

Republican Factionalism and Tea Party Activists

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Abstract: In this paper we examine Republican Party factional differences between Tea Party Republicans and non-Tea Party Republicans. We find, first, that at the mass level Tea Party supporters constitute a majority of Republican identifiers--particularly among those most active in Republican campaigns. We examine the large and significant differences between the two factions. We then turn to an examination of Tea Party (potential) activists, relying on a survey of almost 12,000 supporters of the largest Tea Party membership group: FreedomWorks. Although very similar to the mass sample of tea Party Republicans on issue positions, this group is far more negative towards the Republican Party. We examine the sources of this negativity in ideology, issue priorities, partisanship and political style.

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Since the 2012 election, Republicans have focused on the reasons for their electoral losses. Going into the election, Republicans felt that they would control the presidency and both branches of the legislature. As one senior advisor to Mitt Romney lamented after the 2012 elections, “We went into the evening [election night] confident we had a good path to victory...I don't think there was one person who saw this coming” (Crawford 2012). Since the election, there has been much soul searching and recrimination. In February, for instance, Karl Rove, once a Tea Party supporter, took aim at candidates supported by the Tea Party and the movement itself, claiming that “[The Reagan movement] was also a well-organized, coherent, ideologically motivated and conservative revolution. If you look underneath the surface of the Tea Party movement, on the other hand, you will find that it is not sophisticated” (Der Spiegel Interview October 2012). Rove has pledged to take on such candidates in primaries borrowing from the strategy used by Tea Party supporters to defeat RINO (Republican in Name Only) candidates in primaries in order to put up candidates more in line with their principles. Also in response to the Republicans’ electoral defeat, Reince Priebus appointed a commission, the Growth and Opportunity Project, to issue a report which many interpreted as calling on the Republican Party to turn away from more ideological candidates toward more pragmatic ones (Growth and Opportunity Project 2012).

This reaction highlights the factionalism within the Republican Party and the role of the Tea Party in spurring that factionalism. There has been some academic work on the Tea Party, but much of it has focused on its ideology, determinants of participation in the movement, and the legitimacy of the movement itself, without a broad examination of Tea Party supporters and Tea Party activists (Ulbig and Macha 2011, Perkins and Lavine 2011, Abramowitz 2011, Rae 2011, Skocpol and Williamson 2012). It is this gap which this paper attempts to at least partially fill.

Attempts to dismiss the Tea Party date back almost to its inception ,as liberal and Democratic groups claimed that it was “astroturf” without serious grassroots support. Then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) said on Tax Day 2009:

What they want is a continuation of the failed economic policies of President George Bush which got us into the situation we are in now...This [Tea Party] initiative is funded by the high end—we call it astroturf, it’s not really a grassroots movement. It’s astroturf by some of the wealthiest people in America to keep the focus on tax cuts for the rich instead of for the great middle class” (Fox KTVU San Francisco 2009).

However, co-founders of the Tea Party Patriots organization claimed the opposite, "[while] 'Astroturf' organizations spend big money to drive traffic to their Web sites, our Web site—which had no money, no advertising, and minimal functionality—was quickly deluged with traffic [before April 15, 2009]" (Meckler and Martin 2012, 19).

The Tea Party movement has proved remarkably resilient and remained a force in the Republican Party. Even though there has been a decline in Tea Party supporters (from 29% to 22% of the population since 2010), supporters of the movement still comprise between 45% and 55% of the Republican Party (NBC/*Wall Street Journal* surveys aggregate annual data from 2010-2013).¹ Also, as Alan Abramowitz points out, and as our data show, because Tea Party supporters are more active than non-Tea Party Republicans, they comprise a significant majority of the active Republican Party. Tea Party supporters made up 45 percent of all Republican respondents, but they made up 63 percent of Republicans who reported contacting an elected official to express an opinion, 65 percent of Republicans who reported giving money to a party or candidate, and 73 percent of Republicans who reported attending a political rally or meeting (Abramowitz 2011, 14).

¹ The NBC question may understate the number of Tea Party supporters. We utilize a question asking respondents if they are: strong Tea Party supporters, supporters but not so strong, former Tea Party supporter or never a Tea Party supporter. The two “supporter” categories make up about two-thirds of Republican identifiers (63.4%), whereas the NBC survey done around the same time (December 2011) showed only half of Republicans supporting the Tea Party.

In this paper, we first establish the factional nature of the Republican Party at the mass level and establish the crucial role of Tea Party supporters in the party. Then, we move to examining attitudes, activity, and perceptions of Tea Party activists in detail. In order to examine Republican factionalism and to make sure that we could examine the role of the Tea Party in this process, we use data from a December 2011 YouGov/Polimetrix survey, referred to as the CCES sample throughout this paper. It drew a sample of November 2010 respondents—700 of whom had expressed “Very Positive” views of the Tea Party at that time and 300 of whom had not. While this gave us a sample which was much more heavily Republican than the US population (69.6% Republican, 10.6% independents, and 19.4% Democrats), weights assigned by YouGov/Polimetrix allows us to approximate a national random sample.

In order to examine the attitudes of Tea Party elites, we rely on a survey of more than 12,000 FreedomWorks subscribers of whom 11,726 completed the entire survey. According to the YouGov/Polimetrix survey, FreedomWorks is the largest Tea Party membership group, including 12.9% of all of those who rated the Tea Party “Very Positive.” To our knowledge, this is the first large scale survey of Tea Party group supporters. The survey was sent out to the entire FreedomWorks email list of 700,000 subscribers. However, according to the organization, about 60,000 individuals open any given email. On that basis, our response rate is over 20%; by the AAPOR standards using the total number of subscribers, though, it is slightly under 2%. It is, of course, difficult to know for sure how representative the sample is of all Tea Party organizations or of FreedomWorks supporters.

Still, the large sample size allows us to compare those respondents who reported membership in FreedomWorks with respondents who reported membership in other

organizations comprising the Tea Party movement.² Across eleven issues areas, three measures of ideology, and assessments of twenty-two political figures and groups, the correlation (Somer's d) between group membership and each of these 36 variables exceeded .10 in only one case. Those in the sample who were members of groups besides FreedomWorks (but not FreedomWorks) were somewhat more active in both 2008 and 2010 and more supportive of the Tea Party movement, but this likely reflects their greater general involvement in Tea Party groups (since they were not only receiving emails from FreedomWorks but had joined an additional, separate organization). They were also older, but they were not different in terms of gender or income. Overall, then, FreedomWorks email recipients seem, as far as we can tell, to be quite representative of prospective Tea Party supporters and activists.

REPUBLICAN FACTIONALISM

We begin our analysis with an examination of factional divisions within the Republican Party at the mass level. For this analysis we will focus on the YouGov/Polimetrix survey (the CCES sample). The Growth and Opportunity Project and the Karl Rove Conservative Victory Project initiative have widely been interpreted as challenges to the Tea Party, possibly presaging a spirited contest between Tea Party and more traditional Republicans. In both the Rove initiative and The Growth and Opportunity Project, there are thinly veiled criticisms of the Tea Party and the candidates it has supported. The Growth and Opportunity Project report clearly suggests that it is at the national level that the Republicans label has become most problematic, blaming “third parties” and the Republican message, at least in its packaging, for failing to

² The other groups about which we asked about membership were Americans for Prosperity, Tea Party Express, Tea Party Nation, and Tea Party Patriots, as well as asking if they were members of any other Tea Party group. Slightly over half reported being members of FreedomWorks and about 10% were members of another Tea Party group, but not members of FreedomWorks. We compared the two groups on a variety of variables and found virtually no important differences.

appeal to minorities, women, and the young. These projects call on the party to change policies, specifically those concerning immigration. They also call for greater levels of pragmatism and less ideological purity, accusing the Republican Party of “becom[ing] expert in how to provide ideological reinforcement to like-minded people, but devastatingly...los[ing] the ability to be persuasive with, or welcoming to, those who do not agree with us on every issue (Growth and Opportunity Project 2012, 6). Further, they state, “Third-party groups that promote purity are hurting our electoral prospects” (Growth and Opportunity Project 2012, 54).

These sentiments also reflect the goals of the Rove initiative, which faults the Tea Party with costing the Republicans six Senate seats over the past two election cycles. In an interview with CNN, Victory Project spokesman Jonathan Collegio claimed that “Republicans lost six Senate races in the last two election cycles because they nominated ‘undisciplined candidates’ rather than Republican veterans” (Dolan 2012). On the other side, 19 conservative leaders, including leaders in the Tea Party, wrote an open letter on the FreedomNow website, arguing that Rove is simply wrong in his attempt to “blame conservatives and the tea party.” Rather they argue:

In 2012, the only Senate Republican winners were Jeff Flake, Deb Fischer, and Ted Cruz—all of whom enjoyed significant tea party and conservative support. Meanwhile, more moderate candidates like Tommy Thompson, Heather Wilson, Rick Berg, and Denny Rehberg went down to defeat despite significant support from [Karl Rove’s organization] Crossroads” (ForAmerica 2013).

The conflict within the Republican Party is already spilling over into the 2014 primaries, with threats to challenge Lamar Alexander and even Mitch McConnell. After the failure to capture the Senate in 2012 and with many more Democratic seats at risk once again, this time the stakes will be even higher than in 2012. And what about the Tea Party Republicans currently holding office? In November 2010, the Republicans gained sixty-three seats in the U.S. House

of Representatives and six seats in the Senate as well as six new governorships and seven hundred more state legislature seats. The stakes will be high in 2014 and particularly so in 2016 as these Republicans including Tea Party freshmen run for re-election.

Given this conflict and its importance, we must consider: What are the prospects for reconciliation? How deep is the factional division within the Republican Party? And, how strong is the Tea Party? In approaching these concerns, the simplest question is one of size. How many Republicans identify with the Tea Party and how many have not been Tea Party supporters? In our YouGov/Polimetrix survey (the CCES sample), while only slightly more than one-in-five Republicans (counting Republican leaners) are strong Tea Party identifiers, more than 40% are “Supporters, but not so strong.” Only slightly more than a third of Republicans are either former Tea Party supporters or “never Tea Party supporters.” Almost two-thirds of all Republican respondents, then, call themselves “Tea Party supporters.”

If Tea Party supporters were only as active as non-Tea Party supporters, they would still dominate campaigns, but Tea Party supporters are much more active in campaigns than non-Tea Party Republicans. For example, in 2008 Tea Party Republicans performed 1.42 activities for the presidential and congressional tickets on average, compared with only .41 activities by non-Tea Party Republicans. In 2010, with only congressional races at the national level, Tea Party Republicans performed on average 0.68 activities versus only 0.12 by non-Tea Party Republicans. Tea Party supporters are responsible for almost all of the total campaign activity performed by party supporters on the Republican side.

