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Persuasive Action and Ideological Polarization in Congress

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ABSTRACT

What drives polarized voting in Congress? This article develops a persuasive action model which argues that polarization in Congress depends on the assertive capacities of social movements, the vulnerability of political officials, and the partisanship of the environments they represent. Using multilevel analyses, I demonstrate that endorsements by the Tea Party movement influenced an increase in extreme (conservative) voting among legislators in the 112th Congress. These effects are strongest for vulnerable, freshman legislators representing amenable Republican contexts.

KEYWORDS: polarization; Congress; social movements; endorsements; mobilization.

American politics has become increasingly polarized. Although most voters are moderate in their political orientations (Baldassarri and Bearman 2007; DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; King 1997), the U.S. Congress is now characterized by ideological homogeneity *within* each of the two major parties, which has created a gulf *between* them (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; DiMaggio et al. 1996; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2009). Scholars often define polarization as the distance between the average ideological (liberal to conservative) voting for each party (Poole and Rosenthal 2007). Yet, the growth in this distance, over time, has resulted from increasingly partisan or party-line voting (Hetherington 2009; Persily 2015).

Scholars studying polarization have identified various factors that contribute to polarized voting behavior in Congress. One explanation for extreme partisan voting in Congress is gerrymandering – the partisan redistricting of communities in a way that results in legislators representing ideologically homogenous districts. While some scholars argue that this process emboldens legislators to pursue more partisan policy goals and engage in partisan voting (Barber and McCarty 2015; Jacobson 2015), others reject this explanation, as it cannot explain polarization in the Senate, or in House delegations from single, at-large districts (Barber and McCarty 2015). Alternatively, while we might

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expect high levels of moderate voting from legislators representing competitive, non-gerrymandered districts, data suggest that these heterogenous districts exhibit *more* extreme partisan voting[1] (McCarty et al. 2009).

One understudied mechanism for the growth in polarized voting within Congress is the role of interest groups or social movement organizations. Polarization may, in fact, reflect legislators' increased attention to partisans or activist groups rather than centrist voters (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). To what extent have social movement organizations affected polarization in Congress? Scholars studying the political impacts of social movements tend to focus on stages of policymaking, such as agenda-setting (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; McAdam and Su 2002; Soule and King 2006), passage (Amenta 2006; Amenta, Caren, and Olasky 2005; Burstein and Hirsh 2007; Gillion 2012), and implementation (Andrews 2001). While important, this work tends to overlook the overall behavior of legislators, irrespective of whether or not specific bills beneficial to the movement (and its constituents) were passed or the level of implementation of those bills. I advance this line of inquiry by identifying social movement action as a key mechanism in the polarization voting behavior in Congress.

I develop a persuasive action model that identifies the assertive capacities of social movements, coupled with the partisanship of the contexts within which they operate and the vulnerability of political actors who represent those contexts, as a mechanism for polarized voting in Congress. At a general level, disruptive activities, such as rallies or protests, increase attention to social movement issues (Amenta 2006; Cress and Snow 2000; McAdam 1982, 1983; McAdam and Su 2002; Piven and Cloward 1977; Snow et al. 1998) and are informative of constituent opinion by signalling the size and spread of grievances amongst voters (Gillion 2012; McAdam and Su 2002). Additionally, social movements with strong infrastructures are more likely to be granted legitimacy in political relations, which makes their actions seem increasingly informative to political officials (Andrews 2001, 2004; Skocpol 2003; Staggenborg 1988). Assertive actions, such as endorsements of politicians (Amenta 2006), serve to publicize a movement's support as well as outline expectations for political officials. Yet, these endorsements are increasingly persuasive to officials when the movement perceived as representative of constituent concerns – that is, organizations with strong infrastructures and that engage high degrees of disruptive activity are more likely to be seen as legitimate and have their concerns and assertive actions taken seriously (Vann 2018). Moreover, the effects of endorsements are stronger for political officials who are less established and therefore increasingly vulnerable to being persuaded by activists to use their votes in exchange for constituent support. As such, these legislators may be more likely to vote in ways sympathetic to the movement, no matter how extreme, out of fear of losing the support of the movement's constituents (Gelman and King 1990; Mayhew 1974).

Given the recency of empirical focus on the political impact of social movements, we know little about their influence on legislative behavior.[2] Understanding the polarization of votes by members of Congress is important in its own right because the outcome has implications for changes in or development of policies that affect millions of Americans. For example, polarization driven by one party, when combined with a congressional majority for that party, can increase the ease with which partisan policy decisions are made, at the expense of the goals of the opposing party and the interests of the millions of politically-moderate Americans (e.g., Senate Republicans' refusal to consider President Obama's 2016 nomination of Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court but rapid confirmation of three Supreme Court nominees between 2017 and 2020). Importantly, polarized voting, resulting from movement action, may also signal Congress' openness to actualizing future social movement or partisan demands (Kingdon 1981, 1984).

In this article, I shed light on the relationship between social movements and the ideological polarization of Congress by investigating congressional members' voting during the first term of the Obama presidency. Some scholars have noted that the growing distance in voting between parties

1 See Andrews and Seguin (2015) for examples within ethnic competition theory.

2 See McAdam and Su (2002) for a notable exception.

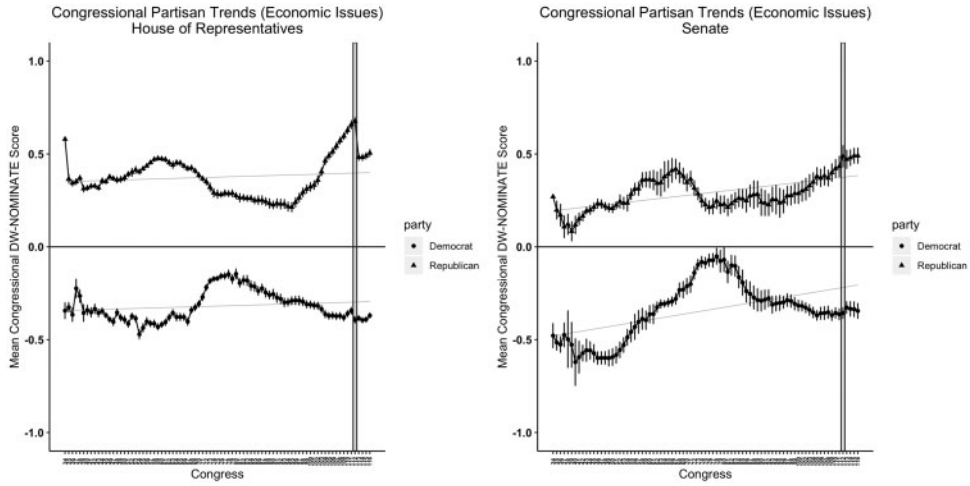

Figure 1. Mean Partisan Voting by Congress

has been asymmetric, with Republican legislators shifting further from the center – their voting becoming more extreme – than that of Democrats. As such, I use multilevel models to examine the influence of the Tea Party movement's action on polarized voting by members of Congress. As seen Figure 1, the 112th Congress (2011–2013) exhibited an apex of polarization when compared to the last 100 years. Why did some legislators engage in extreme partisan voting, and what role did the Tea Party movement play? Moreover, to what extent do these impacts vary by the (dis)advantage of some legislators, as well as the partisan contexts within which the movement operated?

