

**Tea and Coffee:**

**The Ideological Implications of the Tea Party Movement in the House of Representatives**

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According to a recent Gallup Poll, the Tea Party has nearly dried up.<sup>1</sup> Only 17% of respondents currently consider themselves Tea Party supporters—the smallest percentage since the Gallup Poll began surveying on this issue in 2010. Likewise, the percentage of respondents who are neither supporters nor opponents of the Tea Party is higher than ever before (54%). What seemed to be the most significant political movement in 21<sup>st</sup> century American politics not that long ago, would appear to be on its last legs.

However, it may still retain some cachet at the elite level. While the House Tea Party Caucus has become dormant,<sup>2</sup> several new groups--ostensibly affiliated with the Tea Party--have taken center stage in the House Republican conference, orchestrating high-profile policy battles (e.g., the renewal of Import-Export Bank's charter) and leadership shake-ups that have divided the Republican caucus (Cadei 2015). The Liberty Caucus, invigorated during the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, has become the informal "home" for a younger, libertarian-minded cadre of House Republicans who consider themselves "true conservatives" and real "Tea Party Republicans" (Pereene 2014; Ferrerchio 2014). In the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Liberty Caucus was joined by the Freedom Caucus, which has attracted many former members of the Tea Party Caucus (DeSilver 2015). The Freedom Caucus (and to a lesser extent, the Liberty Caucus) has been widely credited with forcing the resignation of Speaker John Boehner and Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy's decision to withdraw his name from the House

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.gallup.com/poll/186338/support-tea-party-drops-new-low.aspx?g\\_source=tea%20party&g\\_medium=search&g\\_campaign=tiles](http://www.gallup.com/poll/186338/support-tea-party-drops-new-low.aspx?g_source=tea%20party&g_medium=search&g_campaign=tiles).

<sup>2</sup> See Newhauser (2013) and Weigel (2013).

speakership election (Matishak 2015; Walsh et al. 2015). Notably, Boehner's replacement, Paul Ryan, would not accept the position without the blessing of affiliated members (or at least some measure of blessing) (*New York Times* 2015).

Thus, while mass support for the Tea Party movement has waned, many observers have concluded that the movement continues to exercise significant—perhaps inordinate— influence in government.<sup>3</sup> However, scholarly studies of the Tea Party have not documented such influence. Our knowledge of the mass-based Tea Party movement is not matched by a similar understanding of the Tea Party at the institutional level or, more specifically, the congressional level. Much of the existing research uses Tea Party-affiliated caucus membership (chiefly the Tea Party Caucus) to determine which legislators are Tea Party “members”. This limited literature on the Tea Party in Congress finds far more subtle distinctions between Tea Party adherents and their fellow Republicans than those found at the mass level. On its face, this appears inconsistent with the recent role of Tea Party supporters in the Speaker's ouster.

We hypothesize that the minimal results which manifest in the existing literature on the Tea Party in Congress are an artifact of a popular measurement strategy—operationalizing Tea Party association as membership in related caucuses (in the 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> congresses, these would be the Tea Party and Liberty caucuses). Unfortunately, the highly-restrictive caucus membership measure fails to capture the full range of legislators' association to the Tea Party movement. The caucus membership measure consistently underestimates members' association with the Tea Party movement. This bias—treating a portion of Tea Party supporters as opponents—leads to a mitigation of the true relationship between Tea

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, *New York Times* (2015)

Party association and legislator ideology, roll call votes, policy preferences, etc. Using alternative measures of Tea Party association developed in our previous work, we identify the “Coffee” Republicans, legislators clearly unassociated with the TP movement. In contrast to previous research, we find a large (and growing) ideological gap between Coffee Republicans and the various manifestations of TP Republicans. This finding implies a greater impact of the movement on legislative politics than previously realized. Though apparently waning at the mass level, our results suggest that the influence of the TP has already—and for the foreseeable future—transformed the Republican Caucus.

We begin with background on the TP movement and research on the movement and the TP in Congress. In the next section, we describe our measure of TP association and make the case that these measures more effectively capture the variation in TP support than simple caucus membership. The subsequent section presents evidence related to the ideological distinctiveness of the Coffee and TP groups of Republicans. We conclude with a brief discussion of the implications of our results for the immediate future of the Republican Party and policymaking conflict in Congress.

### **Measuring Tea Party-ness**

While some argue that the mass-level TP is simply a rebranding of Republicanism (Skocpol and Williamson 2012 and Williamson, et al. 2011), others contend that the Tea Party is a distinctive brand of white conservatism based on opposition to Pres. Obama and racial resentment more generally (Barreto et al. 2011; Maxwell and Parent 2012 and 2013; Parker 2010; Parker and Barreto 2013). Others have suggested that Tea Party support flows primarily from religious conservatism (Campbell and Putnam 2011 and Clement and Green 2011).

