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April 13, 2011

Tea Party Candidates in Republican Primaries:
Explaining Electoral Outcomes

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Abstract

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While there have been numerous studies concerning the emergence and sources of support for the Tea Party movement, the results of Tea Party candidates in Republican primaries have not been analyzed. This study seeks to analyze and explain the success of Tea Party candidates in the 2010 Republican congressional primaries, using ordinary least squares (OLS) and logistic regressions. This study utilizes two data sets, one's unit of analysis is each individual Tea Party candidate, while the other's unit of analysis is each primary. The results indicate that the candidate specific characteristics are more significant than the state-level factors. The importance of candidate specific characteristics implies that, even in an election cycle deemed a "wave" election, as the 2010 congressional election was, the success of Tea Party candidates was largely dependent on characteristics specific to each individual candidate and their ability to compete.

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Introduction

On February 19, 2009, Rick Santelli, the CNBC commentator, let loose on air and called on Americans to protest the recent government bailouts for foreclosed homeowners and the housing sector. The response to Santelli's call is seen in the Tea Party movement, which held its initial protests in February of 2009 in 30 cities. The movement's potential significance was seen in the widespread second round of anti-tax protests, in April 2009, and the September 12th Taxpayer March on Washington, D.C. (Judis 2010).

Politicians, journalists, and political scientists have closely watched the Tea Party movement, from early in the movement's development, knowing that it could be potentially noteworthy, but uncertain about how politically significant the movement would be. In order to address that question, the knowledge base concerning the movement and its impacts must be expanded. At the outset of the 2010 election cycle, when candidates purporting to stand with the movement emerged and entered Republican congressional primaries, it became apparent that the Tea Party movement would play a significant role. This study will analyze these Republican primary results and seek to discover the following:

What explains the success of Tea Party candidates in these primaries?

Specifically, why do certain Tea Party candidates win the Republican primary and advance to the general and why are others eliminated in the primary?

In order to address this question, it is not only necessary to have a basic understanding of the movement's development but also to develop a conceptual framework to view the Tea Party through; the political opportunity model can

help provide this framework. After this is accomplished, data on the Republican primaries can be analyzed and the question at hand answered.

Theory & Literature Review

The Political Opportunity Model

The political opportunity model permeates the literature of social movements, but many disagreements exist concerning the model's specifics. However, the general framework is fairly stable and provides the specificity required to analyze the Tea Party movement. The political opportunity model arose from a desire to understand and explain social movements, their development, and their actions; at its root, the model seeks to answer the question of how excluded social groups can gain political influence while lacking conventional political resources (Meyer 2004).

The political opportunity model dovetails nicely with the Tea Party; the movement emerged as Republicans in the federal government, the conventional mode through which conservatives exert political influence on a national level, were at their lowest point of influence and power in decades (Tanenhaus 2009, 12). The Republicans, and through them the conservative citizen-activists that make up the Tea Party, were excluded from power as a result of the 2006 and 2008 elections. The GOP had lost the White House, was in the minority in the House, and subject to a filibuster-proof Democratic majority in the Senate. Accordingly, conservative activists felt that conventional avenues to exercise political influence were no longer open to them (Packer 2008; Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin 2011, 25-6).

To achieve a thorough understanding of the Tea Party movement, and its greater implications in American politics, it is essential to have a firm grasp of this conceptual model and how it can be applied to the Tea Party. It is through the model that an understanding of the movement's emergence and how it exerts its leverage is theoretically understood. Once this conceptual understanding is achieved, it not only provides a framework through which to view and evaluate the Tea Party movement, but also a perspective from which Republican primary results can be analyzed.

Political Opportunity

Tarrow explored how social movements exert influence using the political opportunity model, defining them as, "collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (1994, 3-4). The model explains how movements exert influence in terms of political opportunity, focusing on the availability of external resources and the political context within which the movement operates.

Through the combination of political opportunity and contentious collective action, social movements achieve influence; Tarrow argues that "people join in social movements in response to political opportunities and then, through collective action, create new ones" (1994, 17). Where prior attempts to exert influence failed because of the absence of political opportunities, the emergence of additional opportunities motivate citizens to act, coalesce into social movements, and attempt to bring about their desired aim. In turn, the pursuit of that goal creates additional political opportunities. Essentially, opportunities

lead people to engage in collective action, through social movements, in an attempt to gain and exercise political leverage.

Contentious collective action¹ is how a social movement expresses itself and achieves its potential impact. It becomes necessary on the part of social movements when they are excluded from regular access to institutions and the typical avenues used to influence the government and its policies; contentious action is often the only recourse available to the typical citizen (Tarrow 1998, 1-7). Through these contentious actions, a movement can capitalize on existing opportunities and create new ones. In the case of Tea Party participation in primary and general elections, this contentious collective action is used in an attempt to reclaim traditional avenues of influence on government policy.

Tarrow (1998) argues that political opportunity is a multifaceted concept: it consists of institutional components and dynamic elements. Institutional components represent a state's political and structural characteristics, such as the government's openness to reform² (political) and its degree of centralization of political power³ (structural). These elements capture the degree to which the avenues to influence the government are available to the social movement, both a lower level of openness to reform and a higher degree of centralization result in the availability of fewer avenues of influence. Further, these institutional variations are, by their very nature, relatively stable over time. It logically follows that the bigger a barrier these institutional components represent, the movement

¹ i.e.: anti-health reform protests by Tea Partiers and allies in Washington

² The government's willingness to allow outside groups to influence policy

³ How few people are involved in the government's decision making process

has that much of a greater incentive to try to reclaim traditional avenues of influence; this was demonstrated by the high enthusiasm among Tea Party supporters during the 2010 election cycle (Abramowitz 2010b, 13-4). In contrast, the dynamic elements of political opportunity (elaborated below) fluctuate. These elements are changes in opportunities directly affecting the movement, particularly its emergence, potency, and ultimate decline (Tarrow 1998, 71-8).

These two aspects of political opportunity may be differentiated by the way in which they affect the emergence of a social movement. Institutional components are the initial conditions in which a movement emerges and they determine the degree of the impediments an emerging movement faces. Institutional components that present fewer barriers can present political opportunities. Meanwhile, dynamic elements result from the opportunities movements create, essentially the strength of the political opportunities the movement achieves, either through its own activities or the help of its allies. These dynamic elements alter the actual viability of the movement. The duality of the inputs to the dynamic elements of political opportunity, which result from the actions of both a movement and its allies, is best understood through two dimensions (Tarrow 1998).

Dynamic Elements of Political Opportunity

The two dimensions, referenced above, of political opportunity's dynamic elements affect the amount of available space within which a social movement can try to exercise its influence. The first dimension is elite instability, which in effect reduces the relative power of capital and the state, increasing incumbent

vulnerability. A social movement's external allies are the second dimension. These allies increase a movement's relative strength by sharing their resources, resources that would otherwise be unavailable to the movement.