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND CONGRESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

Polarized (extreme partisan) voting in Congress has become increasingly common (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Kingdon 1989; Page and Shapiro 1983) and incentives to engage in voting along the poles of partisanship are rooted in politicians' hopes for reelection (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). Why do some congressional members vote along partisan lines while others do not? One explanation is that the diminishing role of parties in the nominating process has forced candidates' campaigns to increasingly rely on a cadre of extreme partisan supporters and activists for donations and volunteer work (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Walker 1991). As a result, these campaigns have become increasingly partisan and candidate-centered (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Kingdon 1989), which has bolstered candidates' presumed freedom to pursue their own policy goals or policies that align with the interests of their partisan supporters (Mayhew 1974).

Political sociologists, for their part, have focused on the impact of activists on the political process. Scholars argue that social movements can influence politics through various means, including their disruptive capacity (Gillion 2012; McAdam and Su 2002) as well as the presence of an organizational infrastructure (Andrews 2004). Disruptive actions such as protests serve as signals that provide politicians with information about constituent preferences (Gillion 2012; Lohmann 1993; Vann 2018; Wouters and Walgrave 2017), which can potentially shape future legislative agendas (Andrews and Caren 2010; Amenta, Caren, and Stobaugh 2012; McAdam and Su 2002; Soule and King 2006) when political officials correctly recognize, interpret, and act on these signals (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Baumgartner and Mahoney 2005; Downs 1957; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). Yet, protest alone is rarely enough to influence politics (Amenta 2006; Soule et al. 1999). Social movement organizations with strong infrastructures – leadership, resources, and a dispersed network of members –

may be better equipped to employ multiple mechanisms for influence in politics (Andrews 2001, 2004) and have the advantage of being taken seriously by political officials (Andrews 2004).

Some scholars, however, question the impact of social movements on politics, arguing that social movements have, at best, indirect or mediated impacts on political change (Amenta 2006; Burstein 1998; Burstein and Linton 2002). Amenta (2006), for example, argues that social movements' impact on political change is shaped by the political environments in which they are embedded. Specifically, by engaging in assertive political action – actions that threaten the prerogatives of political officials or those that alter the likelihood political actors will "[gain] or [keep] something they see as valuable" (Amenta et al. 2005:521), such as their positions – social movements force those actors to consider the electoral consequences of not granting a movement's demands. In practice, assertive political action includes (but is not limited to) endorsing challenger candidates as well as fielding candidates for office[3] (Amenta 2006; Amenta et al. 2005; McVeigh, Myers, and Sikkink 2004). This line of inquiry typically focuses on how the endorsement of a challenger serves to alter the calculus of an incumbent, such that incumbents who were "previously opposed come to support . . . measures that benefit the [social movement]" (Amenta et al. 2005:522). While this work tends to focus on the passage or failure of specific pieces of legislation, it does not empirically investigate the effect of assertiveness (specifically, endorsement), on those political actors who are endorsed. Moreover, this work also fails to identify why assertive action, directed at certain candidates (and not others), results in polarized or partisan voting behavior in Congress. Finally, work that gives explicit attention to the impact of political environments on the relationship between movement action and political outcomes (Amenta 2006), has, only recently, investigated right-wing mobilization (McVeigh, Cunningham, and Farrell 2014; McVeigh and Estep 2019; McVeigh et al. 2004), and often overlooks voting behavior in Congress as an outcome.

To be sure, recent research has investigated the impact of the Tea Party movement. Yet, this work has centered on the impact of Tea Party protests on 1) future movement outcomes – including subsequent growth in Tea Party protestors, organizers, and PAC donations; 2) conservative public opinion; and 3) 2010 voting behavior in the U.S. House of Representatives (Madestam et al. 2013; Miller and Walling 2012), or on backlash voting in the U.S. Senate (Vann 2018). Importantly, while Madestam et al. (2013) investigate conservative voting[4] in the U.S. House of Representatives, they do so by focusing squarely on the effect of Tea Party rallies, which ignores that movements have many sorts of action available at their disposal, that these actions can affect responses in the form of both conservative and liberal voting, and in particular, extreme partisan voting, in both the House and the Senate.

To this end, I elaborate a persuasive action model that attributes polarized voting behavior by members of Congress, in part, to the assertive capacities of social movements, and argue that these effects are more or less persuasive based on the 1) vulnerability (e.g. non-incumbency, challenger disadvantage) of members of Congress to movement demands and 2) the partisanship of the environments within which these movements operate.

PERSUASIVENESS: ASSERTIVE ACTION, LEGISLATOR (DIS)ADVANTAGE, AND THE PARTISAN ENVIRONMENT

The goal of re-election forces politicians to attend to the political positions of their constituents (Downs 1957), which requires attention to the various signals about public opinion. Work in political science, however, has demonstrated that politicians do not slavishly focus on public opinion, nor do they adjust their attitudes based on fluctuations in public opinion (Baumgartner and Jones 1993;

3 Amenta et al. (2005) also highlight how direct democratic devices such as the ballot initiative, referendum, and the recall serve a similar purpose

4 These data come from the American Conservative Union. Each legislator is given an ACU score, which is based on roll-call votes on specific conservative bills.

Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). To that end, many political officials may perceive social movement activity as signaling information about the policy preferences of their constituents (Andrews 2004; Gillion 2012; McAdam and Su 2002; Vann 2018). Social movements, through various sorts of action, can gain the attention of policy-makers (and the public) and raise awareness of their issues and claims. Yet these signals, by way of protest or the presence of organizations, often fail to result in policy change. Moreover, many members of Congress who are sympathetic to the goals of a social movement may not be sufficiently motivated to bear the costs of aligning with the movement – particularly with respect to their own voting behavior (Downs 1957; Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995).

Amenta's work (2006) is particularly instructive and draws attention to how assertive political action – actions that threaten the prerogatives of established political actors – by politically-oriented challengers, can affect political outcomes. Endorsements by social movements, for example, are particularly relevant for congressional partisanship for several reasons. Endorsements require strong organizational infrastructures (Andrews 2001, 2004) with differentiated leadership, members, and resources, all of which enable the coordination of decisions about whom to support. To the extent that activist groups engage in endorsements, these activities signal the strength of the underlying infrastructure, as well as the professionalization and resource capacity of the movement (Staggenborg 1988). Electoral activity can enhance politicians' and the public's perception of a social movement as a legitimate institutional political actor (Amenta et al. 2005; Amenta, Caren, and Tierney 2015; Clemens 1997; Edwards and McCarthy 2004). By first having strong infrastructures and employing disruptive action, social movement organizations can develop an electoral infrastructure that enables them to engage in assertive or institutional political action with which to hold politicians accountable. This argument is in line with scholarship regarding the ways in which social movements impact politics (Amenta 2006; McAdam and Kloos 2014). Assertive political actions by challenging groups threaten the prerogatives of institutional actors (Amenta 2006) by increasing the likelihood that political actors feel threatened by the possibility of losing their positions (Amenta et al. 2010; Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein 1994), which can result in policy concessions to the movement.

