

# Party Sub-Brands and American Party Factions

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# Party Sub-Brands and American Party Factions

## Abstract

*Scholars and pundits have long noted the dominance of the American two-party system, but we know relatively little about new, endogenous institutions that have emerged within the two major parties. I argue that ideological factions provide party sub-brands, which allow legislators to more precisely define their partisan type and capture faction-specific resources. To support this claim, I analyze new data on nine ideological factions in the House of Representatives (1995-2018). I find that [1] faction voting is distinct, suggesting a product ripe for party sub-branding, and [2] joining a faction changes the ideological composition of a candidate's donor base — conditional on the strength of the faction's institutions. Party sub-branding is effective only when factions possess organizational features that induce coordinated and disciplined position-taking (e.g., whips, PACs, membership restrictions). These results suggest that, even within highly polarized parties, American political ideology is more than a dichotomous choice, and factions target niche markets of political donors as a means of blunting financial instruments of party power.*

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*...one might well conclude the existence of not two,  
but several, small parties which flock under one  
banner...*

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Anne Henderson (1970), Democratic Study Group archives.

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 exist as 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. In short, joining a highly organized faction institution is expected to effectively signal a party type to well-resourced political supporters. Several 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. I complement this analysis by investigating the effects of a rebranding campaign conducted by one centrist organization.

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; Bloch Rubin, 2017; Thom-

sen, 2017), 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. Blocs that lack the organizational capacity to coordinate their political behavior are expected to face significant collective action problems that undermine their shared ambitions. We cannot understand sub-branding campaigns, however, 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*.<sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup>The 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.

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 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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:

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 polit-

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

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

ical 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.

Under different electoral institutions, candidates might turn to a third-party nomination as a means of adopting a party brand that better suits their political circumstances or ideological position. As previously mentioned, first-past-the-post, single-member districts create strong incentives for strategic voting and, ultimately, a two-party system in the United States (Duverger, 1959; Cox, 1997). While minor parties have long faced staggering odds at the federal level, third-party candidates have, historically, been able to secure pockets of influence in state legislatures (Reed, 2016). However, the rise of serious third-party challengers seems to have been stunted by a combination of ballot reform (Burden, 2007) and strategic behavior of the two major parties (Hirano and Snyder Jr., 2007). The decline of third-party voting also foreclosed more creative solutions to the problem of brand misfit. For example, would-be faction members in the 19th century might have adopted a blended political brand through “fusion candidacies” (i.e., accepting nominations from multiple parties) (Scarrow, 1986).<sup>4</sup> These cross-listed candidates were effectively able to circumvent the perils of strategic voting by capturing the expressive votes of third-party supporters while maintaining the benefits of a major party label. Taken together, lawmakers dissatisfied with the two major party brands are free to attempt a third-party run, but minor parties have consistently failed to win elections – and their political circumstances have only become *more* dire in the last century as a result of these reform efforts (Reed, 2016). Despite a long history of factional politics (Key, 1949; Hansen, Hirano, and Snyder Jr., 2016), modern congressional and electoral institutions augment the relative appeal of sub-party organizations as a means of differentiating within two polarized political parties.

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<sup>4</sup>For example, Justin Amash (R-MI) might have appeared on the ballot both as the Republican nominee and the Libertarian Party nominee, allowing for more expressive votes to still contribute to a strategically viable candidate.



In this context, I argue that factions create party sub-brands to target donors, party activists, and the media as a means of capturing political resources. I claim that these blocs work together to establish an independent political network and increase their legislative influence.<sup>5</sup> By providing a supplement to traditional party resources, factions liberate their members to vote counter to the party 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.

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. 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.*

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.

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<sup>5</sup>For example, Hendry and Sin (2014) show that Tea Party Caucus membership can be predicted from legislator's location in partisan campaign finance networks.

## 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 1 provides a summary of the faction data. I primarily relied upon CQ’s *Politics in America* and the archived websites of faction leaders.<sup>6</sup> 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 2018.<sup>7</sup> 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).<sup>8</sup>

Several of these factions have been studied individually.<sup>9</sup> For example, Feulner (1983) provides an exhaustive, qualitative account of the origins 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 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; Ragusa and Gaspar, 2016), while other groups (i.e., the modern Populist Caucus, the House Liberty Caucus,

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<sup>6</sup>More specifically, I used the Internet Archive: WayBack Machine (<https://archive.org/web/>)

<sup>7</sup>I 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/>)

<sup>8</sup>I lack data for the Progressive Caucus before the 107th Congress and the Republican Study Committee prior to the 108th Congress. The Taxed Enough Already Caucus may be a successor to the Tea Party Caucus in the 115th Congress, but I omit the group to maintain institutional continuity. Finally, the House Liberty Caucus has continued to exist since March 4th, 2011, but membership data has proved elusive or unreliable for all but the 113th Congress.

<sup>9</sup>Lucas and Deutchman (2009) present an exception to this pattern, as they analyze four of the nine factions considered in this paper.

and the House Freedom Caucus) remain unstudied by political scientists.

Researchers have also begun to investigate the development of party sub-groups by drawing upon archival records, elite-level interviews, and other qualitative resources. More often than not, these contributions add depth to our understanding of factions by engaging in rigorous process tracing research designs.<sup>10</sup> For example, Bloch Rubin (2017) explores when sub-party institutions form and how they work to convert public goods to excludable policy accomplishments. Similarly, DiSalvo (2012) takes a closer look at the relationship between ideologically consistent party sub-units, presidential nominations, and major party initiatives. In light of these contributions, I do not attempt to provide an abbreviated account of institutional development for the nine factions in my analysis.<sup>11</sup> Instead, I aim to join the growing faction literature (Bloch Rubin, 2013) by providing a quantitative analysis of the ideological factions active in the US House of Representatives between 1995 and 2018.<sup>12</sup>

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

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<sup>10</sup>See, however, the quantitative analysis presented in Clarke (Forthcoming), which suggests that Republican party leaders dramatically altered the resources, and thus organizational incentives, available to blocs in the House of Representatives during the mid-1990s.

<sup>11</sup>While I do not investigate predictors of faction formation directly in this research, the logic of party sub-branding suggests that heightened partisan polarization and an increase in both the supply and demand of campaign contributions have changed the incentives for latent party factions. Consequently, groups like the Conservative Democratic Forum (CDF) transitioned from an unstructured forum for information to the highly organized Blue Dog Coalition. As Bloch Rubin (2017) points out, these groups routinely learn from both their own attempts and the experiences of other groups as they experiment with innovative organizational forms. Just as the Republican Study Committee constructed their organization to reflect the perceived strengths of the Democratic Study Group, modern factions (e.g., the Freedom Caucus) have increasingly modeled their organizations on those thought to be the most effective at the time (e.g., the Blue Dog Coalition). So while ideological blocs (e.g., liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats) have long attempted to pull the party’s brand through legislative means, the attempt to carve out party sub-brands for audiences beyond Washington, D.C. is likely a relatively new phenomenon.

<sup>12</sup>Congressional membership organizations did not exist prior to 1995, and this new legislative institution provides a clean break for data collection.

subset of congressional membership organizations. While some non-ideological groups (e.g., the Congressional Black Caucus) share much with the ideological sample considered presently, I leave the considerable task of integrating these two bodies of research to future research. A detailed discussion of my decision to focus on ideological caucuses can be found in the appendix (See p. SI-15).

[Table 1 about here.]

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.<sup>13</sup> Figure 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 1 about here.]

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.<sup>14</sup> Each model is faction-specific and pooled across all available congresses. All standard errors are clustered by legislator to account for serial correlation.<sup>15</sup> The results provide the mean level of ideological divergence between a faction (e.g., the Congressional Progressive Caucus) and their unaffiliated co-partisans (e.g., all Democrats *not* in the Progressive Caucus). Figures 2 and

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<sup>13</sup>See McCarty (2016) for a discussion of the critiques and merits of DW-NOMINATE as a proxy for ideological preferences.

<sup>14</sup>Each 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?”

<sup>15</sup>For 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.

3 display the faction coefficient from each of these models with 95 % Confidence Intervals.<sup>16</sup> 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 (see p. SI-3).

[Figure 2 about here.]

Nearly every Democratic faction is statistically distinct from unaffiliated Democrats (i.e., all co-partisans not in that faction). Figure 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, diverges very little from Democrats that chose not to join their organization ( $p < 0.1$ ), 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 0.28 to the right of the average Progressive ( $p < 0.001$ ). This amounts to over two standard deviations (among Democrats) 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."<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> The dif-

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<sup>16</sup>Confidence 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.

<sup>17</sup>The Republican Main Street Partnership official mission: <http://republicanmainstreet.org/mission/>.

<sup>18</sup>"The Obsession of the House Freedom Caucus", *Politico*, October 15, 2015.

ference between the Freedom Caucus and Main Street Partnership roughly reflects the gap between Progressive and Blue Dogs. In the last two Congresses, the average Freedom Caucus member is 0.33 points to the right of the average member of the Main Street Partnership ( $p < 0.001$ ). This is more than double the standard deviation of DW-NOMINATE scores among Republicans in this time period.

[Figure 3 about here.]

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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> Shortly after, the founding members of the House Liberty Caucus established a small, invitation-only organization because, 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.<sup>21</sup> 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. In contrast to the Democratic Party, conservative Republicans that wish to carve out a party sub-brand face a more difficult task as these groups compete over crowded ideological space.

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<sup>19</sup>From 1994 - 1998, the Republican Study Committee changed its name to the Conservative Action Team (CAT).

<sup>20</sup>The 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.

<sup>21</sup>“Conservatives Form Their Own Caucus Because the RSC Isn’t Hard-Core Enough”, *National Journal*, January 15, 2014.

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 Attempt to Communicate Sub-Brands?*

Inside Congress, organized 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 (e.g., the Progressive Caucus' "People Budget"). By centralizing collective resources in the hands of elected leaders, legislators more effectively create valuable position taking opportunities.

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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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."<sup>24</sup> 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."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>For 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).

<sup>23</sup>The Progressive Caucus, for example, has nearly 29,000 followers on Twitter.

<sup>24</sup>"Blue Dogs Announce First Slate of Endorsed Candidates for 2012," *Blue Dog Coalition PAC*, December 14, 2011.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

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 (2017) find that Tea Party conservatives were more likely to emphasize policy issues during the 2013 government shut down. Faction leaders regularly advance their group’s cause at an elite level through cable television interviews, responses to state of the union addresses, and thousands of press releases each year.

By contrast, faction members almost never spend precious TV advertisement time mentioning their faction affiliations, and most Americans are probably unaware of the short-lived Populist Caucus or the centrist Main Street Partnership.<sup>26</sup> 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:<sup>27</sup>

- “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 ...”<sup>28</sup>
- “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.”<sup>29</sup>
- “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.”<sup>30</sup>
- “The Republican Study Committee, the caucus of House Conservatives, has released the American Health Care Reform Act (AH CRA).”<sup>31</sup>
- “I introduced the Rebuild America Act with my fellow Populist Caucus co-chair Rep. Rosa

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<sup>26</sup>To investigate this, I combed the transcripts of every House television advertisement aired in 2002, 2004, and 2008. Factions are never explicitly mentioned.