Elite instability, characterized through elections, can affect social movements' political opportunities (Tarrow 1998, chap. 5). An approaching election forces politicians to attempt to appeal to their constituencies in the short run. Accordingly, the influence movements can exert on incumbents drastically increases as incumbents vie for movements' electoral support, depicting the reliably opportunistic behavior of politicians. Former Representative Bob Inglis (R-S.C.) discussed the impacts of elite instability, after his primary loss to a Tea Party candidate. Inglis was asked why he entertained and heard the grievances of Tea Party supporters in his district who believed the some ludicrous things, such as that the Federal Government essentially had a bank buy you when you were born, calculated your projected life earnings, and used you as the collateral. His response was that "Well, I had to. We were between primary and runoff" (Corn 2010), this demonstrates the result of elite insecurity, which is an embodiment of the aforementioned element elite instability, the ability for typically excluded groups to exert influence on those in power.

A social movement's external allies increase the actual power of a movement by providing it with resources that would otherwise be unavailable, and take two forms: political allies and the mass media (Tarrow 1998, chap. 5).

Political allies of the Tea Party⁴ provide it with financing, strategic advice, and expertise. They improve a movement's strategic position by providing not only the resources (human, financial, and tactical) to assist operations, but also the means to protect it from government apathy or repression, through vocal public support and mass media exposure (Almeida and Stearns 1998, 41).

In the role of an external ally, the mass media can provide movements with an acknowledgement of the problem(s) they are addressing and public exposure. The relationship between Fox News and the Tea Party serves as a clear example. Although Fox News is not the only media outlet covering the Tea Party's, the movement benefits from basic coverage by all of the news networks, their degree of support is extremely light in comparison to Fox News' coverage. As Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin demonstrate, "Fox News has explicitly mobilized its viewers by connecting the Tea Party to their own brand identity. In early 2009, Fox News dubbed the upcoming Tea Party events as 'FNC [Fox News Channel] Tea Parties'" (Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin 2011, 29-30). Williamson et al. continue to explain why the function provided by Fox News was especially key in the Tea Party movement coalescing around specific goals and a unified image: "For a scattered set of people who might feel isolated or marginalized, a resourceful national organization can help to provide 'an infrastructure for collective action' by [...] fostering 'at least a minimal degree of solidarity and integration'" (Minkoff 2001, 183-4; 2011, 30). The relationship between the Tea Party and Fox shows the theoretical effects of external allies to

⁴ i.e.: Republican Party and conservative 527- or 501(c)-groups (such as Americans for Prosperity, FreedomWorks, or the Tea Party Express)

be valid, with Fox clearly eliciting the attention of both potential supporters of the Tea Party and government elites (Rosenthal 2010). Furthermore, media coverage has compounding effects, encouraging disruptive, high profile, tactics by the movement because those tactics further dramatize the situation, making the event and the movement more ‘newsworthy’.

The effectiveness of the Tea Party’s external allies implicates a potential variance that could occur across different congressional districts or states. Factors such as the allies’ coverage or membership vary with location, resulting in an increase or decrease in the potency of allies’ contributions to the movement and its goals. The potential for a relationship between Tea Party candidates’ success in Republican primaries and the quality of allied organizations’ assistance is theoretically implied; it must be tested as a potential cause of the variance in the success of Tea Party candidates, in Republican primaries, across the country.

Figure 1 illustrates the outcome of the theoretical causal relationship between the dimensions of political opportunity and the degree of a movement’s influence on an outcome. It is particularly valuable for its depiction of the variables’ positive causal relationship: from a group’s two dimensions of political opportunity to the extent of influence it exercises on the outcome. This relationship is based upon the causal linkage that contentious collective action provides, which is how social movements exert their influence outside the, still unavailable, traditional institutional avenues of influence.

[Insert figure 1]

The political opportunity model focuses on the different stages of social activity through the lens of shifting political considerations. Successful movements seize political opportunities whenever they arise and use contentious collective actions in an effort to further improve their strategic political position and increase a movement's bargaining resources. This increase in bargaining resources culminates in the ultimate goal of social and grassroots movements: the ability to affect public policy.

The Rational Politician Model and The Strategic Politician Model of Incumbent Deterrence

In order to complete the analysis of Tea Party candidates and their success in Republican primaries, the incumbent advantage and the strategic politician model of incumbent deterrence must be explored (Banks and Kiewiet 1989; Basinger and Ensley 2007; Black 1972; Jacobson 1989; Krasno and Green 1988; Maisel and Stone 1997). Incumbent deterrence seeks to explain the cause behind the extremely low rate at which incumbents are defeated in both primary and general elections; it does so, in part, through the chilling effect their advantages have on potential challengers. Between 1946 and 2006, only 1.6% of incumbents in the U.S. House of Representatives were defeated in primaries. Historically, more than 90% of House races include incumbents and of those races, they have won more than 90% (Jacobson 2009, 28). Similarly, Senators commonly enjoy non-competitive reelections, defined as Senators whose margin of victory is greater than 10%. Although competition in Senate elections is greater than in

those for the House, the trend holds true (Abramowitz 2009, 33).⁵ In the attempt to determine the relevant factors to a Tea Party candidate's success, it is essential to control for this inherent advantage held by incumbents.

Incumbent advantages in American congressional elections are due to factors that are both natural to incumbency, such as the significant fundraising advantage, and others that have been created and institutionalized by congressional incumbents to protect themselves. These institutional characteristics include the franking privilege, official congressional resources, and constituency services (Jacobson 2009, 35-40). Cumulatively, these incumbency advantages increase an incumbent's name recognition, generate goodwill, facilitate the promotion of the incumbent's reputation, and, when used skillfully, can lead to the accumulation of cash for a campaign war chest (Carson 2005; Galderisi and Ezra 2001; Goodliffe and Magleby 2001; Lazarus 2008a; Mondak 1995; Stone, Maisel, and Maestas 2004). This enables successful incumbents to run positive campaigns, touting their accomplishments, personalities, and reputations. Although the incumbency advantage has been explained, the factors that determine whether a challenger can overcome those advantages, or enter the race despite them, have not.

The strategic politician model of incumbent deterrence aids in a better understanding of how an incumbent's advantages create a further advantage by deterring potential challengers who perceive the incumbent's advantages as

⁵ A mere 22% of Senate races from 2002 through 2008 meet the criteria for competitive elections, decreasing from the 31% average in Senate elections from 1982 through 2000. (Abramowitz 2009, 33)

insurmountable. However, a far more accurate description would be that the strategic politician model views politicians as strategic actors, actors who weigh a choice's costs and benefits and come to a decision based on that comparison (Carson and Roberts 2005; Jacobson 1989; Lazarus 2008a; Stone, Maisel, and Maestas 2004). This conceptualization has its roots in Schlesinger's political ambition theory: "The central assumption of ambition theory is that a politician's behavior is a response to his office goals. Or, to put it another way, the politician as office-seeker engages in political acts and makes decisions appropriate to gaining office" (1966, 6).