While endorsements by social movement organizations potentially limit politicians' freedom to pursue their own policy preferences, endorsements also provide a favorable context for ideological congressional behavior by reifying an organization's threat to political officials. When social movements with strong infrastructures and disruptive capacities endorse political officials, they publicize their goals and expectations for candidates. Endorsements formalize the movement's electoral support for candidates who align with their goals. To hold politicians accountable, endorsements also serve as a threat to withhold votes from candidates who do not abide by the movement's intentions. Building on studies that demonstrate the informative scope of mobilization and protest for congressional behavior, I argue that, along similar lines, endorsements by (particularly, partisan) groups that are viewed as legitimate representatives of public opinion are increasingly persuasive to politicians because these provide information about the policy preferences of the movement's beneficiary group, political expectations of the endorsed candidate, and the electoral consequences of noncompliance. This suggests the following hypothesis:

H1: Endorsed members of Congress will engage in increasingly polarized voting.

Some political officials, however, will be more or less inclined to meet social movement demands. Scholars find that incumbents experience an "advantage," such that they encounter lower resistance from voters while in office. In fact, this incumbency advantage has increased over time (Gelman and King 1990; Mayhew 1974), which has increased legislators' willingness to pursue their own policy goals over those of partisan groups (Wittman 1983). As such, incumbency, and the lack thereof, is important for understanding whether or not assertive action by social movements is likely to be persuasive. That is, social movements are likely to have greater impacts on the behavior of politicians who lack incumbency advantages – those who are most vulnerable to the demands of extra-

institutional actors. Therefore, social movements will likely have greater impacts on the polarization of voting among freshman legislators:

H2: Endorsed freshman members of Congress will engage in increasingly polarized voting, compared to those who are unendorsed.

Polarized voting behavior that aligns with social movement goals requires politicians who are motivated to appease the movement – and some politicians are more motivated than others. Yet, polarized voting does not occur in a vacuum; it depends on the actions of the movement, characteristics of the politician, and the political contexts within which both are embedded. Although politicians do not pander to changes in public opinion, they may be more willing to engage in increasingly partisan voting behavior and pursue partisan policy goals if they represent amenable partisan environments (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). I, therefore, argue that assertive actions by social movement organizations are more or less *persuasive* given the vulnerability of a politician, as well as the partisanship of the context within which both are embedded. Put another way, vulnerable politicians, in highly partisan contexts are more motivated to engage in polarized voting that will appease a movement that has asserted on (endorsed) them. This leads to a final hypothesis:

H3: Endorsed freshman members of Congress representing favorable, Republican, partisan environments will engage in increasingly polarized voting.

THE MIDTERMS AND THE 112TH CONGRESS

The Tea Party Movement

The Tea Party movement emerged in early 2009, fueled by fears that President Obama would expand the size and reach of the federal government by continuing to provide bailouts, increasing taxes, and placing restrictions on the free market. In a televised rant opposing Obama's proposed Homeowners Affordability and Stability Plan, Rick Santelli called on Americans to hold a "tea party in July." Inspired by his call to action, partisan activists across the United States began preparing for a national Tax Day rally on April 15 of that same year (Skocpol and Williamson 2012; Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin 2011; Zernike 2010a), which was soon followed by the emergence of Tea Party organizations and subsequent rallies. The movement adhered to three principles: constitutionally-limited government, lower taxes, and an unregulated free market (Skocpol and Williamson 2012). To be sure, the Tea Party was primarily concerned with advocating a conservative economic agenda.

The Tea Party's rapid emergence resulted from top-down and bottom-up organizing, as well as favorable news coverage (Fetner and King 2014; Lo 2012; Skocpol and Williamson 2012). The emerging party gained traction due to funding from national conservative think tanks and wealthy benefactors such as Koch brothers, Americans for Prosperity, and FreedomWorks, the use of grassroots style organizing (Skocpol and Williamson 2012), and heightened media attention from conservative news outlets, especially that of the Fox News Channel (Boykoff and Laschever 2011; Skocpol and Williamson 2012; Williamson et al. 2011; Zernike 2010a). Yet, despite generous funding from wealthy donors, the movement was composed mainly of locally-based civic organizations (chapters) that operated independently (Parker and Barreto 2013; Skocpol and Williamson 2012).[5]

Tea Party supporters most strongly identified as Republican (Parker and Barreto 2013; Skocpol and Williamson 2012; Zernike 2010a), were economically well-off (and so less affected by the economic recession of 2007–2008), religious conservatives, white, and highly educated, (McVeigh, Beyerlein et al. 2014; Skocpol and Williamson 2012); they expressed resentment toward minority

5 This is not to say that people did not become celebrities or icons of the movement (e.g. Sarah Palin and Michelle Bachmann).

groups (Parker and Barreto 2013) and tended to live in areas of low unemployment and high income inequality (McVeigh, Beyerlein et al. 2014). Many supporters believed they had done all the right things in life, earned their middle class status, and therefore sought to protect what was theirs (Zernike 2010a) from a government trying to subsidize those whom Santelli called "losers" (CNBC 2009). What's more, Tea Party support derived from competing visions of who is deserving and undeserving of privilege within a democratic society (McVeigh, Beyerlein et al. 2014).

While the spread of rallies and the emergence of chapters were the result of opposition to – and hatred for – Obama (Skocpol and Williamson 2012), the Tea Party's involvement in electioneering was driven, in part, by the passage of the Affordable Care and Patient Protection Act (ACA) – or, colloquially, "ObamaCare." Some Tea Party activists feared that the ACA would lead to the abolition of Medicare, or to "death panels" (Nagourney 2009; Skocpol and Williamson 2012). As such, in the run up to the 2010 midterm election, these fears prompted Tea Party organizations to prepare for electoral bouts at state and local levels. As one Tea Party activist proclaimed, the movement's long-term goal was to "install true conservatives" (Zernike 2010a:105) into elected office. While some groups remained uninvolved (Gardner 2010), many were heavily engaged in electioneering (Zernike 2010a). Several Tea Party groups held candidate forums (Zernike 2010a:104) where they could meet and decide whether or not to endorse candidates who sought, and were deemed worthy of, the Tea Party label (Courser 2010; Miller and Walling 2012; Parker and Barreto 2013; Skocpol and Williamson 2012; Zernike 2010a). Additionally, national groups such as the Tea Party Express and FreedomWorks, which had previously "used their resources and know-how to help elect a number of candidates" (Gardner 2010:1), sought to financially back candidates in the midterm, as exemplified by the $1 million anonymous grant to the Tea Party Patriots to help local groups engage in election activities (Weigel 2010). All signs leading up to the 2010 midterm election demonstrated the Tea Party movement's shift toward assertive political action.

Legislators and Candidates Reading the Leaves

As some analysts predicted (Gardner 2010; Zernike 2010b), the Tea Party movement was somewhat successful at getting its endorsed candidates elected in 2010. Indeed, Republicans picked up a majority in the House, winning enough seats in the Senate to obstruct unilateral Democrat-backed legislation. Yet, did legislators view the 2010 election as a Tea Party-led public mandate for partisan voting behavior? Some politicians certainly saw the election as a referendum on the Obama Administration – a signal of the public's desire for a tougher, more partisan brand of conservatism.