<sup>27</sup>All newsletter quotes are from the D.C. Inbox project. This terrific resource can be found at: <http://web.stevens.edu/dcinbox/Home.html>

<sup>28</sup>Patrick Murphy (D-FL) in 2009 newsletter titled “A Blue Dog for Health Reform”

<sup>29</sup>Michele Bachmann (R-MN) in 2012 newsletter titled “Honoring Our History and Holding D.C. Accountable”

<sup>30</sup>Jerrod Nadler (D-NY), in 2014 newsletter titled “Does the Economy Work for You?”

<sup>31</sup>Doug Lamborn (R-CO), in 2015 newsletter titled “Supporting the Republican Study Committee Obamacare Alternative”



DeLauro [...] to rebuild the American middle-class”<sup>32</sup>

- “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.”<sup>33</sup>
- “This week I went on the radio to discuss my membership in the Liberty Caucus ... ”<sup>34</sup>
- “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.”<sup>35</sup>

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.<sup>36</sup>

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

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<sup>32</sup>Congressman Bruce Braley (D-IA), in 2012 newsletter titled “Working for You: May Update”

<sup>33</sup>Raúl Labrador (R-ID), 2015 newsletter titled “Missing the Point: All legislative powers shall be vested in Congress”

<sup>34</sup>Ken Buck (R-CO), in a 2015 newsletter titled “A Message from Congressman Ken Buck”

<sup>35</sup>Ron Kind (D-WI) in a 2012 newsletter titled “Moderate Democrats Ready to Deal”

<sup>36</sup>In the appendix, I present the full results of all eight factions that exist within the DIME database. See p. SI-14.

compatibility.<sup>37</sup> Those 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.<sup>38</sup> 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."<sup>39</sup> 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."<sup>40</sup> 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 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 administra-

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<sup>37</sup>Interview with Congressional Staffer, July 22, 2015.

<sup>38</sup>Vulnerable members receive a disproportionate share of Blue Dog funds.

<sup>39</sup>"Richardson at Fox News: Memo to GOP: Stop Playing Tea Party", December 12, 2010.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

tion, 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.”<sup>41</sup> 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*.

### *Donor Base 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 both congress ( $\delta_t$ ) and candidate ( $\alpha_i$ ) fixed effects, which allows for faction membership “treatments” to occur at different times for different individuals.<sup>42</sup> This model, provided in the equation below, controls for both observed and unobserved (time- and unit-invariant) confounding influences.

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

$\text{Faction}_{it}$  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.

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<sup>41</sup>“Gephardt Speech on Party Angers Some Democrats”, *The Washington Post*, 12/06/1997.

<sup>42</sup>Note that congress fixed effects are equivalent to two-year fixed effects and thus overlap with campaign cycle fixed effects.

*Average Donor Ideology* $_{it}$ , my dependent variable, is the mean ideology among donors that support a House candidate ( $i$ ) in a two-year period, or congress, ( $t$ ).<sup>43</sup> Constructing this variable required a series of steps, each made possible by the common-space campaign finance scores (CF-scores) available in the Database on Ideology, Money in politics, and Elections (DIME) (Bonica, 2016). 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 2014. 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 average in each candidate’s donor base for each two-year period. 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%.<sup>44</sup>

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) and official FEC records. 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, 2016). 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 DW-NOMINATE scores, these measures are estimated one legislative session at a time, providing a more dynamic estimate of

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<sup>43</sup>Results are substantively and statistically similar when using *median* donor ideology. See appendix p. SI-8 and SI-12 for these results.

<sup>44</sup>Most 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.

voting behavior that allows ideology to move in either direction. The appendix provides a summary of my results with and without these control variables (see p. SI-5); 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.

[Figure 4 about here.]

The results, presented in Figure 4, are consistent with the *Faction Donor Base Hypothesis*. Joining the Blue Dog Coalition leads to a more conservative donor base, as reflected by the average contributor.<sup>45</sup> 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 average donor, among Democrats, had a CFscore of -1.4. The most conservative average contributor had a CFscore of 0.69 in the post-104th House. The impact of membership in the Blue Dog coalition is 0.07 ( $p < 0.01$ ). 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 ( $p < .05$ ), 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 Figure 4 support the claim that institutional strength is a critical element of constructing effective

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<sup>45</sup>The results presented in the manuscript hold when I subset the data to those lawmakers that join after they have been sworn into the House. More specifically, I re-code my treatment variables to include only faction affiliates that served at least one prior term in Congress as an unaffiliated Democrat or Republican. In effect, this robustness check sets legislators that join a faction either before or during their first term as missing in the dataset. The results, presented in the appendix (p. SI-9 and SI-13), are virtually the same.

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*

By the end of the 20th century, the Democratic Party had begun a contentious drift toward the center of the ideological spectrum. More liberal members of the House, namely the Congressional Progressive Caucus, sought to anchor the party to the left, while others worked with the Clinton administration to carve out a new Democratic identity associated with deficit reductions, welfare reform, and a variety of business-friendly policies. These internal differences within the Democratic Caucus “made it more difficult to take a clear, coherent posture toward fundamental economic issues, including ones that would signal concretely what the party could do for the middle class” (Hacker and Pierson, 2010, p.235). In other words, House Democrats broiled with factional strife, consequently diluting their party brand, just as the Republican Conference aggressively advanced a strong, clearly articulated message of low taxes and small government.

The New Democrat Coalition was intended to serve as the congressional wing of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) – a group of business-friendly Democrats concerned with a recent string of electoral defeats.<sup>46</sup> This bloc of legislators were eager to rebrand the party as “pro-business” and “pro-growth” while they maintained a former DLC chair in the White House and the “third way” movement picked up steam. In this context, the New Democrat Coalition roster quickly ballooned, and, lacking serious membership restrictions, a large share of newly elected Democrats joined the faction.

The centrist faction became the largest Democratic membership organization after only two years of formal organization, but New Dems' numerical clout came at a cost.<sup>47</sup> Faction “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

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<sup>46</sup>DLC Press Release, March 11, 1997

<sup>47</sup>New Democrat Press Release, February 24, 1999.

the New Democrat Coalition sub-brand. To many, New Dems were mere “political marketeers.”<sup>48</sup> As an unorganized and ideologically diverse faction, members were viewed as “old Democrats with a new label.”<sup>49</sup>

In 2005, however, the New Democrat Coalition leadership explicitly set out to “reconstitute” and “rebrand” the faction nearly a decade after organizing in the House of Representatives.<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup>

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.<sup>52</sup>

Following the old DLC strategy, the New Democratic Coalition used the cachet of personal interactions with legislators to build a network of political donors interested in a more conservative vision of the Democratic Party (Hacker and Pierson, 2010, p.181). Through private retreats and fund-raising dinners, New Dems attempted to amass political resources tied to their bloc, rather than more traditional Democratic Party organizations. At the time, Democratic operatives – particularly centrists – perceived a gulf in organizational capacity between the two major parties; consequently, these candidates needed to build an independent financial base to succeed (Hacker and Pierson, 2010, p.179). New Democrats believed they needed to clean house and erect more meaningful institutional features if they wished to effectively market their organization to affluent, conservative political donors.

The first stage of these efforts – thinning their ranks and clarifying their centrist position – seemed to succeed. Figure 5 displays the conservative vote probabilities of New Democrats before

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<sup>48</sup>“A Moment of Youth”, *The Washington Post*, August 15, 2000.

<sup>49</sup>“House New Democrats at Center of Influence”, *The Washington Post*, May 29, 2000.

<sup>50</sup>“New Democrats Say They’re Back”, Erin P. Billings. *Roll Call*, November 28, 2005.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*

and after this rebranding effort in two key policy areas: trade and finance (Fowler and Hall, 2012).<sup>53</sup> 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 5 illustrates this shift to the center.<sup>54</sup>

[Figure 5 about here.]

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:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Average Donor Ideology}_{it} = & \beta_1(\text{New Democrat Coalition}_{it} \times \text{Post-2005}_t) + \\ & \beta_2(\text{New Democrat Coalition}_{it}) + \beta_3(\text{Post-2005}_t) + \alpha_i + \delta_t + \epsilon_{it} \end{aligned}$$

Here the dependent variable, treatment variable, fixed effects, and control variables are identical to those employed in the Donor Base Analysis.<sup>55</sup> In this analysis, however, I interact the faction treatment variable with a dichotomous indicator for the period after New Democrat rebranding efforts. This variable, *Post-2005<sub>t</sub>*, takes the value of 0 if before 2005 and 1 otherwise.<sup>56</sup> Like the previous models, I cluster all standard errors by candidate. If the institutional development that took place in 2005 succeeded in clarifying the diluted, centrist brand, New Democratic membership should have relatively little impact on *Average Donor Ideology* before 2005 and a positive impact after 2005. The results for this conditional expectation are presented in Figure 6.

[Figure 6 about here.]

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<sup>53</sup>See p. SI-10 for New Democrat conservatism across a wider range of policy domains.

<sup>54</sup>See the New Dems (2016) American Prosperity Agenda for one such platform: <http://newdemocratcoalition-kind.house.gov/our-agenda/our-prosperity-agenda>

<sup>55</sup>Full tables of results for this analysis are available in the appendix (p. SI-10).

<sup>56</sup>In the appendix (p.SI-10), I also exclude time fixed effects ( $\delta_t$ ) in a “within” analysis (i.e., when well the shift occur). Results are not sensitive to the inclusion of  $\delta_t$ .



Before the 109th Congress, the predicted average donor ideology of New Democrats and other Democrats 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 0.06 ( $p < 0.001$ ) more than other Democrats. The magnitude of this latter, more organized New Democrat Coalition estimate 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*.

### *Faction Press Releases*

Thus far, I have provided evidence to suggest that [1] the legislative behavior of congressional faction members differ from unaffiliated co-partisans and [2] the ideological composition of a faction member's donor base shifts in response to affiliation with a well-organized party sub-group. The case of the New Democrat Coalition's rebranding campaign further highlights the importance of institutional capacity. In this section, I provide some descriptive evidence that party sub-brands are a plausible mechanism linking these two findings. More specifically, I collect an extensive list of faction press releases by combing the archived websites of faction leaders from 1995 to present day. In total, these patterns are taken from 950 press releases – complete with links to the source documents – available in the replication files.

Figure 7 presents the varied frequency of faction press releases for the Blue Dog Coalition, the New Democrat Coalition, and the Tea Party Caucus.<sup>57</sup> The patterns closely mirror the branding capacity of each organization. For most years, Blue Dogs routinely communicated their policy positions. The faction used their press releases to announce membership expansions, react to budget projections, reveal leadership election results, and formally endorse (or oppose) legislative initiatives. Much of their content tends to focus on deficit reduction and budgetary politics, although their policy portfolio appears to have expanded in recent years. After Blue Dogs were nearly decimated in the 2010 midterms, however, the faction slowed its annual press release rate.

