

THE TEA PARTY EFFECT:
HOW THE MOVEMENT SHAPED THE 2010 MIDTERM ELECTION

by

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(Under the Direction of Jamie Carson)

ABSTRACT

The Tea Party gained national prominence in 2009 with national protests and rallies against perceived government overreach. It has no official leadership and groups have different policies regarding the extent of activism, yet it was heavily involved in the 2010 electoral cycle with endorsements and grassroots support in primaries and general elections. This study tests the theory of faction emergence using the Tea Party and the 2010 midterm election as a case study. I find that the emergence of the Tea Party has much in common with previous third parties in that it started from disappointment with current major party candidates and offered an attractive alternative as a faction within the Republican Party. I find that Tea Party affiliated challengers do better than their non-affiliated Republican counterparts by 3 percentage points in the general election, on average, when controlling for other factors. Republican challengers that received endorsements from Freedomworks, the Tea Party Express, and signed of the Contract from America outperformed Republican challengers that did not, all else equal. Tea Party Caucus incumbents did no better electorally than Republican incumbents at large when controlling for other factors.

INDEX WORDS: Tea Party, Midterm election, Third party, Congressional elections.

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B.S., Kennesaw State University, 2010

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2012

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April 25, 2012

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank the Political Science Department at the University of Georgia for giving me two years of intellectual and practical growth. Second, the professors on my committee have been incredibly helpful and available with this thesis along with the courses I have taken with them. Lastly, I'd like to thank Gary Jacobson and Stephen Pettigrew for the Congressional data used for this paper. Any mistakes made with the data are solely the fault of the author.

Contents

List of Tables	vii
1 The 2010 Midterm Election	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Mixed Results for Tea Party Candidates	3
2 Congressional Elections	5
2.1 Foundations	5
2.2 Effect of Roll Calls	7
3 Tea Party Emergence	11
3.1 History of Third Parties	11
3.2 Theory of Faction Emergence	15
3.3 Rise of the Tea Party	17
3.4 History of the Tea Party	19
3.5 Tea Party Literature	21
4 The Tea Party Effect	23
4.1 Hypotheses	23
4.2 Data and Methods	26
4.3 Results	29

5	The Future of the Tea Party	33
5.1	The Tea Party Beyond 2010	33
5.2	Conclusion	37
6	Bibliography	40
A	Tea Party Statistics	47

List of Tables

3.1	Major Tea Party protests	19
4.1	Tea Party endorsement or identification	27
4.2	How did Tea Party affiliated candidates affect vote share for Republican challengers?	30
4.3	How different Tea Party affiliations affected Republican challenger vote share	31
4.4	Tea Party Caucus membership and Republican vote share among incumbents	32
A.1	Safety of Tea Party Caucus seats by Democratic vote share	47
A.2	Tea Party Caucus opponent quality in 2010	48
A.3	Tea Party Caucus opponent quality in 2010(percentage)	48
A.4	Ideology of Tea Party Caucus and Republicans	48
A.5	Democratic vote share based on opponent type	48
A.6	Ideology of Democrats facing challengers	48
A.7	Variance Inflation Factor for Table 4.2 (Model One)	48
A.8	Variance Inflation Factor for Table 4.3 (Model Two)	49
A.9	Variance Inflation Factor for Table 4.4 (Model Three)	49

Chapter 1

The 2010 Midterm Election

1.1 Introduction

The 2010 midterm elections saw the undoing of the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives built during the prior two election cycles. With the election of Obama in 2008, the Democratic Party had full control of the federal government and could move forward with an ambitious agenda. In response to the economic malaise, the Democratic majority in Congress and President Obama enacted a stimulus bill to try to spur job creation. They passed a health care reform bill to follow through on Obama's campaign promise, and the House passed a cap and trade bill that stalled in the Senate. This occurred while the specter of TARP, the bank bailout passed under the Bush administration shortly before the 2008 election, loomed in the mind of a skeptical electorate.

The Tea Party is an all encompassing term for a mixture of activist groups and individuals associated with a movement that does not fit neat definitions. It has no official leadership and groups have different policies regarding the extent of activism. Some groups choose to endorse (or oppose) candidates and some choose to remain neutral in primary and general elections. Yet despite the lack of a tight organizational structure the Tea Party

received extensive media attention leading up to the 2010 midterm elections and endorsements by Tea Party groups were sought after by Republicans in the primary season. After the election, the Tea Party has monitored the actions of Congress and its members to acting in accordance with Tea Party philosophy.

Many election forecasts for the 2010 midterm elections by political scientists, bloggers, and journalists underestimated the number of seat pickups for Republicans in the House (Sides 2010a). This suggests that Republicans outperformed expectations formed by indicators such as the economy, presidential approval, and the history of midterm seat losses. What else fueled this midterm surge by Republicans and what did the Tea Party have to do with it? All things equal, did Republican candidates affiliated with the Tea Party garner a higher proportion of the vote than Republicans not affiliated with the Tea Party in the 2010 midterm election? I find that the emergence of the Tea Party has much in common with third parties and factions in American history in that it started from disappointment with current major party candidates and offered an attractive alternative as a faction within the Republican Party. An endorsement from a Tea Party organization gives a signal to the electorate that the candidate shares the belief system of limited government. Thus, a Tea Party endorsed candidate will have more enthusiastic volunteers and supporters than a Republican not affiliated with the Tea Party. In previous years, it might be good enough to just call yourself a Republican or a conservative, but after long periods of Republican control where spending and the deficit were perceived to be out of control that might not be enough in 2010. Tea Party groups also chipped in independent expenditures on things such as ads and financial contributions to the candidates they supported. I find that Tea Party affiliated challengers do better than their non-affiliated Republican counterparts by 3 percentage points, on average, when controlling for other factors. Republican challengers that received endorsements from Freedomworks, the Tea Party Express, and signed the Contract from America outperformed Republican challengers that did not, all else equal. Tea

Party Caucus incumbents did no better electorally than Republican incumbents at large when controlling for other factors.

1.2 Mixed Results for Tea Party Candidates

Rep. Melissa Bean, a Democrat representing Illinois' 8th district since 2004, had won with more than 60% of the vote in 2008 and likely would have won handily in 2006 if a Green Party candidate had not garnered 5% of the vote. Bean received 50.9% in 2006 to her Republican opponent's 44%, and the Green Party candidate took 5.1%. Obama won the district with 56% of the vote in 2008, although the district had long been represented by a Republican before Bean took office in 2004. Bean was challenged by Tea Party-backed Republican Joe Walsh in 2010. Her district was given a leaning Democratic *New York Times* Rating and the FiveThirtyEight model gave her an 88% chance of winning.¹

By election day, Bean had raised \$2,202,480 and spent \$2,358,450 with \$118,139 cash on hand. Walsh had only raised \$527,376, and spent \$577,056 with \$6,529 cash on hand. The race seemed to clearly tilt in her favor. Yet, on Election Day she lost by fewer than 300 votes. Like 2004, the same Green Party candidate yielded a significant 3.2% of the vote, but this time the Republican had earned 48.5%. The third party candidate aside, what could help explain the loss of a seemingly safe seat for the Democrats? Did Tea Party enthusiasm and Bean's yes votes on controversial bills such TARP, stimulus, cap and trade, and the health care reform put Walsh over the top?

Tea Party candidates won all their races that were labeled solid Republican or leaning Republican by the *New York Times*. The success in other districts was mixed. Virginia's 11th district was labeled a tossup because it had elected Clinton, Bush twice, and Obama in

¹Illinois 8th District Profile. *New York Times*<http://elections.nytimes.com/2010/house/illinois/8>. Accessed February 12, 2011.

the last four presidential elections.² The Tea Party candidate, Keith Fimian, outspent the Democratic incumbent, Gerald Connolly, \$2,785,590 to \$2,435,020. In a district that had elected Bush twice, Fimian went on to lose by 981 votes. He outperformed his 2008 vote total when he only received 43%. For the 2010 race he had received an endorsement from the national Tea Party group Freedomworks. Did this help him close the gap?