Recent interviews with elected officials highlight the growing belief that the election was a call to action for conservative legislative behavior through partisan voting, and that the Tea Party should be taken seriously as a representative of the public. John Boehner, for example, was an early supporter. In 2009, when asked about the importance of the Tea Party, Boehner urged Republicans to "get in touch with [the movement's] efforts and connect with them" because the protestors would be "the soldiers for our cause a year from now" (Boyer 2010:1). Boehner sought to get out in front of the movement and capitalize on their reinvigoration of conservatism for the purpose of electoral gain.

Indeed, many Republicans benefitted from the movement's electoral involvement. On election night, Boehner reflected, saying "the American people's voice was heard at the ballot box" (Zeleny 2010:1), and they demanded "a new way forward in Washington" (CNN 2010:1). After her election win, Michele Bachmann stated that the Tea Party would impose its will in Congress against traditional Republicans, and that she and others would push back against the Republican leaders, in order to "stand with the people" on issues (Boyer 2010:1). In his victory speech, Rand Paul similarly reflected on the importance of the Tea Party movement, saying "the American people are not happy with what's going on in Washington. Tonight there is a Tea Party tidal wave, and we're sending a message to [Congress]. It's a message that I will carry with me on day one" (Thompson and Gardner 2010:1).

Many Republicans wanted to streamline the movement's impact on politics. Bachmann, for example, immediately formed the Tea Party Caucus to provide institutional infrastructure for pursuing the movement's goals. Some, however, had different visions about how the movement could shape the trajectory of American politics. In fact, Tea Party darling Marco Rubio chose not to join the Caucus, arguing that he wanted the movement, not politicians behind closed doors, to shape the direction of conservatism. He claimed that joining the caucus would mean that the Tea Party would no longer be a movement representing "Main Street but rather something that's happening in Washington" (Jonsson 2011:1). Likewise, Allen West, who was propelled to the House on a wave of Tea Party support, contended that the movement represented the voice of the American public. When asked about the caucus and the Tea Party's influence, he stated "this is a constitutional conservative grassroots movement. It's the American people, and I'm supposed to be up here standing up for the American people," (D'Aprile and Berman 2011:1).

Taken together, these arguments by Tea Party-backed public officials demonstrate not only that they viewed the movement as a signal of what the American people wanted, but also as a constituent group of activists formidable enough to be politically influential. The movement, thus, possessed the potential to shape policy by way persuasive action over legislators.

DATA AND METHOD

To examine the influence of social movements' persuasive action on partisan voting behavior by members of Congress, I draw on roll call data for every member of the 112th U.S. Congress. I constrain my analysis to the 112th Congress because the Tea Party's activity was targeted toward impacting politics in the short term, and by 2012, many locales across the United States no longer had Tea Party activity (Fetner and King 2014; Skocpol and Williamson 2012). Partisan voting data for each legislator come from DW-NOMINATE (Carroll et al. 2009; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 1997; Poole and Rosenthal 1997, 2007).

I use legislators as the unit of analysis, which provides comparative leverage because I can compare voting behavior across 543 unique legislators (101 Senators and 442 Representatives) from locales across the United States in the 112th Congress. After removing legislators who did not serve a full term, and cases in which demographic data (described below) are unreliable,[6] I am left with data for 95 Senators and 420 Representatives across 49 states.

For each legislator, I include demographic data for the district or state they represent which come from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2005–2009,[7] measured at the state level for Senators and the Congressional district level for members of the House. Because the dependent variable is a scale, I use multilevel linear modeling which allows me to account for clustering of politician characteristics within their respective constituencies. Specifically, I rely on a random-intercept model. The final estimation for the effect of persuasive action on polarized ideology score is captured with the following multilevel linear model:

$$\begin{aligned} PolarizedVoting_{ij} = {} & \beta_0 + \beta_1 LegislatorCharacteristics_{1ij} + \beta_2 MovementEndorsement_{2ij} \\ & + \beta_3 MovementFunding, Infrastructure, andDisruption_{3j} \\ & + \beta_4 Constituency - LevelControls_{4j} + u_{0j} + r_i \end{aligned}$$

where *Legislator Characteristics1ij* includes various characteristics for individual legislator *i* in constituency area (state or district) *j*, *Movement Endorsement2ij* is a measure of whether or not legislator *i* in constituency area *j* was endorsed by the Tea Party, *Movement Funding, Infrastructure, and Disruption3j*

6 I exclude data on legislators from Alaska, due to data limitations (Alaska does not have county equivalents but instead relies on boroughs, city-boroughs, census areas, and a large unincorporated area).

7 I use these data because they are measured prior to the emergence of the Tea Party movement and the 112th Congress.

represents a set of variables that measure additional Tea Party movement activity in area *j*, and *Constituency-Level Controls4j* represents area (level-two) controls. Importantly, u_{0j} and r_{ij} are residuals or error terms, where u_j is the level-2 residual, which is a constituency-specific error component that remains constant across legislators representing a specific constituency and r_{ij} represents an idiosyncratic error component specific to each legislator *i* within a given area *j*.[8]

The analyses below assess whether or not Tea Party activity contributes to variation in polarized voting. Importantly, complementary analyses also consider how the effects of a social movement's persuasive action on partisan voting depends on the vulnerability of politicians.

Dependent Variable

The dependent measure comes from DW-NOMINATE (Carroll et al. 2009; McCarty et al. 1997; Poole and Rosenthal 1997, 2007). DW-NOMINATE scores are "ideological position" estimates for each legislator, in a given Congress, based on their votes on all pieces of legislation in that Congress. DW-NOMINATE scores have two dimensions – the first captures a legislator's ideological position on economic issues, based on their roll-call votes related to government intervention in the economy, while the second captures their position on social issues, based on their roll-call votes related to issues like slavery (from the Civil War to the 1930s) and civil rights (from the 1930s to the 1970s).

For each dimension, scores fall within a unit circle (Euclidean space) that ranges from −1 to +1, liberal to conservative. As such, for each dimension, DW-NOMINATE scores range from −1 to +1 – scores above zero (positive scores) represent conservative ideological positions while scores below zero (negative scores) represent liberal ideological positions. Moreover, scores closer to the upper and lower bounds represent consistent partisan (extremely polarized) voting.

Poole and Rosenthal (2007) developed DW- (*Dynamic Weighted*)-NOMINATE scores, which allows for changes in incumbent legislators' scores over time. As such, scores are constrained to shift, between terms in Congress, in only one direction (e.g. positively or negatively), at a constant velocity.[9] Because of this, over time, a legislator's score may exceed the upper and lower bounds (e.g. outside the unit circle: below -1 or above +1), yet, interpretation of scores is the same as if they fell at the bounds. For example, in the 112th Congress, House member Ron Paul had an economic dimension DW-NOMINATE score of +1.361, which indicates that he voted in an extreme conservative fashion, relative to others, on bills brought before the House.