Black expands on this theory, using the ambition of politicians to develop a model of how political actors make decisions about whether to pursue a particular office: "the [politician] probably tends to make decisions on the basis of the costs, benefits, and probabilities that operate at the time of his decision" (1972, 145). Black contends that it is because of the ambition of politicians that they can be relied on, for the most part, to act rationally in the pursuit of higher office. Foreseeing the possibility that the term 'rationality' could invoke controversy when applied to political actors, Black clearly explains what he means by rationality:

The assumption of rationality in this context implies that the politician, when confronted with a decision, will examine the alternatives with which he is confronted, that he will evaluate those alternatives in terms of the likelihood of their occurrence and the value they hold for him, and that he will choose that alternative which yields for him the greatest expected value. (1972, 146)

Black refined his theory, using the following variables: $u(O)$, the utility of the office sought, to the potential candidate prior to the election; P , the probability of

winning the seat; B , the benefits he/she would garner from holding the office being sought; and C , the costs to the potential candidate for running. He further distilled the theory into a basic mathematical model to understand a potential candidates decision-making calculus: $u(O) = PB - C$

A potential candidate would rationally decide to enter a race under two conditions, according to Black's model. First, if the utility of the office is positive, in other words the benefits of the office, when multiplied by the probability of being victorious, are greater than the costs of seeking the office. The second condition would be when the utility of the office, either positive or negative, has a higher value to the potential candidate than the alternative means by which they would invest their resources (Black 1972, 146). This model thus implies that office holding is a means through which other goals are attained, be they policy-oriented goals or simply the acquisition of power and prestige.

Building upon Black's strategic politician model, Stone, Maisel, and Maestas (2004) were unsatisfied with the specificity of the benefit variable, B , contending that Black's model is flawed because it fails to account for the importance of the incumbent's personal quality. They explain that an incumbent's personal "quality exists in advance of and separate from the other aspects of the campaign" (2004, 481). Stone et al. go on to argue that an incumbent's personal quality has two facets: the quality as perceived by their constituents, which increases their probability of winning reelection as it increases; and an incumbent's personal quality from the perspective of the potential candidate. If the potential candidate derives a benefit from his/her

representation by the high-quality incumbent, that benefit would be lost if the candidate was successful in his/her electoral challenge (2004, 479-81).

With the potential for a challenger to derive a benefit from an incumbent of high personal quality established, the equation determining the utility, to the challenger, of the seat he/she is considering seeking must be altered. The B , or benefit variable, must be broken down into two components: the benefit a challenger attaches to the office for his/her personal interest, represented by B_{self} ; and the value a potential challenger attaches to the incumbent's personal quality, B_{IPQ} . The resultant B term is: $B = B_{self} - B_{IPQ}$. Accordingly, the equation for the seat's utility to the potential candidate becomes:

$$u(O) = P(B_{self} - B_{IPQ}) - C \quad \text{OR} \quad u(O) = P(B_{self}) - P(B_{IPQ}) - C$$

Stone et al. finalize the utility equation by incorporating the personal benefit the challenger would gain from winning and the potential loss he/she would entail by not having the current incumbent. This potential loss varies with the challenger's perception of the incumbent's personal quality (2004, 481-2).

The strategic and rational politician models are based in sound logic and empirical testing (Jacobson 1989; Stone, Maisel, and Maestas 2004). Carson and Roberts (2005) showed empirically the historical longevity of the strategic politician and rational models by assessing the strategic candidate behavior of political actors, from 1874 through 1914. They conclude, "that in terms of strategic emergence and electoral performance, congressional candidates exhibited patterns of behavior which are strikingly similar to those seen in modern-day campaigns, [...] individual ambition is the best explanation for

candidate behavior” (2005, 474). The enduring ambitious nature of political actors and the strategic calculus that goes into their decision making is shown to be just as true for contemporary politicians as those from the early 1900’s.

An assumption going forward in this study, flowing from the contentions above, is that Tea Party candidates follow the strategic politician model. Regardless of the vociferousness of their claims to not be politicians, by ambitiously seeking public office and making decisions to further one’s electoral prospects, these candidates conform to Schlesinger’s political ambition theory.

Rational Politician and Strategic Politician Models: Implications

By itself, the above theory does not explain why certain Tea Party candidates are successful in Republican primaries; it only speaks to whether a challenger will enter the race, not to the challenge’s success. The large number of Tea Party challengers, many of whom ran against fairly safe incumbents, can be understood through two of the implications of the above theory.

First, many of the candidates do not have a more viable investment opportunity for their resources; the utility of the office exceeds the value of alternate investments available to the potential candidate. Since many Tea Party candidates do not hold a political office, there is no political cost to entering the race (Banks and Kiewiet 1989). “This makes the cost of running lower for amateurs than for experienced candidates, all else being equal” (Lazarus 2008a, 838-9). This affects both sides of the equation, lowering both the threshold $u(O)$ must reach for the potential candidate to run and the costs of running, C , especially when relative to experienced political actors.

Second, the measure of the benefit the potential candidate derives from the incumbent's personal quality, put forward by Stone et al. (2004), is often negative from the perception of Tea Party candidates and supporters, because Tea Party supporters have an extremely negative perception of incumbents, Democrats and Republicans alike (CBS News 2010, 7). If this value, B_{IPQ} , is negative, it increases the individual's perceived value of the seat. Tea Party candidates' perceived benefits from an incumbent are pushed lower by their extreme dissatisfaction with incumbents, increasing the likelihood of pursuing the seat. Furthermore, Tea Party challengers make determinations concerning the personal value of an incumbent not by the more traditional metrics, such as the financial benefits the incumbent brings home, but by the degree of the incumbent's adherence to the Tea Party's extremely conservative agenda.

These implications of the theory are clearly interrelated, affecting all three terms and both sides of the equation. Either increases the chances a potential candidate would enter the race; combined they drastically increase the likelihood a Tea Party challenger would enter a primary. This provides an initial theory to explain the number of Tea Party challengers. It may also address the question of variance across states and districts because it implies that an incumbent's strength will not have its traditional deterrent effect; what would have deterred traditional challengers, may not have a similar effect on Tea Party challengers who make determinations concerning value and cost, in terms of both the incumbent's value and the cost of entering a race, in atypical ways. Accordingly, variation in an incumbent's ideology may explain the variance in Tea Party

candidates' success.

Potential Tea Party candidates are further encouraged to enter a primary by the nature of the electorate, which serves to increase their perceived probability of winning. The conventional wisdom on primaries is that they polarize candidates, pushing them away from centrist positions (Abramowitz 2010a; Burden 2001; Lazarus 2008b; Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani 2003). Carey and Polga-Hecimovich (2006) summarize this concept in terms of the ideological scale:

... this argument has become conventional journalistic wisdom regarding U.S. primaries: Primaries attract hardcore partisans, who tend to come from the ideological extremes of the two big parties, and these voters in turn choose candidates of limited appeal to the middle-of-the-road voters who dominate the general electorate. (2006, 530)

This logic leads Tea Party candidates to believe they can perform well in Republican primaries because they do not have to attempt to shift their positions to ideological extremes as other candidates do; Tea Party candidates already espouse extreme ideological beliefs. This implies that as the ideology of the Republican-primary electorate varies across states and districts, so do the prospects of Tea Party candidates in those primaries.

Ultimately, it is the aforementioned mathematical representation of a potential candidate's calculus, along with the relevant environmental factors, drawn from the political opportunity model, which provides the greatest potential for a theoretical explanation concerning the emergence of Tea Party candidates and their success in Republican primaries.