In the next section, I examine the literature regarding congressional elections and the effect of salient roll calls. This discussion will lead into my theory regarding third party or faction emergence followed by a review of third parties in American history. The rise and history of the Tea Party along with the relevant literature on its effect in 2010 are then examined. The next section lays out my hypotheses, methods, and empirical results of my theory. The final section begins with exploring the effect of the Tea Party beyond 2010 and concludes with a review of findings along with the implications for Congressional elections.

²Virginia 11th District Profile. *New York Times*. <http://elections.nytimes.com/2010/house/virginia/11>. Accessed February 12, 2011.

Chapter 2

Congressional Elections

2.1 Foundations

Mayhew (1974) predicted what members of Congress would do if we assumed that they were single-minded seekers of reelection. Congressmen engage in advertising, credit claiming, and position taking as activities that are electorally useful. Advertising would be considered franking, speeches, town halls, or anything that would make the member more visible to his constituency. Credit claiming would involve extolling the virtues of what you have done for the district such as bringing programs or certain pork projects. Position taking requires making pleasing judgmental statements but does not actually require action. Fenno (1978) expanded on Mayhew's argument by saying that members had three goals: reelection, power in Congress, and good public policy. The members must establish a home style in order to attain reelection, because the other two goals are only possible if reelected.

Mayhew posits, "If a group of planners sat down and tried to design a pair of American national assemblies with the goal of serving members' electoral needs year in and year out, they would be hard pressed to improve on what exists" (Mayhew 1974, 82). They are aided most notably by congressional offices, committees, and parties. They can use Congressional

offices to make use of the franking privilege, which entails sending mail to constituents that helps improve their name recognition and can be used for credit claiming or position taking. The offices are also used for valuable constituent services such as help with federal programs such as Social Security and correspondence with constituents by mail or phone. Members are also allowed a travel stipend to travel free to and from their district. When Congress is not in session, one can expect the incumbent to be either raising money or holding events in the district. Thus, we can expect incumbents to have a major electoral advantage over challengers.

Mayhew claims parties are tailored to suit members electoral needs. He says this is because majority parties, unlike today, do not shut out minority parties in terms of particularized benefits, committee membership, and resources because they know it would happen to them if they lost the majority. Parties let members vote their district and rarely pressure members to vote one way or the other. One implication of this is that Republicans from more liberal districts can be liberal Republicans. Congress has changed drastically since 1974. No longer do we see majority parties attempting to share benefits or resources and moderates are disappearing in both parties leading to increased polarization.

The Tea Party supported primary challenges to Republicans deemed as too moderate or not conservative enough. The Democratic Leadership Council, the non-profit that advocated for a more moderate Democratic Party, has seen its influence wane as progressive groups such as the Center for American Progress and Democracy for America have risen in prominence. The Republican counterpart to the DLC, the Republican Leadership Council, endorsed two Senate candidate and five candidates in 2010 showing that very few Republicans meet its ideological criteria of fiscal conservatism and social liberalism. The polarization between the parties has led to legislative gridlock on issues including the budget, energy, and presidential appointments. Despite the breakdown of parties sharing benefits, incumbents still hold a sizeable electoral advantage over challengers. In 1974, 88% of House incumbents

won reelection compared to 85% in 2010, which was the lowest reelection percentage between 1964 and 2010 (Open Secrets 2010).

2.2 Effect of Roll Calls

Members of Congress often engage in position taking to attract electoral constituencies, but it is hard to measure how it affects electoral outcomes (Mayhew 1974). Unlike position taking, roll call votes are permanent and could possibly affect electoral outcomes. Arnold (1990) explains that representatives estimate the consequences of voting decisions. Each issue may have only a slight impact on a legislators electoral margin; yet small effects can quickly add up to become large effects when summed over many issues that Congress considers each year (Arnold 1990, 62). Kingdon (1981) argues that members will avoid casting votes that might portray them as extreme back in their district. Two economists examined the issue of roll calls differently compared with previous political science research (Kau, Keenan and Rubin 1982). They assumed that members of Congress represented their constituents and that their input was important to the passage of legislation. They test whether laws are passed to benefit special interest groups or because of ideological reasons. Their models show ideology to be important in explaining congressional voting. They also conclude that interest groups, with the exception of unions, largely do not have much influence on the legislative process.(Kau, Keenan and Rubin 1982, 122).

A legislator who votes against the wishes of his district risks the chance of inviting a challenger and firing up political opponents (Arnold 1990). Thus, incumbents must tread carefully and attempt to maintain a record worthy of highlighting, or at least defending, to their constituents. Salient votes that capture media attention are especially important considering the chance of receiving attention from constituents that may normally be passive. In

response, parties in the House craft strategies that allow vulnerable incumbents to defect on a bill if it already has adequate support, or House leadership may bring an issue to the floor in order to get its members and the opposition on the record. House leaders use the power of being in the majority to set the legislative agenda (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Rohde 1991). After taking a public relations beating over the payroll tax cut extension, the Republican controlled House of Representatives forced a vote on freezing federal worker pay until the end of 2013 and 72 Democrats joined the Republican majority in passing the bill. Federal worker pay, and public employee pay in general, has become controversial and Republicans now have a potential wedge issue to use against 117 Democrats that voted against the bill (Kasperowicz 2012). This vote has the potential to strengthen the Republican brand name and weaken the Democratic brand name considering the reelection of a party's candidates is partially dependent on legislative accomplishments (Cox and McCubbins 2005). The brand name for a party is important considering that more high-quality candidates run for office when national tides favor their party and these candidates perform better electorally than other similar candidates (Jacobson 1989).

It is not always clear if legislative accomplishment will aid the party in the next election. In two years of Democratic control of Congress and the Presidency beginning in 2008, a health care bill and a stimulus program to stimulate the economy were landmark pieces of legislation, yet Democrats suffered losses that outpaced most predictions. How much of a difference can some key votes have on an election? There are some scholars who find votes do not have electoral consequences or that the evidence for consequences is mixed (Ansolabehere, Snyder Jr and Stewart III 2001; Gaines and Nokken 1998; Jacobson 1993). Jacobson (1993) argues that legislators base their votes on the electoral environment. If they wish to vote for a bill and believe they have win reelection still voting for the bill they are likely to vote for it. Those who thought that they would see electoral losses would vote against the bill. He examined deficit reduction votes in 1990 and found that only vulnerable incumbents were

harmful by voting for deficit reduction. One study examined House candidates from 1874 to 1996 and conclude that candidates moderated very little to accommodate district interests, instead they espoused the ideology of their respective national party (Ansolabehere, Snyder Jr and Stewart III 2001). In response, Bovitz and Carson (2006) find that individual roll call votes affect vote share when examining nearly thirty years of roll call data in the House. The degree of the effect depends on the saliency of the issue at hand and suggests that House members often vote strategically to avoid compiling an electorally dangerous voting record.

There are reasons for a member of Congress to possibly accept a vote that may harm them electorally. Aside from reelection, secondary goals for members of Congress include good public policy (Fenno 1978) and internal advancement in the House (Cox and McCubbins 2005). Thus, a member may vote for a bill knowing its negative electoral effects if they strongly believe it is good public policy. This is the dilemma many moderate Democrats had to face when debating whether or not to vote for the Affordable Health Care for America Act. Further, to advance in the House members may have to follow the preferences of party leaders. A party member that defects on party bills is less likely to find internal advancement within the party.

There are differing opinions on whether members of Congress receive fewer votes the more ideologically extreme they are (Erikson 1971; Canes-Wrone, Brady and Cogan 2002) or the more partisan they vote (Carson et al. 2010). Erikson (1971) found that the more conservative a Republican congressman votes or the more liberal a Democratic congressman votes will lead to a decrease in vote share. One study found that during the time period of 1956-1996 the incumbent would receive a lower vote share the more he supported the ideological extreme of his party (Canes-Wrone, Brady and Cogan 2002). This effect, they argue, is comparable in size to other electoral determinants such as challenger quality. Lastly, this effect does not only affect marginal seats; even safe seats will be affected. This is because the reason they were safe seats in the first place is that the member had a more moderate voting

record. A recent article shifts the argument from ideology to partisanship by looking to see how partisan loyalty affects electoral fortunes (Carson et al. 2010). They find that voters punish representatives for being too partisan instead of ideological. Jones (2010) argues that low approval ratings for Congress translates into lower vote share for majority party incumbents and increased vote share minority party incumbents. The greater party cohesion since the 1970s has made it less difficult for voters to hold representatives accountable. Individual congressmen are now being held accountable for the performance of the collective Congress. These findings hold regardless of seat safety or party loyalty.