The New Democrats provided a middling volume of press releases in the early years of their organization. After their 2005 rebranding campaign, however, New Democrats dramatically in-

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<sup>57</sup>Each trend is a locally weighted regression (i.e., LOWESS) fit of annual press release frequencies.

creased their public outreach. Many of their post-2005 press releases advance the faction’s policy platform – the American Prosperity Agenda – or advertise reports from their various task forces. These statements speak to a wonkish array of topics ranging from infrastructural investment to free trade to cybersecurity to financial derivative trading.

By contrast, the Tea Party Caucus did little to cultivate a party sub-brand. Despite the paucity of attention paid to the wider Tea Party movement, the caucus published only six press releases in total. While other groups used their press releases to draw attention to fully developed faction budgets, landmark amendments, and candidate endorsements, the Tea Party Caucus publicized staff briefing events, future meetings, and expressive calls for the Tea Party movement to “keep up the fight.”

[Figure 7 about here.]

These descriptive results provide some face validity to the categorization of these groups as weak, mixed, and strong faction institutions. Moreover, the distinct rates of the three groups correspond with the ideological divergence in voting behavior presented in the Product Analysis (Figure 2), the shifts in campaign contribution patterns in the Donor Base Analysis (Figure 4), and the conditional effect of faction institutions in the analysis of New Democrats’ rebranding campaign (Figure 6).

## 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. An additional 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. At the same time, major parties tend to co-opt popular policy positions of competing organizations (Hirano and Snyder Jr., 2007); this, in turn, invites a sort of institutional arms race among sub-party blocs intent on endogenously shifting the party brand. More research is needed on the complex relationship between faction and party leaders. 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.

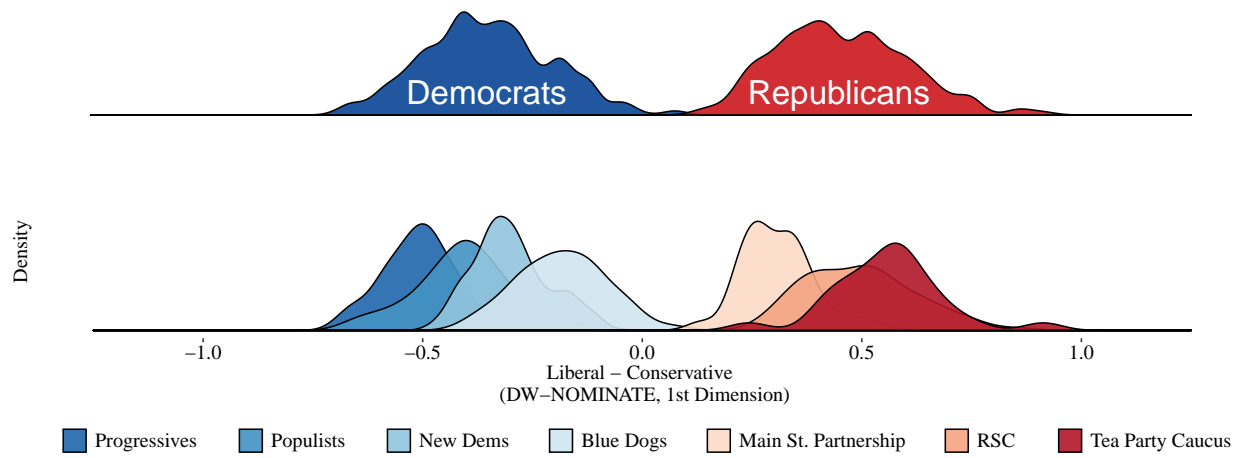
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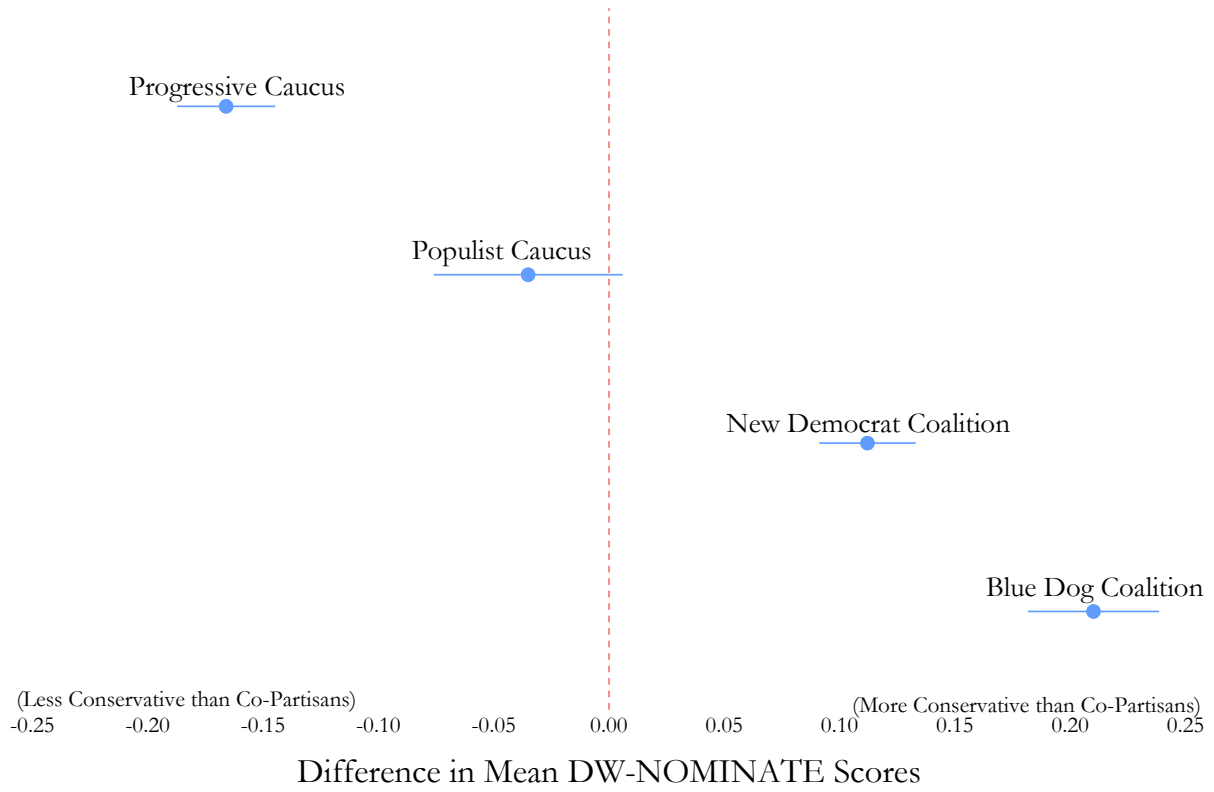
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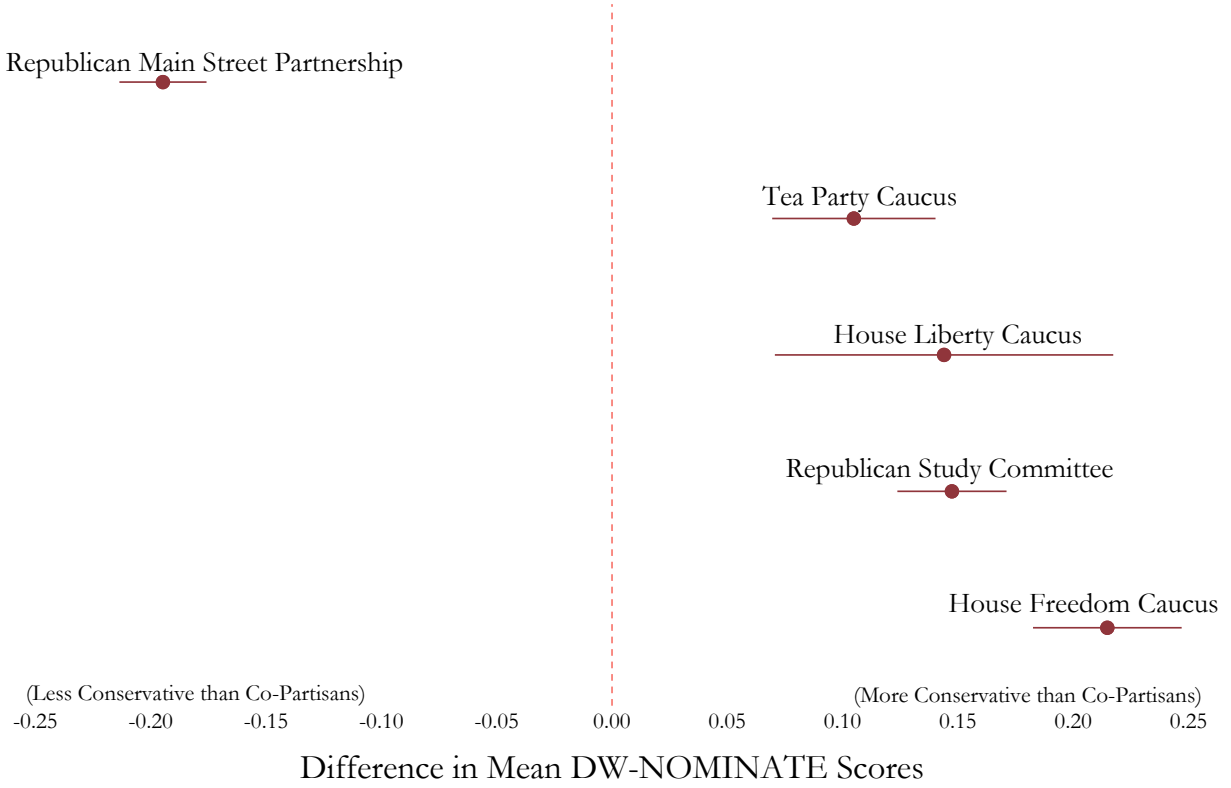