Hypotheses

The political opportunity and strategic politician models provide a framework through which the success of Tea Party candidates in Republican primaries can be analyzed. However, since the research question seeks to explain a variance across states and districts, the hypotheses must identify independent variables that are implicated by the theory and vary across space, not time. Therefore, the political opportunity model, which naturally lends itself to temporal analysis, must be modified for it to have implications for the study. This modification, of sorts, is to focus on aspects of the model relevant to answering the proposed research question, the dynamic elements of political opportunity. They are relevant because they represent the element of political opportunity that varies across space, as dynamic elements can change with local conditions and sentiments, and because political opportunity is a significant factor in the strength of the influence a movement exerts. Therefore, all components of the dynamic elements that have a propensity to vary across space have the potential to theoretically implicate independent variables.

Now that how the political opportunity model is relevant to this analysis has been teased out, the concept of variance across space, in terms of primary results, can be attacked from the proper perspective of the intersection of the strategic politician, rational politician, and political opportunity models.

Hypothesis 1: *As the relative popularity of the Tea Party in the primary electorate increases, the Tea Party candidate's vote-share will tend to increase.*

Membership in and support for the Tea Party varies widely across the country, implicating a potential explanation for the variance in the success of Tea Party candidates in Republican primaries. The theoretical significance of this variance is provided through the dynamic elements of political opportunity, of which a movement's popularity is a key component.

Hypothesis 2: *As an incumbent's degree of conservatism decreases, the Tea Party candidate's vote-share will tend to increase.*

Although elite insecurity occurs at some level during any election, as an incumbent is more vulnerable, the level of elite instability rises. This hypothesis emerged theoretically when the aforementioned argument, drawn from the political opportunity model, was considered alongside the contention that as an incumbent is less conservative, Tea Party candidates are more likely to enter the primary, which is drawn from the strategic politician model. This increase in the likelihood of Tea Party candidates entering a primary occurs because as an incumbent is less conservative, the perceived cost to a Tea Party candidate of losing the incumbent's services decreases. This perceived cost could potentially depreciate to a point that the challenger actually perceives a benefit from the loss of the incumbent. Accordingly, as an incumbent's degree of conservatism decreases, not only does their level of insecurity rise but the likelihood of a Tea Party candidate entering a primary also increases.

Hypothesis 3: *As support by external allies of the Tea Party increases, the Tea Party candidate's vote-share will tend to increase.*

The actions of a movement's external allies also tend to vary across space,

as these actions vary, so do their impact on a given election. Not only is this seen in the Tea Party's external allies' impacts on the movement's popularity, which is discussed above, but these external allies can also have a more direct impact on the election. These direct impacts are typically achieved through independent expenditures and public endorsements; often both of these actions are highly correlated.

Hypothesis 4: *As the ideology of the Republican primary electorate becomes more conservative, the Tea Party candidate's vote-share will tend to increase.*

As Abramowitz concludes from his analysis exploring Tea Party support: "The results [...] show that ideological conservatism was by far the strongest predictor of Tea Party support" (2010b, 13). It follows logically that as the ideology of the Republican primary electorate becomes more conservative, Tea Party candidates will have greater success. This is because Tea Party supporters are typically more conservative than Republicans who are not supporters. The ideology of the GOP primary electorate in particular is the subject of interest because this study is concerned with the outcomes of Republican primaries.

Hypothesis 5: *As the campaign spending by a Tea Party candidate increases, relative to that of their primary opponents, so to does the Tea Party candidate's vote-share.*

The amount of money a Tea Party candidate spends is an additional independent variable. Spending is not only a measure of a candidate's viability but, as both Jacobson (1990) and Bardwell (2003) demonstrate, spending is

especially essential for a challenger and has been shown to directly increase a challenger's vote-share. The necessity of this measure of spending being compared with the other candidates from the same primary will be addressed in the Research Design.

Hypothesis 6: *As a Tea Party candidate's candidate quality increases, relative to that of their primary opponents, the Tea Party candidate's vote-share will tend to increase.*

It has been well documented that in addition to a challenger's campaign spending, his/her level of candidate quality, which is essentially a measure of political experience, has a significant impact on their electoral success (Abramowitz 1988; Bardwell 2003; Squire 1992). When this is considered alongside the varying degrees of elite vulnerability present throughout the primaries, the value of a relative measure of candidate quality becomes apparent. These varying degrees of candidate quality are demonstrated by the wide variance in the amount of political experience among the non-Tea Party candidates in each primary. To understand the value of a measure of relative candidate quality, consider a race where a lieutenant governor is running against a sitting senator and a separate race where a state assemblyman is running against opponents with no political experience. Even though the assemblyman's experience is less than that of the lieutenant governor, the lieutenant governor is nonetheless at a relative disadvantage because he/she is running against someone with even more experience and a better-developed network.

Research Design

I will empirically test these hypotheses with a quantitative analysis of the 2010 Republican Senate primary results. Although this study's theory and hypotheses have been developed with both the House and Senate in mind, the analysis will only include Senate primaries. The reasoning for limiting my analysis is that many variables⁶ are only available on the statewide level.

Further, the collected data were analyzed from two different perspectives: the unit of analysis for the first data set is the individual Tea Party candidate; in the second data set, the unit of analysis is each Republican Senate primary. These different perspectives, that of each Tea Party candidate and of each primary, allow for a comparison between the candidate-specific variables and the primary-level variables. This is important because it will offer insights into whether the characteristics of a race lead to the success of Tea Party candidates or if their success depends on characteristics specific to each candidate. The dependent variables are the vote-share of the Tea Party candidate, for the first data set, and whether a Tea Party candidate won the primary, for the second.

The first task to undertake is the identification of Tea Party candidates. For the purposes of this analysis, a candidate will be considered a Tea Party candidate if he/she is identified as such in a news article. This information was collected through a Google news search for every candidate, in every 2010 Republican Senate primary, so that it was determined how each candidate was

⁶ I.e.: The electorate's ideology & the popularity of Tea Party groups

identified.⁷ A candidate was recorded as a Tea Party candidate only if he/she is explicitly identified as such in an article, it was insufficient if an article simply stated that they agree with or draw some support from the Tea Party. This is important because of candidates such as Hunt Downer, who vied for the Republican nomination for Louisiana's 3rd Congressional District and tried to claim Tea Party support, even though Louisiana-based Tea Party groups actively campaigned against him; although this was a primary for the House it serves as an example of what my methodology must protect against (Isenstadt 2010).

To empirically gauge and analyze Republican primary results, I gathered the results of all Republican Senate primaries, using the New York Times race profiles for each 2010 Senate general election; the primary results were included at the bottom of each profile ("New York Times Senate Race Ratings" 2010). The one necessary comment concerning the primary results is that in the case of Washington's blanket primary, the vote-shares were recalculated including only Republican candidates.