Chapter 3

Tea Party Emergence

3.1 History of Third Parties

The rise of third parties throughout American history offer similarities to the rise of the Tea Party. According to (Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus 1996), third parties emerge when there is dissatisfaction with the major parties on issues or candidate selection. Other reasons include economic discontent and distrust of government (Gold 1995). Hofstadter (1994) describes third parties saying, “When a third party’s demands become popular enough, they are appropriated by one or both of the major parties and the third party disappears. Third parties are like bees: once they have stung, they die.” I argue that the Tea Party rises and falls in much the same way as past American third party movements. In this section I will outline some third party movements that are comparable to the rise of the Tea Party in that they emerged because of unhappiness on major issues of their time such as slavery and economic policy.

In the United States, third parties face a myriad of problems including ballot access, fundraising, and being thought of as a wasted vote, yet every election year turns out a third party candidate who receives some portion of the vote in presidential elections. Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus (1996) note that third parties have received at least

5% of the popular vote in one-third of presidential elections since 1840 and have cost 14 of the last 36 presidents a majority of the popular vote. Over the course of American history, two types of third party movements have risen. During the nineteenth century, minor parties operated as complete political organizations with conventions, platforms, and candidates in state and local races. Unlike the nineteenth century third party movements, the twentieth century third party campaigns were generally focused on independent candidates as opposed to a new minor political party.

In 1840, the Liberty Party formed on a platform of anti-slavery after both major parties nominated pro-slavery candidates and largely ignored the issue during the election. The major parties doubled down on nominating pro-slavery candidates in 1844 and the Liberty Party's 15,812 votes in New York allowed Polk to defeat the Whig candidate Henry Clay. It ran another candidate in 1848, but by that time the party had splintered into three factions. One of those factions eventually became the Free Soil Party. It was more moderate on slavery by generally focusing on not allowing slavery in new territories. It garnered the support of disaffected Whigs and Democrats who felt shut out at their parties conventions. The party nominated Martin Van Buren who received roughly 10 percent of the vote. In the aftermath, some state parties in the Democratic Party adopted the Free Soil position on the extension of slavery outright and coalitions were formed in other states, thus neutering the Free Soil party in the election of 1852.

The election of 1860 saw the rise of Southern Democrats whose only goal was to protect the institution of slavery. The rift in the Democratic Party paved the way for the election of Lincoln and the end of the issue of slavery shortly thereafter. After the Civil War, parties such as the Greenback Party and the Populist Party formed with the support of anti-industrial farming and labor supporters which were unhappy with economic conditions. By 1896 a major party, the Democratic Party, had endorsed the Populists' message of free silver and gained support from the Populist Party. The nineteenth century third parties formed

after attempting to work within one of the major parties. Some of these minor parties were incorporated by one of the major parties as their main issues became more popular. All of the minor parties were unsustainable because followers would become discouraged or the national conditions would change making their party unnecessary (Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus 1996).

Much like the middle of the nineteenth century, third party candidates ran for president in 1948 and 1968 focused on the issue of race and civil rights. Strom Thurmond entered the race in 1948 after Southern Democrats objections to Truman's civil rights policies were rejected at the Democratic convention. Thurmond received 38 electoral votes from four states and as a result the Democratic Party nominated a more southern friendly Adlai Stevenson in 1952. Race and civil rights only became more salient in the 1960s as Alabama Governor George Wallace rose to prominence by blocking the doorway into the University of Alabama to two newly enrolled African-American students. He contemplated an independent run in 1964 after some strong showings in the Democratic primary, but decided against it when the Republicans nominated Barry Goldwater. In response to his announcement to run as an independent in 1968, both Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey took action to diminish his strength. Nixon took a softer stand on racial integration and Humphrey argued that a vote for Wallace was a vote for Nixon and worked hard for the support of organized labor to stay competitive among blue collar workers. Wallace earned roughly 10 million popular votes and 46 electoral votes. His American Independent Party would not earn more than 1.4 percent of the popular vote in the next three elections.

The previous third party runs were based on issue unresponsiveness or an unpopular incumbent, but in 1980 John Anderson's independent run is hard to explain. He did not have a unifying issue, although he held moderate positions on some issues for a former Republican which gave him good press. Despite falling in the polls before the election and not having a unifying cause or issue, Anderson still earned 6.6 percent of the popular vote.

In sum, nineteenth century candidates used relatively stable minor parties to run for office, and twentieth century candidates formed their own third parties around their candidacy. Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus (1996) argue that the advent of technological and political changes allowed twentieth century candidates to be able run without pre-existing party organizations. The growth of the media has increased a candidate's ability to communicate directly to the electorate without using a party apparatus.

As George H.W. Bush was riding high in the polls after the victory in the first Gulf War, the thought of a strong third-party challenge in 1992 seemed implausible. Yet as the economy slowed and poll numbers dropped, a frustrated public found outlets for their anger. Some would channel it by voting for Pat Buchanan in the Republican primary or for Jerry Brown in the Democratic Primary. After they were defeated, disaffected Americans turned to Ross Perot. The main themes Perot ran on are similar to that of the current Tea Party: federal budget deficits and disfunction in Washington (Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus 1996). Perot had a distinct advantage over previous third-party candidates in that he had virtually unlimited money to spend. This, along with a lot of free media exposure, helped him form a support network and get on all 50 state ballots. At his peak, Perot polled near 40 percent, but he would receive only 18.9 percent on election day. Perot's influence led both Democrats and Republicans to adopt some of his policy positions to try and persuade Perot voters. Early in his presidency, Clinton proposed a deficit reduction bill and ethics bills. Perot themes were evident in the GOP's Contract with America. Perot would run under the Reform Party banner in 1996 and garner 8 percent of the vote. The Reform Party still exists today and runs candidates for president and sometimes for lower offices, but it has not seen success since Jesse Ventura won the race for Governor in Minnesota.

What are the similarities and differences between the Tea party and third parties of the past? The biggest difference may be that Tea Party candidates ran under the banner of one of the two major political parties instead of forming its own party. Yet it is similar

because the Tea Party formed in response to a perceived indifference by the major parties on the issues that concerned them and the presence of economic malaise. Many of the policies supported by the third parties were eventually adopted by one of the major parties much like how the Republican Party has absorbed the Tea Party. If the Tea Party is a reflection of some of these earlier movements we should see it start to fade away after 2012.

3.2 Theory of Faction Emergence

I argue that appearance of the Tea Party is consistent with the literature regarding the emergence of third parties (Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus 1996), but I contend that the Tea Party, despite its name, is no third party at all. Instead, the Tea Party is a powerful faction that resides within the Republican Party that serves to mobilize its conservative base.

The Republican Party has dealt with major factions throughout its history. The factions emerged in response to a issue such as slavery or economic policy. The slavery issue led to the rise of the Radical Republicans who were adamantly opposed to slavery as opposed to most of the party which was generally more moderate. The group never formally organized, and were a minor part of the party which was dominated by moderates before the Civil War. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Progressive Republicans emerged in response to issues regarding economic justice. At its peak it had one of its own as President in Theodore Roosevelt, but it would eventually shift into the Democratic Party as it shifted left under Woodrow Wilson.

The rise of the Tea Party is similar to the rise of third party movements and factions in American history in that it emerged from perceived issue unresponsiveness and distrust of current government officials. Instead of forming a third party movement, the Tea Party seemed to be absorbed into the Republican Party shortly after it started. Why did the Tea

Party not form an electoral third party? It did not because it emerged in response primarily due to policies passed by the Democratic controlled Congress and President Obama. Many third party movements blossomed into electoral movements when neither major party would incorporate its policy demands. The Tea Party movement fit well into the ideology of the Republican Party and was embraced by some within the party. Further, the rise of some third party movements in history came from the lack of party polarization on some issues. The slavery issue divided both major parties during the nineteenth century and thus staunch anti-slavery opponents could not find a home in either party for some time.