Somewhat surprisingly, given the burgeoning literature on the mass-level Tea Party, the Tea Party in government has generated relatively less interest (or scholarship). There is a small body of work on the success (or lack thereof) of congressional candidates endorsed by one or more Tea Party organizations (e.g. Bullock and Hood 2012), and our own work has demonstrated that members of the Tea Party Caucus tend to have particularly conservative roll call voting records on issues related to taxation. But even within these rather limited veins of research, the results are not always consistent. For example, Bullock and Hood (2012) show that the types of candidates Tea Party organizations endorsed varied by organization. Similarly, the distinctiveness of the voting patterns of Tea Party Caucus members on taxation policy did not extend to other areas of legislative policymaking (Bailey, et al. 2012). More generally, research on the Tea Party in government suggests that the foundations of the movement in the mass public are not easily translatable into Tea Party legislators' incentives or their actions (see, for example, Arceneaux and Nicholson 2011 and Gervais and Morris 2012).

One reason for the dearth of research on the Tea Party in government is the difficulty associated with identifying which legislators are “true” Tea Party members. The most common means of identifying Tea Party legislators has been the membership rolls of the Tea Party Caucus in the House of Representatives, formed by Michele Bachmann (R-MN) in 2010 (see Gervais and Morris 2012). Caucus membership is a plausible and compelling tool for this purpose. The one purely institutional manifestation of the Tea Party, the caucus also was the only organizational entity associated with the Tea Party which recognized a public and official claim by members of Congress as associates of the popular movement. In contrast to organized parties, the TP movement has no mechanism for recognizing formal

membership. Similarly, the caucus was established to further the interests of the Tea Party movement and so legislators joining the caucus might be expected to be the members of Congress most inclined to the policy goals of the Tea Party (as diffuse as those might be).

Tea Party Caucus membership has been widely used to identify Tea Party members in scholarly research (Bailey et al. 2012; Gervais and Morris 2012) and news media (Mehta 2014; Tiron and Rowley 2012), but it is a flawed measure. For one, while the Tea Party is in part a movement meant to purge the Republican ranks of those lacking ideological purity, it is doubtful that those in the Caucus are “pure” conservatives in this sense (Weigel 2013). While Tea Party legislators have been labeled insurgents, and have been associated with “brinkmanship” politics on controversial votes involving the debt ceiling and the 2013 government shutdown (Hook and O’Connor 2014), only a fraction of the Tea Party Caucus membership have been among those who have bucked leadership and not voted with the Republican “establishment”.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that Tea Party Caucus membership has been used to beef up conservative credentials, rather than reflective of preexisting beliefs and legislative behavior.

Now dormant, Tea Party Caucus membership has lost whatever limited usefulness it once had as a measurement tool.<sup>5</sup> However, the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress did feature an active Liberty Caucus, dedicated to curbing a perceived “centrist” drift among the Republican leadership (Alberta 2014; Costa 2014; Draper 2014; Ferrechio 2014). The group, chaired by Justin Amash (R-MI), became a competitor to the “establishment” Republican Study Committee (Pareene

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<sup>4</sup> An analysis by the Washington Post (Cilizza 2013) breaks down voting patterns among the House Republican conference on seven votes that divided the caucus, including the 2012 fiscal cliff compromise plan and the vote to re-elect John Boehner as Speaker of the House in 2013. Of the 55 members who were a part of the Tea Party Caucus in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and were reelected to the 113<sup>th</sup>, only 12 (or 22 percent) were among those who voted against leadership every time or nearly every time.

<sup>5</sup> With the exception of one “kick-off” event during the first session of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, we could not identify any other “official” Tea Party Caucus activity taking place during that congress.

2014; Ferrerchio 2014), and, according to some conservative-leaning media, the nexus of Tea Party-establishment conflict during the 113<sup>th</sup> (Eddlem 2014). If the Tea Party existed in an institutional sense during the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, it was as the Liberty Caucus. Yet, the ranks of the Liberty Caucus are informal and nebulous, and its association with the Tea Party movement is more ambiguous than that of the Tea Party Caucus. Hence, as with TP Caucus membership, Liberty Caucus membership is an imperfect metric of TP-ness on its own.

Members of Congress may promote Tea Party connections in a variety of ways that do not involve participating in the Tea Party or Liberty Caucuses. This may involve, for example, attending Tea Party rallies and then issuing a traditional press release. The period since 2010 is notable for not just the rise of the Tea Party, however, but also the rise of “digital home style,” or how members of Congress present themselves to constituents and the broader public using social media. Before the 112th United States Congress began in January of 2011, less than 30 percent of all legislators in the House and Senate had a verified Twitter account (Golbeck et al. 2010). By the time the 112th Congress was wrapping up in December of 2012, 95 percent of all members were on Twitter (Hemphill et al. 2013). Thus, the 112th can be considered the first “Tweeting” Congress. Both traditional and digital methods for connecting to constituents allow legislators to concoct a Tea Party image. Striving to identify with the Tea Party likely reflects some appreciation for and fidelity to the movement. However, like Tea Party Caucus membership, it is unclear how much of this is cover for less than impeccable ideological credentials, and how much of it represents legitimate commitment to the movement’s principles and goals.