But, how does this identification translate into distinctive attitudes? This level of identification would be of less interest were it not the case that Tea Party supporters differ significantly from other Republicans across a range of issues. However, Tea Party Republicans

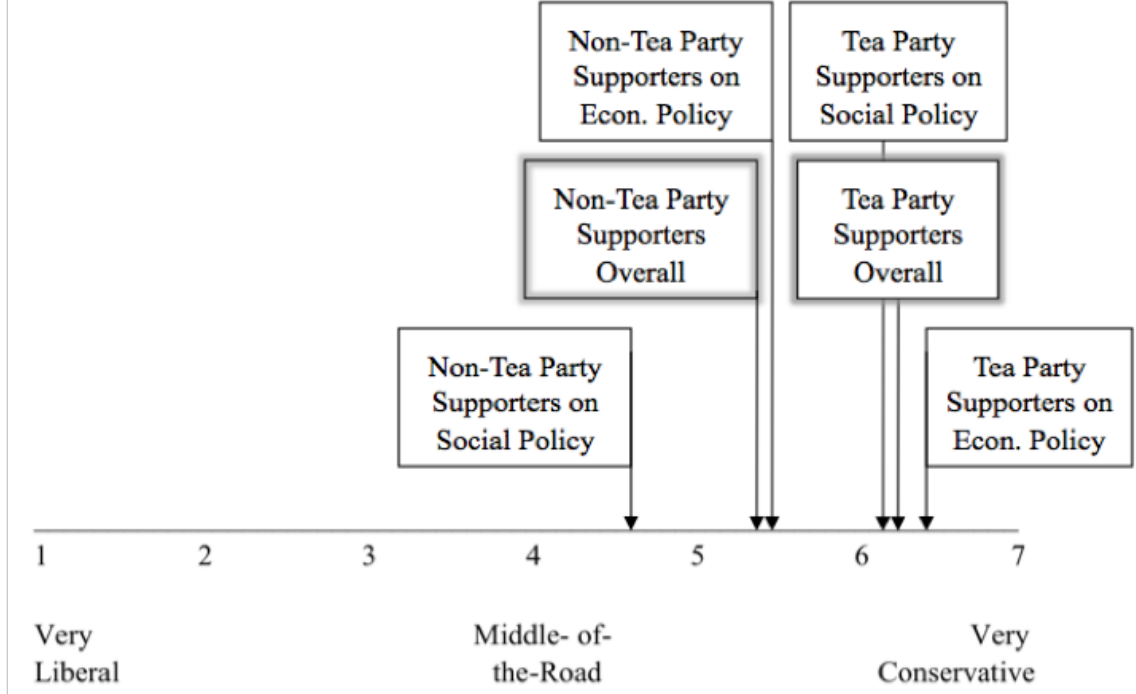
do differ substantially from those non-Tea Party Republicans. We look at the ways in which the groups differ, the degree of that differentiation, and the implications of that differentiation.

FACTIONAL DIFFERENCES ON VOTING AND IDEOLOGY

First, we look at voting behavior. Given the strong relationship between partisanship and vote, we might expect little difference between Tea Party Republicans and non-Tea Party Republicans, and such is generally the case. When we look at votes cast in 2008 and 2010, an extremely high vote percentage for the Republican candidate is common to both groups. For Tea Party Republicans, the votes for the House in 2008 and 2010 and for President in 2008 all show Republican support levels above 92%. Although non-Tea Party Republicans show a slightly lower level of support, their support still ranges between 87% and 94%. Vote should show the least differentiation between the groups, particularly since it is largely a dichotomous choice pitting Democrats against Republicans, whether Tea Party or not. We should expect much greater differences as we move to look at attitudes and campaign behavior.

When we turn to ideology, we begin to find much stronger differences. Respondents were asked to place themselves on three scales: overall liberal-conservative, liberal-conservative on economic issues, and liberal-conservative on social issues. The Tea Party movement has emphasized that economic issues and not social issues most unify it, and when we look at Figure 1, we see some support for this claim.

Figure 1
Placement by Sample, Tea Party Supporters and Non-Tea Party Supporters, of Self on Liberal-Conservative Scale (CCES Sample)



Turning to ideological placement measures, we might expect that Tea Party supporters would be very conservative on economic issues but less so on social issues. This would be in keeping with the focus by many Tea Party leaders on issues such as reducing the deficit, shrinking the size of government, and repealing “Obamacare.” As Jenny Beth Martin, co-founder of Tea Party Patriots, said, “Issues like abortion and gay marriage have little to do with our three core principles, and therefore we leave these issues for other groups to advocate” (Meckler and Martin 2012, 23). In a CNN interview, Tea Party Express Chairwoman Amy Kremer also emphasized, “We’re not about social issues. We’re all about fiscal issues” (CNN News 2012).

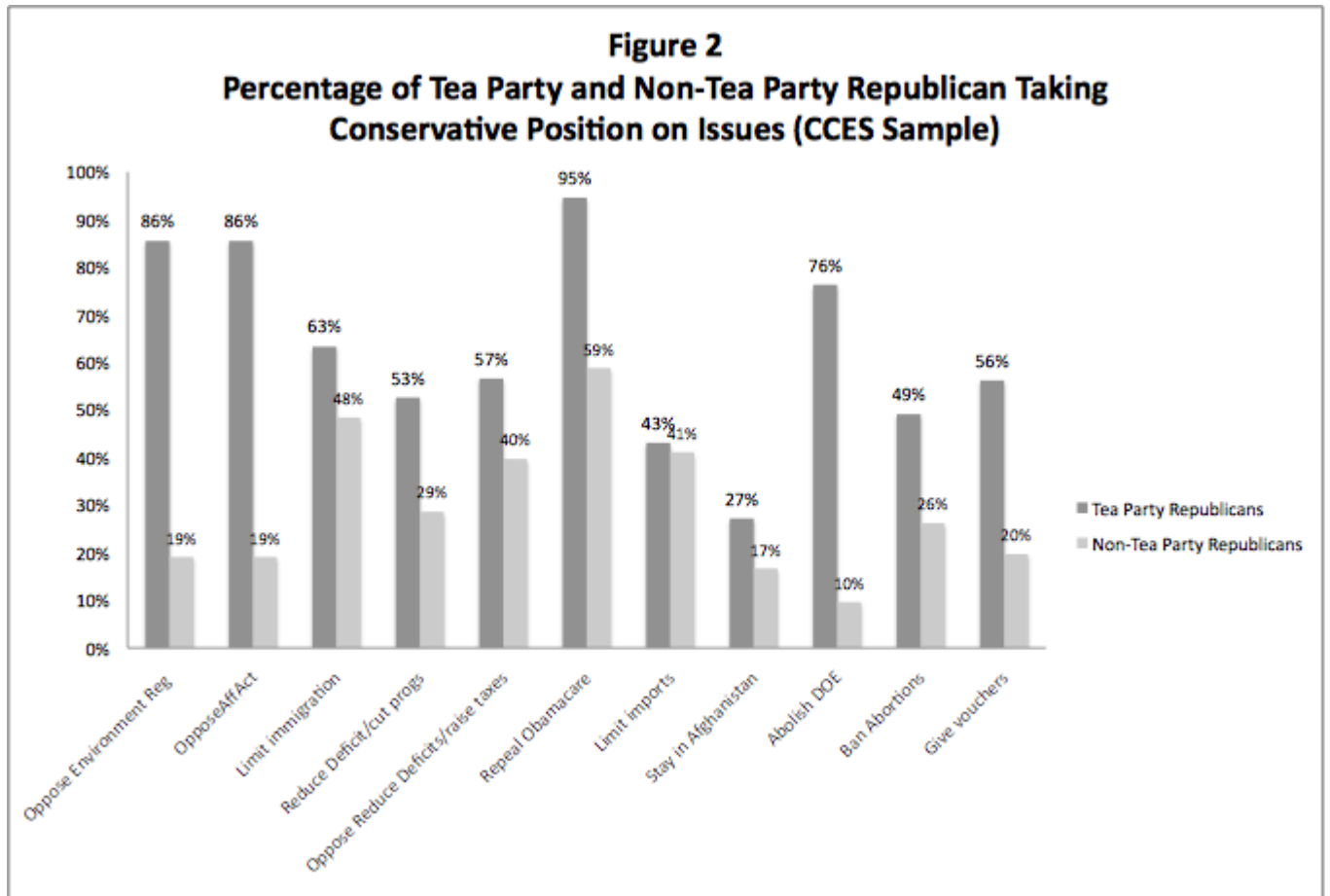
Examining the self-placement of Tea Party members, it is clear that there are differences in placement of Tea Party supporters on the three ideological scales. They are most conservative

on economic issues—almost half (48.1%) place themselves in the most conservative category and 89.3% place themselves in either category 6 or 7 (out of 7). Even on social issues, though, 81.3% place themselves in the two most conservative categories—a percentage almost exactly the same as on the overall liberal-conservative scale. In fact, more than two-thirds of the Tea Party supporters place themselves in one of the two most conservative categories on all three measures of ideology—a remarkable level of ideological consistency. On the other hand, among non-Tea-Party Republicans, fewer than a quarter (23.0%) place themselves in the two most conservative categories on all three ideological measures, and almost twice that number (38.9%) do not place themselves in the most conservative categories on even one of the three measures.

The mean placement scores in Figure 1 show a clear difference between Tea Party and non-Tea Party Republicans on all three measures. While both Tea Party and non-Tea Party Republicans are more moderate on the social liberal-conservative scale, non-Tea Party Republicans show a greater difference. The smallest difference (.7 units) is on general ideology; but, the greatest difference is on social issues, where Tea Party Republicans are 1.4 units more conservative than Non-Tea Party Republicans.