These data present some complications, namely the large number of candidates who earned an extremely small percentage of the vote, with many under 5%, which indicates the presence of non-serious candidates. Including these non-serious candidates in the analysis would skew the results. To determine whether a candidate is serious, I will exclude any candidate who both fails to file with the FEC, which is required once a campaign spends over \$5,000 (FEC 2010), and garners less than 5% of the vote. I made it extremely difficult to

⁷ A spreadsheet of all primary candidates and the source for each candidate's classification as a Tea Party candidate is available upon request.

rule a candidate as not serious because I did not want to exclude any legitimate Tea Party candidates; even if a Tea Party candidate was very unsuccessful at the polls, the reasons for that failure are pertinent to this study. Furthermore, most of the candidates that earned under 5% of the vote were not acknowledged in the press with anything more than their name. This serves as an additional control against non-serious candidates because if a candidate was not deemed serious enough by the media for their ideology to be deemed relevant, that candidate is not serious enough that he/she ought to be included in this analysis. Additionally, candidates who enter the primary but drop out prior to the election will also be excluded.⁸

Data for incumbent ideology were collected from a widely used data set of Congress members' ideologies, "Common Space" DW-NOMINATE Scores (Carroll et al. 2011). These scores are calculated from all non-unanimous roll call votes cast from the 1st to the 111th Congress. Each member's distribution of roll call votes locates him/her on a liberal-conservative dimension ranging from -1.0 (most liberal) to 1.0 (most conservative). Because they were developed using both Houses of Congress, the "Common Space" scores allow for the comparison between the ideological positions of representatives and senators. This cross-comparison is useful because it allows for the impact of the ideological leanings of establishment-backed candidates, who were sitting members of the U.S. House, to be measured as well. However, because this variable is only present in 14 of the 37 primaries, it will be accounted for through two dummy variables, one

⁸ I.e.: Fmr. Governor Charlie Christ (R-FL); Fmr. Senator Bob Bennet (R-UT)

representing whether a moderate incumbent senator or establishment-backed representative is running, with the other representing whether there is a conservative.

The threshold that determines the moderate or conservative identification is 0.4, on the “Common Space” DW-NOMINATE scale, where all values greater than 0.4 denote a conservative. This determination was made using the mean of all Republican members of Congress from the 111th Congress, which was 0.448, and the mean of the ideological scores of candidates in the data set⁹, which was 0.369. If the first mean was used, the dummy variables would not accurately represent the concept, as senators such as Johnny Isaakson (R-GA) would be considered a moderate, albeit barely, and Richard Shelby (R-AL) would be close to the middle of the moderate range. With the cut-off point used in this analysis, Senators Jim DeMint (R-SC) and Richard Burr (R-NC) are considered conservative and Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) are considered moderate.

To operationalize candidate quality, it has been widely accepted in the literature that the relevant information is a particular candidate’s political experience (Abramowitz 1988; Bardwell 2003; Squire 1992; Stone, Maisel, and Maestas 2004). Using this information, the concept can be operationalized using a modified version of Squire’s (Squire 1992, 128-30) candidate quality scale. This is a 6-point scale, ranging from current senators and governors (6), to political amateurs (0). To fill out the scale: U.S. representatives (5); statewide official (4);

⁹ For the purposes of calculating this mean: all ‘0’ values were excluded, as this signifies that no incumbent senator or representative is running.

state legislator (3); and local elected officials (2). Bardwell's (Bardwell 2003, 298-9) modification was to penalize former office holders one point, reflecting their decline in visibility. These data were collected in the process of looking up news articles, through Google news, on every candidate as a part of the Tea Party candidate identification process.

To calculate the relative quality of Tea Party candidates, the candidate quality of each Tea Party candidate was subtracted from the highest non-Tea Party candidate's quality. The resulting variable ranged from -6, the lowest level of relative candidate quality, to 6, the highest. For example, the relative candidate quality for Clint Moser was -6, because he ran against Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL), whose quality value was 6, and had never held political office. Clint Moser's candidate quality value of 0 is subtracted from Senator Shelby's of 6; the result of the subtraction, or Clint Moser's relative quality value, is -6.

Given the lop-sided ideological make-up of Tea Party supporters, it follows logically that the ideology of the relevant electorate has an impact on the electoral outcomes of Tea Party candidates. The problem that must be confronted for this study is that not only do I need the ideology of just the Republican voters in a state, but I also need to have a measure that is consistent across all 36 states in my data set. This second requirement is what forced me to abandon my first data source, 2008 Republican presidential primary exit polls, which were unavailable for many states. In order to get a measure that was consistent across all the states that I needed, I looked to the 2008 general election exit polls. These data were all collected from the Roper Center, and I used their online statistical

analysis tools to get the relevant cross-tabulation, political party by ideology, from each state's exit poll data set (National Election Pool 2008). However, there was an additional problem with these data, the general election exit polls had respondents self-identify on a 3-point ideological scale. This is in contrast to the primary exit polls, which utilized a 5-point ideological scale. The reason this presents a problem is that if the measure is simply Republicans who identify themselves as 'conservative', there is not much opportunity for the different degrees of ideological leaning to be accounted for. Essentially, too many Republicans identify themselves as 'conservative', so that when a 3-point scale is used there is not substantial enough variation to use this value to validly measure the concept outlined in the fourth hypothesis.

Support by external allies of the Tea Party is provided through those allies' independent expenditures and endorsements. The first problem with operationalizing this concept is the difficulty of collecting accurate information on outside group spending in primary races; where data are available, they typically have all expenditures grouped by election cycle and expenses are not differentiated between primary and general elections. Additionally, it can be extremely difficult to track independent expenditures because of the accounting practices of these groups, this was especially true after the Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), which made it even easier for external groups to participate in electoral politics. It has been reported that many well known groups' advertisements and expenditures, which were

reported by private citizens that saw the results of the expenditures,¹⁰ did not match up to their disclosures (Beckel 2010a). Furthermore, expenditures by external allies often coincide with endorsements by that same ally or with endorsements from other external allies who are ideologically consistent with each other (Beckel 2010b). Accordingly, support by the Tea Party's external allies can be operationalized through a measure of the number of endorsements a particular candidate receives.

Of all independent political entities¹¹ that were actively involved in the 2010 elections, there are four that had a significant national presence in Republican primaries: The Tea Party Express, FreedomWorks, Sarah Palin, and Senator Jim DeMint's (R-SC) Senate Conservatives Fund PAC. The endorsements were collected from news sources or, when available, press releases from the entities themselves.¹² For Sarah Palin, endorsements were collected from the Washington Post's "Palin Endorsements Tracker" (Stanton et al. 2010). It is important to note that the date the endorsements were given is also significant because any endorsements made after the primary election are not pertinent to this study, such as Sarah Palin's endorsement of Sharron Angle that occurred about five weeks after the Nevada Senate primary. The variable used to represent this concept is the total number of endorsements, which ranges from 0 to 4.

The popularity of the Tea Party in a given state can be measured through

¹⁰ I.e.: TV commercials, mail pieces, etc.

¹¹ Those entities that are not affiliated with any particular candidate

¹² A spreadsheet of endorsements and their sources is available upon request.

polls conducted by Rasmussen Reports, in the summer and fall of 2010 (Rasmussen Reports 2010). Respondents, in these Rasmussen polls, were given three choices to the question of whether they consider themselves a part of the Tea Party movement: 'yes', 'no', or 'not sure'. This variable's value will be drawn from the percentage of respondents who answered 'yes'.