In addition to choosing to associate with the Tea Party on their own initiative, legislators may receive support from Tea Party actors. The Tea Party label has often been

applied to candidates who have received endorsements from national Tea Party organizations, such as FreedomWorks and Tea Party Express (Bailey et al. 2012; *New York Times* 2010). However, using endorsements alone to determine who is a “Tea Party” legislator is problematic. In the 2010 elections, FreedomWorks chose to endorse few incumbents and were strategic in choosing which candidates to back, favoring those in winnable races (Bailey et al. 2012; Karpowitz et al. 2011). The limited overlap between Tea Party group endorsements suggests there is some difference of opinion among groups when it comes to who is deserving of Tea Party support (Bailey et al. 2012; *New York Times* 2011). Moreover, while a plethora of Tea Party groups were active during the 2012 elections, very few formally endorsed candidates (Beckel 2013).

Tea Party organizations also provided candidates with campaign contributions. When legislators are perceived to have conservative activists associated with these groups on their side, they are often described as “Tea Party-backed.” However, as is the case with endorsements, Tea Party groups have been strategic about which candidates they wish to financially support and have generally made surprisingly few direct contributions to candidates (Gold 2014). And, whether it is endorsements or contributions, we expect this support to be partially based on need, with candidates in “safe” seats less likely to draw valuable time and resources. Moreover, when support originates with one or more groups, thus suggesting approval of a candidate, it is unclear if other Tea Party groups or activists share these sentiments; with no single Tea Party “voice,” it is possible for a candidate endorsed by a national Tea Party group to be disregarded by activists at home.

The Tea Party Movement is multi-faceted, consisting of a loose network of organizations, not unlike the anti-war movement of the 1960s (Bailey et al. 2012; Berry et al.

2012). Fractures have arisen within the movement, particularly between local Tea Party organizations and national organizations, such as FreedomWorks (Weisman and Steinhauer 2014). This raises questions as to whether a connection with one element of the Tea Party movement qualifies a legislator as “Tea Party”, especially when other elements decline to provide support. Determining whether a legislator is a member of a traditional party is relatively straightforward.

The Tea Party is obviously not a traditional party; not surprisingly, ascertaining membership in the party is more complicated. In fact, it is not clear that “membership” is even an appropriate term for the relationship between a legislator on the diffuse mass movement that is the Tea Party. We argue that it is more accurate—and more analytically useful—to describe the relationship between members of Congress and the Tea Party as an attachment. As an attachment, it is intrinsically relational; the extent of the attachment is a function not only of legislators’ efforts to cultivate Tea Party support but also Tea Party efforts to cultivate interest among members of Congress (and Tea Party responses to legislators’ efforts to curry support).

When political associations are well-organized and formally structured, there is a compelling logic to use explicit membership to determine the relative attachments of legislators to that association. But in the absence of formal structure and organization, the dichotomous quality of formal membership—whether in the party itself or a group associated with the party (i.e. the Tea Party Caucus)—fails to fully and adequately reflect the likely variance in attachment to the movement itself. This is a key issue with the Tea Party, such as it is, in Congress. We do not doubt that certain members of Congress are as closely aligned to the TP movement as the rather amorphous character of that entity allows. Similarly, we expect that a number of legislators, even within the Republican Party, have no attachment to

the movement at all. But we also expect that there are legislators whose attachment to the movement, while tangible, is more tenuous than that of the hard core. We also expect the character of this limited attachment to take one of two forms. One form manifests in those cases in which a legislators endeavors to be recognized as a TP member have yet to be fully successful. Here we would expect to see claims of attachment to the movement that are not matched by comparable support from TP organizations (maybe in the form of endorsements or campaign contributions). A second form of marginal/limited attachment would manifest in that context in which a member who is supported by TP organizations manages her/his message and public presentation to limit the emphasis on TP attachments (possibly, in an effort to attract/retain more moderate components of an electoral constituency).

In previous work, we uncover two largely distinct dimensions of TP association: TP attachment and TP support.<sup>6</sup> The discussion above provides various rationales for the limited overlap between the measures. At the very least, this suggests that the influence of the TP movement varied somewhat across legislators and the extent to which they displayed that influence also varied. It might also suggest that the TP movement's manifestation in Congress is either as a small (and declining) splinter group or a broad but quite shallow collection of name-only TP adherents. Another alternative is that the various manifestations of the movement in the House, some subtle, some not, obscured the significance of the movements impact on the behavior of a large number of legislators. To assess the plausibility of this perspective, we begin by using the measures developed in our own previous work to identify the "Coffee" Republicans, who we define as those legislators who have indicated *no*

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<sup>6</sup> Factor analysis confirms the presence of two dimensions in both the 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses.

attachment to the TP movement *and* who have received *no* support from the movement. In the next section we describe the variables used to measure TP attachment and TP support.

### **Measuring TP-ness**

The focus of our analysis is on the 2010 and 2012 election periods, and the 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> congresses. Whether this period will prove to be the high water mark of the TP in congress remains to be seen, but it is clearly a time in which efforts to associate with the Tea Party movement were extensive and TP organizations and activists widely advertised their support for members of Congress (and congressional candidates).