FACTIONAL DIFFERENCES ON ISSUE POSITIONS AND ISSUE PRIORITIES

We turn next to factional differences on issues. In Figure 2, we show the percentage of Tea Party and Non-Tea Party Republicans who took one of the two most conservative positions on the issues about which we asked.³



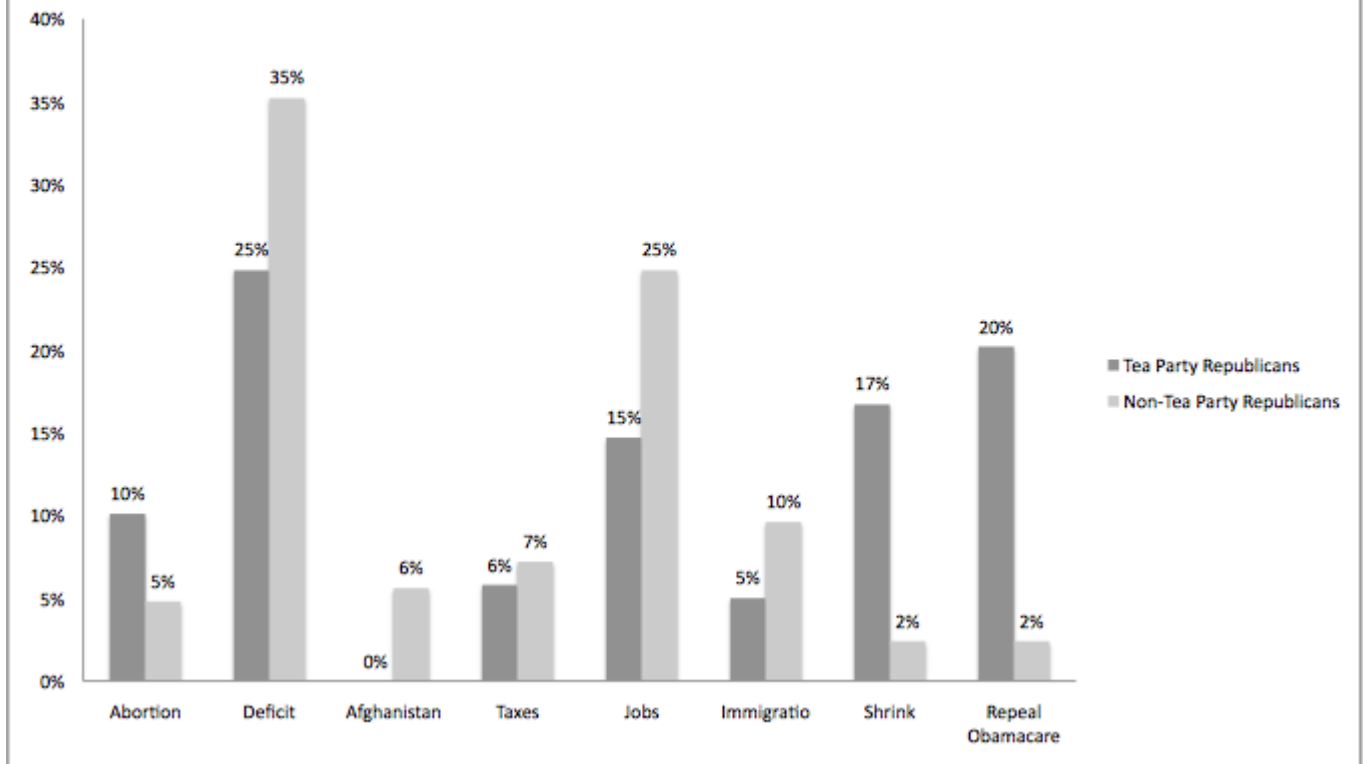
The differences between the two groups are striking. On all issues, except limiting imports and staying in Afghanistan, a majority of Tea Party supporters take one of the two most conservative positions. On no issue does a majority of non-Tea Party Republicans take one of two most

³ For each issue the scale was Strongly agree, Agree, Slightly agree, Slightly disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree. We took the two most conservative positions and combined them for this figure. For most issues the conservative position was clear. On immigration, import restrictions and Afghanistan it was less so. We are defining as the conservative position on these favoring restrictions on immigration, protectionism and keeping troops in Afghanistan. For the first two, these are the plurality position of Tea Party supporters, for Afghanistan we take the Bush nation-building as the conservative position. Using the two most liberal positions, or the mean, the results very similar.

conservative positions. In fact, the largest consensus for non-Tea Party Republicans was on providing school vouchers, where 50% took one of the two most liberal positions, opposing their distribution to families. On five of the 11 issues, more non-Tea Party Republicans take one of the two least conservative positions than take one of the two most conservative positions (those five issues are staying in Afghanistan, giving vouchers to families, abortion, abolishing the Department of Education, and reducing the deficit through cutting programs). The division within the Republican Party is between the almost two-thirds who are Tea Party supporters and a less conservative minority. The one issue with the largest support for the conservative position among non-Tea Party Republicans is limiting immigration—the same issue that the Growth and Opportunity Project singled out for a change in party position.

These issue differences are even greater than Figure 2 shows because it is not just what position is being taken but the priority given to those issues that divides the party. In Figure 3, we show the percentage of each group that rates an issue as their top priority issue.

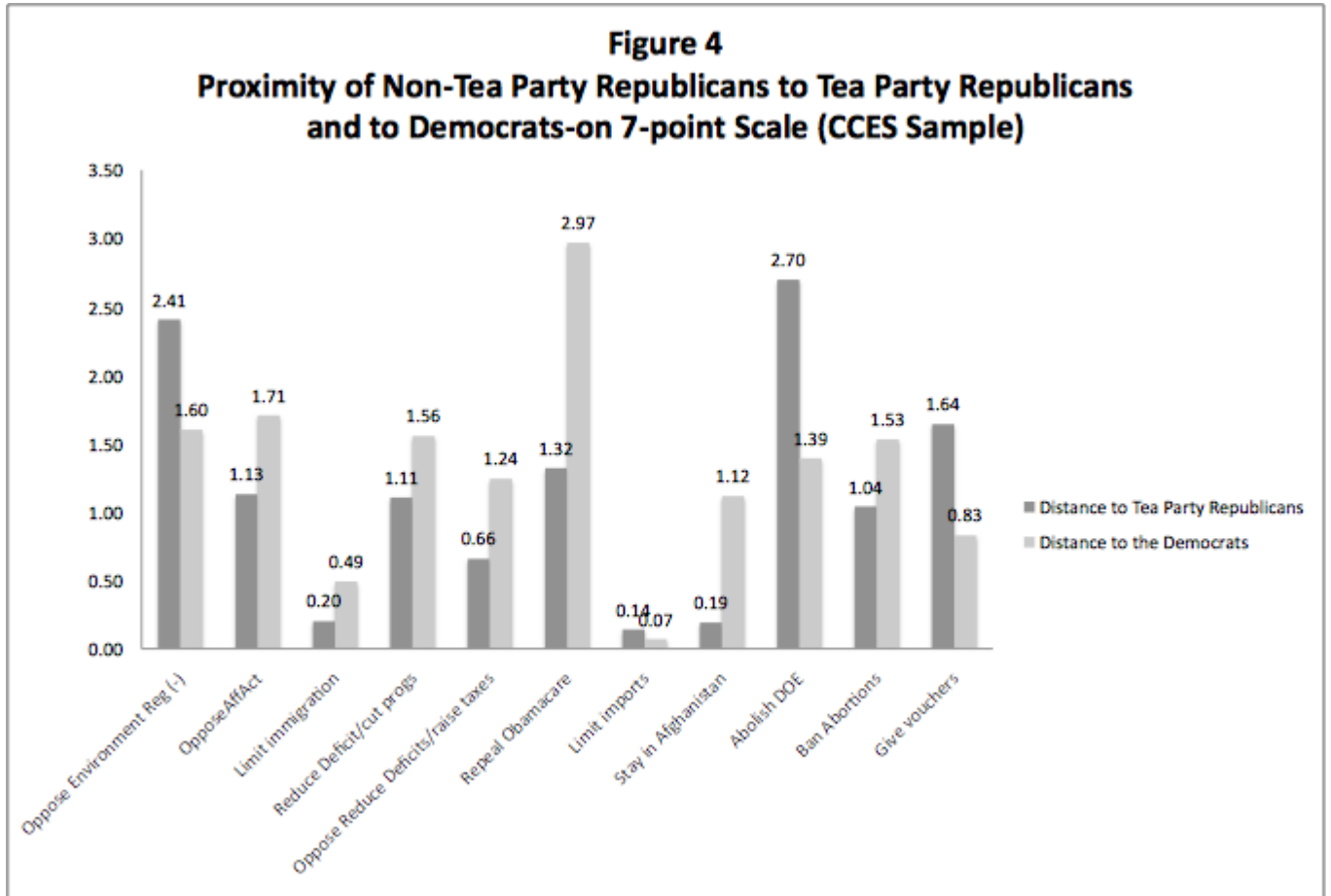
Figure 3
Top Priority Areas of Tea Party and Non-Tea Party Republicans
(CCES Sample)



Whereas more than a third of all Tea Party Republicans pick either “Shrinking Government” or “Repealing Obamacare” as their top priority, such is the case for only 4% of non-Tea Party Republicans. In fact, “Repealing Obamacare” is the second most important priority for Tea Party Republicans but is tied for last of the eight issue areas for the non-Tea Party Republicans. On the other hand, jobs and the deficit dominate the list of priorities for the non-Tea Party Republicans with 60% picking one of the two, compared with only 40% of Tea Party Republicans. When asked directly which should be a higher priority, jobs or the deficit, almost two-thirds (63.1%) of Tea Party Republicans selected the deficit, while a majority (53.2%) of non-Tea Party Republicans selected jobs.

To put the ideological and issue gap between Tea Party Republicans and non-Tea Party Republicans in even more dramatic relief, Figure 4 reports the difference in mean self-placement

of Tea Party Republicans, non-Tea Party Republicans and the Democrats in our sample on a 7-point scale going from “strongly agree” (a score of 1) to “strongly disagree” (a score of 7). The chart shows the distance from non-Tea Party Republicans to Tea Party Republicans and from non-Tea-Party Republicans to the Democrats.