To operationalize the campaign spending of Tea Party candidates I faced a few hurdles. First, since primaries are at different dates around the country I was unsure of how to get a measure of spending that would be consistent across all of my observations. This was overcome by using the pre-primary reports every campaign is required to submit to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) about a week prior to their primary. These reports were available through the FEC's website and its "2010 House and Senate Elections Campaign Finance Map" (<http://www.fec.gov/>). To ensure consistency, I used the net operating expenditures from "Column B," or election cycle-to-date. The second hurdle in getting a valid measure of campaign spending is the drastic difference between the costs of campaigning in different states, such as Iowa and California, which is tied to the wide variation in state populations. This may seem to be solvable by a straightforward fix of adjusting spending as a factor of population, however this would fail to account for the many relatively fixed costs of a political campaign, such as campaign staff and political consultant payrolls and polling (Abramowitz 1988, 388-9). Accordingly, my measure must account for both the fixed and dynamic nature of political campaign expenditures; in order to do this, I will use a ratio as the measure for campaign spending. This ratio will be the Tea Party

candidate's spending, divided by the average amount spent by all candidates in the same primary. Through this measure, I will be able to compare spending by Tea Party candidates across all of the 36 states in my data set.

I will also need to include variables to control for the total number of candidates running, because as more candidates are in a primary, it logically follows that the vote-share of each individual ought to decrease. Additionally, it is necessary to control for whether an incumbent is in the race, which is already accomplished through the dummy variables representing the incumbent's ideology. This control variable is necessary because of the significant effects that the advantages of incumbency can have on primary election outcomes, which was discussed in the literature review.

In conducting the empirical analysis, my choices for statistical tests are limited due to the nature of my dependent variables. For the first data set, for which the unit of analysis is each Tea Party candidate and the dependent variable is a ratio-level measure, I will use an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis. For the second data set, for which the unit of analysis is the Republican Senate primary, I am restricted to conducting a logistic regression analysis because of the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable. This is because an OLS regression will not restrict the output of the dependent variable to the extremely limited range of a dichotomous variable, 0 and 1, and could generate regression coefficients that predict a change in the dependent variable that is not possible. Accordingly, logistic regression should be used because instead of its coefficients representing a predicted change in the dependent variable, as in an

OLS regression, they represent the change in probability that the dependent variable will shift between its two values.

Analysis

Both of the data sets in this study examine the results of the 2010 Republican Senate primaries and the impact of the following independent variables: each state's level of Tea Party support; the ideology of the Republican electorate; the number of endorsements; the Tea Party candidate's spending as a ratio to the average amount spent by candidates in the same primary; and the relative candidate quality of the Tea Party candidate.

Variables' Summary Statistics

The variables will first be discussed in relation to the Tea Party candidate data set. Although the variables are fairly consistent across both data sets, some differences exist; those differences will be addressed after the variables from the first data set are discussed.

[Table 1 goes here]

The level of support for the Tea Party in each state, collected from Rasmussen Reports, ranges from 14% to 33%, with a mean of 23% and a standard deviation of 4.5%. What is striking about these data is that among those states whose Tea Party support is 14% are Vermont and Hawaii, two states where the Tea Party was victorious. This potential flaw in my hypothesis will be fully addressed in the discussion of the results, after the OLS regression.

The measure of a state's Republican electorate's ideology was derived from

an exit-poll question, which used a three-point scale¹³ for respondents to self-identify an ideological leaning. The variable's value is the percentage of Republican respondents that identified themselves as 'conservative'. The mean value is 64% and the standard deviation is 5.6%. Given that the range of values is from 49% to 74%, the relatively small size of the standard deviation demonstrates how little variance exists across the states, lending serious reservations as to the validity and value of this measure. However, as previously discussed in the research design, this measure was used because it was the best available measure to operationalize this concept.

Both the variable representing the total number of endorsements and the relative experience of the Tea Party candidates varies widely among the observations. This relatively wide dispersion is demonstrated by the relative experience variable's mean of -1.48 and standard deviation of 3.25, on a scale ranging from -6 to 6. A similarly wide dispersion is demonstrated by the number of endorsements variable, which has a range of 0 to 4, a mean of 0.76 and a standard deviation of 1.18. Interestingly, if all races where no endorsements were made are excluded, the variable's mean is 2.06 and the standard deviation is 1.03. This indicates that even among races where at least one endorsement was made, there still exists significant variability, which means that overall a tendency did not exist where all four of the endorsing parties would follow each others lead and all get behind a particular candidate. There were instances where all four endorsed the same candidate, such as in the case of Marco Rubio (FL), but that is

¹³ 'Liberal', 'Moderate', or 'Conservative'

the exception rather than the rule.

Campaign spending by Tea Party candidates is measured as a ratio of the Tea Party candidate's spending, to the average amount spent by all candidates in the same primary. This allows for a straightforward comparison between races with very different political fiscal realities, such as Iowa and Connecticut. The mean for this variable is 0.95 and the standard deviation is 1.04, indicating that Tea Party candidates' spending varies widely, even when considered as a ratio to control for significant regional differences.

[Table 2 goes here]

Two variables are slightly different in the state-level data. First, the total number of endorsements is the total number for all candidates in a particular primary. Second, the campaign spending by Tea Party candidates ratio uses the highest spending by any Tea Party candidate in that primary, compared to the average spending by a candidate in that same primary.

Some of the variables' descriptive statistics differ enough from those in the Tea Party candidate set that the new values need to be discussed. The mean of the total number of endorsements has increased to 1.08 and the standard deviation has also grown larger, to 1.34, indicating a wider dispersion of the variable. The mean of the relative experience of Tea Party candidates has also decreased, to -2, which makes sense given that the state-level data set includes unopposed incumbents that would skew the average toward -6. Similarly, the spending ratio's mean has also decreased, which is accounted for by those primaries where a Tea Party candidate is not running and therefore are not included in the first

data set but are included in the second.

OLS Regression: Tea Party Candidate Data Set

The variable representing the ideology of the Republican primary electorate was dropped from this analysis in light of both the results of an OLS regression that included it and serious reservations concerning the validity of the measure. These concerns were previously addressed, in the Research Design and the descriptive statistics; however, the main culprit is the 3-point scale that was used to identify ideology. That small scale is not very good at distinguishing among Republican voters, as the percentage of Republicans that self-identified as ‘conservative’ was too consistent across the states. The results from the regression including the measure of ideology support the conclusions reached above concerning the measure’s validity and utility. The regression coefficient for a state’s Republican electorate’s ideology was only 0.08 and its p-value was 0.89. These results demonstrate that as the measure currently exists, it is not useful to this analysis. Accordingly, the following OLS and logistic regressions were run excluding the ideology variable.

In order to test the Tea Party candidate data set, I will estimate the model using an OLS regression analysis. This model can be summarized as follows:

$$TPVS = b_0 + b_1TPS + b_2END + b_3EXP + b_4\$R + b_5MINC + b_6CINC + b_7\#CAN + e$$

Where TPVS is the Tea Party candidate’s vote-share; TPS is the level of Tea Party support in a given state; END is the total number of endorsements a particular candidate has received; EXP is the relative experience of a Tea Party candidate; \$R is the ratio of the amount spent by a Tea Party candidate to the average

spending in that candidate's primary; MINC is a dummy variable representing whether a 'moderate' incumbent or establishment-backed representative is in the primary; CINC is a dummy variable representing 'conservative' for the same individuals as MINC; #CAN is a control variable for the number of candidates in the primary.