We have identified a set of indicators of TP attachment that fall into each of these dimensions: support emanating from TP groups and activists (a Support dimension), and attempts by legislators to self-identify with the TP movement (an Attachment dimension). We use three measures to tap legislators' attachment to the Tea Party:

1. *Membership in the TP Caucus or Liberty Caucus*

This variable was simply coded "1" if a legislator joined the TP Caucus during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, and "0" if she/he did not join the caucus. Our list of TP Caucus 112<sup>th</sup> members is based on the official membership list, which was made available on Michele Bachmann's website while the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress was in session. While the 112<sup>th</sup> was in session, 60 legislators, or about 25 percent of the House Republican conference, joined the caucus. Membership in the Liberty Caucus was used for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. While attendees of Liberty Caucus meetings were invitation-only during the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (Pereene 2014; Ferrerchio 2014), the Liberty Caucus does not have an official (at least public) membership list (Hohmann 2013). However, we were able to generate a list from

several different sources.<sup>7</sup> This was variable coded “1” if a legislator was a member of the Liberty Caucus during the 113th Congress and “0” if she/he was not.

## 2. *TP Self-identification with Social Media.*

While candidates can try to influence coverage of their campaigns in traditional news, social media has provided an avenue to campaigns for circumventing news media entirely, and deliver unadulterated (and un-vetted) messages directly to voters (Gainous and Wagner 2013). Thus, for the candidate who wishes to connect herself to the TP movement, there is ample opportunity to do so with social media. As mentioned above, the 112th Congress was the first in which nearly all members of Congress had official congressional Twitter accounts (Hemphill et al. 2013). We made use of this wave by collecting every Tweet generated by a Republican member’s official account throughout the entire 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> congresses.<sup>8</sup> This Tweet database consists of hundreds of thousands of Tweets, and allows us to total the number of Tweets, and the percentage of a member’s overall Tweets, that positively affiliate herself with the Tea Party. Specifically, we searched within each member’s Tweet collection for the terms “tea party” and “teaparty”, the latter of which can identify use of the hashtag “#teaparty”, as well as “#tpp”,<sup>9</sup> in reference to “tea party patriots”, and “freedomworks”. If tweet was already identified as a Tea Party tweet, it was not counted again (i.e., if it included more than one

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<sup>7</sup> We were, however, able to locate a formerly public list of Liberty Caucus members from its chair’s website: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130220000241/http://houselibertycaucus-amash.house.gov/membership>. We augmented this list with members who were being followed by the caucus’s official Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/houselibertycaucus>) and reports on attendance of caucus events in various news reports. While this method is not ideal, there is substantial overlap between the various sources, which gives us confidence in its workability.

<sup>8</sup> The search parameters for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress were from 12:00 PM on January 5, 2011 until 12:00 PM on January 3, 2013. The parameters for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress were from 12:00 PM on January 3, 2013-January 3, 2015 at noon.

<sup>9</sup> “#tpp” tweets were reviewed to ensure they were not referring to trans-pacific partnership.

of the search terms). As with the activist search and media saliency search, Tea Party Tweets were reviewed to ensure references were positive and related to the Tea Party movement.<sup>10</sup> We created a Tea Party Tweet variable for both congresses, which was calculated by dividing the number positive Tea Party tweets by divided by the total number of tweets post by a member's account within each congress. .

### 3. *Media Saliency of Tea Party Connection*

Another means through which a candidate can be associated with the Tea Party Movement is the news media. Ubiquitous in many reports of Republican primary and general elections are the terms "Tea Party Republican" and "Tea Party candidate." Most voters' perceptions of who is and who is not a Tea Party legislator are based on how salient the Tea Party association is made in news media. In regards to actual candidate control over this manner of association, news media connections are amalgamated: while much of the decision to connect a candidate to the Tea Party is ultimately at the discretion of journalists and media outlets, candidates can certainly influence the saliency of the association. By appearing at Tea Party rallies, meeting with Tea Party organizations, and making Tea Party connections known to media outlets through the release of press releases, etc., candidates and their campaigns can increase their Tea Party association saliency in news reports.

To measure the saliency of Tea Party associations in news media, we use a measure of how frequently candidates were positively connected to the Tea Party in print and in television transcripts of U.S. news outlets during the 2010 election season (January 1,

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<sup>10</sup> Certain references were discounted, including general reports on the investigation into whether the IRS targeted TP groups. Exceptions include tweets that used "#teaparty" and references to specific local TP groups with a member's district that were targeted. In addition, retweets of tweets made by accounts with "teaparty" in the handle counted, but replies to such accounts were discounted.