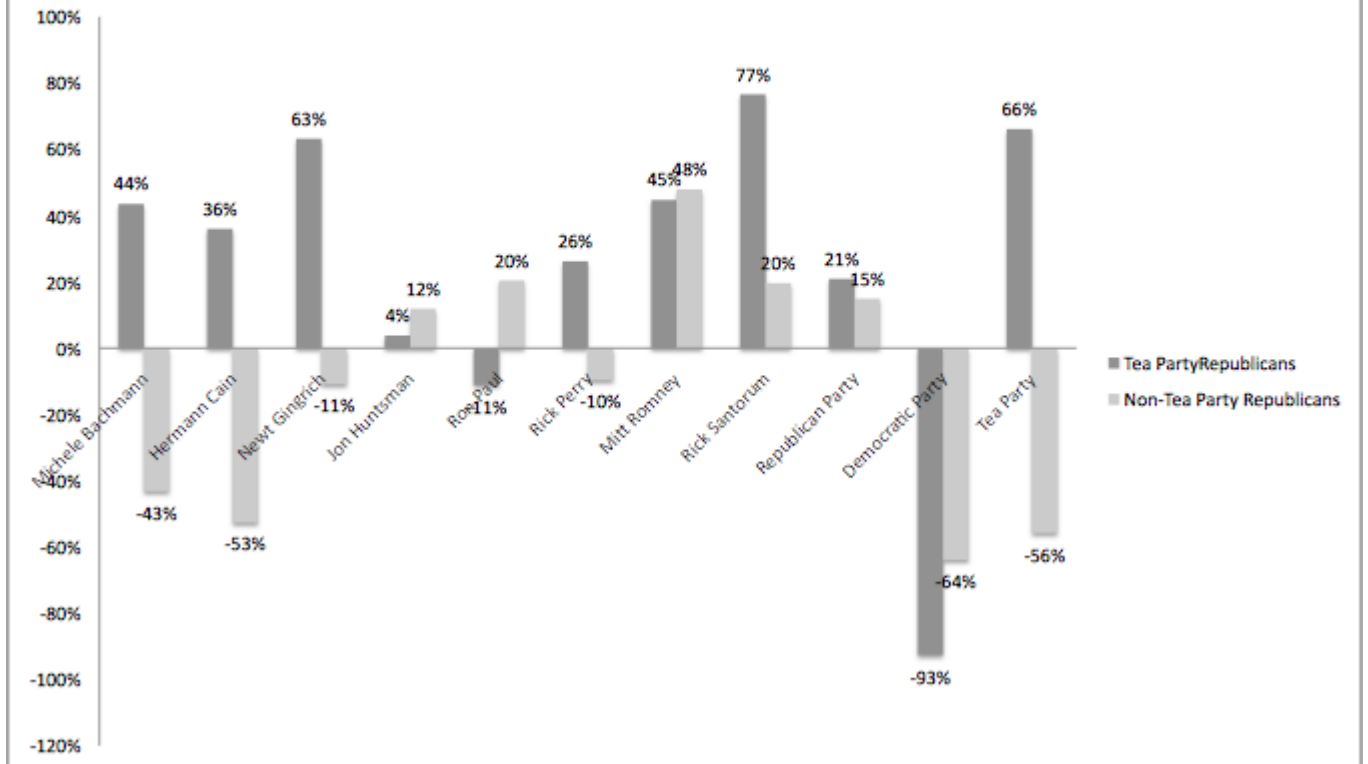


Remarkably, there are four issues on which non-Tea Party Republicans are actually closer to the mean position of Democrats than to that of Tea Party Republicans (those issues are imports, abolishing the Department of Education, giving vouchers, and environmental regulation). Over the whole set of issues, the non-Tea Party Republicans are only slightly closer to the Tea Party Republicans than they are to the Democrats in our sample (by 0.18 units on a 7-point scale).

The large difference in proximity on abolishing the Department of Education is particularly significant. Shrinking the size of government was the second highest priority for the Tea Party Republicans, but on this issue—intended to tap size of government concerns—the non-Tea Party Republicans are much closer to the Democrats. In fact, the relative difference is the second largest for any issue, surpassed only by the Tea Party Republican advantage on repealing “Obamacare.” Of the largest issue advantages (where one group is relatively closer to non-Tea Party Republicans by .7 or more), non-Tea Party Republicans are closer to the Democrats on three out four.

Finally, candidates and the parties reflect extremely high levels of polarization between non-Tea Party Republicans and Tea Party Republicans, as shown in Figure 5. In fact, five of the nine candidates for the presidential nomination showed net positive ratings for one group and net negative ratings for the other.

Figure 5
Net Positive Negative Ratings of 2012 Nomination Candidates
and the Parties [%Positive-%Negative] (CCES Sample)



The strongest contrast in evaluations was, not surprisingly, on candidates most closely associated with the Tea Party. For example, Michele Bachmann and Herman Cain are among the most positively rated candidates among Tea Party Republicans, but they are the two most negatively rated among non-Tea Party Republicans. Bachmann is rated positively by 58.0% of Tea Party Republicans and negatively by only 14.5% of Tea Party Republicans. Her numbers are almost exactly reversed for non-Tea Party Republicans; among this group, only 16.1% rate her positively, while 59.3% rate her negatively. Herman Cain shows a similar reversal between the two groups of Republicans. He has positive ratings of 54.4% and negative ratings from 18.4% of Tea Party Republicans versus 63.2% negative and only 10.5% positive from non-Tea Party Republicans. Newt Gingrich's ratings show smaller but still polarized attitudes between the two groups. Given these results on Tea Party figures, it is not surprising that the Tea Party,

non-Tea Party differential is strongest in the ratings of the Tea Party itself. Tea Party Republicans rated the Tea Party extremely high, while non-Tea Party respondents gave it low ratings.

Romney and Santorum are the only candidates with positive ratings from both Tea Party Republicans and non-Tea Party Republicans. While Romney's ratings are equal across the two groups, Santorum evaluations were much higher among Tea Party supporters, foreshadowing his emergence as the Tea Party alternative to Romney later in the primaries. The only candidate with a net negative rating among Tea Party Republicans is Ron Paul. This negative rating contrasts with a rating from non-Tea Party Republicans that is the second highest of all nomination candidates. Paul's low ranking among Tea Party Republicans in our survey was also reflected in his poor showing in a variety of states where he actually ran more strongly among non-Tea Party Republicans (Sonmez 2012).

In sum, two things come through clearly. First, Tea Party supporters are a majority of the Republican Party and especially of the most politically active identifiers within the party. Second, there is a chasm between non-Tea Party Republicans and Tea Party Republicans whether we consider overall ideology, specific issue positions and issue priorities, or affect towards candidates. Because of this large divide, it is not surprising that we saw Tea Party candidates challenging more traditional Republicans and winning primaries. Because those primary challenges and the encouragement of Tea Party candidacies comes from the most active Tea Party supporters, it is appropriate to now turn to the FreedomWorks sample to better understand the activist stratum of the Tea Party movement.

EXAMINING THE TEA PARTY'S ACTIVIST BASE

If the mass base of a movement or political party is important to its success so is a group of more involved activists within the movement. It is the activist base that supplies much of the energy and manpower for parties and organizations, and the activist base of parties plays a crucial role in party change—both ideological and electorally (Carmines and Stimson 1989, Herrera 1995, Rapoport and Stone 1994, Claassen 2007). Indeed, Carmines and Stimson (1989) are quite explicit in assigning a major role to activists in transmitting changes in party positions to a less involved electorate. The role of Tea Party activists in recruiting and promoting primary challenges to incumbents and establishment Republicans has been well documented (Berry, Sobieraj and Schlossberg 2012; Skocpol and Williamson 2012). As Abramowitz (2011) finds by analyzing decades worth of ANES data, the emergence of the Tea Party movement at the grassroots level can be understood as an outgrowth of the increased conservatism of the Republican electoral base, especially the activists within that group.

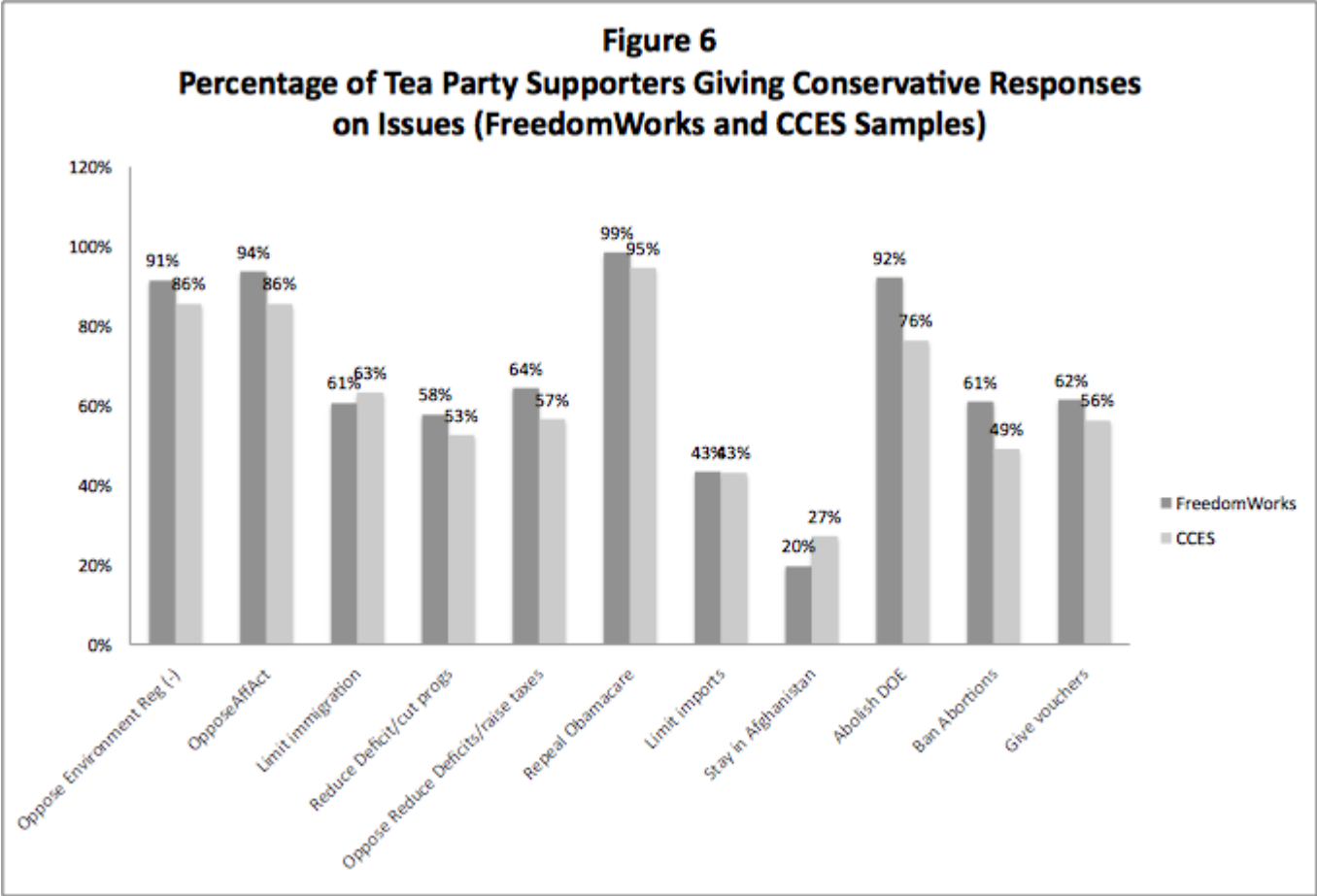
Given the importance of Tea Party rallies and other Tea Party events in publicizing the movement (Madestam et al. 2011), the role of activists in both showing support and transmitting the positions of the Tea Party are self-evident. In general, activists in groups are consistently more extreme than less active members, just as party activists are more extreme than rank and file identifiers (Kirkpatrick 1976, Miller and Jennings 1986, Aldrich 1995, Stone 2010, Maisel and Berry 2010). Claassen and Nicholson (2010, 18) find that as a consequence of partisan and ideological self-selection, group members express more extreme opinions than nonmembers. In new movements, like the Tea Party, the role of activists is likely to be even more significant than the role of group members alone.