It would be more accurate to say I am testing a theory of faction emergence where an electoral group dislikes the opposing party, but is unconvinced with some of its own party's ability to represent their values. A faction that emerges under this condition could offer electoral benefits to candidates that reach out to assure its members that they share its values. Thus, strategic politicians will likely emerge and use position taking to attempt to align with the faction for electoral gains (Mayhew 1974; Jacobson 1989). However, challengers are more likely to gain from this faction emergence, because of the lack of a voting record on national issues allows them to use position taking to craft their positions specifically for the support of the faction.

To test the theory of faction emergence, I examine the Tea Party and its effect on the 2010 midterm election. If the Tea Party is a good case study for the theory of faction emergence I should find that candidates endorsed by the Tea Party reap electoral benefits compared to those without Tea Party endorsements. Further, this benefit should be limited to challengers as opposed to incumbents. An example of previous faction emergence would be the beginning of the pro-life movement following the 1973 decision *Roe v. Wade*. Eventually, the pro-life movement would reside almost exclusively in the Republican Party and many Republican candidates seek the approval of pro-life groups such as the National Right to Life.

3.3 Rise of the Tea Party

The rise of the Tea Party fits well into the literature on the emergence of third parties. Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus (1996) have five conditions for the emergence of third parties. The first condition is when citizens are unhappy or distrustful of government and current political parties. Third parties are also likely to form during economic downturns. The case could be made that this condition and economic performance is met as congressional approval stands at 12% and unemployment around 9%.¹ Congressional approval at the time of the first national Tea Party protest on February 27, 2009 was 31.8% and unemployment had risen to 8%. During its arguably largest protest, the Taxpayer March on Washington in September of 2009, Congressional approval stood at 28%. Six months later approval was 17% and unemployment was hovering around 10%.

The second condition, issue unresponsiveness, is met by the fact that Tea Party protests were centered around what they felt like was an intolerable expansion of government spending at the national as well as state and local level. Protests were held in opposition to specific bills that had already passed or were under consideration including: the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP), American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), The American Clean Energy and Security Act (cap and trade), and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act (Obamacare to Tea Partiers). The effect of the salient roll calls for the 2010 election has been tested by a number of scholars and bloggers (Masket and Greene 2011; Silver 2010; McGhee 2010*b,a*). All of the models used the same four votes: health care, stimulus, TARP, and cap and trade and found effects for at least some of the votes. Nate Silver of *FiveThirtyEight* finds that Democrats were punished for health care and TARP votes, but not for cap and trade and stimulus votes. Greene and Masket find that health care was particularly costly, but TARP and stimulus also had an effect. Cap and trade does

¹Disapproval at 82.5% according to the Real Clear Politics average <http://tinyurl.com/3oqapw>

not show significance in any of their models. Eric McGhee ran two different models. The first used an additive count of the salient votes. For example, if a member voted for health care and the stimulus but not TARP or cap and trade he would receive a two. This model projected a 4% loss for every yes vote. The second model ran the votes individually in the model and found that all the votes except for TARP led to meaningful vote losses.

The last two conditions under which third parties are likely to emerge are unacceptable major party candidates and attractive third party alternatives. Tea Party activists were not only upset with perceived overreach by Democrats in full control of the government, but also by Republican candidates they felt were complicit in standing against Tea Party values. Hence, Tea Party groups not only chose not to endorse a single Democratic candidate for the House of Representatives, but they also chose to endorse some Republican challengers running against Republican incumbents. The 2010 midterm election ended with a 46 year low incumbent reelection rate in the House of Representatives of 85%. Citizen dissatisfaction with major party candidates, and more specifically the Democratic majority in Congress, is directly related to the issue unresponsiveness condition described above. Many of those major bills passed by the Democratic Congress were controversial and divided along partisan lines. These controversial laws served as a rallying cry for Tea Party groups and candidates that emphasized these issues were setting themselves up as a viable alternative to the actions of the Democratic majority. Republicans were also targeted by Tea Party Groups. Three term Senator Bob Bennett of Utah was ousted in the Republican primary. Despite a 84% lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union, Tea Party groups were upset with his vote for TARP in 2008 (Knickerbocker 2010).

3.4 History of the Tea Party

Conservatives and libertarian activists have used the Tea Party theme as far back as 1973 and it was widely used during the 1980s and early 1990s to protest tax increases at the state and local level.² The current Tea Party movement has its roots in libertarian organizations such as the Campaign for Liberty and Ron Paul’s 2008 Presidential campaign, although some now claim the group has been taken over by neoconservatives.³

In 2009, an on-air rant by Rick Santelli on CNBC against a plan to refinance mortgages received audible approval from traders on the floor behind him and has been credited with sparking the nation-wide Tea Party movement. Demonstrations and rallies have been held numerous times in different cities across the United States most of which focused on taxes and spending at the national level. Table 1 outlines some of the major Tea Party protests in 2009 and 2010 along with the stated reason for the protest (Major Protests 2009).

Table 3.1: Major Tea Party protests

Date	Protest Overview
1/24/2009	18% soft drink tax in New York
2/27/2009	Against TARP and ARRA
4/15/2009	Tax Day
7/4/2009	Independence Day
9/12/2009	September 11, 2011
11/5/2009	Health Care
3/14/2010	Health Care

According to polls and studies from 2010, self-identified Tea Partiers are wealthier, more educated, older, and majority white males. (Burghart and Zeskin 2010; Zernike 2010;

²Some examples include: 1984 in Kentucky <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=tv4hAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=dUcEAAAAI> and 1983 in Tallahassee <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=mtoPAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=y4wDAAAAIIBAJ&pg=5866,33154>

³Republican Liberty Caucus Vice Chairman Aaron Bitterman said thusly: “But it’s now a year later, and the Tea Party seems to be transforming from a libertarian gathering to promote less intrusive government and celebrate our freedoms to a neo-con group promoting War in Iran, criticizing immigrants and diversity, and persecuting those with different religious views.” <http://www.rlc.org/2010/02/10/hijacked-tea-party/>

Quinnipiac University 2010). In a *New York Times/CBS* poll conducted in April of 2010, eighteen percent of respondents said they were Tea Party supporters while only twenty percent of that group had given money or attended a rally. Tea Partiers were more likely to describe themselves as angry compared to most Republicans that choose dissatisfied. Despite being more likely to describe their situation very or fairly good, ninety-two percent believe the country was on the wrong track. A March 2010 poll from Quinnipac had thirteen percent of respondents saying they were part of the Tea Party movement (Quinnipiac University 2010). The poll also showed if the Tea Party ran as a third party in a generic Congressional district the Democratic candidate would win with Tea Party and Republican candidates splitting the vote.

The *New York Times/CBS* poll identified three issues of most concern to Tea Partiers: health care, government spending, and not having their opinions heard in Washington. Reducing the size of government was a more popular response than cutting taxes or reducing spending and almost three-fourths said they would accept cuts in domestic spending, but when asked specifically, many did not favor cutting Social Security or Medicare. A study by Williamson, Skocpol and Coggin (2011) polled 79 Massachusetts Tea Party activists and found that members distinguish between government programs. Programs such as Social Security and Medicare are considered better than programs that go to perceived freeloaders.

The Tea Party Caucus was formed July 16, 2010 and chaired by Representative Michelle Bachman (Sherman 2010). It has 62 members as identified by Rep. Michelle Bachman on 7/12/11. 18 of those members were newly elected in 2010 and 44 were incumbents. The caucus is filled with those that self-identify with the Tea Party movement. According to the Jacobson congressional data, a summary of which can be found in the Appendix, Tea Party Caucus incumbents:

- Have served an average of 8.29 years in the House.

- Hold seats in relatively safer districts than other Republicans, on average.
- Had more uncontested races and faced fewer quality challengers than other Republicans, on average.
- Are more conservative than other Republicans, on average.

There were 186 Tea Party Affiliated Republican challengers in the general election:

- Candidates with a Tea Party affiliation ran against weaker opponents than non-affiliated Republicans, on average.
- Candidates with a Tea Party affiliation ran against more conservative opponents than non-affiliated Republicans, on average.