2010 to November 1, 2010), the 2012 election season (January 1, 2012 through November 5, 2012), and the 2014 election season (January 1, 2014 through November 3, 2014). The search was conducted utilizing the Lexis Nexis news database and results were reviewed to ensure the candidates was truly being attached to the Tea Party; other references were discounted (for example, an article mentioning that an incumbent defeated a Tea Party challenger would not be counted as a positive association for the incumbent).<sup>11</sup>

As indicated above, we are open to the possibility that there is some variance between a legislator's efforts to attach herself or himself to the Tea Party movement and the extent to which the "movement" recognizes and reciprocates these efforts. Likewise, organizations within the movement—or prominent individuals associated with the movement—may in their turn cultivate the support of legislators who do not fully reciprocate their efforts. In any case, there is reason to at least allow for the possibility that there is variance in legislators' interest in a movement and the movement's interests in them. We assess legislators' interest and efforts related to the Tea Party movement with our measures of association above. To assess the movement's support for various legislators we use the following two measures:

1. *Tea Party Endorsements*

We follow the lead of previous works which have utilized Tea Party endorsements and focus on those issued by several national, high-profile Tea Party organizations and figures (Bailey et al. 2012; Ansolabehere and Snyder 2011). We do this for several reasons. First, many Tea Party organizations decline to issue endorsements of candidates (Karpowitz et al. 2011). Secondly, even if collecting a comprehensive list of local and

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<sup>11</sup> This measure was first utilized in Gervais and Taylor (2013). We wish to acknowledge Jeff Taylor for his work in developing and compiling the measure.

national Tea Party groups was feasible, the problem of retrieving complete and reliable endorsements lists from each remains. Additionally, endorsements by some national Tea Party organizations in 2010 were too few and indefinite to be leveraged.<sup>12</sup> <sup>7</sup>Two national organizations that did make true endorsements in 2010 and 2012 were Tea Party Express and FreedomWorks. In addition, endorsements by former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin have been treated as Tea Party endorsements (Bailey et al. 2012). For the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, we utilize the lists of endorsements made by Tea Party Express, FreedomWorks, and Sarah Palin assembled by Bailey et al. (2012) to generate a Tea Party endorsements variable on a scale of 4, with “3” indicating endorsements by all three, and “0” indicating endorsements by none of the three. For the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, we utilize endorsements by the Tea Party Express and FreedomWorks.

## 2. *Tea Party Campaign Contributions and Independent Expenditures*

To collect both direct and independent campaign contributions from TP groups during the 2010, 2012, and 2014 election cycles, we relied on the official returns which eventual members of the House Republican conference filed with the Federal Election Commission. We again collected data on the national TP organizations Tea Party Express (whose fundraising arm is known as “Our Country Deserves Better PAC”) and FreedomWorks, along with contributions from Palin’s political action committee, known as “SarahPAC”. Additionally, we collected data on contributions by the fiscally

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<sup>12</sup> In 2010, Independent Caucus “vetted” candidates through a questionnaire, but we hesitate to characterize these as “endorsements” in the same way we qualify FreedomWorks and Tea Party Express endorsements: [http://www.icaucus.org/archived\\_races](http://www.icaucus.org/archived_races). Moreover, a large percentage of the “endorsed” candidates did not win the primary in 2010, never mind the general election. The social media site Tea Party Nation called attention to specific candidates in online postings titled “Candidates you need to know about.” However, in addition to not being clear-cut endorsements, we identified only three “endorsed” candidates who went on to win in the 2010 general election

conservative group Club for Growth, which is often grouped with FreedomWorks and Our Country Deserves Better in accounts of outside “Tea Party” spending (Bump 2014; Weisman and Steinhauer 2014) and has evaluated legislators on Tea Party “purity” (Wasson 2012). While FreedomWorks and Club for Growth primarily made independent expenditures in support of candidates, Our Country Deserves Better was active in making direct and independent expenditures. SarahPAC, on the other hand, made direct contributions to candidate campaigns during the 2010 and 2012 election seasons. For the 112<sup>th</sup>, we also collected direct contribution data on smaller, local TP organizations, by conducting a search for all groups that reported contributions to the FEC which contained “Tea Party” in their name. Groups identified in this search included Independence Hall Tea Party PAC, the Llano Tea Party (of Texas), and Tea Party PAC USA. While other groups with “Tea Party” in their name were featured in the FEC database, they did not make any direct contributions during the 2010 election cycle and were thus excluded. For the 113<sup>th</sup>, we also collected expenditure data from the Tea Party Victory PAC.

We define Coffee Republicans as those who manifested *no* attachment to the TP movement and who received *no* support from the TP organizations. Coffee Republicans were not endorsed by TP organizations, did not receive campaign funds from TP organizations, did not Tweet in support of the TP, were not members of the TP Caucus (in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress) or the Liberty Caucus (in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress), nor did journalists associate them with the TP. A list of Coffee Republicans in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress is found in Table 1. A list of Coffee Republicans in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress is found in Table 2.

<<Table 1 about here>>

<<Table 2 about here>>

The group of Coffee Republicans in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress is quite small (probably surprisingly small). This is a function of several facts. The size of the TP Caucus was significantly larger than the Liberty Caucus. Supportive tweeting for the TP was widespread. Scores of Republicans received TP organization endorsements in 2010. And the relationship between the various measures of TP support is not strong. Membership in the TP Caucus did not, necessarily, imply TP organization endorsement (and vice versa). Clearly, the number of legislators with no attachment to (or support from) the TP movement in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress was relatively small.

The number of Coffee Republicans grew considerably in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, but the number was still far short of a majority of the Caucus. The increase is almost completely due to the shifting associations of incumbents; of the new Republicans in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, those with an association to the TP were several times larger than the number of Coffee Republicans. Still, the extent to which Coffee Republicans are distinct from fellow partisans associated with the TP remains unknown. How are these legislators different from those who received more support from TP organizations, made more concerted efforts to attach themselves to the TP, or both? We now address that question.