There has been little systematic study of Tea Party activists, largely because of access problems. Many studies are limited by geography—either a specific rally in a particular place or

because activists are interviewed and observed in a limited number of places. Here, however, we rely on a very large sample survey of FreedomWorks supporters as our potential activist group. FreedomWorks, as discussed above, is the largest Tea Party membership group, and the group's email list includes individuals in all 50 states. By relying on a sample of email recipients, we even include a small percentage of non-Tea Party identifiers. The sample of FreedomWorks supporters (as we will refer to this group of email recipients) is uniformly Republican, with only 1% identifying as Democrats and 7% identifying as independents. We will use the entire sample in our analysis since dropping out the Democratic group does not alter any of our findings.

Because of the unique qualities of the Tea Party movement—its strong ideological component and the rapidity with which it developed—it is unclear whether we should expect to find the same discontinuity between activists and non-activists that Claassen and Nicholson (2010) find. So, we start our analysis by examining issue positions of the FreedomWorks supporters sample in comparison with the CCES mass sample.

The results in Figure 6 suggest that FreedomWorks supporters are only slightly more conservative than Tea Party Republicans in the mass sample. Both groups are close to unanimous in their opposition to increased environmental regulation, affirmative action, and “Obamacare.” On all other issues, except for abortion and abolishing the Department of Education, the differences are less than 10%. The largest difference between the two groups is on abolishing the Department of Education, where more than 90% percent of FreedomWorks supporters either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with the proposal but 75% of Tea Party supporters in the mass sample did. As we shall see, this is an important difference since shrinking government is such a priority for FreedomWorks supporters.



What is most striking, then, is the similarity between the two groups. Over the entire set of 11 issues, the FreedomWorks supporters are, on average, only about 5% more conservative than the Tea Party supporters in the electorate. Although Claassen and Nicholson (2010, 22) found that interest group members are more extreme than nonmembers of the same issue public, we see far less differentiation between these groups, perhaps because both are relatively extreme.

If we are to understand the Tea Party movement and its future, it is essential to examine the activist base in depth. The FreedomWorks sample allows us to do just that. In this section, we will examine the attitudes, activities, and perceptions of the FreedomWorks supporters and the implications of these attitudes and perceptions for the Republican Party—particularly for the conflict within the party.

If the take-away from our examination of the Tea Party supporters above emphasized the huge divide between Tea Party Republicans and non-Tea Party Republicans, the findings in this section suggest significant conflict between Tea Party activists and the Republican Party. In understanding this relationship, we focus on voting, evaluation, and identification with the party and then move on to explanations for this divide.

ACTIVIST VOTING, EVALUATION, AND IDENTIFICATION

Turning first to voting, we find even greater unanimity than among Tea Party supporters in the mass public. For our sample as a whole, only 3% voted for either Obama or a Democratic House candidate in 2008, and this election was before the Tea Party officially started. In 2010, Democratic support remained at the same very low level. It is clear that, when faced with a dichotomous choice between Democrats and Republicans, Tea Party supporters are close to unanimous in their support of Republican candidates.

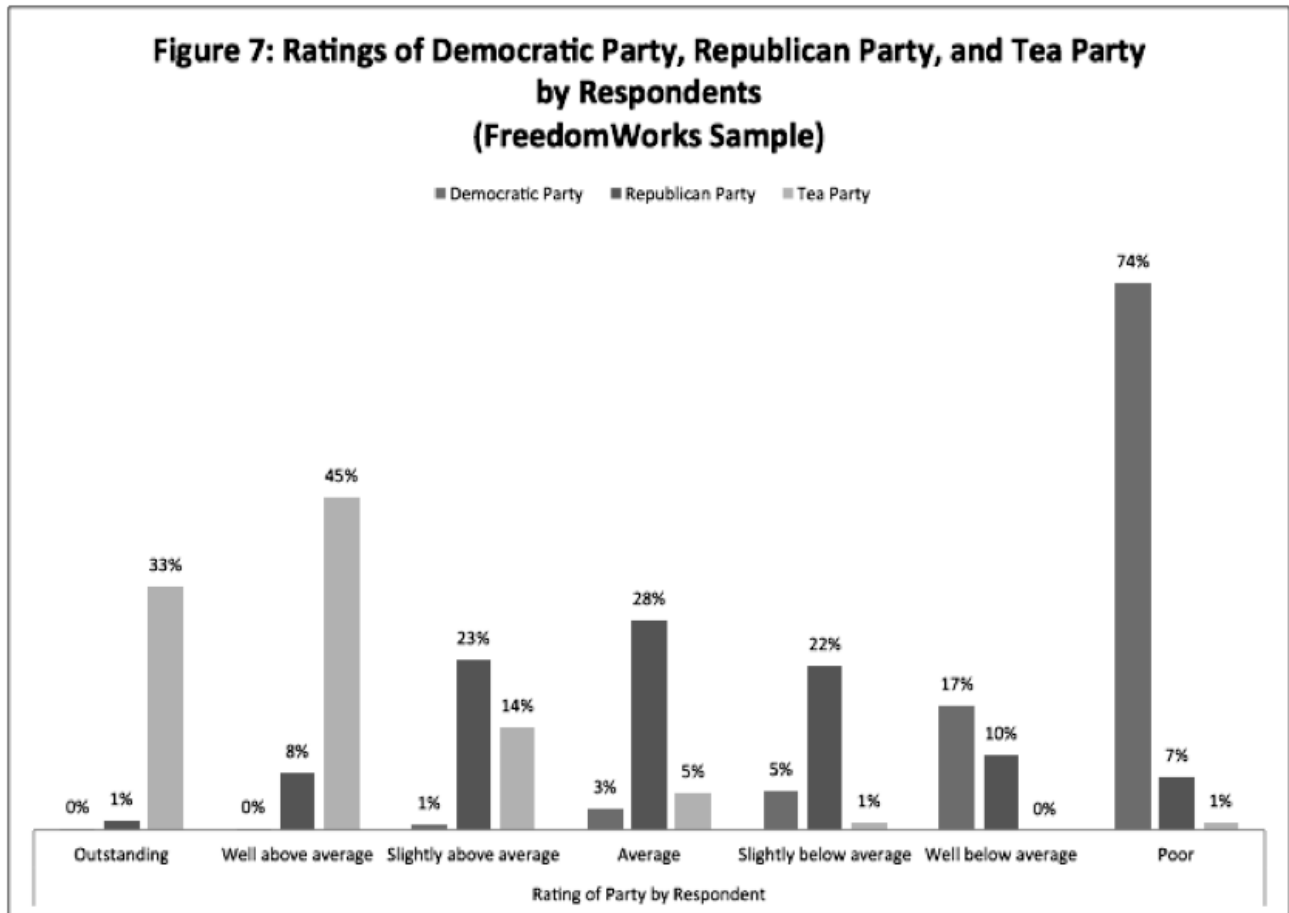
We find no support for the Democratic Party in the FreedomWorks sample—only 1.2% of our sample identify as Democrats and only about 5% as pure independents. However, when given an alternative to both the Democrats and the Republicans, a large number of FreedomWorks Tea Party supporters favored the alternative. Twenty-two percent (22.4%) selected “Other” in preference to either Democratic or Republican (or independent) identification. Rather than being a random collection of respondents with little in common, these responses show distinctive qualities: they are less Republican and more conservative than other Republicans.⁴ Sixty-one percent of the group place themselves in the “Very Conservative” category—higher even than the percentage of strong Republicans who do so. They also account

⁴ “Conservative” or some variant thereof was selected by almost three-quarters of the “Other” group, followed by Libertarian, Tea Party, and Constitutionalist. Altogether, these comprised around 85 percent of the “Other” category with nothing else getting more than a scattering.

for much of the non-McCain presidential vote in 2008, with more than one-in-eight (13.1%) reporting voting for a third party presidential candidate, compared with less than 3% of all Republican identifiers.

Nonetheless, because over 70% of FreedomWorks supporters do identify with the Republican Party, one might wonder if antipathy towards the party—if that is what the non-Republican identifiers are displaying—goes beyond a relatively small minority. Respondents were asked to rate the Democratic Party, Republican Party, and Tea Party on a 7-point scale ranging from “Poor” to “Outstanding” with “Average” in the center of the scale. As Figure 7 shows, there is a total rejection of the Democratic Party; only 1% of the respondents rate it as either “Outstanding,” “Well Above Average,” or “Slightly Above Average,” while three-quarters rate it “Poor.” Surprisingly, more individuals rate the Republican Party “Poor,” “Well Below Average,” or “Slightly Below Average” as rate it “Outstanding,” “Well Above Average,” or “Slightly Above Average.” The largest differences are in the extreme categories. Twice as many respondents rated the Republican Party as “Poor” or “Well Below Average” as rated it “Outstanding” or “Well Above Average.”

The comparison of the ratings of the Republican Party and Tea Party are striking. Tea Party support is broad and strong. A third of the sample rated the Tea Party “Outstanding,” and another 45% rated it “Well Above Average.” In fact, if we take the mean ratings of the three parties, the gap in favorability (on a seven point scale between +3 and -3) between the Republican Party (-0.22) and Tea Party (1.99) is almost as great as that between Republican Party and Democratic Party (-2.6) ratings.



When we combine the trichotomized evaluations of the Tea Party (favorable, neutral and unfavorable) and the Republican Party, we find that the largest group (35%) consists of those who are favorable towards the Tea Party but negative towards the Republican Party. Another quarter of the sample is neutral towards the Republican Party but positive towards the Tea Party. This negativity squares well with the avowed goal of the Tea Party to take-over and reform the Republican Party. The title of the recent book by Matt Kibbe, the President of FreedomWorks, *Hostile Takeover* is indicative of the relationship between the Tea Party supporters and the traditional Republican Party. On the other hand, slightly less than a third of our respondents are positive towards both, and only about a quarter are positive towards the Tea Party and neutral towards the Republicans. Admittedly, this is a sample of supporters of a Tea Party oriented group, which explains the positivity towards that movement, but it is also a sample of individuals

with a history of Republican activity and voting both predating and post-dating the inception of the Tea Party movement. Over 80% were active in either 2008 for Republican congressional candidates or 2010 for Republican candidates for Congress or President, and almost two-thirds (61.6%) were for Republicans in both years.