[Table 3 goes here]

The results for the Tea Party candidate model are presented in table 3. All of the estimated coefficients, except the level of Tea Party support within a state, are in the expected direction and therefore a one-tailed test for statistical significance will be used for all variables, except Tea Party support. Given the one-tailed test and an alpha of 0.05, all but two of the coefficients are statistically significant. When the two-tailed test for significance is applied to the level of Tea Party support, it is also determined to be statistically significant. The overall fit of the model is surprisingly high, given the small number of observations, with a adjusted R² of 0.58; this model explains about 58% of the variance in the vote-share of Tea Party candidates.

According to the results of my regression, the most significant independent variables are those that are candidate specific: the Tea Party candidate's total number of endorsements, the candidate's relative level of experience, and the candidate's spending (as a ratio to the average from their primary). All three of these variables are statistically significant, at the 0.01 level.

The results for the variable representing a candidate's relative level of experience validate an assumption I made while constructing my variables. That

assumption was that when the levels of experience among candidates, both Tea Party and non-Tea Party, vary among the primary races to the extent that they did, relative experience is of higher significance than a candidate's level of experience in and of itself.

As expected, the total number of endorsements a candidate receives is a powerful independent variable, with a p-value of less than 0.001 and an estimated coefficient of 9.64. The size of this coefficient is not surprising because this variable is not just reflecting endorsements and support from the endorsing entities' supporters, but also the independent expenditures that these organizations often back-up their endorsements with. For example, not only did the Tea Party Express spend \$550,000 in support of Joe Miller in the Alaska Republican Senate primary, but in the four days before the election was able to raise \$156,000 for him through a "money bomb" among its supporters (MacColl 2010).

The most interesting result of my OLS regression analysis is the estimated coefficient for the level of Tea Party support within a state. Surprisingly, as the level of support for the Tea Party within a state increases, a Tea Party candidate's vote-share actually decreases. When this coefficient is considered with the size of the variables range, which is 19 (14%-33%), one can see that the impacts of this coefficient are more significant than one would initially be led to believe given that it is just -1.19. Accordingly, if there were two states and Tea Party candidates where all other variables were held constant but the level of Tea Party support was 10% higher in one, the Tea Party candidate in the state with the higher level

of Tea Party support would get about 12% less of the vote-share, a substantial impact.

The control variable for the number of candidates satisfied a one-tailed test for statistical significance and behaved as expected; as the number of candidates in a primary increases, the Tea Party candidate's vote-share takes a modest hit.

The two dummy variables representing the ideology of incumbents or establishment-backed representatives were not statistically significant, although the estimated coefficients are in the predicted direction. The coefficients imply that if a moderate incumbent is in the race, the vote-share of a Tea Party candidate would increase; alternatively, if a conservative incumbent is in the race, the Tea Party candidate's vote-share ought to suffer. However, I was surprised at how small the coefficient was for conservative incumbents, I had expected the presence of a conservative incumbent to have a near-calamitous affect on Tea Party candidates. The lack of statistical significance for these variables is not discouraging when one considers that there are a total of 46 observations, while there are only 7 and 6 observations, respectively, whose value is 1, or 'yes', for these variables. Given the small number of observations that are affirmative for both of these dichotomous variables, all that can be concluded from these results is that with a larger data set statistically significant results might be attained.

Logistic Regression: State-level Data Set

To analyze the state-level data set, logistic regression analysis must be used because of the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable, which is whether or not a Tea Party candidate won the primary.

[Table 4 goes here]

The results for the state-level data are presented in table 4. Only one variable is statistically significant, the total number of endorsements made in a particular primary. Also, the logistic regression coefficient is positive, indicating that if all other independent variables are held constant, as the total number of endorsements in a particular primary increases, the probability that a Tea Party candidate would be victorious in that primary also increases. All of the other variables are not statistically significant. Even though all but one of the variables failed the test for statistical significance, interestingly the regression's pseudo- R^2 is 0.6. This pseudo- R^2 implies that the proposed independent variables are relevant to understanding the probability that a Tea Party candidate wins a primary; this becomes interesting when the measure of fit is juxtaposed to the lack of statistical significance for the results for each variable.

The important implication to draw from this logistic regression is that when the unit of analysis is the primary election, the proposed variables fail to accurately predict the election's outcome.

Discussion and Conclusion

The outcomes of the two separate statistical analyses stand in stark contrast to each other. The OLS regression results not only demonstrated statistical significance for all but two variables, but also explained a substantial proportion of the variance in the electoral results of Tea Party candidates. Alternatively, the logistic regression did not garner many significant results; with only one variable deemed statistically significant, no strong conclusions can be drawn directly from the logistic model.

When the results of both regressions are considered together, they suggest a general conclusion, which is that the success of Tea Party candidates has little to do with the characteristics of the state and is most reflective of the individual race and candidate characteristics.

An additional interesting characteristic about these results is that the relationship between a state's level of Tea Party support and the Tea Party candidate's vote-share is negative, the opposite of the hypothesized positive relationship. I believe that the theory behind my hypothesis was sound and that the problem lies in the measure. First, recollect that this measure was derived from a series of statewide polls and measures the level of Tea Party support among the electorate as a whole, but what is relevant to this study is the level of Tea Party support among the Republican electorate. Furthermore, the negative findings are not surprising because of states such as Delaware and Hawaii, where Tea Party support is at the nationwide low of 14% but Tea Party candidates were nonetheless victorious. The theoretical argument is that in those states where Tea

Party support is low, the Republican base is also extremely small. Therefore, because Tea Party supporters typically consist almost entirely of Republicans (Abramowitz 2010b, 9-10), in states with a small Republican base, the Tea Party supporters make up a very large share of GOP primary voters.

This concept is clearer when a state from the other end of the spectrum of Tea Party support is considered, such as Indiana. Although in Indiana, 31% of respondents consider themselves part of the Tea Party, Tea Party candidates fared worse than in Delaware or Hawaii. Drawing from the above contentions, I would argue that because the Republican base is substantially larger in Indiana than in Delaware, the power of that 31% to affect primary outcomes is much more diluted than the ability of the 14% in Delaware to achieve the same.

This analysis of the determining factors in Republican primary outcomes for Tea Party candidates represents a contribution to the field of political science, as no similar study has been completed. However, this thesis is merely a first step and, as could be expected, there were some methodological obstacles in this study, it is my hope that they are overcome in future studies. First, the number of observations was limited due to the relatively new nature of the Tea Party. After one or two more election cycles a larger set of data will be available that will allow for a more substantial analysis. Second, two measures in particular need to be improved, state Tea Party support and the ideology of the Republican primary electorate. The flaws in the state Tea Party support data are discussed above, but the most important fix that can be made is to get a measure of Tea Party support only among Republicans. The main flaw in the ideology data is that it was

recorded on too compressed a scale. A measure of Republicans who consider themselves 'conservative', as opposed to 'liberal' or 'moderate', will not paint an accurate picture of the diversity in degrees of conservative ideology present in the Republican Party, or provide for enough variance between the states so that distinctions can be identified among them.

