Persistence or Decline?
The Grassroots Tea Party Since November 2010

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Abstract

Using a dataset of local Tea Party websites, we estimate the decline of existing grassroots Tea Party groups since the 2010 midterm elections. We measure decline in two ways, looking both at a local Tea Party group's web activity and the frequency of their events. We find that about 68% of the 824 local Tea Party websites active on or after November 2, 2010, were still active a year later, and 350 groups were still meeting as or more frequently. Looking at group characteristics recorded between February and April 2011, we find that groups that had referred to budgets and spending were more likely to still be active at the end of 2011. In addition, groups linking to Fox News were more likely to survive the year, while links to advocacy organizations in the Tea Party sphere were not predictive of continued activity. Our findings suggest several additional lines of inquiry that may shed new light on the Tea Party phenomenon, and on social movement decline more generally.

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In early 2009, American conservatives held colorful "Tea Party" protests against the new Obama Administration, protesting its plans for economic recovery and health care reform. Rallies through that spring and summer were heavily promoted by conservative media and supported by a number of longstanding national conservative advocacy groups. Starting in mid-2009, Tea Party participants moved beyond public protest and began to organize locally into hundreds of grassroots Tea Party groups. By 2010, many conservative Republican candidates adopted Tea Party slogans, and the success of very conservative GOP candidates in the November 2010 midterm elections helped push the 112th Congress substantially to the right.

As attention turned to elite Tea Party activity in Washington, what became of the grassroots activists? In the wake of so much success, did people at the grassroots congratulate themselves and fade into the background; or were local activists energized and determined to push newly elected Republicans and prepare to take on Barack Obama in 2012? To learn more about what is happening in the most organized parts of grassroots Tea Party activism, we revisited hundreds of local Tea Party websites first identified in early 2011. Our nationwide database as of the spring of 2011 showed 824 regularly active local Tea Parties spread across all 50 U.S. states. If we looked again in early 2012, what would we find? This paper presents our first-cut findings. We learned that about a third of Tea Party groups active in 2011 have since ceased their activity. But most are still active on a local level. Examining the characteristics of surviving local Tea Parties, we find the issues highlighted on their websites after the 2010 midterms, and the extra-local advocacy and media organizations linked to on the websites, are significantly

and substantially predictive of the degree of local group activity a year later. Our research offers a new empirical window into issues of persistence or decline that have long interested students of activist social movements.

The Persistence and Decline of Tea Party Activism

The grassroots component of the Tea Party is best understood as a surge of activism among the conservatives in the Republican Party base. Their initial mobilization has been the subject of considerable study, particularly for so recent a political phenomenon. But less has been done to chart the trajectory of the grassroots Tea Party since its noisy arrival on the political scene in 2009 and 2010. More generally, issues of persistence and decline are an understudied phenomenon. There is relatively little social movement theory to guide hypotheses about the sustainability of Tea Party activism, or to help us pinpoint the factors that might lead some local Tea Parties to thrive while others fade away.

The literature offers us no clear prediction for the fate of the Tea Party phenomenon as a whole after 2010. The midterm elections could be interpreted either as an expansion of political opportunity for Tea Party activists, or as the "re-stabilization" of Republican Party structures that would preclude further insurgent influence (Koopmans 2004).

From the first perspective, the Republican sweep in the midterm elections may have given Tea Party activists a reason for optimism and reinforced their sense of agency and efficacy. The newly-elected conservatives in Congress and the state legislatures may have offered grassroots Tea Party activists new challenges and avenues for advocacy,

encouraging local Tea Partiers to monitor and pressure legislators. Even in cases where the GOP legislators are not responsive and do not directly encourage Tea Partiers to be in touch with them, the new opportunities to pressure legislators, not just take to the streets, could be encouraging and thus help local leaders to sustain member engagement.

Alternatively, the Republican victories of 2010 may lead to the re-stabilization of elite-managed Republican politics. The failures of 2008, as the Republican Party struggled electorally and organizationally, destabilized the Republican Party elite and created a political opportunity for grassroots activists and for party elites previously on the fringes. Two years later, the success of conservative candidates at the state and national level may have stabilized the party to a degree, which might over time discourage additional insurgency from below.

The social movements literature is also divided on the effect of organization on the success of social movements. Organizations more closely allied with funders are more likely to survive in the long term (Cress and Snow 1996), though this may create counter-productive resource dependency for the movement as a whole (Clemens and Minkoff 2004; Piven and Cloward 1977; Jenkins and Ekert 1986). Local Tea Party groups are not correctly understood as chapters or cells of a single national organization. The connection between grassroots Tea Parties and elite advocacy organizations are often tenuous. Local groups organize largely independently, and many local leaders are deeply suspicious of establishment figures in the Republican Party and in supra-local, professionally run conservative advocacy groups. But some local Tea Parties have allied themselves explicitly with resource-rich national advocates like FreedomWorks, Tea Party Patriots, and Americans for Prosperity (Skocpol and Williamson 2012, p. 114).

These national groups have on occasion provided assistance with practicalities like protest planning and website management, have organized national conferences and rallies that many Tea Party members have attended, and have offered funds for transportation to these events. In addition, national organizations provide information to local Tea Parties (and other groups active in the conservative cause) via emails, reports, candidate scorecards, and travelling speakers.