This divide between the Republican Party and Tea Party is reinforced by the fact that when respondents were asked if they considered themselves more Republican or more a Tea Party member, more than three-quarters chose the Tea Party as their answer.⁵ Once again, given the unanimity of negativity towards the Democrats, a two-person race between Democrat and Republican leaves little choice for the Tea Party supporters who are negative towards the Republicans.

Furthermore, as we showed in an earlier paper (Rapoport 2012), the level of Tea Party identification had a strong independent effect on 2010 activity, even when we controlled for ideology, partisanship, demographics, and issue priorities. The reliance on the Tea Party for campaign support and its attendant activity in elections makes it a difficult adversary for many of the groups within the Republican Party that would curtail its influence.

SOURCES OF TEA PARTY ANTIPATHY

We examine four sources of factional negativity within the Republican Party: political ideology, lack of agreement on issue priority, views towards party leaders, and style of party (i.e., willingness to compromise).

⁵ We should note that the negativity found in the FreedomWorks/Tea Party sample is significantly more extreme than in the CCES survey. However, even there a quarter of the Tea Party Republicans rated the party below average, and less than half rated it above average. Similarly, only about a quarter of Tea Party Republicans in the mass sample selected Tea Party as their primary identification over Republican Party; but, of the one-third of Tea Party supporters who called themselves “Strong Tea Party Supporters,” more than half selected the Tea Party over the Republican Party.

Our results for the FreedomWorks supporters on ideology sample mirror those for the mass sample as Figure 8 shows. Respondents are most unified on economic issues where two-thirds call themselves “Very Conservative” and 96% place themselves in one of the two most conservative categories. Even on social issues, more than three-quarters (78%) place themselves in the two most conservative categories, and only 10% call themselves middle of the road or liberal.

Self-placement takes on much greater significance when we view our respondents in relationship to the major parties and the Tea Party movement. As is evident in Figure 8, FreedomWorks supporters saw the Democratic Party as more extreme than either the Republican Party or the Tea Party. Eighty-five percent rated it “Very Liberal.” On the other hand, these same respondents place the Republican Party just slightly right of center—not far from where the American public places itself in national surveys. The Tea Party is placed significantly to the right of the Republicans, anchoring the right-wing of the scale. In fact, the distance from the sample’s placement of the Republican Party to its placement of the Tea Party is more than half as great as the distance between the its placements of the Democratic and Republican parties. The FreedomWorks supporters as a whole place themselves almost exactly where they place the Tea Party movement.⁶ There is little pressure on the Tea Party movement groups to moderate in order to keep its activist constituency on board.

⁶ Although it might seem surprising the FreedomWorks supporters who are 98% Tea Party see themselves as somewhat far away ideologically from the Tea Party movement. But that is quite common. In national surveys, Democrats and Republicans often see themselves as more moderate than the party with which they identify.

Figure 8
Placement by Sample of Self, Democratic Party, Republican Party
and Tea Party on Liberal-Conservative Scale (FreedomWorks Sample)

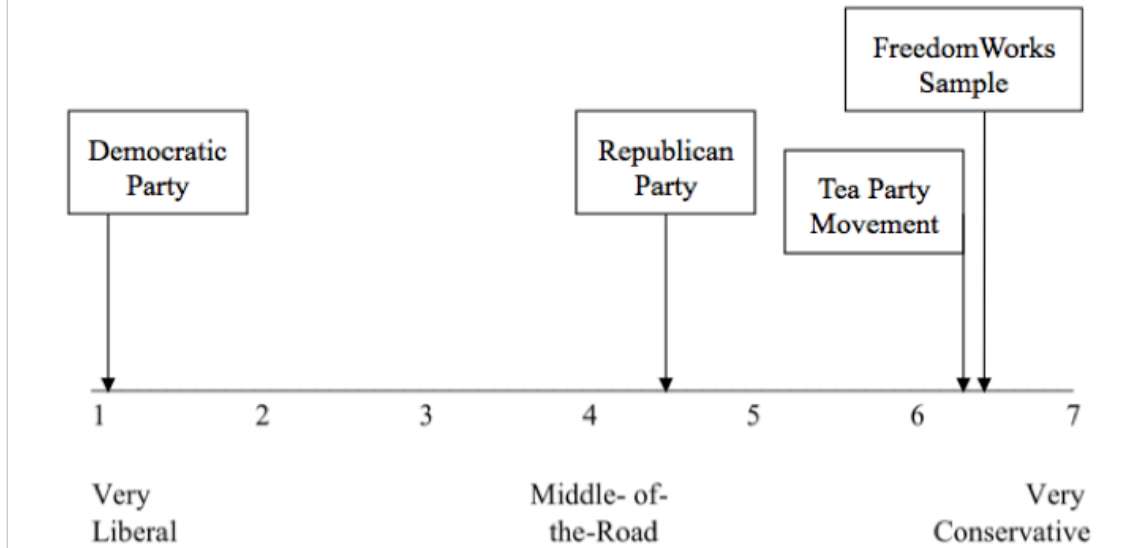


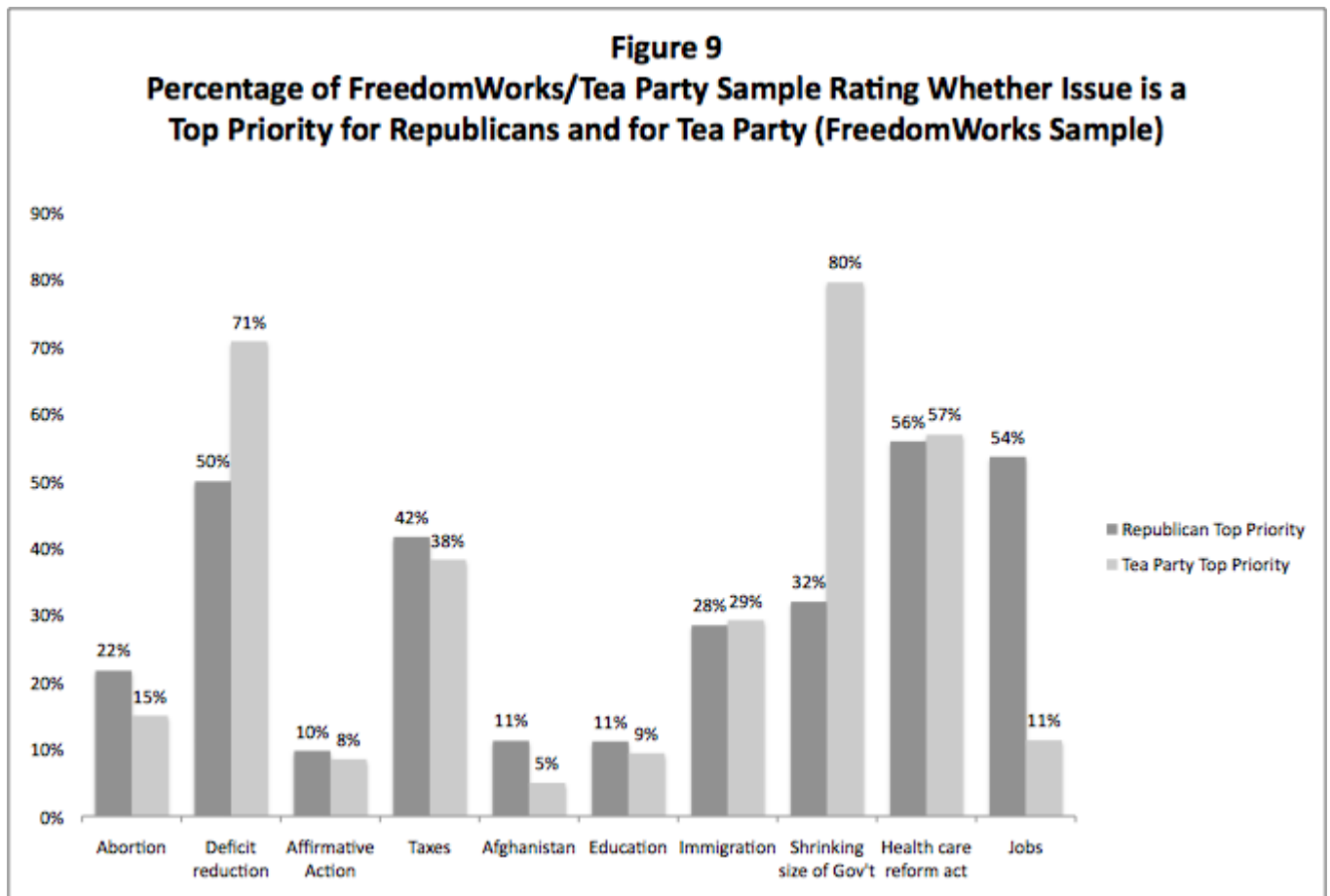
Figure 8 makes clear the distance between the Democratic Party and the respondents, which effectively eliminates the Democratic candidate from consideration as an electoral choice. But, the distance between many of the respondents and the Republican Party makes that party still less than ideal. Tea Party supporters see themselves as more extreme than their movement; and, they are quite distant from the Republican Party. This ideological gap provides a possible source for their alienation from the party.

Ideological (and issue) proximity does not fully capture the distinctiveness of the movement, though. Position on issues differs from priority given to issues. As we found for the Perot movement (Rapoport and Stone 2005), the ability to emphasize distinctive issue concerns ignored by the major parties is also a compelling reason for dissatisfaction with the major parties.

We asked respondents to assign priority to 12 issue areas. Although the FreedomWorks supporters sample selects the same three highest priorities (shrinking government, repealing “Obamacare,” and reducing the deficit) as the mass sample of Tea Party supporters, there is

much more consensus among the FreedomWorks supporters, and “shrinking government” is the most commonly selected priority (31%), followed by the deficit and repealing Obamacare. More than three-quarters (77%) select one of these three issues.