## **Findings**

Our analysis focuses on the ideological distinctiveness of the Coffee Republicans in the Republican Caucus. To gauge the level of conservatism of each Republican member of the 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses, we use scores from the first dimension of the DW-Nominate scale developed by Poole and Rosenthal (1991, 1997) as our measure of ideological orientation, a standard practice in the academic research on ideology in Congress, and journalistic treatments

of this topic—and the TP in Congress more specifically—frequently employ this measure (Poole and Rosenthal 2007). We realize the measure is imperfect, and any discussion of ideology in Congress is unavoidably controversial. However, in the context of our study, we view these scores as a more than plausible indicator of variations in policy preferences within the Republican Caucus.<sup>13</sup>

Other political variables include seniority (first year of Congress-first year in Congress) and President Obama’s district-level vote margin from the relevant presidential election (2008 for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and 2012 for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress). Due to the significant relationship between district-level unemployment and membership in the TP Caucus (Gervais and Morris 2012) manifest in our own previous research, we have included that here as well.

If we compare the DW-Nominate scores of the Coffee Republicans and the TP Republicans in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, we see that Coffee Republicans are clearly more liberal than their fellow partisans. The gap between these two groups of Republicans is approximately half of the standard deviation of the DW-Nominate scores in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress.

<<Table 3 about here>>

We find increased ideological distinctiveness in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. The gap between the DW-Nominate scores of the Coffee Republicans and those associated with the TP movement in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress approaches twice the size of the gap in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and is relatively close to a full standard deviation in Republicans’ scores. While the scores for **both** the Coffee Republicans and the TP Republicans increased from the 112<sup>th</sup> to 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses, the average increase for TP Republicans is nearly four times the increase manifest among Coffee

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<sup>13</sup> We also view this analysis as an early stage of a broader study of the impact of the TP on Republicans in Congress. Subsequent stages of the analysis will include analyses of policy making activities other than roll call votes on legislation (e.g. content of bills introduced and co-sponsored, co-sponsorship relationships, committee assignments, and leadership votes).

Republicans.<sup>14</sup> For comparison, the average DW-Nominate score among Democrats was almost exactly the same in the 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses.<sup>15</sup> Based on this data, all manner of Republicans became more conservative while the Democrats stood pat. But the locus of the increase in conservatism was the majority of Republicans who had an association with the Tea Party.

<<Table 4 about here>>

The increase in the ideological distinctiveness of Coffee Republicans is partly a function of the ideological orientation of first-term legislators. First-termers associated with the TP movement had ideological scores more than a tenth of a point higher than Coffee Republicans in their first term. We also see a conservative ideological shift among incumbent Republicans more generally—both Coffee Republicans and TP Republicans. However, the size of the conservative shift among TP incumbents is more than twice that of the shift among Coffee Republicans.

The ideological distinctiveness of Coffee Republicans in both the 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congress is not easily explained away by references to other variables. See Tables 5 and 6. In the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, we see that seniority is strongly associated with membership in the group of Coffee Republicans as is the Obama vote in 2008 and district-level unemployment. Given existing research, results are to be expected. But even after accounting for the effects of these factors, Nominate scores are strongly associated with membership in the group of Coffee Republicans. In the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, we see that members of the group of Coffee Republicans are clearly still more liberal and more senior than other Republicans. Significantly, district level

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<sup>14</sup> Note that the increase in scores manifests at the individual level. It is not solely—or even primarily—a function of member replacement. The increase among TP Republicans (in both Congresses) was nearly twice that of Coffee Republicans (again, in both Congresses), and the difference between the two groups is significant at the .05 level (one-tailed test).

<sup>15</sup> In fact, it declined slightly (less than 0.006 points).

factors—both economic (unemployment) and political (support for Obama) are unrelated to attachment to the Tea Party.<sup>16</sup>

<<Table 5 about here>>

<<Table 6 about here>>

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Widely recognized as the most important mass movement in American politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have good reason to think that the TP has also played an important role in legislative policymaking (or the lack thereof) since 2010. However, just what role the movement has played—beyond the displacement of a relatively small set of House incumbents—remains unclear.

Initial efforts to understand the institutional significance of the movement—including our own—were based largely on identifying the distinctive characteristics (and behavior) of “Tea Party” legislators. The end (or dormancy) of the House Tea Party Caucus posed a serious problem for these analytical efforts. While never perfect, Caucus membership was widely-accepted as *the* distinguishing characteristic of TP representatives. With that measure no longer available, we set about developing an alternative. To our surprise, what we considered the most straightforward alternative measures of TP attachment were not highly correlated (Gervais and Morris 2014 and 2015). In hindsight, maybe this should have been expected given the lack of an overarching organizational structure to the movement, but that’s not something that occurred to us *ex ante*.

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<sup>16</sup> We found no evidence that racial/ethnic demographics influenced ideological orientation. There was some evidence of regional distinctiveness—legislators from the rim South appeared to be somewhat more conservative—but the results were inconsistent.