Legislators are given DW-NOMINATE estimates on two dimensions – economic issues and social issues. I select only the first dimension, and investigate the influence of the Tea Party movement on polarized voting on pieces of economic legislation, given that the Tea Party advocated primarily an economic agenda (McVeigh et al. 2014; Skocpol and Williamson 2012). Importantly, the emergence of the Tea Party movement has been linked with racist worldviews and is seen as a response to the election of America's first Black president (Parker and Barreto 2013). While the second dimension (votes on social issues) has historically captured such views – legislator positions on conflicts over slavery and civil rights – by the 1980s, Southern realignment had rendered estimates on the social dimension less valid (McCarty et al. 1997; Poole and Rosenthal 1997, 2007). As such, I exclude the second dimension from the analysis presented here.

8 It is important to note that the error components are sometimes referred to differently. For example, Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal (2012) refer to a single residual error term: ξ_{ij}, composed of two uncorrelated components ζ_j (the level 2 residual referred to as u_{0j} above, sometimes also called U_{0j}), which is error shared between all level-1 observations within a level-2 cluster and ϵ_{ij} (the level 1 residual referred to as r_{ij} above, but sometimes also called R_{ij} or e_{ij}) which is error unique to each observation. Additionally, when computing variance statistics for each level, Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal (2012) refer to level 2 variance as ψ and level 1 variance as θ, while Snijders and Bosker (2012) refer to level 2 variance as τ^2 and level 1 variance as σ^2

9 Because developing dynamic estimates for every member of Congress, over time, is computational intensive, Poole and Rosenthal (2007) set up several constraints, including only allowing shifts in scores only after a legislator has served at least five terms, the movement occurs a constant velocity – in one direction over time, and constraining scores to fall within the unit circle in the middle of their careers.

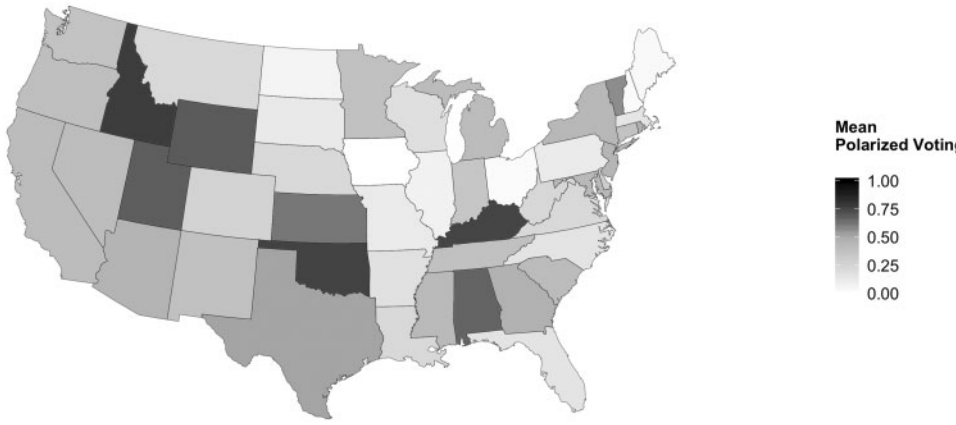

Figure 2. Mean Polarized Voting for Senators, by State

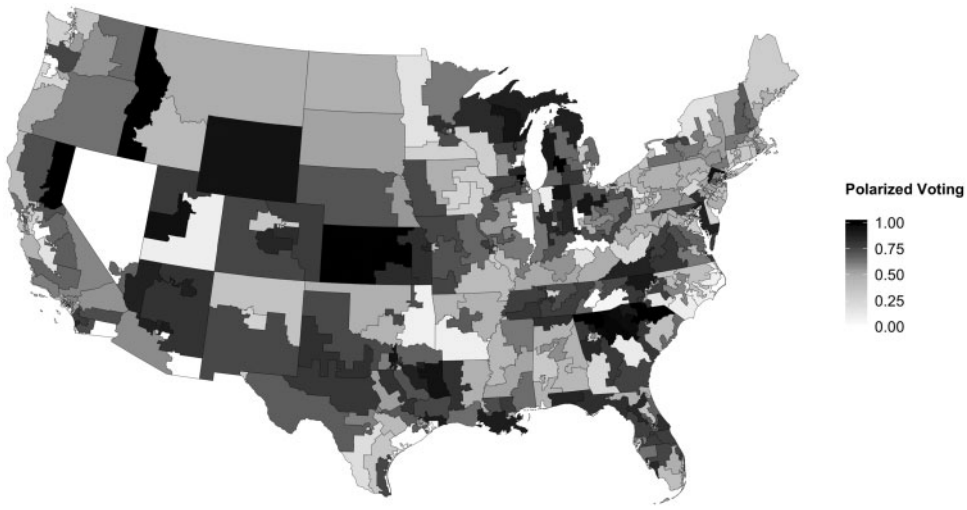

Figure 3. Polarized Voting for House Members, by Congressional District

Ultimately, because I am interested in polarization (extreme partisanship) in voting behavior, I take the absolute value of each legislator's economic dimension DW-NOMINATE score. The new score, therefore, ranges from 0 to ,[10] with higher scores representing increasingly polarized voting behavior. Figures 2 and 3, below, demonstrate the substantial variation in the degree of polarization in voting across the U.S.

Independent Variables

Legislator Characteristics. Congressional voting behavior is shaped by legislator-specific and constituency-level conditions, as well as disruptive and assertive action by social movements. I therefore construct several measures to capture these conditions. Because the ideological position of a legislator's voting is largely related to party identification, and because much of the recent polarization in Congress has been attributed to Republicans voting along party lines (Abramowitz 2011; Barber and McCarty 2015), I include a binary indicator variable to represent whether or not the

10 Unless the original score exceeds the bounds.

congressional member is Republican. To measure a legislator's non-incumbency or vulnerability, I compare data from the 112th Congress to that of the 111th Congress and construct a measure of whether or not the legislator was a freshman at the start of the 112th Congress. Campaigns require that candidates appeal to and interact with their constituents. Thus, legislators coming off a recent campaign may feel a sense of indebtedness to voters and may be more inclined to appease supports by engaging in ideological voting. As such, I create a binary variable for whether or not the legislator campaigned in the 2010 election. Finally, because gerrymandering can create politically homogeneous Congressional districts, House members may more freely pursue partisan policies by engaging in ideological voting (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). I therefore create a binary variable to represent whether or not the legislator is a member of the House of Representatives.