**Figure 1:** *Ideological Factions in the U.S. House of Representatives (2009-10)*

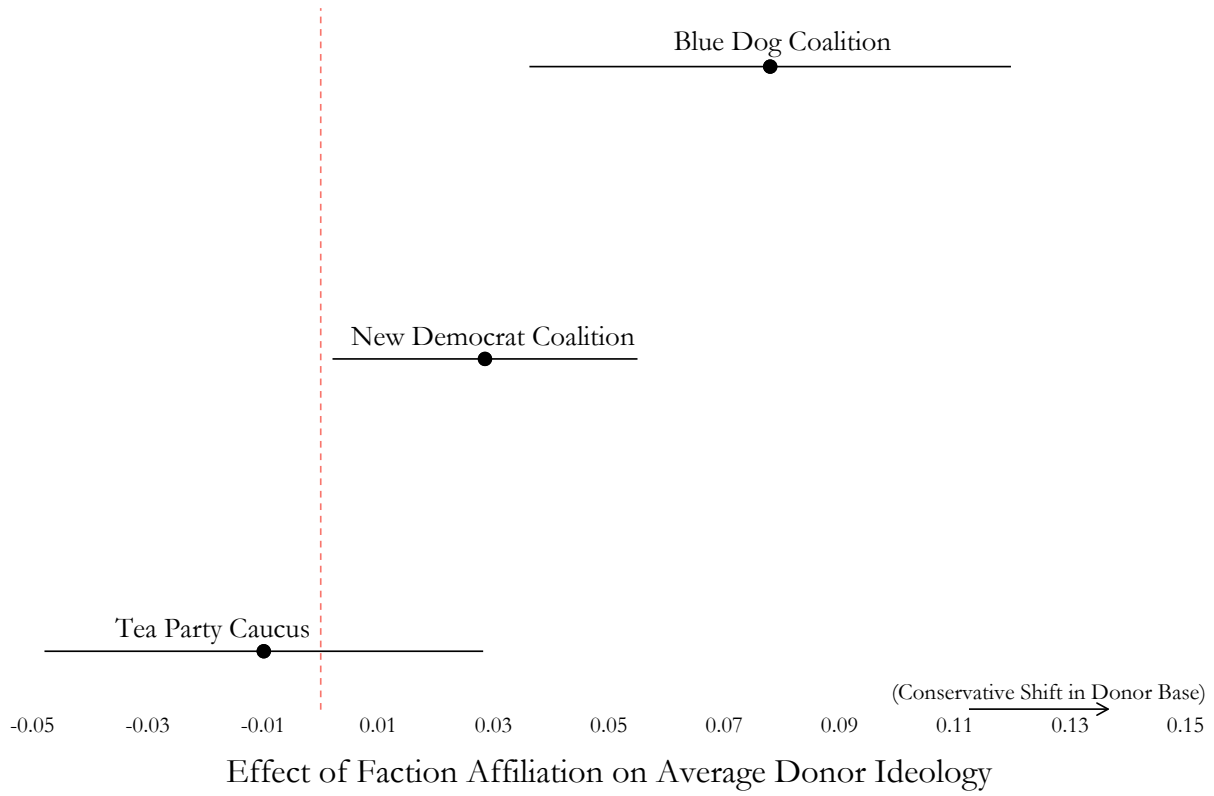




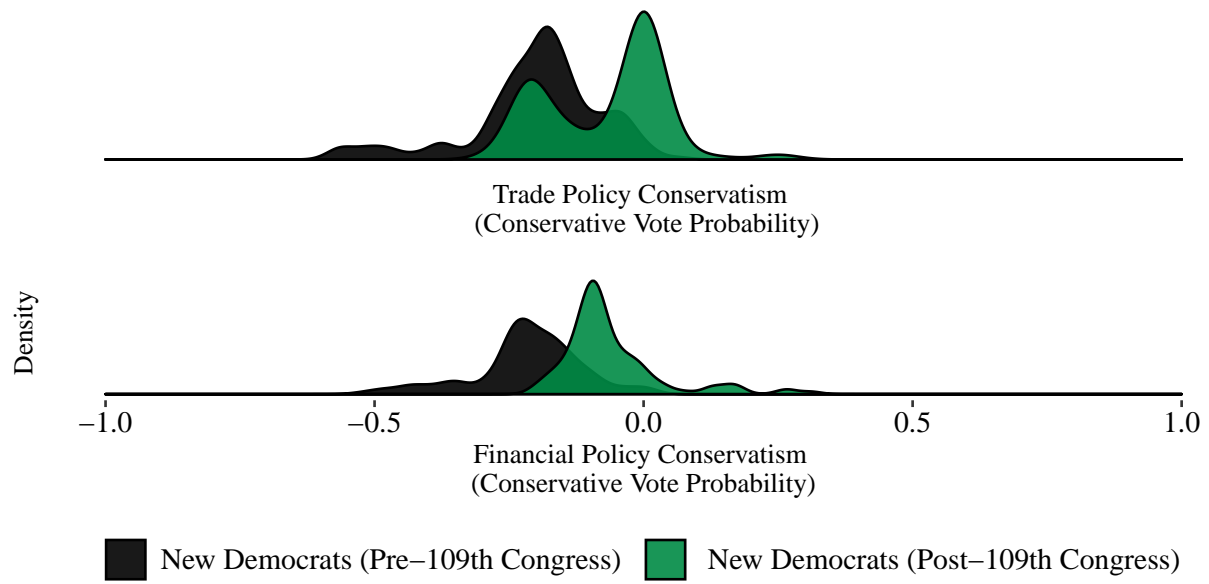
**Figure 2:** *Democratic Factions are Distinct from their Co-Partisans*



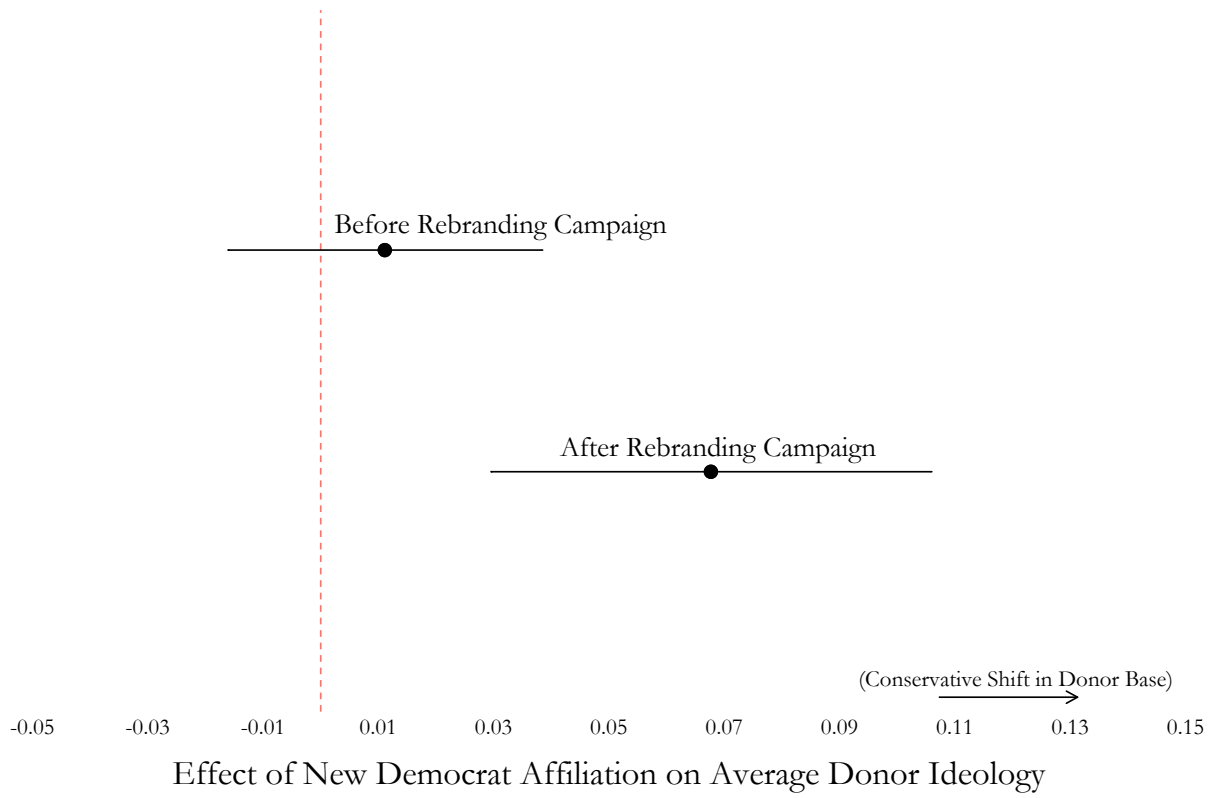
**Figure 3:** *Republican Factions are Distinct from their Co-Partisans*



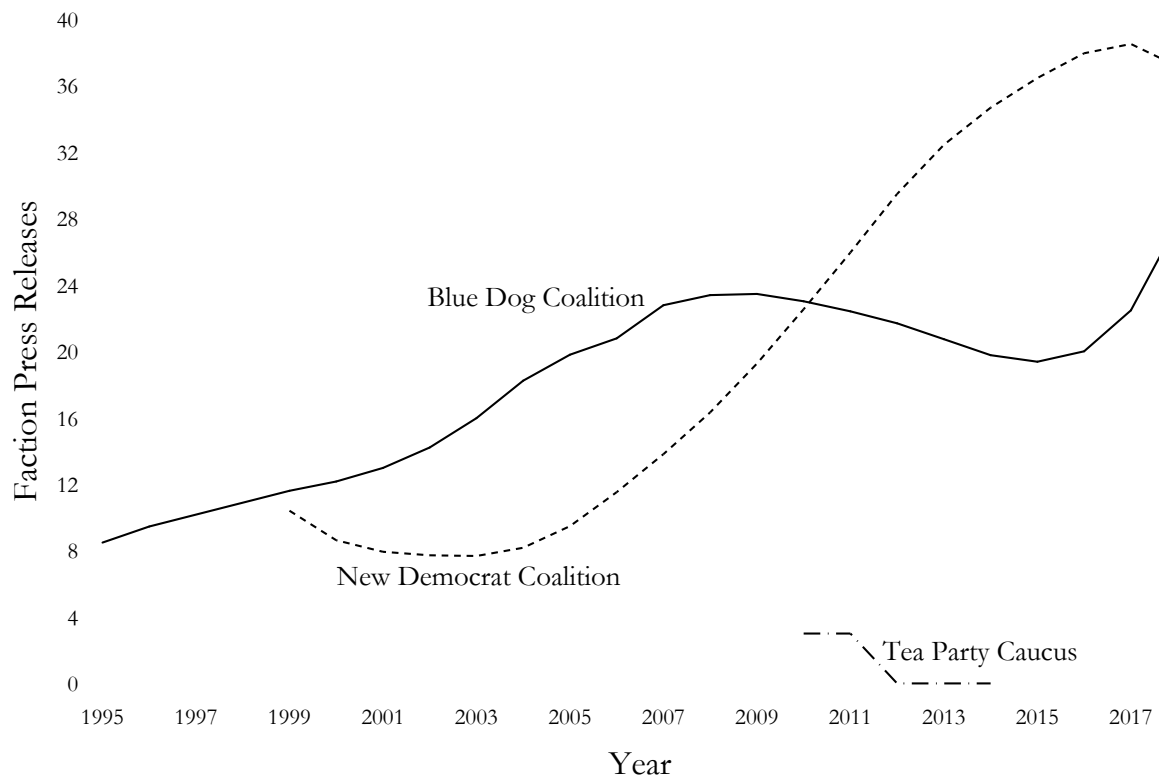
**Figure 4:** *Estimates from Two-Way Fixed Effects Models with 95% Confidence Intervals*



**Figure 5:** *New Democrats Rebranded in the 109th Congress*



**Figure 6:** *Estimates from Two-Way Fixed Effects Model with 95% Confidence Intervals*



**Figure 7:** *Trends in Faction Press Releases Issued Per Year*

Faction	Party	Years	Size (Average)	Proportion of Party (Average)
Congressional Progressive Caucus	Dem	2001 - 2018	65	0.31
Populist Caucus	Dem	2009 - 2012	31	0.13
New Democrat Coalition	Dem	1997 - 2018	56	0.26
Blue Dog Coalition	Dem	1995 - 2018	29	0.13
Republican Main Street Partnership	GOP	1999 - 2018	53	0.23
Republican Study Committee	GOP	2003 - 2018	132	0.57
Tea Party Caucus	GOP	2010 - 2014	45	0.20
House Liberty Caucus	GOP	2013 - 2014	14	0.06
House Freedom Caucus	GOP	2015 - 2018	38	0.15

**Table 1:** *Overview of Congressional Faction Data*

## **Supplementary Information**

Party Sub-Brands and American Party Factions



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## 1 FACTION PRODUCT ANALYSES

Tables A1 and A2 provide the full results presented in the Faction Product Analyses.