In conclusion, the results support my third, fifth, and sixth hypotheses, concerning a positive causal relationship between a Tea Party candidate's vote-share and all three of the following independent variables: the level of support by external allies, the level of spending by Tea Party candidates, and the relative candidate quality of Tea Party candidates. Meanwhile, my results indicate that the direction of my first hypothesis was incorrect and that a negative causal relationship exists between the level of Tea Party support in a state and a Tea Party candidate's vote-share. This was addressed above and I am not prepared to reject my hypothesis outright, I believe that if the recommended methodological improvements are made in the future, my hypothesis may yet turn out to be valid. My first hypothesis joins the second in the relevant results from this study being inconclusive. My fourth hypothesis had to be dropped from this analysis because of problems with the measure of a state's Republican electorate's ideology, which were also addressed above.

Looking forward to the 2012 and 2014 elections and the role the Tea Party will play, my results indicate that Tea Party success will depend on the candidates themselves and their ability to gain the support of outside groups. Even in 2010, a year that many considered a 'wave-election,' the success of Tea Party candidates

in Republican Senate primaries was not the result of nationwide or statewide trends. What my results suggest made the difference were traditional, candidate-centered, factors such as the challenger's spending, outside support, and political experience. It is possible that in future studies, when the methodological limitations outlined above are overcome, that it will be demonstrated that some state-level factors, such as the ideology of the Republican primary electorate, have an impact on the success of Tea Party candidates.

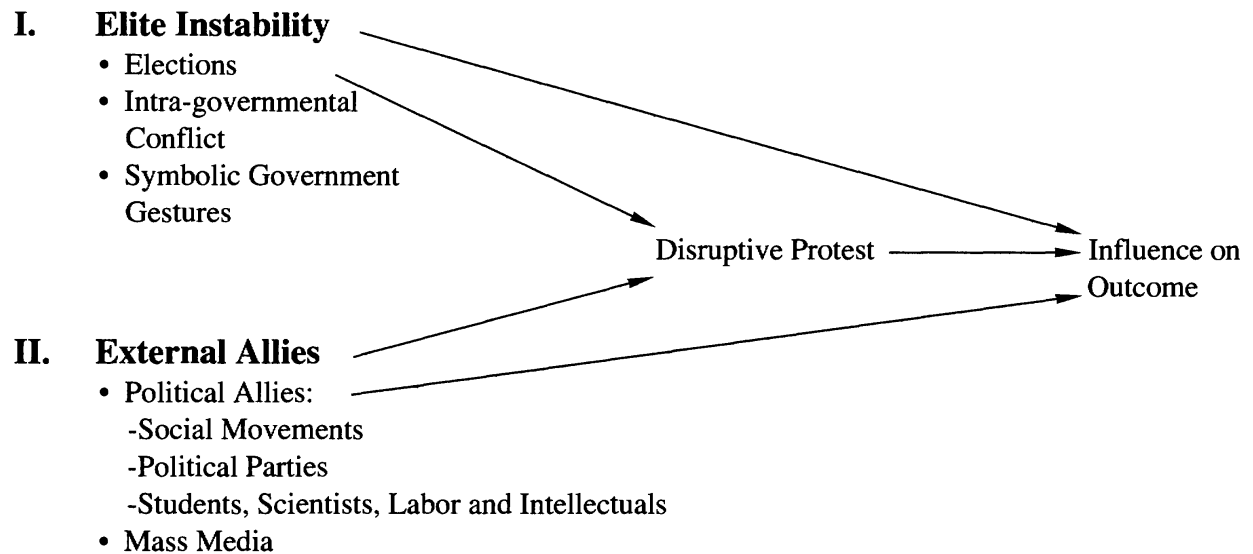
However, these results clearly demonstrate that a strong relationship exists between Tea Party candidates' electoral outcomes and candidate and election-specific characteristics; indicating that Tea Party candidates are just as likely, if not more so, to succeed in states where the Republican Party is weaker. It is important to note that the lack of importance of statewide characteristics in primaries does not hold true for general elections. This explains why Tea Party candidates such as Christine O'Donnell (DE) and Len Britton (VT) won their primaries but did not present serious challenges to their Democratic opponents, and demonstrates a potential threat posed by the Tea Party to the Republican Party. That threat has the potential to decrease the GOP's competitiveness in moderate, swing states. Unless the Republican Party addresses this problem, it could pose a threat to its long-term national viability.

This trend may have the further consequence of giving Republican incumbents up for reelection, who are afraid of a Tea Party-backed challenger, more confidence in their prospects. For, as these results demonstrate, a strategic and shrewd politician, through prolific fundraising and astute political posturing

to preclude an opposing endorsement, can often overcome the central forces in a Tea Party victory without extreme difficulty. However, further studies are needed before the full scope of the factors in Tea Party candidates' success can be definitively understood; until that day, there will be nervous Republican incumbents.

Figures

Figure 1: Two Dimensions of the Dynamic Elements of Political Opportunity



(Almeida and Stearns 1998, 42)

Disruptive Protest ~ Contentious Collective Action

Tables

Table 1: Tea Party Candidate Data – Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
State TP Support	22.96	4.54
State Republican Ideology	63.61	5.63
Total Number of Endorsements	0.76	1.18
Candidate Quality Difference	-1.48	3.25
Spending Ratio	0.95	1.04
Number of Candidates	5.80	3.98

Table 2: State-level Data – Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
State TP Support	23.28	5.17
State Republican Ideology	63.30	5.66
Total Number of Endorsements	1.08	1.34
Candidate Quality Difference	-2.00	3.54
Spending Ratio	0.88	1.16

Table 3: OLS Regression Analysis for Tea Party Candidate Model
Unit of Analysis: Individual Tea Party Candidates

Independent Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio	Probability Levels
State TP Support ¹	-1.19	0.57	-2.11	0.041
Total Number of Endorsements	9.64	2.17	4.44	0.000
Candidate Quality Difference	2.73	1.04	2.61	0.007
Spending Ratio	6.49	2.57	2.52	0.008
Moderate Incumbent	6.50	9.04	0.72	0.239
Conservative Incumbent	-1.64	7.60	-0.22	0.4155
Number of Candidates	1.41	0.76	-1.84	0.037
Constant	60.14	14.79		

¹=2-tailed probability test

n=46
pseudo-R² = 0.5804

Table 4: Logistic Regression Analysis for State-level Model
Unit of Analysis: Each Primary Election

Independent Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio	Probability Levels
State TP Support ¹	-0.25	0.18	-1.41	0.160
Total Number of Endorsements	1.66	0.65	2.55	0.006
Candidate Quality Difference	0.30	0.27	1.10	0.1355
Spending Ratio	1.89	1.26	1.50	0.067
Moderate Incumbent	2.57	2.13	1.21	0.1135
Conservative Incumbent	1.46	2.65	0.55	0.292
Constant	1.52	3.29		

¹=2-tailed probability test

n=36
Pseudo-R²=0.6018

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