While we do not share this view, we accept that one response to the poorly correlated measures of “Tea Party-ness” is a clear indicator of the absence of a coherent, meaningful TP presence within the House Republican caucus. Taking this tack, one is led rather quickly to the conclusion that all of the discussion of what was the TP in Congress (or at least in the House) is smoke and mirrors. Just what the smoke and mirrors obscures—maybe the general conservatism of the Caucus—remains unclear.

Alternatively, we see these measures as meaningful, albeit imperfect, indicators of attachment to (or support from) a complex movement. In this paper, we apply employ these measures to examine the significance of the absence of association with the TP movement. We address two questions:

1. Who are the legislators outside the TP umbrella (the Coffee Republicans)?
2. How are Coffee Republicans ideologically distinct from TP Republicans?

A group of Republicans without ties to the TP movement—no endorsements, no campaign contributions, didn’t join the TP or Liberty Caucuses, etc.—manifest in both the 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses. In fact, the membership of this group, who we refer to as Coffee Republicans, grew from the 112<sup>th</sup> to the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. But there is also clear evidence (though stronger in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress than the 112<sup>th</sup>) that the Coffee Republicans are far less conservative than fellow partisans associated with the TP movement. We find that this is true for first-timers and for incumbents. Incumbents who served in both the 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses became (generally) more conservative, but the increase in conservatism was greater among TP Republicans than Coffee Republicans. Likewise, first-term Coffee Republicans in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress were more liberal than first-term TP Republicans. The consistency of member ideology is relatively well-established in the literature on roll-call voting (e.g., Poole 2007). In

that context—and in the context of the stability of Democratic ideology—the differences in the very recent trajectory of their ideological scores—is striking.

According to Gallup Poll data, support for the TP in the electorate was far *weaker* in 2012 than in 2010. How then can we understand the increase in the ideological distinctiveness of Coffee Republicans and TP Republicans during this time period? We conjecture that three forces were at work in the transition from 2010 to 2012:

1. The Supreme Court decision in *Citizen's United v. FEC* unleashed a torrent of new financial resources that were effectively leveraged by conservative interests to support conservative candidates. While the initial post *Citizen's United* election was 2010, full and effective campaign mobilization (even pre-campaign mobilization) did not manifest until 2012. Advantage: conservative Republicans.
2. Various TP organizations maintained a significant presence through the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and into the 2012 elections and the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. Thus, the organizational pressure on Coffee Republicans (including primary races) remained significant in 2012.
3. Newly drawn districts in 2012 privileged conservative Republicans from states held by Republicans. This was an extremely large number of Republicans in 2012.

Conservative Republicans were advantaged by what might be referred to as a “perfect storm” of electoral dynamics during the 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses, and more moderate Republicans faced pressure from similar forces to take a more conservative tack. While we do not foresee a similar storm in 2016, the nature of congressional electoral politics suggests that a significant shift to the left anytime in the near future is extremely unlikely.

Should we take this as evidence that the Republican Party in the House is polarized?

Yes, but it is neither a polarization of relatively equal sides nor a polarization of two or three dozen arch conservatives and a caucus filled with moderates. It is a polarization of a small group of moderates and a much larger group of conservatives.<sup>17</sup> Descriptions of the TP movement that characterize it as an effort to rebrand Republican conservatives (e.g. Skocpol and Williamson 2012) are correct as far as they go, but we would like to suggest that we have seen (and are seeing) is more a reconstituting than a rebranding. And it is not just Republican conservatives; it is the Republican Caucus more generally.<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting that the Republican with the highest TP salience score 2012—Paul Ryan—is now Speaker of the House.

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<sup>17</sup> Uslaner's (2015) recent post on the death of Republican moderates is fully in line with our findings. The interesting additional wrinkle in our results is that it occurred *after* the exodus of Northern Liberals.

<sup>18</sup> Students of comparative politics seem to have come to this conclusion sooner than the Americanists. As Art (2015) writes:

Given all this, the claim that the Tea Party has mattered in American politics would seem too obvious to point out. And while a few contrarian studies warned against exaggerating its influence early on (Ansolabehere and Snyder 2011), . . . the transformation of the Republican Party render it arguably more influential than its supposed heydays of 2009 and 2010 (Skocpol and Williamson 2013).

Table 1: Coffee Republicans in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress

<b>Name</b>	<b>District</b>
Jo Bonner	AL-01
David Derier	CA-26
Vern Buchanan	FL-13
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen	FL-18
Jack Kingston	GA-01
Rob Woodall	GA-07
Tom Latham	IA-04
Timothy Johnson	IL-15
Ed Whitfield	KY-01
Brett Guthrie	KY-02
Geoff Davis	KY-04
Hal Rogers	KY-05
Charles Boustany	LA-07
Sam Graves	MO-06
Jo Ann Emerson	MO-08
Gregg Harper	MS-03
Pete King	NY-03
Mike Turner	OH-03
Steve Austria	OH-07
Bill Shuster	PA-09
Jimmy Duncan	TN-02
Sam Johnson	TX-03
Kay Granger	TX-12
Mac Thornberry	TX-13
Thomas Petri	WI-06