<i>Faction</i>	DV: DW-NOMINATE Scores (1st Dimension)			
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Progressive Caucus	-0.17*** (0.01)			
Populist Caucus		-0.04* (0.02)		
New Democrat Coalition			0.11*** (0.01)	
Blue Dog Coalition				0.21*** (0.01)
Constant	-0.34*** (0.01)	-0.34*** (0.01)	-0.39*** (0.01)	-0.38*** (0.01)
$R^2$	0.36	0.03	0.15	0.30
N	1920	463	2345	2553
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

OLS Models - Democrats Only  
(Std. Errors Clustered by Legislator)  
\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

**Table A1:** *Democratic Faction Differences in Mean DW-NOMINATE Scores*

<i>Faction</i>	DV: DW-NOMINATE Scores (1st Dimension)				
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Main St. Partnership	-0.19*** (0.01)				
Rep. Study Committee		0.15*** (0.01)			
Tea Party Caucus			0.10*** (0.02)		
Liberty Caucus				0.14*** (0.04)	
Freedom Caucus					0.21*** (0.02)
Constant	0.45*** (0.01)	0.38*** (0.01)	0.44*** (0.01)	0.48*** (0.01)	0.45*** (0.01)
$R^2$	0.34	0.24	0.08	0.05	0.26
N	2292	1839	668	240	499
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

OLS Models - Republicans Only  
(Std. Errors Clustered by Legislator)  
\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

**Table A2:** *Republican Faction Differences in Mean DW-NOMINATE Scores*

## 2 DONOR BASE ANALYSES

Tables A3, A4, and A5 present the full results of the donor base analyses for each faction.

	DV: Mean Donor Conservatism				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Blue Dog Coalition	0.09*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)
General Election Vote Percentage <sub>(t-1)</sub>		0.001*** (0.0002)	0.001*** (0.0002)	0.001*** (0.0002)	0.001*** (0.0002)
Primary Election Vote Percentage <sub>(t-1)</sub>			0.0003* (0.0001)	0.0003** (0.0001)	0.0003** (0.0001)
Democratic Pres. Cand. Vote Share				0.00004 (0.0005)	0.0001 (0.0005)
Nokken-Poole NOMINATE Scores (1st)					0.07 (0.05)
Constant	-0.24*** (0.01)	-0.31*** (0.01)	-0.32*** (0.02)	-0.33*** (0.03)	-0.31*** (0.03)
Congress Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.19	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.21
N	3772	3697	3626	3604	3604

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

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

**Table A3:** *Blue Dog Donor Base Analysis*

	DV: Mean Donor Conservatism				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Tea Party Caucus	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
General Election Vote Percentage <sub>(t-1)</sub>		-0.001*** (0.0002)	-0.001*** (0.0002)	-0.001*** (0.0002)	-0.001*** (0.0002)
Primary Election Vote Percentage <sub>(t-1)</sub>			-0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0001 (0.0001)
Democratic Pres. Cand. Vote Share				0.0001 (0.0005)	0.0001 (0.0005)
Nokken-Poole NOMINATE Scores (1st)					-0.01 (0.05)
Constant	0.53*** (0.01)	0.57*** (0.01)	0.58*** (0.02)	0.57*** (0.02)	0.58*** (0.03)
Congress Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03
N	3322	3260	3161	3145	3145

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

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

**Table A4:** *Tea Party Caucus Donor Base Analysis*

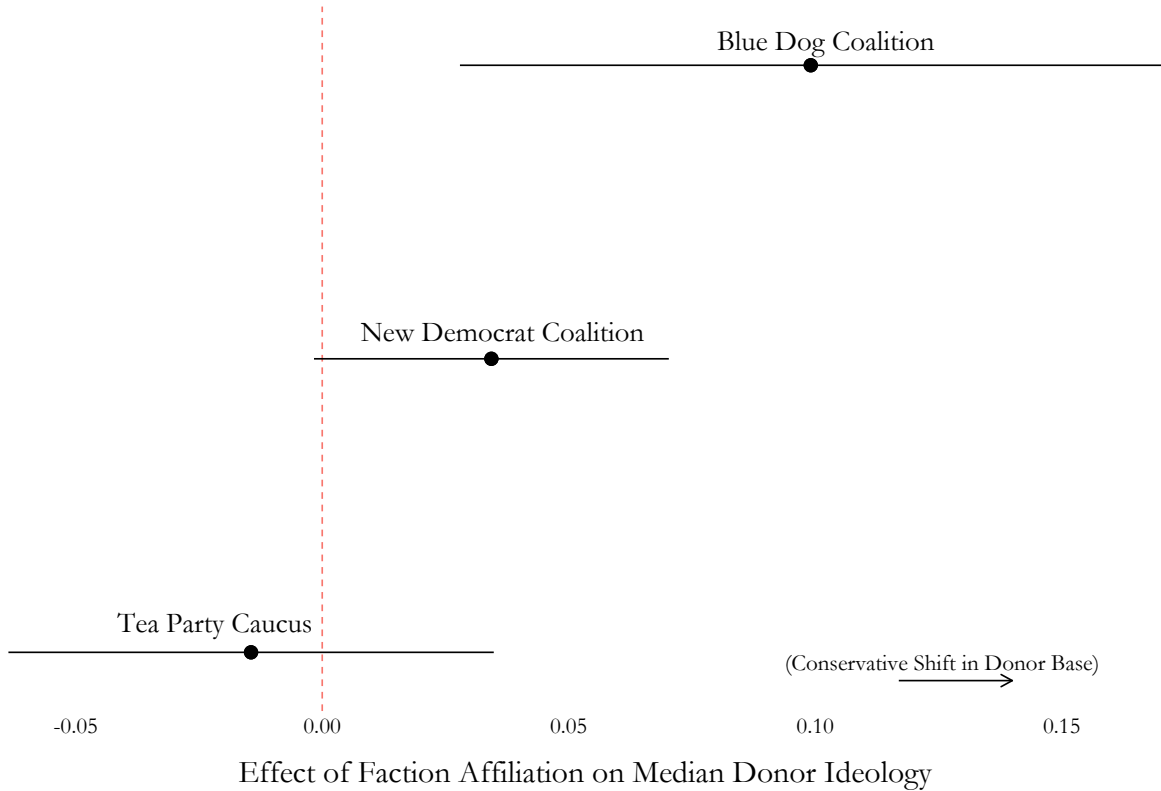
	DV:Mean Donor Conservatism				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
New Democrat Coalition	0.03*	0.03**	0.03**	0.03**	0.03**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
General Election Vote Proportion <sub>(t-1)</sub>		0.001***	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***
		(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Primary Election Vote Proportion <sub>(t-1)</sub>			0.0003**	0.0004**	0.0004**
			(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Democratic Pres. Cand. Vote Share				-0.0001	-0.0001
				(0.0005)	(0.0005)
Nokken-Poole NOMINATE Scores (1st)					0.06
					(0.05)
Constant	-0.24***	-0.31***	-0.32***	-0.32***	-0.30***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Congress Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.18	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20
N	3772	3697	3626	3604	3604

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

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

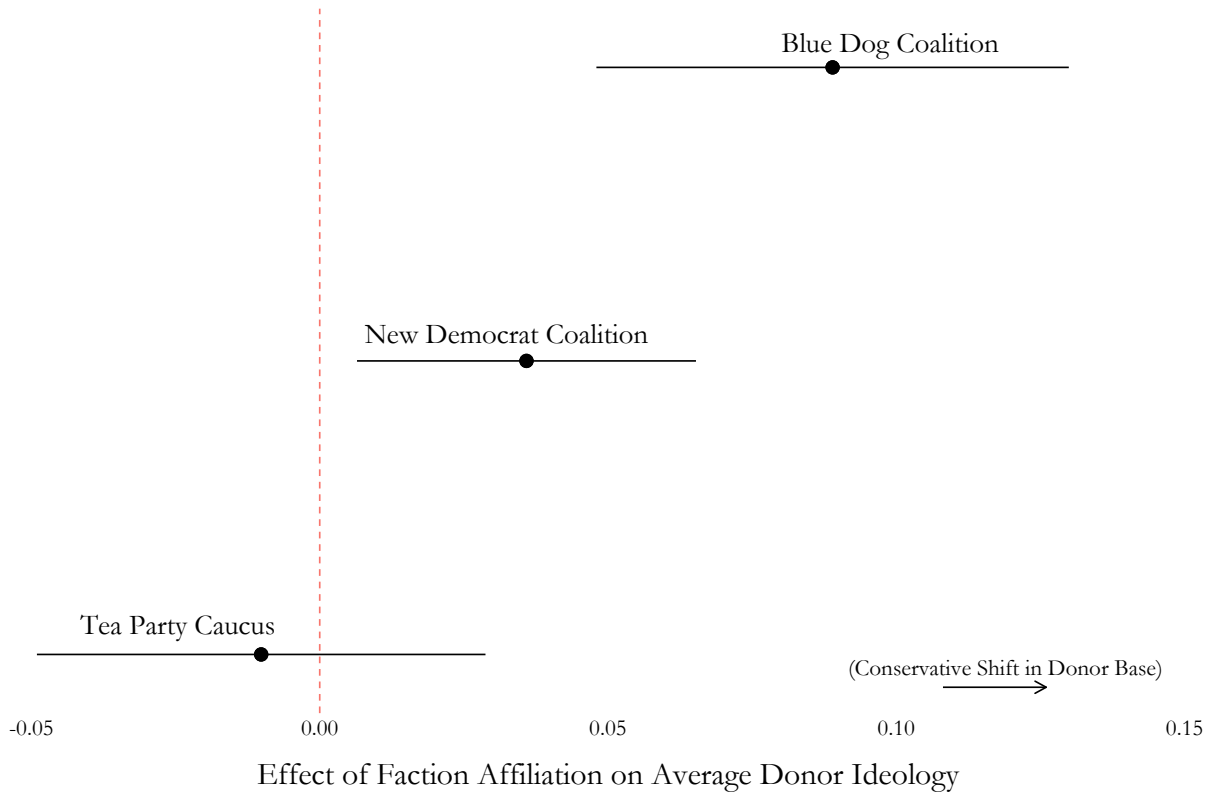
**Table A5:** *New Democrat Donor Base Analysis*

Figure A1 presents the results from the full model when the *median*, rather than the mean, donor is taken to identify shifts in campaign finance patterns. Note that the full New Democratic coefficient is in the conservative direction, but the effect is only significant at the  $p < 0.1$  level (two-tailed test).