We also asked respondents to indicate which issue areas were high priorities for the Republican Party, and the Tea Party movement. We present this data in Figure 9.⁷



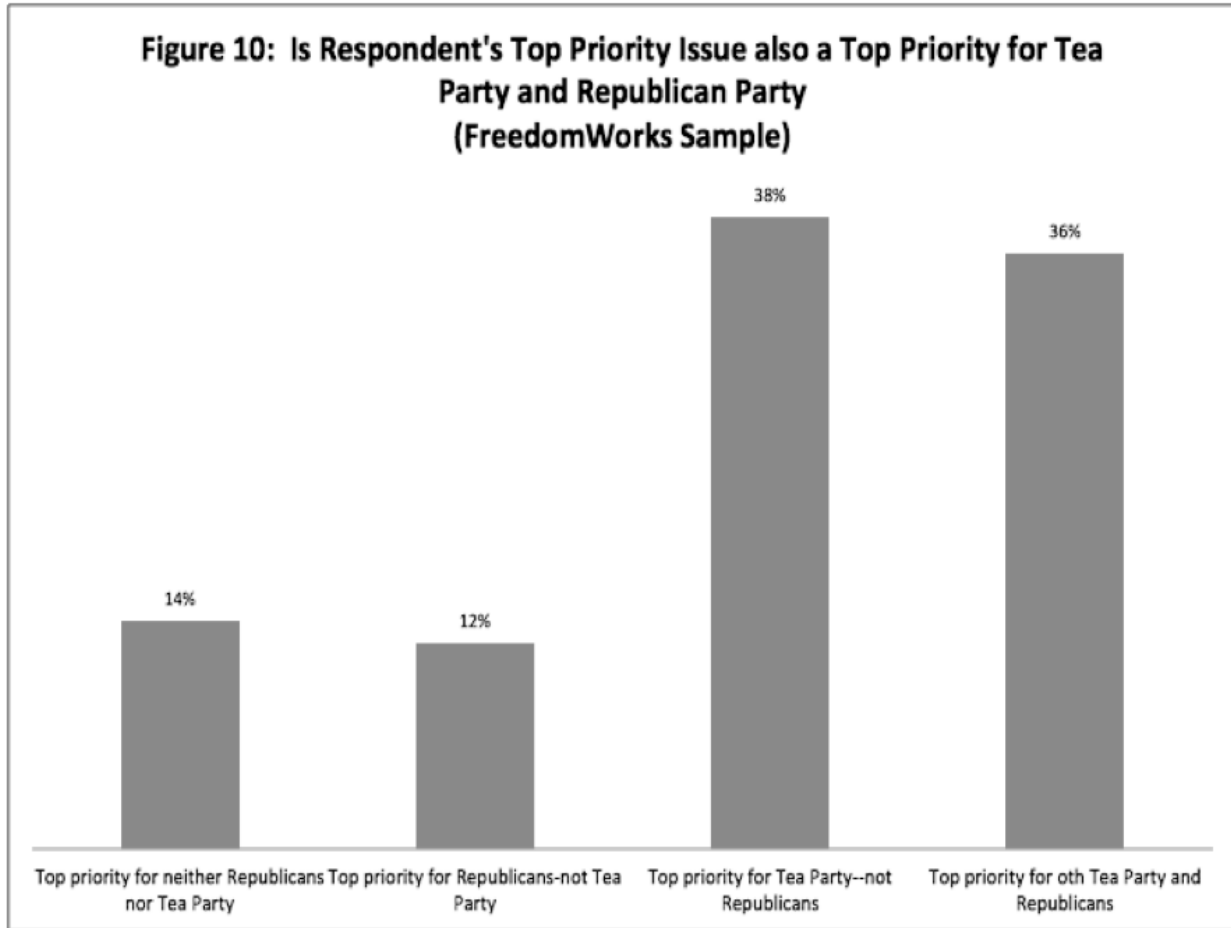
Fewer than a third of Tea Party supporters thought that the Republican Party attached a high priority to “Shrinking government,” and just half felt that they prioritized deficit reduction. On the other hand, twice as many thought the Tea Party attached high priority to “Shrinking

⁷ We only show 10 of 12 issue areas because on imports and environment, fewer than 10% of respondents rated it a high priority for either Republicans or tea Party.

government,” and almost three-quarters thought the same about deficit reduction. Only on repealing “Obamacare” were the parts in rough parity with one another. Still, Republicans were viewed as prioritizing jobs, abortion, and staying in Afghanistan to a greater degree than the Tea Party. In fact, jobs were considered by our sample to be almost as high a priority for Republicans as repealing “Obamacare.” These are issue areas rating quite low in priority for our sample (none are selected by even 10% as their top priority).

The much greater perceived agreement between the FreedomWorks supporters sample and the Tea Party is shown in Figure 10, in which we pair respondent priorities with party priorities. Here we see that the largest percentage of our sample (38%) feel that they share their top priority with the Tea Party but not with the Republican Party, versus only 12% who feel the opposite.⁸

⁸ Although motivated reasoning (Lodge and Taber 2006) may play some role in this, we shall see priorities exert an effect separate from agreement with parties on them.



We turn next to evaluations of prominent Republican leaders. The 2012 Republican nomination contest was unusual in that it had five different candidates who at one time or another were the top candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in surveys of Republicans. For many observers, the race epitomized the contest between the candidate with support from establishment Republican leaders and the insurgent Tea Party candidates, particularly Bachmann, Cain, and Santorum. At almost every point when one of these candidates, besides Romney, was in the lead, Romney ran second, suggesting a clear dichotomy. But, the labeling carried over beyond just the Republican presidential candidates to Republican leaders, as Tea Party leaders and longtime Republican office holders got involved on their respective sides. This dichotomy reflected intra-party contests for the Senate in 2010 in

Colorado, Delaware, Nevada, Utah and again in 2012 in Indiana, Missouri, Wisconsin, Texas and Arizona.

Our expectation is that among FreedomWorks supporters, the factional structure will be articulated. We included evaluations of all Republican leaders about whom we asked our FreedomWorks supporter sample: all of the candidates for the nomination (except Santorum, who was running so poorly in national polls that he was not included in the survey), John Boehner, Sarah Palin, George W. Bush, Glenn Beck, as well as evaluations of the Tea Party and the Republican Party. Our expectations about most of these candidates are clear. Bachmann, Palin, Beck, and Cain were avowed Tea Party supporters. Boehner and George W. Bush epitomize the Republican establishment, and Romney was clearly the establishment's candidate in spite of his attempt to develop Tea Party bona fides. Perry was viewed from the beginning as someone with the ability to appeal to both Tea Party and more traditional Republicans, although he made strong appeals to the Tea Party and Christian right; if so, he might fit into both camps. Expectations about Gingrich are less clear; he did well among Tea Party supporters in primaries when he was the major alternative to Romney, but he is also an insider, having served in Congress for two decades and as speaker of the house for four years. However, because this survey was done in December 2011 and January 2012, Gingrich had not yet emerged as the alternative to Romney, and we might expect his party bona fides to dominate with our sample. Ron Paul does not fit in with as either typical Tea Party or Republican establishment, given his views on US involvement, the Patriot Act, and immigration. Appeal as a libertarian and sometime isolationist differentiated him from the field, separating him from both traditional Republicans and all but the libertarian Tea Party (Sonmez 2012).

The principal components analysis with varimax rotation analysis broadly supports these expectations broadly. With a two exceptions, each figure or party loads (.3 or above) on only one factor.

The first two factors correspond to the Tea Party-Republican establishment dichotomy. These two factors are almost equal in variance explained, with the Republican factor explaining 23.5% of the variance and the Tea Party factor explaining 25.8% of the variance. The first factor shows high loading for the four Tea Party figures and Tea Party evaluation. Beck, Palin, Cain and Bachmann, as well as the Tea Party, all show factor loading above .7. The second factor is the Republican establishment factor with evaluations of the Republican Party, Mitt Romney, John Boehner, George W. Bush and Newt Gingrich all loading above .68. It is significant that none of these ten evaluations loads above .3 on the other factor. The third factor, which we might think of as the maverick factor, explains only half as much variance as the first two (11.1%), with Ron Paul and Jon Huntsman show factor loading at or above .3. Rick Perry is the only figure to show factor loading above .3 on two factors. The distinctiveness of the factors and strong clustering of evaluations, reinforces the division within the Republican Party.⁹

⁹ We display the three dimensional figure in Appendix 1.

Table 1
Factor Loadings* from Principal Components Analysis with
Varimax Rotation of Republican Political Figures, Tea Party,
and Republican Party (FreedomWorks Sample)

Evaluation of:	Factor		
	Tea Party	Republican Establishment	Maverick
Michele Bachmann	0.822		
Sarah Palin	0.805		
Glenn Beck	0.749		
Herman Cain	0.705		
The Tea Party movement	0.737		
Rick Perry	0.536	0.363	
John Boehner		0.763	
George W. Bush		0.737	
Newt Gingrich		0.71	
Mitt Romney		0.687	
The Republican Party		0.732	
Jon Huntsman		0.331	0.748
Ron Paul			0.816

*Factor loadings below .3 not reported

Finally, we turn to political style. One of the major criticisms of traditional Republicans by Tea Party supporters is their willingness to compromise on important issues. Tea Party advocates have called on Republicans to refuse to compromise, even when it could have led to US default. In a post-2012 election CNN interview, Chairwoman of Tea Party Express Amy Kremer outright said, “I hate the word compromise” when speaking about the fiscal cliff. The measure of purism we use here is: “When we feel strongly about political issues, we should not be willing to compromise with our political opponents.” Almost a third (31.9%) “Agree Strongly” and another third (33.3%) say they “Agree” with the statement. Altogether, over 80%

agree to some degree, compared with fewer than 10% of respondents who say they “Disagree Strongly,” “Disagree,” or “Disagree Slightly.”

COMBINED MODEL OF TEA PARTY-REPUBLICAN PARTY AFFECT

Having outlined attitudes that characterize our sample, the question becomes: to what degree do each of these contribute to preference for the Tea Party vis a vis the Republican Party? Can we explain polarization in attitudes towards the two factions within the Republican Party?

Our dependent variable is the difference in evaluation between the Republican Party and the Tea Party (lower values indicate preference for the Tea Party and higher values preference towards the Republican Party).¹⁰ Given the distribution of responses on our dependent variable, what we are trying to describe in this sample is, at least, what produces greater or less negativity towards the Republican Party (vis a vis the Tea Party). Our independent variables include partisanship,¹¹ ideology, issue priority,¹² willingness to compromise, and candidate evaluations.¹³ We use ideological self-placement instead of relative proximity and highest priority issue instead of shared priority in order to remove effects of selective perception and motivated reasoning which could artificially inflate the effects of these factors. In addition, our initial regression did not include the two candidate evaluation variables because of concern about the direction of causality.

¹⁰ Because this is a Tea Party sample, only about 10% actually give the Republican Party a more favorable evaluation than the Tea Party. Nonetheless, there is significant variation in the degree of Tea Party preference which we should expect to be explained by the factors we have discussed.

¹¹ Because we wanted to include a dummy variable for whether respondent selected “Other” on the party identification question, we used all eight categories of the party identification question (including “Other”)

¹² We used only the issues which received at least 10% mention as being respondent’s top priority issue: “Obamacare,” the deficit, and shrinking government.

¹³ We used the evaluation of the candidate who loaded highest on the Tea Party factor (Michele Bachmann) and since the factors themselves included evaluation of the parties.