3.5 Tea Party Literature

Does being endorsed by the Tea Party or its affiliated groups have electoral benefits? In other words, do candidates with affiliations with the Tea Party have a higher vote share than non-affiliated candidates in the 2010 midterm election all else equal? This question has garnered mixed results. Karpowitz et al. (2011) find that endorsements from Freedomworks, Palin, or signing the Contract from America helped candidates in Republican primaries, but only Freedomworks was associated with better performance in the general election. Sides (2010*b*) finds that Republicans affiliated with the Tea Party did about 1.3 points better than their unaffiliated counterparts in the 2010 midterm election, although Tea Party candidates did no better in open seat races than unaffiliated Republicans. Further, he finds no evidence that Tea Party candidate performance is dependent on district partisanship. According to Bailey, Mummolo and Noel (2011), the Tea Party Caucus members did slightly worse than Republicans as a whole in the general election, but note that their poor performance might

be caused by issues that predate their joining the caucus. In districts with more Tea Party activity, candidates had better electoral outcomes and voted in accordance with the movement. Endorsements, other than Freedomworks, did not show any effects on vote share and those elected voted much like the average GOP Representative. The success of Freedomworks endorsed candidates is suggested to be a product of it endorsing candidates strategically by avoiding sure losers and endorsing quality candidates.

Ansolabehere and Snyder (2011) echoes the previous findings that the Tea Party groups endorsed candidates only in Republican or Republican-leaning districts. Yet as Sides (2010*b*) notes, it could be that GOP candidates believe a Tea Party affiliation would be beneficial and they are acting strategically by seeking it. It is likely that a candidate would seek a Tea Party endorsement if he resides in a Republican or Republican leaning district whereas a candidate in a Democratic district may shy away from the Tea Party. The data used in the current literature seems to have left out many Tea Party Express endorsements. As of March 2012, the Tea Party Express has 134 non-incumbent candidates endorsed for the 2010 midterm election on their page for Previous Endorsements (Tea Party Express 2010). Bailey, Mummolo and Noel (2011) has the Tea Party Express endorsements at 87 and if they replicated Karpowitz et al. (2011) then one can assume they probably used the same data. Secondly, both Karpowitz et al. (2011); Bailey, Mummolo and Noel (2011) run their models on almost the full data of races ($n=378$ and $n=405$, respectively). This is problematic because it assumes a Tea Party group endorsement is worth the same for an incumbent Republican as it does for a challenger. Part of the Tea Party mindset is being mad at Washington and looking for a fresh face to change it. It is at least partially an anti-incumbent movement. Thus, would a four-term incumbent get the same benefit from the endorsement compared to House candidate Allen West who is now a Tea Party favorite?

Chapter 4

The Tea Party Effect

4.1 Hypotheses

I test the issue unresponsiveness and attractive third party alternatives conditions to see if the Tea Party fits the theory of faction emergence (Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus 1996). It has already met the conditions of bad economic performance and possibly unpopular major party candidates. To prove to be an attractive third party alternative or further show major party candidates are unpopular, candidates associated with the Tea Party must electorally outperform those who are not. The case study used here is the 2010 midterm election and the races for the House of Representatives.

- H_1 : Republican challengers affiliated with Tea Party organizations will earn a higher vote share than Republican challengers without Tea Party affiliation on average, all else equal.

An endorsement from a Tea Party organization gives a signal to the electorate that the candidate shares the belief system of limited government. In a good year for Republicans, if the Republican challenger in a district did not receive a Tea Party endorsement of any kind conservatives might be skeptical of what he or she believes.

In previous years, it might be good enough to just call yourself a Republican or a conservative, but after long periods of Republican control where spending and the deficit were perceived to be out of control that might not be enough in 2010. When local GOP groups across the country attempt to get volunteers to phone bank or canvas local districts, will the same number of people volunteer for the candidate with no Tea Party affiliation compared to the challenger with endorsements from Freedomworks and the Tea Party Express? There would be an obvious enthusiasm gap between the Tea Party candidate and the typical Republican or Republican incumbent. The data also show that 55 of the 60 Republican challengers with previous political experience (quality candidates) were Tea Party Affiliated and 17 of the 20 Republican challengers running for an open seat were Tea Party Affiliated.

- H_2 : Republican challengers with endorsements from Freedomworks and Tea Party Express will earn a higher vote share than non-endorsed Republican challengers on average, all else equal.

Freedomworks has been the only individual group found to have positive electoral effects in previous studies, so I suspect I will find similar results (Karpowitz et al. 2011; Bailey, Mummolo and Noel 2011). The studies previously mentioned had a vastly different number of Tea Party Express endorsements. I found their website to list 134 endorsements for Republican challengers while they only list 87. The Tea Party Express website says this about its effect on the 2010 midterm election: Tea Party Express went on to back victorious Constitutional conservative candidates for the House and Senate in the 2010 midterm elections. In these elections Tea Party Express spent 96% of all Tea Party PAC funds, and was responsible for 99% of all Tea Party money that went to winning candidates (Tea Party Express 2010). According to Newkirk (2011), the Tea Party Express founded a political action committee, Our Country Deserves Better (OCDB), spent \$640,000 on successful candidates for the

House and Senate along with \$2,772,405 in independent expenditures such as ads. The money spent along with correct endorsement number could possibly lead to a positive electoral benefit for Republican challengers backed by the Tea Party Express.

- H_3 : Incumbent members of the Tea Party Caucus will not earn a higher vote share than non-caucus Republican incumbents on average, all else equal.

I do not expect those that voluntarily join the Tea Party Caucus to receive electoral benefit, because of the anti-incumbent nature of the Tea Party. The logic here is that a grassroots movement that is mad at Washington would not likely be enthused to support incumbents of any variety. Further, this group of Tea Party affiliated members decided to join the Tea Party Caucus themselves. The Tea Party Caucus is not an invite only club or a group ran by Tea Party groups or grassroots organizers, rather it is an collection of Representatives that want to be affiliated with the Tea Party without any input from the movement. Caucus members are not significantly different from the unpopular major party candidates or close enough to be considered the third party alternative (Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus 1996).

- H_4 : Republican challengers that have previously held political office (referred to as quality candidates) and challengers running in open seat races will earn a higher vote share than non-quality Republican challengers and Republican challengers facing incumbents on average, all else equal.

This is in accordance with Jacobson (1980), which found that holding previous elective office shows skill in electioneering and thus are considered stronger candidates than those without electoral experience. Candidates with prior electoral experience are more likely to challenge an incumbent when national conditions are favorable. He notes that previous vote margin and ideology of the district are two metrics challengers examine when deciding whether or not to run. The benefits on incumbency for re-election pur-

poses has been noted by many scholars, and thus open-seats without an incumbent are naturally more competitive (Mayhew 1974; Erikson 1971; Carson, Engstrom and Roberts 2007).

4.2 Data and Methods

The data for this project were gathered from a variety of sources (New York Times 2010; Tea Party Express 2010; Washington Post 2010^{a,b}; Freedomworks 2010). The Congressional data are from Gary Jacobson with additions by Stephen Pettigrew. The Tea Party data was gathered from the 128 Tea Party affiliated candidates as identified by the *New York Times*¹, the Tea Party endorsement overlap and Palin endorsement graphic from the *Washington Post*, the Freedomworks website, the website for the Tea Party Express, and 62 members of the Tea Party Caucus as identified by Rep. Michelle Bachman on 7/12/11. Data for some of the information in the Appendix are from Poole and Rosenthal (1997) and the American Conservative Union.

The table below shows the number of endorsements by group or self-identification. The numbers for Tea Party Nation, independent caucus, local, other, and contract were gathered from the *New York Times* and were coded using content analysis. The Independence Caucus candidates are those who qualified after taking an 80 question survey before being contacted by a iCaucus Vetting Representative. This endorsement is similar to signing the Contract from America in that a candidate that is willing to answer the questionnaire likely already shares the values of the Independence Caucus. Local is coded for support from local Tea Party organizations and other is coded when the data does not specify an organization

¹The *New York Times* data was confusing at first until I found this disclaimer at the bottom of the article: Note: For the purposes of this list, Tea Party candidates were those who had entered politics through the movement, or are candidates receiving significant support from local Tea Party groups and who share the ideology of the movement. Many have been endorsed by national groups like FreedomWorks or the Tea Party Express, but those endorsements alone were not enough to put them on the list.

or it names one other than the ones previous listed. “Contract” is coded when a candidate is noted to have signed the Contract from America which was modeled on the 1994 Contract with America. It states three principles including individual liberty, limited government, and economic freedom along with ten specific policy goals (Contract from America 2012). Unlike the other groups, this is a type of self-identification with Tea Party values much like choosing to join the Tea Party Caucus.