**Figure A1:** *Donor Base Analysis with Median, Rather than Mean, Donor*

Figure A2 presents the results of the full model after recoding as missing any legislators that joined a faction in their first term.

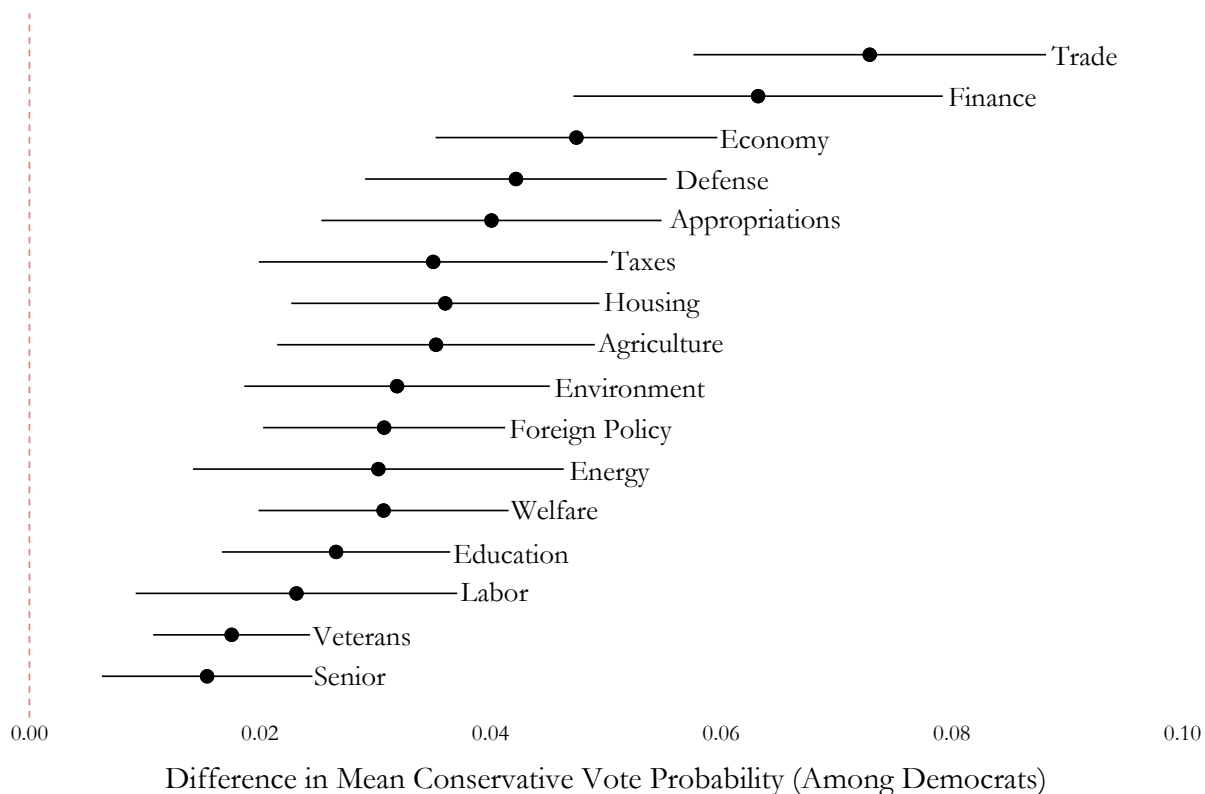


**Figure A2:** *Donor Base Analysis (Excluding First-Term Joiners)*



## 2 *New Democrat Rebranding Analyses*

The New Democrat Coalition was significantly more conservative than other Democrats. In the main body of the article, I show that this was true in an aggregate sense (i.e., using DW-NOMINATE Scores) and on two key issue areas: trade and finance. These two policy domains have consistently been central to New Democrats' divergence from many of their co-partisans. In Figure A3, I show that New Democrats are more conservative than other Democrats on a host of policy areas, as measured by conservative vote probabilities. Note, however, that trade and finance remain the policy areas in which the faction disagrees most with their co-partisans.



**Figure A3:** *New Democrat Coalition Conservatism Across Issue Area*

Table A6 presents the full results, with and without control variables, for the New Democrat rebranding analysis.

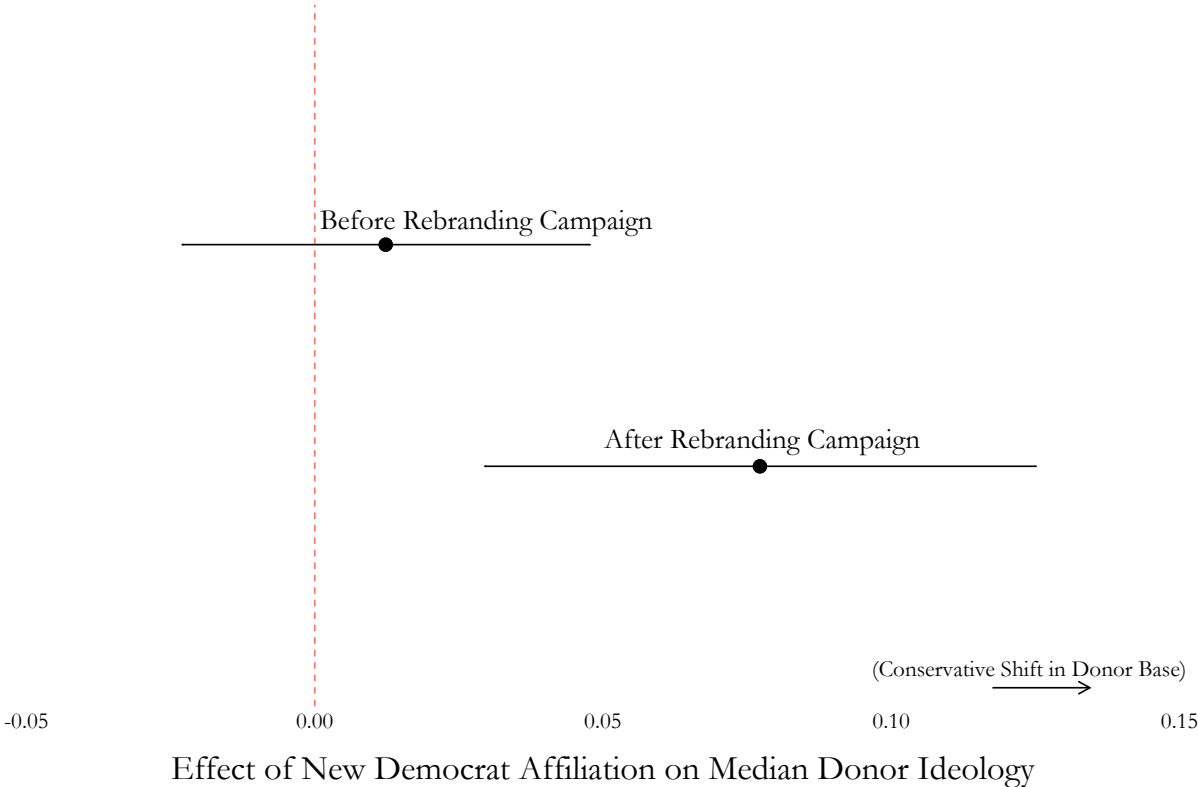
**Table A6:** *New Democrat Coalition Rebranding Analysis*

	DV: Mean Donor Conservatism					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
New Democrat × Post-2005	0.08*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)
New Democrat	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Post-2005	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.06*** (0.01)	
General Election Vote Prop. <sub>(t-1)</sub>		0.002*** (0.0003)	0.002*** (0.0003)	0.002*** (0.0003)	0.002*** (0.0003)	0.001*** (0.0003)
Primary Election Vote Prop. <sub>(t-1)</sub>			0.0000 (0.0002)	0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0002 (0.0002)
District Pres. Cand. Vote Share				-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Nokken-Poole NOMINATE Score					-0.04 (0.08)	-0.002 (0.08)
Constant	-0.42*** (0.01)	-0.54*** (0.02)	-0.54*** (0.03)	-0.47*** (0.06)	-0.48*** (0.06)	-0.56*** (0.07)
Congress Fixed Effects?	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Legislator Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.18
N	2052	2024	1955	1951	1951	1951

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

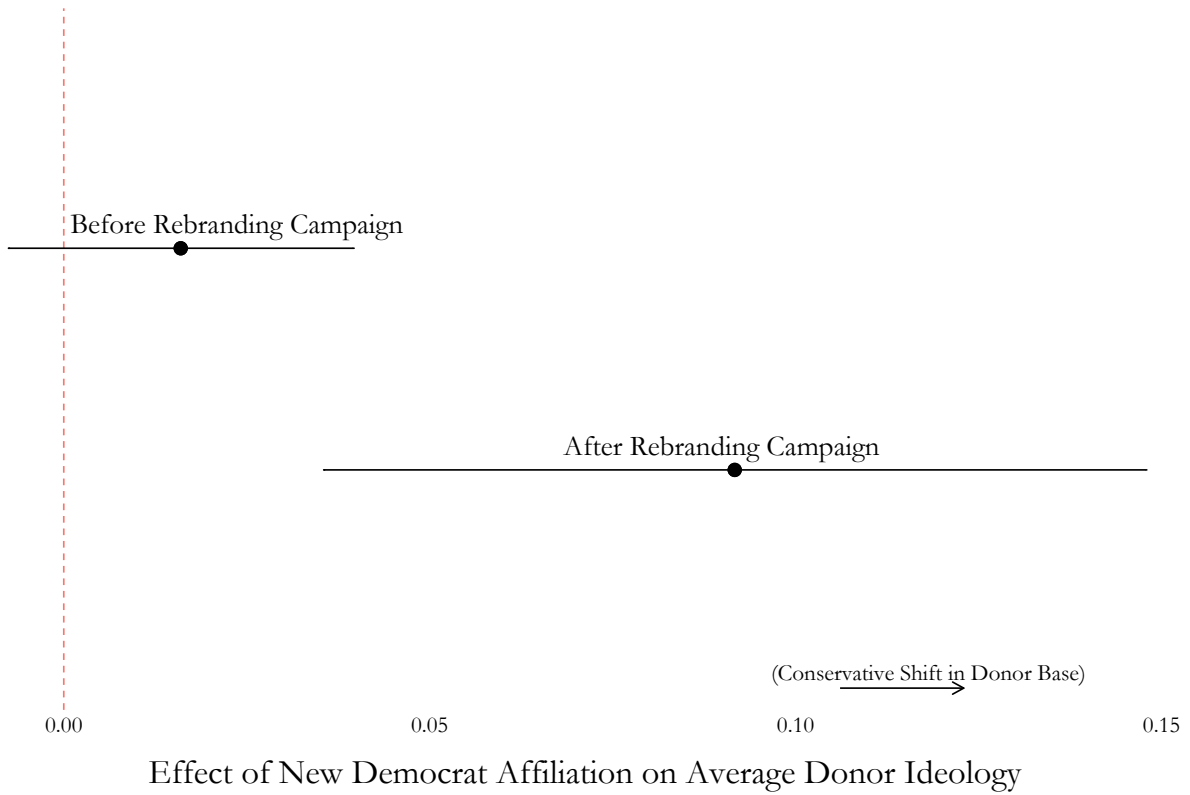
\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Figure A4 replicates the results of the New Democrat rebranding analysis using median, rather than mean, donors to detect shifts in campaign finance patterns.