Table 2

Regression of Tea Party-Republican Party Evaluation Difference on Selected Relevant Variables					
	Coefficient	t-value	Mean of Variable	Net effect	
(Constant)	-1.779	31.335	-		
Party ID	-0.299	21.193	-1.900	0.568	
"Other" party	-1.029	25.220	0.234	-0.241	
			Total Party Effect	0.327	
Ideology Liberal	0.338	16.874	-2.363	-0.799	
Top priority issue					
Obamacare	-0.206	-4.597	0.192	-0.040	
Shrink government	-0.261	-6.554	0.321	-0.084	
Deficit	-0.129	-3.13	0.270	-0.035	
			Total Priority Effect	-0.158	
Support compromise	0.113	12.155	-1.549	-0.175	
Demographics					
Gender	-0.017	-1.846	0.325	-0.006	
Church Attendance (1/month)+	0.132	4.511	0.026	0.034	
Age (60+)	0.190	9.526	0.002	0.0004	
Adj R Square	0.112				
Std. Error of Estimate	1.37				
N	9315				

Table 2 shows that the effects for partisanship, ideology, issue priority, and political style all hold up well when entered simultaneously. The coefficients for partisanship indicate that those more strongly identified with the Republican Party are more pro-Republican, but the effect

of shifting from an independent to a strong Republican (i.e. a shift of three categories) is still less than the difference between those choosing a party with which to identify and those who chose “Other” as their party. This makes clear the importance of the rejection of the Republican label (or any label) 22% of our FreedomWorks sample.

The coefficient for ideology is slightly greater than that for partisanship (both on 7-point scale), showing that, not surprisingly, the less conservative the ideological position, the greater the relative favorability of the Republican Party. We also find significant issue priority effects. In particular, those who select shrinking government as their top priority are significantly more supportive of the Tea Party. To a slightly smaller degree, those who select “Obamacare” and the deficit as their highest priority issue are as well.

However, it is not just issues, ideology, and priority that determine relative affect; willingness to compromise has an effect over and above these. As expected, those willing to compromise are more comfortable with the traditional Republican Party, than the upstart Tea Party. Although gender has virtually no effect, those attending church more than once a month are more supportive of the Republicans over the Tea Party, as are those over 60.

By looking at the distribution of our sample on each variable (i.e., the mean) we can assess what the actual effect of each factor is for our specific sample. For example, if conservative self-placement meant higher levels of Tea Party support, the more conservative the sample, the more ideology would contribute to Tea Party advantage. By calculating these net effects we can also calculate total effects for both partisanship (by combining the effects of the seven point party identification scale with the effect of selecting “other” as one’s party) and issue priority (by combining the effects of the three issue priority variables).

When we calculate net effect scores, we see that the strong conservatism of our sample is largely responsible for the Tea Party advantage in the sample. On the other hand, the total

partisanship effect (combining party id and selecting “Other” as a party designation) actually benefits the Republican Party by a bit less than half as much as ideology benefits the Tea Party. Issue priority effects (assigning high priority to issues which are Tea Party priorities) and political style (reluctance to compromise) together equal the effect size of party identification, but in their cases in the Tea Party direction.

Republicans profit very slightly from the age profile, since the sample splits almost evenly between those 60 and over and those under 60; and the effect of religious attendance is relatively small as well, owing to a low mean on the variable.

Overall, then, the strongly conservative views of Tea Party respondents presents a difficult problem for a more moderate Republican Party to win over its Tea party supporters, similarly, problems of issue priorities and of the commitment of Tea party supporters to a more ideological (rather than compromise-oriented) style also present serious difficulties. The basic commitment to the Republican Party is shared by many FreedomWorks/Tea Party supporters is a major plus in appealing to FreedomWorks/Tea Party supporters, but a good number (22%) reject the Republican label, selecting “Other” on the party identification question, and this group is far more inclined to the Tea Party.

Finally, when we reran the same regression and included evaluations of John Boehner and Michele Bachmann (really as stand-ins for the factors they most strongly represented in our factor analysis), the effects of the original predictors decline, but in no case is significance lost. But, the strongest effect of the additional two predictors is the doubling of variance explained. Over and above the effects of issues, ideology, partisanship, and unwillingness to compromise on matters of principal, evaluations of Boehner and Bachmann bring greater variance explained than

those other variables did when taken together. This indicates the role of leaders in embodying political movements and political factions.¹⁴

Table 3
Regression of Tea Party-Republican Party Evaluation Difference on Selected Relevant Variables, Including Leader Evaluations (FreedomWorks Sample)

	Coefficient	t-value
(Constant)	-1.583	-29.968
Party ID	-0.190	-12.848
"Other" party	-0.650	-14.574
Ideology Liberal	0.229	12.203
Top priority issue		
Obamacare	-0.143	-3.452
Shrink government	-0.200	-5.420
Deficit	-0.136	-3.572
Support compromise	0.063	7.212
Demographics		
Gender	-0.017	-0.615
Church Attendance (1/month)+	0.124	4.586
Age (60+)	0.190	7.212
Candidate evals		
Evaluation of Boehner	0.391	36.777
Evaluation of Bachmann	-0.251	-23.434
Adj R Square	0.241	
Std. Error of Estimate	1.27	
N	9315	

¹⁴ We ran the same regressions, but used Republican Party evaluation and Democratic Party identification as alternative dependent variables. “Shrinking government” as a priority, willingness to compromise, partisanship and “Other” party selection remained significant predictors of both Tea Party and Republican Party affect.

CONCLUSION

Utilizing both a national sample, over-representing Tea Party supporters, and a large sample of potential Tea Party activists, we have assessed the seriousness of divisions within the Republican Party, and attitudes of potential Tea Party activists towards the Republican Party and the Tea Party. Our findings suggest that the current attempt of the Republican Party to moderate, and even, in some cases, shed Tea party supporters is problematic.

We find that issues, ideology, issue priorities, and political style considerations differentiate Tea Party Republicans from non-Tea Party Republicans. The Tea Party supporters are not just a faction within the Republican Party: they are a majority faction within the party, particularly among active Republicans. The divide between the two groups of Republicans is so wide that on four of eleven issues, the non-Tea Party Republicans were actually closer to the mean of the Democratic identifiers in the sample than they were to the Tea party Republicans. Bridging this gap will present a challenge for the party, particularly for leaders more in sympathy with the non-Tea Party group and those most committed to expanding the base of the Republican Party.

The activist FreedomWorks sample shows a general lack of positive feeling towards the Republican Party. That more rate the Republican Party below average than above average is problematic for the party, and is reinforced by almost a quarter of the sample who choose “other” as their party and are particularly negative towards the Republican Party. This negativity is dwarfed by their antipathy towards the Democrats. But, in primary campaigns between establishment and Tea Party Republicans, there are no Democrats, and appeals to pragmatism appear likely to fail (particularly given the lack of willingness to compromise on issues about which they feel strongly). The success of groups like Karl Rove’s committed to a more pragmatic brand of Republicanism is very much in question.

Finally, we found significant effects of partisanship, ideology, issue priorities, party style and demographics in explaining Tea Party-Republican Party preference. Once again the conservatism, issue priorities and concerns about compromise explain the Tea Party preference over the Republicans. Only partisanship gives the Republican Party leverage over the Tea Party. How this will play out in the next two years is an open question, but it is likely that the Tea Party will continue to be a major, often dominant, force within the Republican Party.

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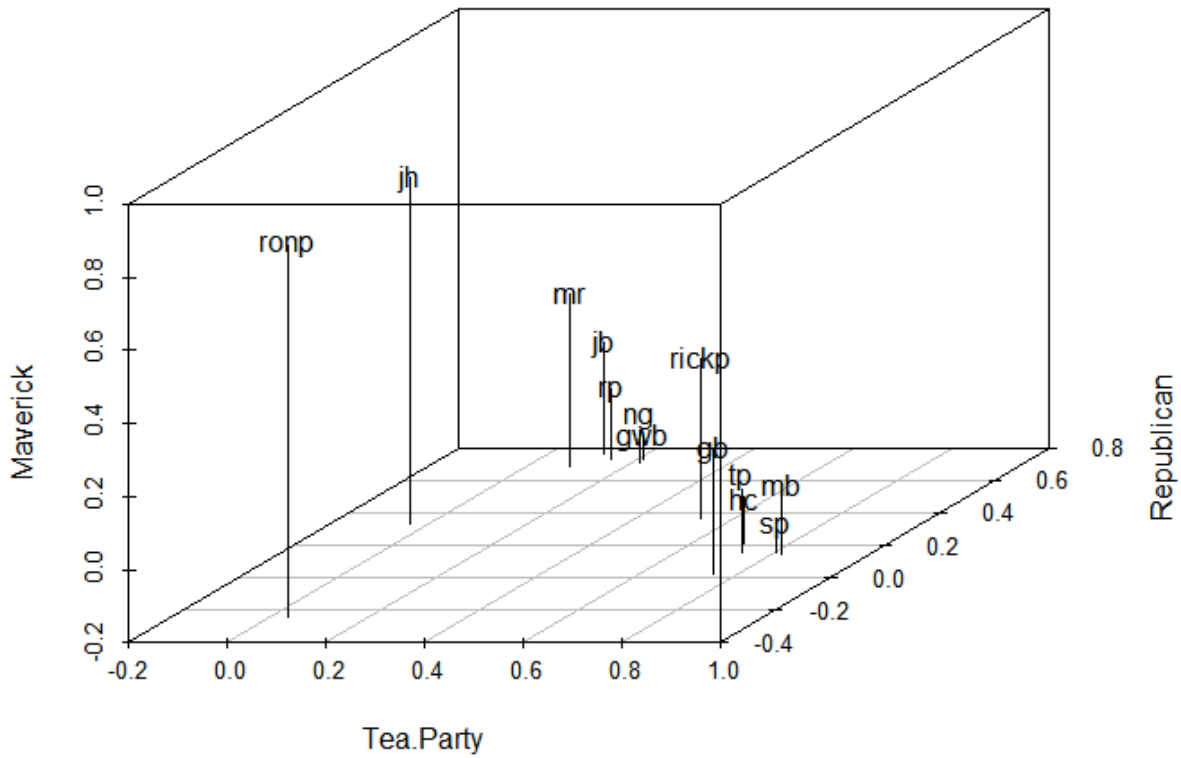
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Appendix 1

2012 Republican Candidate Loadings



tp=Tea Party Evaluations

rp=Republican Party Evaluations

mb=Michele Bachmann Evaluations

gb=Glenn Beck Evaluations

jb=John Boehner Evaluations

gwb=George W. Bush Evaluations

hc=Herman Cain Evaluations

ng=Newt Gingrich

jh=Jon Huntsman Evaluations

sp=Sarah Palin Evaluations

ronp=Ron Paul Evaluations

rickp=Rick Perry Evaluations

mr=Mitt Romney Evaluations