major political party controls all major levers of government and remains hamstrung by internal divisions. Political scientists have a role to play in explaining if and how American party factions distort policy outcomes in their preferred direction. Despite the many shortcomings with this dissertation, I can think of no better time to push forward with a comprehensive investigation of faction power in the United States House of Representatives.

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