**Figure A4:** *New Democrat Rebranding Analysis, Using Median Donor Ideology*

Figure A5 presents the results of the full rebranding model after recoding as missing any legislators that joined the New Democrat Coalition in (or prior to) their first term.

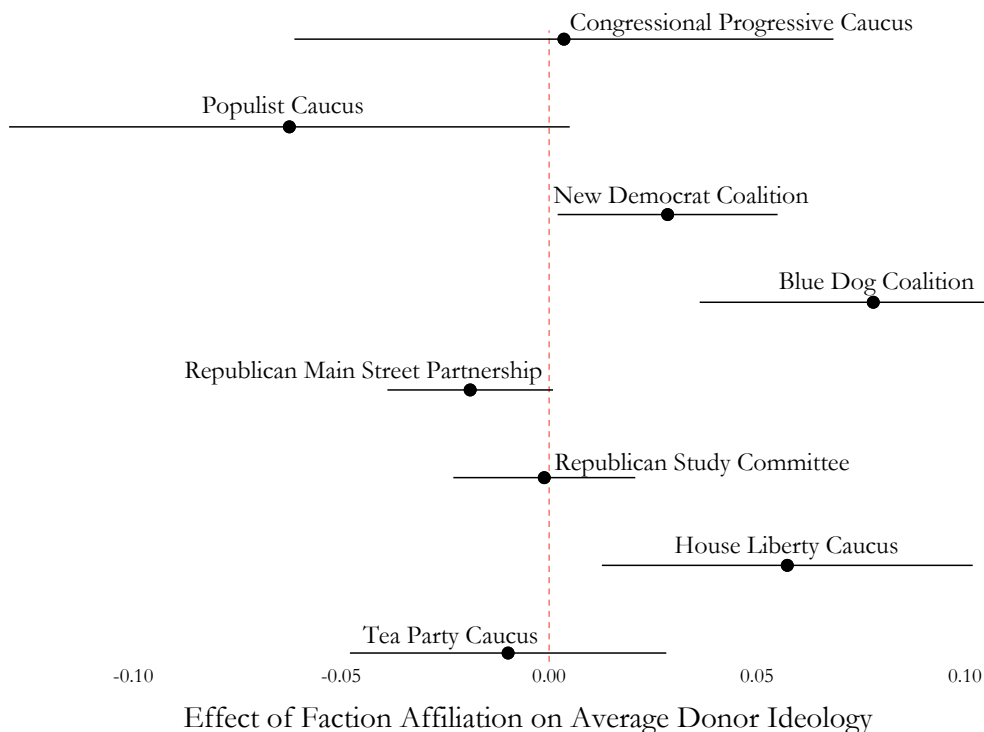


**Figure A5:** *New Democrat Coalition Rebranding Analysis (Excluding First-Term Joiners)*

2 *Extending the Donor Base Analyses to Eight Ideological Caucuses*

Figure A6 presents the results of the donor base analysis for all factions.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking, we see that affiliation in centrist organizations (e.g., the Main Street Partnership) are associated with a more centrist shift in an individual’s donor base ( $p < 0.1$ ), and non-centrist faction affiliates (e.g., the House Liberty Caucus) experience a non-centrist shift in their donor base ( $p < 0.05$ ).

As noted in the manuscript, I focus on three cases – the Blue Dogs, New Dems, and Tea Party Caucus – that present clear cases of varied institutional capacity with complete data throughout their faction’s history. Each of the three groups that produce a null result – i.e., the RSC, the Progressive Caucus, and the Tea Party Caucus – lack the gatekeeping mechanisms of more institutionally developed factions, which is consistent with the significance I attribute to faction institutions in the manuscript. Nevertheless, I caution readers in interpreting these results, as legislators adopted the use of congressional web pages unevenly, creating missing data problems in several cases. For example, I was unable to collect membership data on both the Republican Study Committee and Progressive Caucus in their early years of formation, where one might expect the emergence of a new brand to be of particular importance. Thus, it is difficult to untangle missing data problems from the open recruiting policies of these two large ideological caucuses.



**Figure A6:** *Donor Base Analysis for Eight Ideological Factions*

<sup>1</sup>The House Freedom Caucus formed in the 114th Congress. Unfortunately, there are no available CF Scores to analyze the most recent two Congresses.

### 3 SELECTION OF IDEOLOGICAL FACTIONS

I exclusively consider ideological caucuses in the U.S. House of Representatives throughout the article. There are, of course, many other possible measurement strategies available to scholars interested in party factions. For example, I might have analyzed the full universe of congressional membership organizations in the House. Alternatively, I could have analyzed roll call or donation data to discover latent blocs of lawmakers that choose not to formally organize within their chamber. Ultimately, I limit my analysis to these nine factions for the following reasons.

1. Membership data is considerably more difficult to collect for other caucuses.

There are many, many congressional membership organizations (often referred to as “caucuses”) in the modern House. In fact, the 115th Congress had nearly 500 such organizations. There are also considerable missing data issues that arise if one took the time to manually code individual legislators for hundreds of organizations. Congressional membership organizations typically report their leadership when they file with the House. They are not required to report full membership lists, and few publish full rosters on their websites. Consequently, one cannot rely upon official records to collect complete memberships for a long time-series. Moreover, it is not clear that these groups follow uniform rules in reporting their leadership structures. Some reports are much more extensive than others. While this may reflect the varied structures of these organizations, it is impossible to identify missing leadership data without deep substantive knowledge of each of these organizations. In short, collecting data on the full scope of congressional caucuses would be incredibly time consuming, and the final dataset would likely be limited to (possibly imperfect) leadership lists. As I show below, it is possible to use subscription-based services to collect data from the contemporary Congress, but I am unable to track down historical data. By contrast, I am able to analyze the full membership lists of nine ideological factions over the course of multiple decades.

2. The logic of party sub-branding may generalize to other caucuses, but the measurement of my dependent variable does not.

One can imagine that many issue-specific organizations aim to construct a sub-brand to differentiate themselves from their co-partisans. For example, the Sustainable Energy & Environmental Coalition (SEEC) may attempt to more strongly signal their environmental credentials to key interest groups. In so doing, SEEC members may benefit from additional donations from conservation groups that view them as the “true believers” among Democrats. This resource base, in turn, may free SEEC members to more aggressively push back against party leaders and other members of the Democratic Caucus. These funds may also secure the electoral fortunes of the most “green” members of the Caucus, preserving a specific policy preference distribution on sustainable energy. In this way, the logic of party sub-branding may generalize to less overtly ideological caucuses.

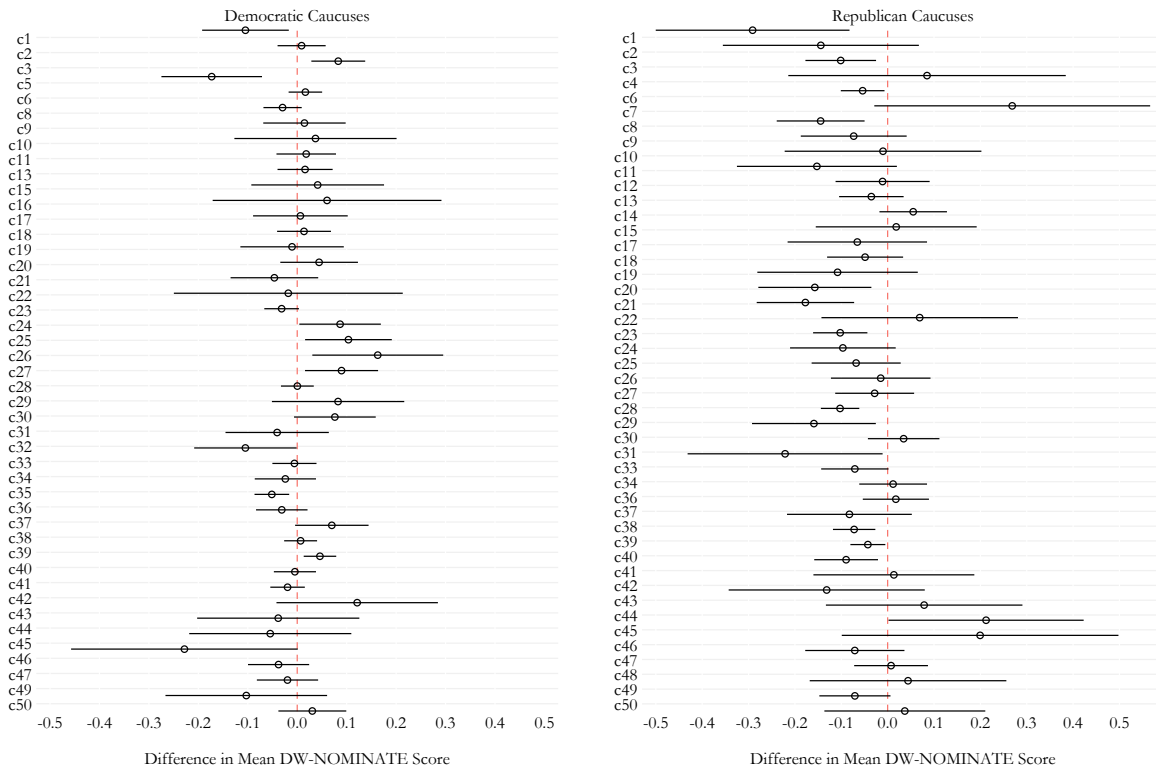
Researchers interested in generalizing this argument to *all* caucuses will, however, be faced with additional measurement challenges. A shift in the average Campaign Finance Score among donors is likely to be too general to detect issue-specific branding consequences – even after overcoming the aforementioned challenges to measuring the caucus “treatment” variable. It is possible that affiliation with the SEEC produces a liberal shift in their donor base, but this is a diluted and indirect way to measure a much more specific group of donors. The problem is even more severe for caucuses devoted to issues that do not map neatly onto a left-right dimension. For example, what direction should CF Scores shift in response to joining the Congressional Bike Caucus? A serious

analysis of all congressional caucuses would require many, perhaps hundreds, of custom-designed, more granular dependent variables.