To test electoral vote share of Tea Party affiliated candidates, I would identify the

Table 4.1: Tea Party endorsement or identification

Endorsement Type	Number
Freedomworks	90
Tea Party Express	134
Tea Party Nation	7
Independence Caucus	27
Local	47
Other	21
Palin	11
Contract	32
Total Tea Party Affiliated Candidates	186

affiliations with the Tea Party by using the data sources listed previously. The data tested includes all Democratic incumbents (n=246) and formerly held Democratic open seats (n=20) facing a Republican challenger. Using the ordinary least squares model specified below, the dependent variable will be Republican candidate vote share. Tea Party affiliation, the independent variable, will be a dichotomous variable with 1 having an affiliation and 0 possessing none. Controls will be added for district partisanship (McCain vote share 2008), previous Republican vote share in 2008, open seat, and challenger quality. I use the dichotomous measure for challenger quality as outlined by Jacobson and Kernell (1981).

The model to test hypothesis one is specified as:

$$Y_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \beta_4 X_{4i} + \beta_5 X_{5i} + \beta_6 X_{6i} + \epsilon_i \quad (4.1)$$

Where Y_i is Republican vote share, X_{2i} is McCains's vote share, X_{3i} is the previous Republican vote share in the district in 2008, X_{4i} is challenger quality, X_{5i} is open seat, and X_{6i} is Tea Party Affiliation.

Using the ordinary least squares model specified below, the dependent variable will be Republican candidate vote share. Tea Party Affiliation is separated by type of Tea Party affiliation instead of the dichotomous all inclusive variable used in model 1. Controls will be added for district partisanship (McCain vote share 2008), previous Republican vote share in 2008, open seat, and challenger quality. The model to test hypothesis two is specified as:

$$Y_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \beta_4 X_{4i} + \beta_5 X_{5i} + \beta_6 X_{6i} + \beta_7 X_{7i} + \beta_8 X_{8i} + \beta_9 X_{9i} + \beta_{10} X_{10i} + \beta_{11} X_{11i} + \beta_{12} X_{12i} + \beta_{13} X_{13i} + \epsilon_i \quad (4.2)$$

Where Y_i is Republican vote share, X_{2i} is McCains's vote share, X_{3i} is the previous Republican vote share in the district in 2008, X_{4i} is challenger quality, X_{5i} is open seat, X_{6i} is a Freedomworks endorsement, X_{7i} is a Tea Party Express endorsement, X_{8i} is a Tea Party Nation endorsement, X_{9i} is an Independent Caucus endorsement, X_{10i} is a local Tea Party endorsement, X_{11i} is an endorsement from an unspecified Tea Party group, X_{12i} is an endorsement from Sarah Palin, and X_{13i} indicates signing the Contract from America . The endorsement variables are all dichotomous with a one for and endorsement and a zero for none.

The Tea Party Caucus OLS model's dependent variable is Republican vote share and the independent variable is the dichotomous Tea Party Caucus variable. The data set used for this model contains all Republican incumbents (n=157) excluding the 22 open seats with former Republican incumbents. Included are controls for district partisanship (McCain vote share 2008), challenger quality, and previous Republican vote share in 2008.

The model to test hypothesis three is specified as:

$$Y_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \beta_4 X_{4i} + \beta_5 X_{5i} + \epsilon_i \quad (4.3)$$

Where Y_i is Republican vote share, X_{2i} is McCains's vote share, X_{3i} is the previous Republican vote share in the district in 2008, X_{4i} is challenger quality, and X_{5i} is Tea Party Caucus membership. Tea Party Caucus membership is a dichotomous variable with one for being a member and zero for not.

4.3 Results

The results of model one are in Table 4.2.² All of the variables achieve statistical significance in the expected direction and the model as a whole explains a significant portion of the variance ($R^2=0.89$). As expected, previous vote share in the district and McCain's 2008 vote share have a positive effect. Republican challengers running for an open seat formerly held by a Democrat outpaced Republican challengers against incumbents by 5.7 percentage points on average with all else equal. Quality Republican challengers also ran ahead of non-quality challengers by 1.5 percent points on average with all else equal. In accordance with the findings of Sides (2010*b*) and consistent with the expectations of hypothesis one, Republican challengers with a Tea Party affiliation outperformed non-affiliated candidates by 3 percentage points, all else equal.³

The first model showed a pretty clear impact of the Tea Party on the 2010 midterm election, but the second model will test the power of the separate groups and identifications

²The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for this model shows a low level of multicollinearity McCain 2008 vote share and Republican previous vote share. This multicollinearity is expected and noted throughout previous literature. The results of the VIF tests can be found in the appendix.

³When I include the partisan balance of fundraising in the model the results do not substantively change the coefficient for funds is not statistically significant.

Table 4.2: How did Tea Party affiliated candidates affect vote share for Republican challengers?

	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	3.798	0.889	0.000
McCain 2008 Vote Share	0.699	0.030	0.000
Republican House Candidate 2008 Vote Share	0.215	0.027	0.000
Challenger Quality	1.570	0.749	0.018
Open Seat Former Democratic Incumbent	5.718	1.113	0.000
Tea Party Affiliated	3.090	0.763	0.000
N=256	$R^2=0.89$		

within the Tea Party.⁴ Table 4.3 shows a similar positive impact for previous vote share in the district, challenger quality, open seat, and McCain’s 2008 vote share.⁵ The model as a whole explains a significant portion of the variance ($R^2=0.89$). Freedomworks endorsed candidates performed about 1.2 percentage points better than non-endorsed candidates on average and all else equal. This confirms the findings of Karpowitz et al. (2011); Bailey, Mummolo and Noel (2011), but unlike them I find support for Tea Party Express endorsements, endorsements from other Tea Party organizations, and signers of the Contract From America. Recipients of Tea Party Express endorsements outperformed all of the Tea Party Affiliations with a 2.4 percentage point increase on average and all else equal. Between Freedomworks and the Tea Party Express, we find strong support for hypothesis two. The disparity between Karpowitz et al. (2011); Bailey, Mummolo and Noel (2011) and my findings could be caused by the differing numbers of Tea Party Express endorsements. I found 134 Tea Party Express endorsements for Republican challengers while they only list 87. Tea Party candidates endorsed by “other” Tea Party organizations saw a 2 percentage point in-

⁴The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for the second model shows a low level of multicollinearity for McCain 2008 vote share (2.365), Republican previous vote share (1.854), Freedomworks (1.829), and Tea Party Express (2.372). The results of the VIF tests can be found in the appendix.

⁵When I include the partisan balance of fundraising in the model the results do not substantively change the coefficient for funds is not statistically significant.

crease in vote share on average with all else equal. There were 21 candidates in this category and 13 of them did not receive an endorsement from Freedomworks or Tea Party Express, so they cannot be completely riding on the coattails of another endorsement. Signers of the Contract from America see a 1.1 percentage point improvement on average with all else equal, but this variable barely reaches significance. Of the 32 signers only 9 did not receive an endorsement from any Tea Party group which could suggest that candidates may have signed the Contract from America to set themselves up for a possible endorsement. Much like Grover Norquist’s No Tax Pledge or other interest groups such as those in the pro-life movement, signing the Contract sends a signal to potential supporters that they share similar values and thus begins a relationship between the candidate and the Tea Party movement. The remaining Tea Party organizations have a positive effect but fail to achieve significance. The smallest impact is a Sarah Palin endorsement which is perhaps not surprising considering her Senate endorsements of Christine O’Donnell and Sharon Angle. She is perhaps the anti-Freedomworks of the Tea Party movement in that she may not attempt to endorse strategically.