Social Movement Measures. As I have argued, assertive action by social movements can impact ideological polarization in legislative behavior, and these effects are increasingly persuasive for vulnerable politicians, particularly in highly partisan contexts. As the measure of assertive action, endorsements are a key component of the persuasive action model. Political science scholars have highlighted the substantial variation in endorsements across Tea Party factions (Bond, Fleisher, and Ilderton 2012; Karpowitz et al. 2011). As such, I use the *New York Times*' (2010) measurement of endorsements by various Tea Party movement factions. The data show that during the 2010 midterm elections the various factions of the Tea Party movement endorsed a total of 138 candidates (129 candidates for the House and 9 Senate candidates). Across these 138 endorsements, three were for incumbent candidates. Ultimately, 44 of these endorsed candidates were elected (five Senators and 39 members of the House).[11]

Because the Tea Party was supported by wealthy benefactors, it is important to account for whether and how the money contributed to the movement's impact on politics. Fundraising data provide insight into the degree of support (local or otherwise) experienced by the movement, as well as the amount of resources the movement had at its disposal. In line with prior work on the influence of the Tea Party (Madestam et al. 2013), I draw on data for individual contributions (limited to $5,000 per person per year) to the Our Country Deserves Better PAC – the fundraising political action committee of the Tea Party Express faction – which come from 2009–2010 campaign finance reports by the Federal Election Commission. These data are aggregated to the constituency level.

In addition, the persuasive action model predicts that organizations and disruption are important for legitimizing endorsements by social movements. Therefore, from the Insitute for Research & Education on Human Rights (2011), I include two measures: the number of Tea Party chapters and the number of Tea Party rallies in each U.S. state and Congressional district. The IREHR examined online directories of major national Tea Party faction websites and provided an exhaustive list of local organizations that belonged to one of the following factions: ResistNet, Tea Party Nation, or the Tea Party Patriots (Skocpol and Williamson 2012). These data, collected between May 1 and May 5, 2010, were geo-coded, which enables me to identify the district and state of each chapter. Importantly, because these measures occur after demographic control data from the ACS, I am able to isolate the effects of local Tea Party infrastructure on legislative behavior. The original data included 2,811 chapters distributed across 409 Congressional districts and 49 U.S. states. To deal with skewness, the variable is log-transformed.

In addition to chapters, Tea Party rallies serve as public displays of contention; they were heavily covered by media outlets (Boykoff and Laschever 2011; Skocpol and Williamson 2012), and they aim to bring together movement adherents as well as capture the attention of politicians as signals of public grievances. To measure disruption – also from IREHR – I include the number of Tea Party rallies between February 27, 2009, and April 27, 2010. In October of 2010, IREHR culled directories

11 Out of the 135 freshman candidates who were endorsed, 42 were ultimately elected. Alternatively, out of the three endorsed incumbents, two were elected.

of press accounts of Tea Party rallies and geo-coded each event. In total, there were 582 rallies spanning 377 cities. After removing cases with incorrect geo-codes, there were 573 rallies spanning 262 Congressional districts and 49 states. Tea Party rally data are substantially skewed; therefore, I take the natural log of the number of rallies plus one (see Table 1).[12]

Partisan Environments. An important component of the persuasive action model is the partisan environment that legislators represent and within which movement activities occur. It is, therefore, necessary to account for the effect of Republican party support on the voting behavior of legislators. I use data from Congressional Quarterly's *America Votes* and Polidata to measure the percent of the state or district population that voted for the Republican candidate in the 2008 presidential election, John McCain.[13]

Control Variables. Countermovement opposition to the Tea Party movement has been linked to oppositional voting (Vann 2018). Relatedly, countermovement opposition might also affect liberal voting by congressional members. I therefore use data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2008) to countermovement organizations, which is the number of nonprofit activist organizations in each state and district, registered with the Internal Revenue Service as "Civil Rights, Social Action, and Advocacy" (category R, codes 30 through 40) according to the classification scheme of the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE).[14] Because the variable is skewed, I take the natural log of the number of organizations plus one.

Given that Census data from 2000 are far removed from the Tea Party's activity and voting in the 112th Congress, I use demographic control measures from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2005–2009, both at the state and Congressional district level. Because the number of Tea Party chapters and rallies may be proportional to the size of the population, I include a measure for the natural log of the population. Since support for the Tea Party is high in places where residents are financially well-off and college-educated (McVeigh et al. 2014; Skocpol and Williamson 2012), I include measures for median family income, the percent of homes owner-occupied, and the percentage of the population 25 years of age or older with at least a bachelor's degree. Importantly, Tea Party emergence is related to fears regarding racial and economic matters (McVeigh et al. 2014; Parker and Barreto 2013). To control for these factors, I include a measure for the percent of the population that is Black, as well as the percent that is Latino. Relatedly, the Tea Party's anger towards President Obama stemmed from fear about deepening unemployment, and so I include a measure of the percentage of the population that is unemployed. Moreover, because the Tea Party's agenda is related to support for inequality more generally (McVeigh et al. 2014), I include the ACS Gini coefficient as a measure of income inequality. Supporters of the Tea Party tend to be older than non-supporters (Skocpol and Williamson 2012; Zernike 2010a). I also include a control for the median age. Finally, because many Tea Party supporters tend to be affiliated with the religious right (Skocpol and Williamson 2012), I include a measure of the percentage of the population affiliated with Evangelical denominations,

12 Importantly, because protest events vary considerably in the number of attendees, scholars have recently called for protest research to incorporate more robust measures such as protest size rather than event counts (Biggs 2016). However, Biggs (2016:24) argues that measures of protest size should only be used when reported accurately and estimated consistently. Closer examination reveals that this is not the case for IREHR's protest data. IREHR states that, where the number of attendees was unverifiable, an event is coded as having "1" participant, which accounts for nearly twenty percent (19.24%) of all events. Moreover, the remaining cases are imprecise, with most events measured in "hundreds" of attendees. It is for these reasons that using event counts is preferable to using protest size measures.

13 Polidata and CQ data exhibit slight discrepancies when aggregated to the state level. As such, I use Polidata electoral returns for Congressional districts, and CQ data for states.

14 I use activist organizations, rather than data on get-out-the-vote campaigns, expenditures due to data inconsistencies and unavailability. Tax exempt organizations with at least $5,000 in annual gross receipts are required to register with the IRS. These data include the total number of organizations that filed with the IRS within 24 months of December 2008.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables (N=515)

Statistic	*Mean*	*St. Dev.*	*Min*	*25th Pct*	*75th Pct*	*Max*
Polarized Ideology	0.541	0.221	0.032	0.386	0.716	1.361
Republican	0.544	0.499	0	0	1	1
Freshman	0.208	0.406	0	0	0	1
2010 Campaign	0.849	0.359	0	1	1	1
House of Representatives	0.816	0.388	0	1	1	1
Endorsed by Tea Party	0.085	0.280	0	0	0	1
Tea Party Endorsed Freshman	0.082	0.274	0	0	0	1
Tea Party Endorsed Incumbent	0.004	0.062	0	0	0	1
Non-Endorsed Freshman	0.126	0.332	0	0	0	1
Tea Party PAC Money Raised (1000s)	18.450	56.822	0.000	3.050	12.517	735.380
Tea Party Chapters (logged)	2.092	1.125	0.000	1.386	2.639	5.485
Tea Party Rallies (logged)	0.924	0.903	0.000	0.000	1.386	3.784
Percent Republican, 2008	45.552	13.955	5.040	37.179	55.710	76.686
Activist Organizations (logged)	2.973	1.088	0.000	2.398	3.296	6.524
Population (logged)	13.762	0.803	13.100	13.395	13.562	17.408
Median Family Income (1000s)	63.618	15.657	26.308	53.098	71.010	116.138
Percent Homeowners	67.087	10.257	7.181	64.115	73.106	85.072
Percent College	27.137	8.975	6.698	20.937	31.843	64.856
Percent Black	12.069	13.714	0.460	3.138	15.375	65.445
Percent Latino	13.865	16.240	0.723	3.409	17.384	80.861
Percent Unemployed	7.160	1.873	3.574	5.963	7.969	19.503
Income Inequality (Gini)	0.448	0.030	0.372	0.430	0.463	0.598
Median Age	36.748	3.078	25.400	35.200	38.700	47.700
Percent Evangelical	29.187	20.210	2.542	15.583	41.156	75.544

using data from the 2000 Association of Religion Data Archives.[15] Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the variables in the analysis.[16]