These problems may be mitigated by conducting a purely descriptive analysis of voting behavior (rather than donation patterns). Missing data problems notwithstanding, I provide an example of what such an extension might look like. I hand-code each individual member of a random sample of fifty congressional caucuses (out of five hundred total House groups) in the 115th Congress. All data were coded from Legistorm, a subscription-based platform for congressional news and data.

There is tremendous variation among even a small subset of caucuses in one Congress. There are sprawling coalitions boasting well over one-hundred members and hollow organizations with no more than one or two affiliated lawmakers. The names of the sample reflect significant heterogeneity in their purpose, but by and large, the groups address narrow subjects that more closely resemble an ad hoc committee system than a political party.

In contrast to the factions in my analyses, most caucuses in this random sample are not ideologically distinct from their co-partisans. However, this is a rather unfair test of divergence. The Congressional 5G Caucus (a hard null result in both parties) is almost certainly interested in a small set of policies unlikely to drive shifts in DW-NOMINATE Scores. While Republicans and Democrats in the Bipartisan Congressional Refugee Caucus may shade to the left of their respective party distributions, the simple extension of my approach to these varied institutions seems too blunt to respectfully analyze the constellation of less overtly ideological congressional membership organizations.



**Figure A7:** *Difference in Mean NOMINATE Scores Among Random Sample of Non-Ideological Caucuses*

**Table A7:** *List of Caucuses in Random Sample*

Random Sample of Caucuses in the 115th Congress	
c1	Bipartisan Congressional Refugee Caucus
c2	California Public Higher Education Caucus
c3	Caucus for the Humane Bond
c4	Congressional American Religious Freedom Caucus
c5	Congressional Antitrust Caucus
c6	Congressional Arthritis Caucus
c7	Congressional Article I Caucus
c8	Congressional Biomedical Research Caucus
c9	Congressional Caucus on Prescription Drug Abuse
c10	Congressional E-Learning Caucus
c11	Congressional High-Performance Buildings Caucus
c12	Congressional Media Fairness Caucus
c13	Congressional Navy and Marine Corps Caucus
c14	Congressional School Choice Caucus
c15	Congressional Telehealth Caucus
c16	Distributed Generation Caucus
c17	Florida Ports Caucus
c18	Medical Technology Caucus
c19	National Heritage Areas Caucus
c20	Northwest Energy Caucus
c21	Bipartisan Task Force to End Sexual Violence
c22	Congressional 5G Caucus
c23	Congressional Addiction, Treatment and Recovery Caucus
c24	Congressional Assisting Caregivers Today Caucus
c25	Congressional Biofuels Caucus
c26	Congressional Caucus on CPAs and Accountants
c27	Congressional Chemistry Caucus
c28	Congressional Cystic Fibrosis Caucus
c29	Congressional Explosive Ordnance Disposal Caucus
c30	Congressional Financial Security and Life Insurance Caucus
c31	Congressional Former Mayors Caucus
c32	Congressional Hepatitis Caucus
c33	Congressional House Cancer Caucus
c34	Congressional Iran Human Rights and Democracy Caucus
c35	Congressional Labor and Working Families Caucus
c36	Congressional Library of Congress Caucus
c37	Congressional Microbusiness Caucus
c38	Congressional Multiple Sclerosis Caucus
c39	Congressional National Guard and Reserve Components Caucus
c40	Congressional Oceans Caucus
c41	Congressional Peace Corps Caucus
c42	Congressional Resilient Construction Caucus
c43	Congressional Serbian Caucus
c44	Congressional Texas Maritime Caucus
c45	Electromagnetic Pulse Caucus
c46	European Union Caucus
c47	House NASA Caucus
c48	House National Security Caucus
c49	Montenegro Caucus
c50	U.S.-Philippines Friendship Caucus



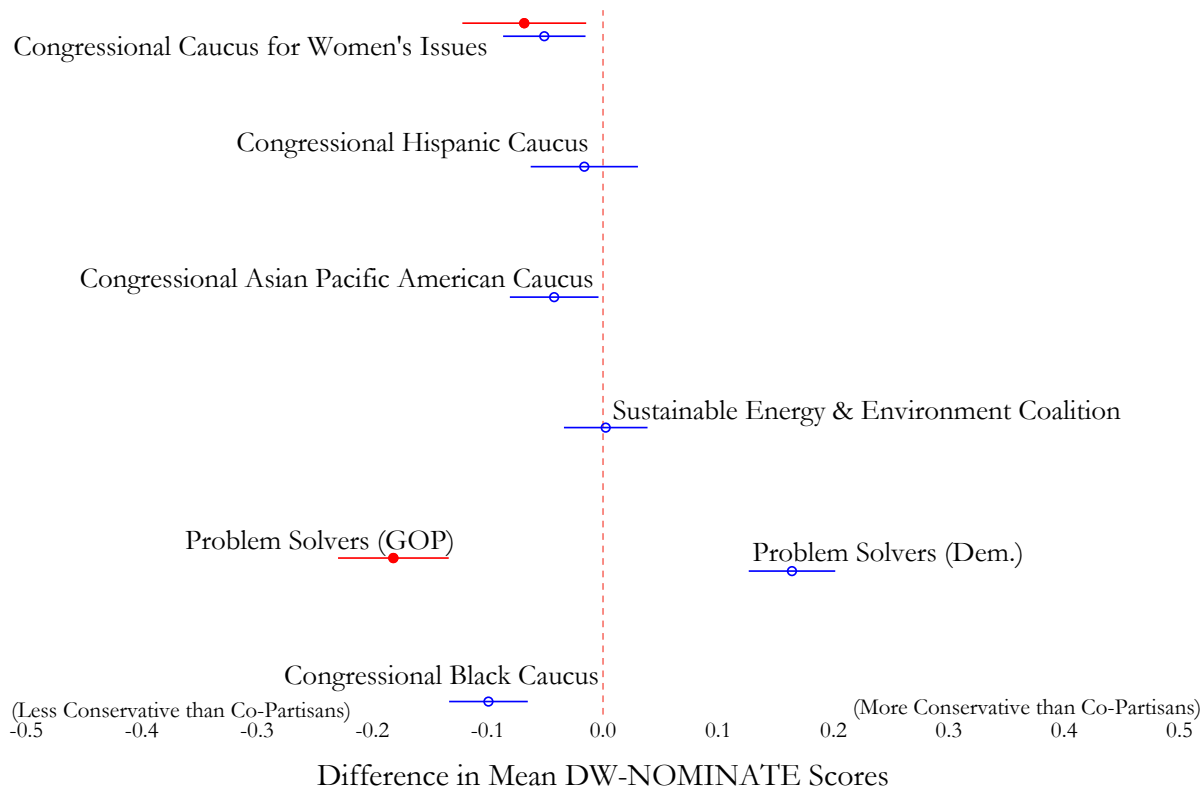
3. Selecting a more expansive subset requires a new, arbitrary scope condition.

Extending my research design to *all* caucuses raises a host of measurement and missing data concerns, but it would be possible to incorporate a handful of notable groups to generalize the theory in some small increment. Readers may have noted the absence of several caucuses with long histories, prestigious extra-legislative institutions, and serious organizational capacity. The Congressional Black Caucus, for example, is among the most enduring informal political institutions in the U.S. House.

Consequently, I extend my analysis of differences in voting behavior to members of six prominent groups in the 115th Congress. The results, presented in Figure A8 suggest that many, but not all, of these groups do diverge from their co-partisans. The Congressional Black Caucus is significantly more liberal than other Democrats, as are those affiliated with the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. Democratic members of the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues are more progressive than their co-partisans, while their GOP affiliates are more moderate than the Republican Conference. Legislators that joined the newly formed Problem Solvers Caucus tend to be more centrist than their co-partisans, which is broadly consistent with their bipartisan ambitions.<sup>2</sup> These are groups that more closely resemble the factional institutions considered in my main analyses, generally diverge from their co-partisans, and cultivate the support of robust outside organizations. In other words, these are caucuses that plausibly engage in a partisan sub-branding strategy.

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<sup>2</sup>The Problem Solvers Caucus might reasonably be classified as an ideological, sub-branding organization, despite their ironic affiliation with the No Labels movement, but their recent formation precludes an extended analysis of shifts in campaign finance scores.



**Figure A8:** *Difference in Mean NOMINATE Scores Among Other Notable Caucuses*

Ultimately, I leave it to future researchers to bridge the excellent existing research on many of these groups (e.g., Singh 1998) with the logic of party sub-branding. The inclusion of many of these groups, such as the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, complicates the measurement strategy necessary to provide a proper test of the argument. More importantly, the move to expand beyond explicitly ideological House caucuses to include other notable groups risks a more arbitrary scope condition for the empirical analyses.

4. Latent, unnamed coalitions of lawmakers are probably not attempting a sub-branding campaign.

The hundreds of congressional membership organizations in the U.S. House only scratch the surface of possible factions worthy of analysis. The federal legislature surely possesses a vast number of unnamed blocs that work to accomplish some common political objective. In fact, much of the existing research on American political factions tends to focus on cleavages (or tightly clustered nodes) within the broader network of partisans in American politics (Koger, Masket, and Noel 2009; Koger, Masket, and Noel 2010; Noel 2017).

In contrast to this research, I choose to study the set of self-identified ideological organizations. I focus on nine caucuses because their intention to ally with one another is explicit, which greatly simplifies the identification of faction members. Moreover, investigating durable blocs that publicly express policy positions allows for a realistic extension of the existing research on political branding; groups that do not bother to select a name are probably not attempting a sub-branding campaign. Note, however, that establishing a named caucus does not guarantee divergent voting behavior or a corresponding shift in one's donor base (see Figure A7).

5. Ideological caucuses *seem* important, at least by media accounts, which raises important questions for scholars of American political institutions.

Finally, the media frequently highlights the role of ideological caucuses, implicitly nodding to their political clout. Without question, the limited scope conditions of this paper leave important avenues for future researchers. Nevertheless, my selection criteria allow me to provide an empirical analysis of groups routinely covered by the political press but rarely scrutinized by scholars of American political institutions. Ideological factions *seem* important to many beltway observers, but political scientists are well-positioned to check that assumption and explore *how* sub-party institutions establish new pockets of political power.