Table 4.3: How different Tea Party affiliations affected Republican challenger vote share

	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	4.966	0.985	0.000
McCain 2008 Vote Share	0.681	0.032	0.000
Republican House Candidate 2008 Vote Share	0.203	0.027	0.000
Challenger Quality	1.176	0.778	0.066
Open Seat Former Democratic Incumbent	5.288	1.136	0.000
Freedomworks	1.195	0.789	0.065
Tea Party Express	2.423	0.859	0.002
Tea Party Nation	1.848	1.870	0.162
Independence Caucus	0.632	0.969	0.257
Local	0.504	0.783	0.260
Other	2.001	1.037	0.027
Palin	0.132	1.463	0.462
Contract	1.148	0.916	0.105
N=256	$R^2=0.89$		

The third model compares Republican incumbent performance to that of Republican incumbents who joined the House Tea Party Caucus.⁶ Table 4.4 shows a similar positive impact for previous vote share in the district and McCain’s 2008 vote share.⁷ Republican incumbents facing quality challengers earn 1.8 percentage points less of the vote on average with all else equal. Tea Party Caucus membership has no discernible effect on vote share. This suggests that Tea Party Caucus membership has not hurt or helped any of these incumbent candidates in 2010.

Table 4.4: Tea Party Caucus membership and Republican vote share among incumbents

	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	8.663	5.517	0.055
McCain 2008 Vote Share	0.696	0.102	0.000
Republican Incumbent 2008 Vote Shar	0.362	0.084	0.000
Challenger Quality	-1.864	1.854	0.159
Tea Party Caucus	-0.292	1.507	0.423
N=157	$R^2=0.52$		

⁶The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for the third model shows a low level of multicollinearity for McCain 2008 vote share (1.598) and Republican previous vote share (1.419). The results of the VIF tests can be found in the appendix.

⁷When I include the partisan balance of fundraising in the model the results do not substantively change the coefficient for funds is not statistically significant.

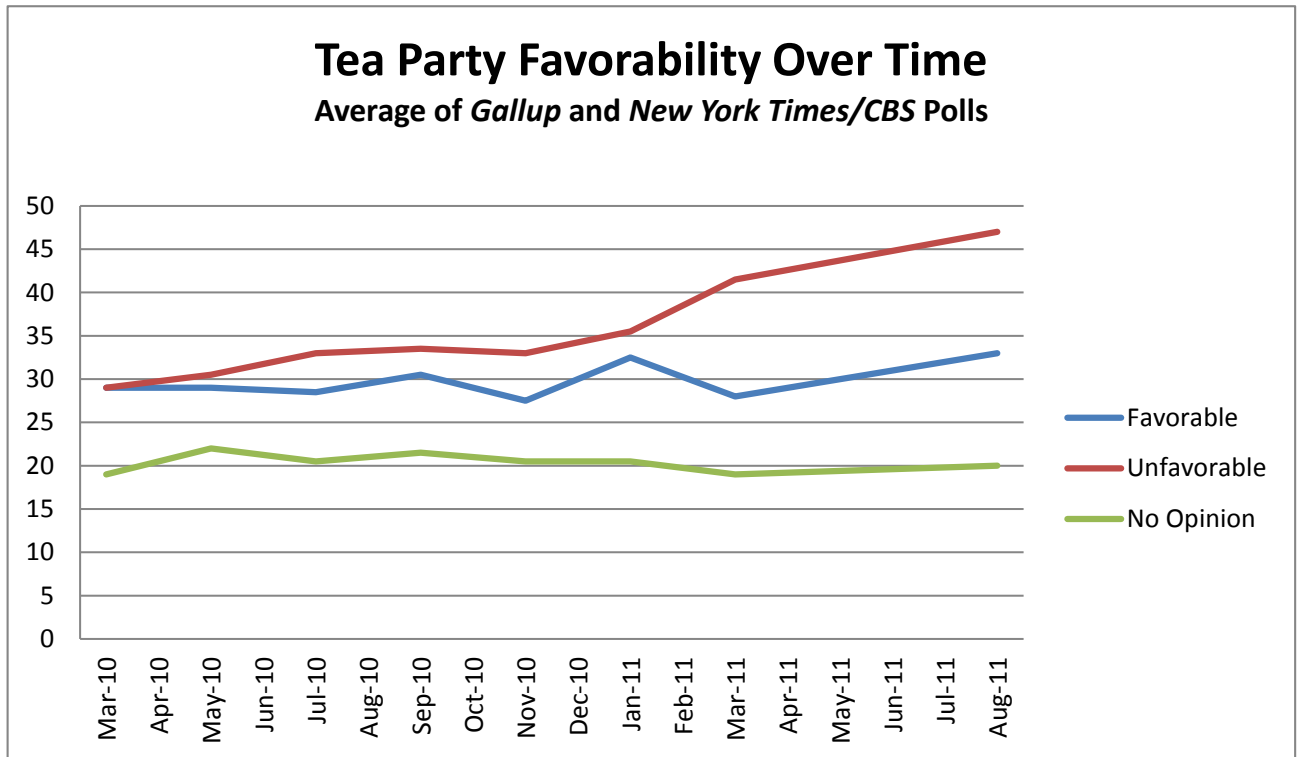
Chapter 5

The Future of the Tea Party

5.1 The Tea Party Beyond 2010

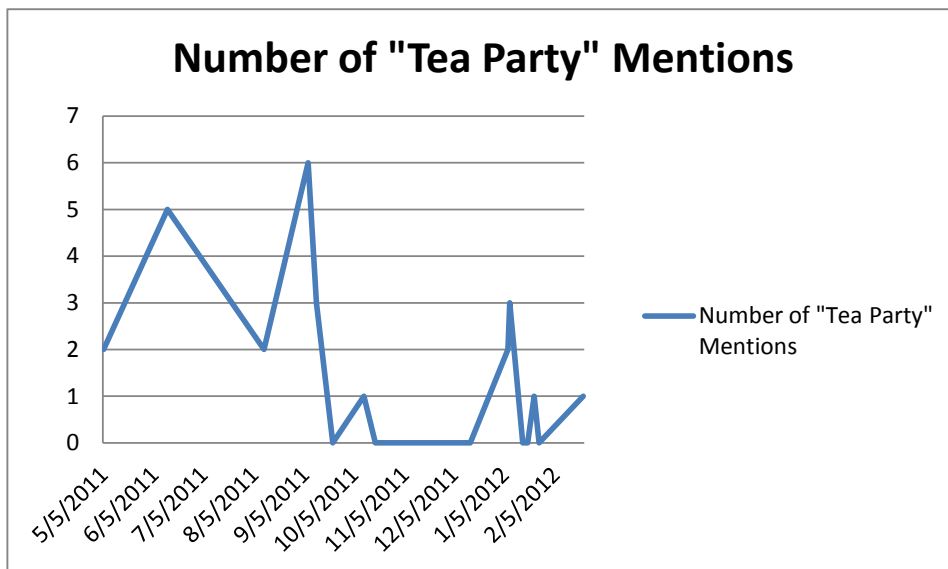
The Tea Party has been losing influence and popularity among the general public. In August of 2011, a *New York Times/CBS* poll and a *Gallup* poll both showed the highest unfavorable rating for the Tea Party in its history. The unfavorable rating in the former was 40% with only 20% favorable and the latter found 47% unfavorable with 33% favorable (Gallup 2011; Cooper and Thee-Brenan 2011). The *Times* poll also found that 43% believed the Tea Party had too much influence over the Republican Party which was more than three previous polls at 27, 26, and 14%. The graph below shows the declining popularity of the Tea Party over time by taking the average of *New York Times/CBS* and *Gallup* polls. A *Pew Research* poll from November of 2011 found that support for the Tea Party was even falling in Tea Party districts with the 25% saying they agree with the Tea Party compared to 23% that said they did not (Pew Research 2011). The Republican Party was also falling in popularity in the Tea Party districts¹ with a 48% unfavorable rating while Democratic Party opinion remained stable at 50% unfavorable.