Table 2: Coffee Republicans in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress

Candidate Name	District
Michael Rogers	AL-03
Robert Brown Aderholt	AL-04
Spencer T. Bachus	AL-06
Donald E. Young	AK-AL
Devin G. Nunes	CA-22
Howard P. "Buck" McKeon	CA-25
Kenneth S. Calvert	CA-42
Paul Cook	CA-08
Gus Bilirakis	FL-12
Dennis Ross	FL-15
Tom Rooney	FL-17
Jefferson B. Miller	FL-01
Mario Diaz-Balart	FL-25
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen	FL-27
Ander Crenshaw	FL-04
John L. Mica	FL-07
Michael K. Simpson	ID-02
Rodney Davis	IL-13
John M. Shimkus	IL-15
Aaron Jon Schock	IL-18
Susan Brookes	IN-05
Luke Messer	IN-06
Ed Whitfield	KY-01
S. Brett Guthrie	KY-02
Harold Dallas Rogers	KY-05
Vance McAllister	LA-05
Candice S. Miller	MI-10
Michael J. Rogers	MI-08
Erik Paulsen	MN-03
Gregg Harper	MS-03
W. Blaine Luetkemeyer	MO-03
Jason Smith	MO-08
Jeff Fortenberry	NE-01
Adrian Smith	NE-03
Mark Amodei	NV-02
Rodney P. Frelinghuysen	NJ-11
Frank A. Lobiondo	NJ-02
Leonard Lance	NJ-07
Richard Hanna	NY-22
Tom Reed	NY-23
Peter T. King	NY-02
Steve Stivers	OH-15
Robert Edward Latta	OH-05
Bob Gibbs	OH-07

John A. Boehner	OH-08
Frank D. Lucas	OK-03
Tom Cole	OK-04
James Lankford	OK-05
Gregory P. Walden	OR-02
Tim Murphy	PA-18
Scott Perry	PA-04
William F. Shuster	PA-09
Michael McCaul	TX-10
Michael Conaway	TX-11
Kay Granger	TX-12
Mac Thornberry	TX-13
Peter G. Olson	TX-22
John Culberson	TX-07
Frank R. Wolf	VA-10
Bob Goodlatte	VA-06
Doc Hastings	WA-04
Dave Reichert	WA-08
Shelley Moore Capito	WV-02
F. James Sensenbrenner	WI-05
Thomas Petri	WI-06

Table 3: Distinctiveness of Coffee Republicans in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress

Two-Sample T-Test with Equal Variances			
Group	Mean	Std. Err.	95% Conf. Interval
TP GOP (n=218)	0.6828	0.012	0.660 – 0.706
Coffee GOP (n=25)	0.6105	0.030	0.549 – 0.672
Combined (n=243)	0.6753	0.011	0.654 – 0.697
Difference	0.0722	0.036	0.002 – 0.143
Statistics	P-value: 0.011		

Table 4: Distinctiveness of Coffee Republicans in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress

Two-Sample T-Test with Equal Variances			
Group	Mean	Std. Err.	95% Conf. Interval
TP GOP (n=164)	0.7610	0.013	0.735 – 0.787
Coffee GOP (n=68)	0.6417	0.018	0.605 – 0.678
Combined (n=232)	0.7260	0.011	0.704 – 0.749
Difference	0.1193	0.024	0.072 – 0.166
Statistics	P-value: <0.0001		

Table 5: Distinctiveness of Coffee Republicans in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress Redux

Logistic Regression		
Independent Variables	Coefficient (Std. Err.)	95% Conf. Interval
DW Nominate, 112 <sup>th</sup>	-2.9501* (1.344)	-5.584 – -0.316
Seniority, 112 <sup>th</sup>	0.0747*** (0.022)	0.031 – 0.118
District Unemployment, 2008	-0.0566 (0.080)	-0.214 – 0.101
District Vote for Obama, 2008	-0.0526* (0.025)	-0.102 – -0.003
Constant	1.7988 (1.476)	-1.094 – -4.692
N of cases		243
Log Pseudo-likelihood		-70.026
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>		0.130
Wald X <sup>2</sup> (4)		22.03***

\*p≤.05, \*\*p≤.01, \*\*\*p≤.001

Table 6: Distinctiveness of Coffee Republicans in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress Redux

Logistic Regression		
Independent Variables	Coefficient (Std. Err.)	95% Conf. Interval
DW Nominate, 113 <sup>th</sup>	-4.7293*** (1.145)	-6.973 – -2.485
Seniority, 113 <sup>th</sup>	0.0778*** (0.023)	0.033 – 0.123
District Unemployment, 2012	-0.0042 (0.085)	-0.171 – 0.162
District Vote for Obama, 2012	-0.0255 (0.022)	-0.067 – 0.017
Constant	2.7813* (1.334)	0.167 – 5.396
<i>N</i> of cases	232	
Log Pseudo-likelihood	-114.168	
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.170	
Wald X <sup>2</sup> (4)	28.04***	

\*p≤.05, \*\*p≤.01, \*\*\*p≤.001

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