RESULTS

Table 2 presents multilevel linear regression estimates of polarization for all members who served a full term in the 112th Congress. In the first column, I include only individual legislator-level measures but omit the measure of endorsement by the Tea Party movement. I find that, consistent with prior work, Republicans exhibit higher levels of polarized voting in Congress, compared to others. When accounting for only legislator characteristics, Freshman members of Congress did not tend to vote in an increasingly polarized fashion. Further, having a recent campaign or being a member of the House were unrelated to the outcome.

The second column incorporates the measure of Tea Party endorsement, and shows that legislators who were endorsed by the Tea Party, net of legislator-level characteristics, exhibited increasingly polarized voting in the 112th Congress. This finding supports my claim that assertive action by the Tea Party affected polarized congressional behavior. Importantly, the introduction of endorsement pulls the House measure to significance, indicating that the endorsement measure is acting as a

15 Data from the ARDA are not measured lower than the county level. For this reason, I include these data aggregated at the state level.

16 Correlation matrix for variables available upon request.

suppressor variable for the House measure. All other variables maintain their relationship with the outcome.

Model 3 of Table 2 incorporates constituency-level measures of movement activity, including the measures of social movement PAC donations, infrastructure (chapters) and disruption (rallies), none of which are significantly related to polarization. All other variables maintain their relationship with the outcome. It is important to note, however, that for this model, the only movement activity that mattered was assertive action (endorsement) by the Tea Party.

Model 4 of Table 2 includes state and district level covariates, and includes the partisan context measure. After controlling for these (level-two) characteristics, the effect of endorsement remains as strong positive predictor of polarization in the 112th Congress. This finding further supports my argument that social movements can influence polarization in Congress through their use of assertive action (*Hypothesis 1*). By being perceived as legitimate representatives of public opinion, and possessing the ability to deliver or withdraw constituent votes, the Tea Party, through their endorsements, was able to put pressure on legislators to act in increasingly ideological ways. Importantly, as I have argued, the legitimacy to have these endorsements taken seriously by political actors depends on prior strong infrastructures as well as disruption. As we see in this model, while assertive action is important for polarized outcomes, other sorts of social movement action such as disruptive action (rallies) or infrastructure (chapters), alone, however, have little effect on polarization.

Beyond these findings, relationships between additional controls and polarization, including the findings that polarization was highest for legislators representing constituencies with higher Republican support and higher percentages of their populations that were college-educated, and higher percentages of unemployed. Alternatively, polarization was lower in places with higher levels of income inequality, and places with higher levels of homeownership. These findings are all consistent with recent work on mobilization of the Tea Party and conservative politics (McVeigh et al. 2014; Vann 2018). Moreover, these findings that polarization was higher in places with high percentages of the college-educated and high unemployment might signify left-leaning polarization, while polarization associated with homogenous incomes may represent additional drivers of right-wing polarization.

Importantly, the persuasive action model predicts that the effects of assertive action on polarization vary by both the vulnerability – lack of incumbency advantage – of a legislator (e.g. being a freshman), as well as the partisanship of the communities they represent. That is, vulnerable political actors may be persuaded to engage in increasingly partisan voting to appease strong, legitimated social movements whose endorsements they have secured, and this voting behavior should be especially strong in highly partisan contexts.

As such, Table 3 presents multilevel linear regression estimates of polarization but substitutes dummy variables to account for varying categories (assertive action by vulnerability) identified by the persuasive action model. To elucidate this relationship, and because vulnerability (being a freshman legislator) and assertive action (being endorsed) are key components of the model, I create dummy-codes for the following categories: 1) freshman legislators who were endorsed by the Tea Party, 2) incumbent legislators who were endorsed by the Tea Party, and 3) freshman legislators who were not endorsed by the Tea Party, with non-endorsed incumbents taking the place of the reference category. Table 3 presents the full model from Table 2 using the dummy-coded categories, and one model that demonstrate the moderating effect of partisanship on the relationship between these categories (assertive action by vulnerability) and polarization (Model 2) in the 112th Congress. By separating the models in this way, I am able to parse differences in effects as a function of vulnerability and assertive action on polarization as predicted by the persuasive action model, while also accounting for how these effects may or may not vary by the level of partisanship in legislators' communities. This test of moderation is exemplified through interactions, where interaction terms for partisanship (percent Republican support) is centered at its mean.

Table 2. Legislators' Polarized Voting on Economic Legislation in the 112th Congress: Multilevel Linear Model Estimates

Independent Variables	*Legislator Characteristics (1)*	*Movement Endorsement (2)*	*Movement Activity (3)*	*Constituency-Level Controls (4)*
Republican	0.284***	0.279***	0.281***	0.275***
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.022)
Freshman	0.031	−0.009	−0.010	0.007
	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)
2010 Campaign	0.036	0.034	0.028	0.031
	(0.040)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.038)
House of Representatives	0.074	0.075*	0.088*	−0.033
	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.040)	(0.057)
Endorsed by Tea Party		0.112***	0.110***	0.116***
		(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Tea Party PAC Money Raised ($1000s)			0.0002	0.0002
			(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Tea Party Chapters (logged)			−0.009	0.009
			(0.009)	(0.010)
Tea Party Rallies (logged)			0.011	0.021
			(0.012)	(0.013)
Percent Republican, 2008				0.003*
				(0.001)
Activist Organizations (logged)				−0.016
				(0.012)
Population (logged)				−0.039
				(0.026)
Median Family Income ($1000s)				−0.0005
				(0.001)
Percent Homeowners				−0.003*
				(0.001)
Percent College				0.007**
				(0.002)
Percent Black				0.001
				(0.001)
Percent Latino				0.0003
				(0.001)
Percent Unemployed				0.019**
				(0.006)
Income Inequality (Gini)				−0.909*
				(0.383)
Median Age				−0.002
				(0.003)
Percent Evangelical				−0.0005
				(0.001)
Constant	0.290***	0.292***	0.282***	1.325**
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.023)	(0.405)

(*continued*)

Table 2. Legislators' Polarized Voting on Economic Legislation in the 112th Congress: Multilevel Linear Model Estimates(continued)

Independent Variables	*Legislator Characteristics* *(1)*	*Movement Endorsement* *(2)*	*Movement Activity* *(3)*	*Constituency-Level Controls* *(4)*
Level 2 Variance (τ^2)	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007
Level 1 Variance (σ^2)	0.017	0.016	0.016	0.016
R^2	0.499	0.512	0.514	0.546
Observations	515	515	515	515

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (two-tailed test).