¹This is defined as those represented by the 60 Congressmen in the House Tea Party Caucus



The Tea Party has struggled to coalesce around a presidential candidate in 2012, although some groups and straw polls show they have flirted with different candidates. The Sam Adams Alliance, a conservative non-profit group, conducted two polls in 2010 in March and August (Sam Adams Alliance 2010*a,b*). The poll in March interviewed 50 Tea Party leaders and Sarah Palin was the first choice with 12 votes, followed by Mitt Romney at 9, and waiting to decide or none of the above at 9. The August poll surveyed 222 Tea Party

supporters and found similar patterns of support for presidential hopefuls. Sarah Palin received roughly 20% but that was tied with other and undecided. The early outlook from these polls showed that Tea Party support without Palin in the race would be diffuse. When it became clear Palin would not run, Herman Cain began to draw Tea Party support with his business credentials and lack of political experience. In February of 2011, Cain won a straw poll hosted by the Tea Party Patriots with 22% of the vote. After Cain dropped out, Congresswoman Michelle Bachman, Governor Rick Perry, and Newt Gingrich all courted the Tea party vote. In December of 2011, Gingrich won a Tea Party Patriot straw poll with 31% of the vote and Bachmann followed with 28%. Currently, it is impossible to tell if any candidate was able to solidify a base of Tea Party support. A crude measure to show the declining importance of the Tea Party on the presidential primary is shown in the graph below. The graph shows how many times candidates have mentioned the Tea Party in the twenty debates during the primary season. How is it that in a group of candidates desperately searching for support from the Republican base, which is likely where much of the Tea Party resides, there were debates where the Tea Party was not even mentioned once?



Tea Party leaders, like Republican voters, are reportedly disappointed with the presidential field in 2012 (Peoples 2011). Amy Kremer, president of the Tea Party Express,

said: “I wish that we had coalesced behind one candidate earlier on. It’s not because of the tea party movement, it’s because there hasn’t been that candidate out there so far that has stirred the passion or the fire in the belly. Everybody wants to focus on presidential politics. I think we need to be focused on the Senate. That’s where we really, really need to be engaged.” Further, Tea Party groups have been holding off endorsements because of the divided support of their members. Freedomworks has pledged to focus its energies on the Senate in 2012.

According to Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus (1996), when the ideas of the third party becomes popular, the major parties co-opt those ideas as their own and the third party disappears. Is the Republican Party doing that currently or will the Tea Party survive past 2012? Soon after taking office in 2011, the new House Republican majority voted to repeal Obama’s Affordable Care Act. Media reports and scholars have argued that the movement has moved Republicans further to the right (Williamson, Skocpol and Coggin 2011). In the House, Tea Party supporters have clashed with some of the Republican establishment on issues such as funding fighter jet engines, renewing the Patriot Act, and avoiding a government shutdown. It is hard to say if the Republican Party has absorbed enough Tea Party ideas to see the Tea Party disappear, but it is clear that Tea Party enthusiasm for the 2012 election is low and the general public is souring on the movement. Those two facts will likely blunt the impact it will have in 2012 and beyond.

5.2 Conclusion

The results of the models suggest that the Tea Party and Tea Party groups had a significant effect on the 2010 midterm election. Republican challengers affiliated with Tea Party organizations earned a 3 percent point higher vote share than Republican challengers without Tea Party affiliation on average, all else equal. Tea Party endorsements from Freedomworks,

the Tea Party Express, other Tea Party groups, and Contract from America signers increased the vote share of Republican challengers compared to those who did not receive those endorsements. Endorsements from Tea Party Nation, independent caucus, Sarah Palin, and local groups did not have statistically significant effects on vote share. Tea Party Caucus incumbents did no better electorally than Republican incumbents at large when controlling for other factors. This reason could be that incumbents that joined the Tea Party Caucus may not really have the support of the grassroots Tea Party members. Tea Party Caucus members choose whether or not to join the caucus and Tea Party groups have no input on who can be in it. I conclude that the Tea Party meets the faction emergence conditions modeled on the third party emergence conditions set out by Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus (1996). Republican challengers that received Tea Party endorsements offered an attractive alternative to the unpopular major party candidates of both parties.

Bailey, Mummolo and Noel (2011); Karpowitz et al. (2011) hypothesize that Tea Party affiliated candidates may have done well because groups like Freedomworks endorsed strategically by choosing not to endorse sure losers. According to the literature on social movements, they are generally more predisposed to hold ideas first and electoral victory second (Meyer and Tarrow 1998). Yet, the suggestion that Freedomworks endorsed strategically makes sense. Its chairman is former House Majority Leader Dick Armey and the group has a national focus. If it endorsed sure losers it could lose influence. The logic in the argument is sound, but the models in this paper have shown that not only Freedomworks endorsements carried weight. Further, of the 90 Republican challengers endorsed by Freedomworks, 84 of them were also endorsed by the Tea party Express. This seems to confirm the strategic endorsement strategy except that the Tea Party Express endorsed 50 more candidates for a total of 134 and it had a larger positive effect on vote share than Freedomworks. Freedomworks could have picked more winners from the remaining group that the Tea Party Express endorsed.

In 2011 and early 2012, the Tea Party has not been as active. The popularity of the Tea Party has dropped, it failed to coalesce around a presidential candidate, and the enthusiasm leading up to the 2010 election seems to have disappeared. The media narrative also changed from conservative activists to liberal activists protesting for Occupy Wall Street. Occupy Wall Street might be even less centralized than the Tea Party and operates under different tactics. The Tea Party preferred large, but temporary, protests, whereas Occupy Wall Street prefers a protest that goes on 24/7. The effect of Occupy Wall Street is unknown and faces different problems. The winter cold and mayors fed up with the occupation forced the end of the Occupy protests. Without running or endorsing candidates how can they affect the political process? It seems that the Tea Party may be aided in its older demographics as opposed to the youthful Occupy Wall Street in terms of organization and affecting the political process. Will either be around after the 2012 election? Considering the pattern of third party movements in the American history its a safe bet to say that the days for Occupy and the Tea Party movement are numbered.

Chapter 6

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Appendix A

Tea Party Statistics

- Current Tea Party Caucus n=62. 18 newly elected in 2010.
- Tea Party Caucus Incumbents n=44
- Average Years Served=8.29
- Only 1 of the 44 voted for TARP and none voted for Healthcare, Stimulus, or Cap and trade.
- American Conservative Union scores and DW-NOMINATE scores correlate at 0.96 in my dataset.

Table A.1: Safety of Tea Party Caucus seats by Democratic vote share

	2010	2008	Obama Vote
Tea Party Caucus Incumbents	26.55%	34.89%	39.20%
All Republican Incumbents	30.22%	36.19%	42.68%
Rep Incumbents without TPC	31.41%	36.61%	43.81%

Table A.2: Tea Party Caucus opponent quality in 2010

Quality Challengers	5
Non-Quality	27
No Challenger	12

Table A.3: Tea Party Caucus opponent quality in 2010(percentage)

	Quality	Non-Quality	No Challenger
TPC Incumbents	11.36%	61.36%	27.27%
All Repub Inc	18.82%	65.88%	15.29%
Rep Inc without TPC	21.43%	67.46%	11.11%

Table A.4: Ideology of Tea Party Caucus and Republicans

	2010 ACU	2009 ACU	DW-NOMINATE	N
TPC Inc	97.5	96.5	0.697	44
All Repub Inc	92.7	91.41	0.62	158
Rep Inc no TPC	90.8	89.42	0.59	114

Table A.5: Democratic vote share based on opponent type

	2010	2008	Obama Vote
Tea Party Affiliated (TPA)	54.62%	63.97%	56.35%
All Republican Challengers	59.53%	68.11%	61.41%
Republican Challengers minus TPA	71.94%	77.19%	73.67%

Table A.6: Ideology of Democrats facing challengers

Opponent Type	ACU2010	ACU2009	DW-NOMINATE
TPA Challenger	6.972	8.41	-0.32
Repub Challenge	5.57	6.56	-0.35
Repub minus TPA	1.871	1.60	-0.43

Table A.7: Variance Inflation Factor for Table 4.2 (Model One)

McCain 2008 Vote Share	2.095
Republican House Candidate 2008 Vote Share	1.734
Challenger Quality	1.280
Open Seat Former Democratic Incumbent	1.140
Tea Party Affiliated	1.477

Table A.8: Variance Inflation Factor for Table 4.3 (Model Two)

McCain 2008 Vote Share	2.365
Republican House Candidate 2008 Vote Share	1.854
Challenger Quality	1.398
Open Seat Former Democratic Incumbent	1.198
Freedomworks	1.829
Tea Party Express	2.372
Tea Party Nation	1.197
Independence Caucus	1.140
Local	1.185
Other	1.043
Palin	1.134
Contract	1.185

Table A.9: Variance Inflation Factor for Table 4.4 (Model Three)

McCain 2008 Vote Share	1.598
Republican House Candidate 2008 Vote Share	1.419
Challenger Quality	1.121
Tea Party Caucus	1.065