In Model 1, we see that Republican legislators voted in increasingly polarized ways. Additionally, in support of the persuasive action model, Tea Party-endorsed Freshmen engaged in increasingly polarized voting (compared to non-endorsed Incumbents). This finding aligns with my claim that endorsement by the Tea Party affected polarized voting behavior amongst vulnerable legislators (*Hypothesis 2*). It is important to note, however, that even Tea-Party-endorsed incumbents had increasingly polarized scores, attesting to the impact of assertive action altogether. Yet, key to the persuasive action model is how vulnerability, assertive action, and partisan environments interact to shape polarization – such that characteristics of legislators (namely vulnerability) matter more in highly partisan contexts. In addition to these variables, all other controls maintained their relationship with the outcome.

Model 2 incorporates an interaction between the variable representing legislator status (whether they were endorsed by the Tea Party movement and whether they were a freshman or an incumbent) and Republican partisanship – the constituency's percent of the population that supported the Republican candidate in the 2008 presidential election (centered at its mean). When the interaction terms are included, the main effect for endorsed freshman legislators remains positive and significant, which indicates that when the measure for Republican partisan context is at its mean value, endorsed freshman legislators have increasingly polarized voting (compared to non-endorsed Incumbents). The significant interaction term for endorsed freshman legislators indicates that this positive effect is even stronger for endorsed freshman legislators representing places with higher than average Republican partisanship (*Hypothesis 3*). Importantly, the main effect for Tea Party-endorsed incumbents drops to non-significance, the main effect for non-endorsed freshman legislators remains non-significant, and the interaction terms for both groups are not significantly related to the outcome. These findings indicate that for these two groups, polarized voting does not vary by the Republican partisanship of their constituency. Beyond this, the main effect for Republican partisan context drops to non significance, simply indicating that polarization amongst non-endorsed incumbents does not depend on partisanship. All other variables maintain their relationship with the outcome. Overall, in support of my predictions from the persuasive action model, polarization in the 112th Congress resulted from a combination of assertive action by the Tea Party movement, targeted at challengers who ultimately became Freshman legislators, in particularly amenable (Republican) partisan environments.

CONCLUSION

The results of the preceding analyses confirm that the partisan polarization of the 112th Congress resulted, in part, from legislators who were endorsed by the Tea Party movement. Moreover, the effect of endorsement on polarization was stronger for freshman legislators representing Republican partisan environments. Endorsement, as an assertive type of action, signaled the Tea Party's message

Table 3. Legislators' Polarized Voting on Economic Legislation in the 112th Congress: Multilevel Linear Model Estimates

Independent Variables	*Full Model* (1)	*Legislator Characteristics* (2)
Republican	0.276***	0.286***
	(0.022)	(0.022)
2010 Campaign	0.031	0.026
	(0.038)	(0.038)
House of Representatives	−0.004	0.002
	(0.056)	(0.056)
TP-Endorsed Freshman	0.115***	0.068*
	(0.026)	(0.032)
TP-Endorsed Incumbent	0.304**	0.234
	(0.106)	(0.250)
Non-Endorsed Freshman	0.014	0.005
	(0.021)	(0.022)
TP PAC Money Raised (1000s)	0.0002	0.0002
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
TP Chapters (logged)	0.008	0.008
	(0.010)	(0.010)
TP Rallies (logged)	0.022	0.023
	(0.013)	(0.013)
Percent Republican, 2008	0.003*	0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Activist Organizations (logged)	−0.015	−0.016
	(0.012)	(0.012)
Population (Logged)	−0.039	−0.037
	(0.025)	(0.025)
Median Family Income (1000s)	−0.0004	−0.0005
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Percent Homeowners	−0.003*	−0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Percent College	0.007**	0.007**
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Percent Black	0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Percent Latino	0.0003	0.0003
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Percent Unemployed	0.019**	0.018**
	(0.006)	(0.006)
Income Inequality (Gini)	−0.888*	−0.878*
	(0.381)	(0.379)
Median Age	−0.002	−0.001
	(0.003)	(0.003)
Percent Evangelical	−0.001	−0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)

(*continued*)

Table 3. Legislators' Polarized Voting on Economic Legislation in the 112th Congress: Multilevel Linear Model Estimates(continued)

Independent Variables	*Full Model* (1)	*Legislator Characteristics* (2)
TP-Endorsed Freshman X Republican Context		0.009**
		(0.003)
TP-Endorsed Incumbent X Republican Context		0.004
		(0.011)
Non-Endorsed Freshman X Republican Context		0.002
		(0.002)
Constant	1.244**	1.184**
	(0.412)	(0.412)
Level 2 Variance (τ^2)	0.006	0.007
Level 1 Variance (σ^2)	0.016	0.015
R^2	0.549	0.556
Observations	515	515

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (two-tailed test).

to politicians, and this message was increasingly persuasive to freshman legislators in Republican contexts.

The current study addresses many broad gaps in social movement theory and does so by investigating the effects of movements on polarization and legislative behavior. First, given the longstanding tradition in social movement scholarship to investigate left-wing movements, this work follows a more recent line of inquiry devoted to understanding the consequences of right-wing social movements (Blee 2002; Cunningham 2013; McVeigh 2009; Vann 2018). By focusing on cases such as the Tea Party, this work provides more general insights into patterns of social movement outcomes across the political spectrum.

Second, this work contributes to the growing chorus of scholarship on the impact of social movements on both polarization and legislative behavior as a political outcome (Andrews 1997; Heany 2013; McVeigh et al. 2004). Particularly, for research on the Tea Party movement – which has focused on explaining its mobilization, tactics, or impacts on public support for congressional candidates – this research broadens the scope of scholarly study by empirically investigating their impacts on how legislators themselves vote. Continuing along this line of inquiry will allow scholars of social movements, political sociology, and political science to generate robust theories about movement impacts in politics more generally.

Third, this investigation expands the scope of understanding on the dynamics of legislative behavior. Scholarship on congressional voting tends to focus on the impacts of movements on agenda setting or passage of specific issues. Yet, as I have shown, movement influence extends beyond issue-based legislation into shaping overall polarization in Congress. Just as important, this study also demonstrates the ways in which social movements impact legislators by threatening their potential loss of support as well as serving as a pulse of public grievances.

To advance the study of legislative behavior, future work should further explore the ways in which extra-institutional social movement activity around political issues also impacts legislative opposition. For example, scholars might consider the role of movement activity in backlash voting, particularly by unsympathetic candidates who get elected. In addition, this work should also explore how social

movement mobilization differs from conventional campaign-related activities, and how this difference shapes legislative behavior. Moreover, scholarship on congressional behavior would benefit from empirical investigations into how the effect of polarization on political outcomes may be influenced by party control.

In this article, I focused on social movement activity and implications on voting in Congress. Where movements remain an active facet of the social and political landscape, their activities compel policymakers to make decisions about the electoral costs of incorporating or shirking movement grievances in their voting.

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