By far the most significant national organization to have aligned itself with the Tea Party movement is the cable news network Fox News. Conservative media have shown to exert a powerful influence on conservative-minded audiences (see, e.g., Jamieson and Cappella 2008, Della Vigna and Kaplan 2007, Ladd and Lenz 2009). Beyond serving merely as a media outlet, Fox News played a vital role in the early phases of Tea Party activism. As we have argued elsewhere (Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin 2011; see also Street 2011 and Skocpol and Williamson 2012, Ch. 4), Fox News is best understood as itself a kind of "social movement organization" in the sense discussed by Debra Minkoff (2001). In early 2009, the network helped define the Tea Party label and encouraged the participation of their viewers and listeners in the 2009 protests. To use Minkoff's terminology, Fox News provided some of the elements of an "infrastructure for collective action" and promoted the diffusion of a collective identity for conservatives feeling disheartened and isolated in the first months of the Obama Administration.

The updated dataset of local Tea Party activity we present below provides new evidence about whether national advocacy and media organizations may have contributed to sustaining local Tea Party groups from 2010 into 2011 and early 2012. The

persistence of local Tea Party activism should not be confused with the achievement of the movement's broader goals. But for Tea Party activists, local activity is a clear prerequisite for movement success. In interviews in Virginia and Arizona in 2011, Tea Party activists we met insisted that their work had only just begun, and that local, independent Tea Parties were needed to hold elected officials' "feet to the fire" and ensure that the victories of the 2010 midterms did not go to waste. In this paper, we see what aspects of Tea Party websites are associated with the persistence of local groups. The institutionalization of a social movement does not necessarily coincide with achievement of movement goals (Piven and Cloward 1977), but the kind of face-to-face local activism practiced by Tea Party groups is remarkable in the context of contemporary U.S. civil society (Putnam 1995, Skocpol 2004). So it is important to gain a better understanding of why many local grassroots organizations remain active, and how they situate themselves in relation to other organizations and forces speaking in the name of the Tea Party.

Data and Measures

The dataset in this study is the result of an effort in February-April 2011 to identify every local Tea Party organization in the country.[i] In sum, we found more than 900 local Tea Party groups that had ever had a web presence.[ii] These home-spun local websites are managed by the local group members, rather than any central organization, and their structure varies greatly. Some local Tea Parties build their website on a social media platform, such as MeetUp.com, while others used widely available blog templates, and a few built entire websites from scratch. With calendars, action alerts, online forums and

blogs, these sites were a trove of information about the group members' interests and activities. We recorded an array of data from these websites, including their links to national organizations, the issues discussed, and the frequency with which the local group was holding face-to-face meetings. To provide a sense of the range of websites, pictures of the homepages of a few sample sites have been included in the Appendix, along with frequency tables for the different kinds of links we recorded:

- *Tea Party Activity*. To measure the activity of local Tea Party groups, we rely on two metrics: a measure of website "survival," a binary indicator of whether the website has been updated since November 2, 2011, and a measure of how frequently events are held by the group, measured on a scale from 0 (no events) to 4 (events weekly or more frequently).
- *Organizational Ties.* Websites will often direct viewers to other Tea-Party related organizations through links on their website. These linkages can convey important information about which national advocates a local group considers relevant to their work. To capture, these linkages, we noted whether local group linked from their webpage to any of the following:
    - Advocacy organizations that had identified with the Tea Party movement: Tea Party Patriots, Tea Party Express, Tea Party Nation, The 9/12 Project, FreedomWorks, Americans for Prosperity, and Campaign for Liberty.
    - Conservative "think tanks," the Heritage Foundation or the Cato Institute
    - Any other local tea party group that we identified in our search.
    - Fox News

- *Issue Areas.* To capture the variety and flavor of local Tea Party concerns, we tracked whether or not a Tea Party website mentioned certain key issues associated with the Tea Party. We indicated when groups referenced government budgets and spending, immigration, and "social issues", including gay marriage, abortion, and religion in schools.[iii] In addition, we created an indicator of when groups utilized religious language or religious imagery in their website. As discussed elsewhere (Skocpol and Williamson 2012), some Tea Party groups self-consciously refrained from utilizing religious language, while for other groups it was a salient part of their organizational identity.

In January 2012, we returned to each website in our dataset and re-recorded the latest date on the website and the new measure of event frequency (i.e. how often the group was meeting). This gives us two data points for our group activity metrics, with which we can estimate the change in activity for each local group over the course of 2011. In this work, we use two simple measures: a binary measure of whether the local group updated their website more than a year after the November 2, 2010, midterm elections, and the change in event frequency between time 1 and time 2.

We do not have information about the activity of new groups that may have formed since our original search, but there appear to be few new and active Tea Party groups.[iv] We feel confident that our analysis of the 824 groups active after November 2, 2010, provides a relatively complete picture of Tea Party activity as a whole during this time period.

We supplement this data on Tea Party websites with information about the local context. Matching the zip code of each organization to the 2010 Census and American Community Survey data, we measure local demographic and economic characteristics. At the zip code level, we control for the percent white, percent of the population over 65, household median income, and house district competitiveness. Here, we measure district competitiveness by following a variation of the Holbrook and Van Dunk (1993) index for electoral competitiveness. For each electoral district, we calculate an index based upon two factors: the percent of the vote obtained by the winner in the House 2010 election and the margin of victory of that election.[1] Higher scores are associated with more electoral competitiveness. At the state level, we control for citizen ideology (Berry et al 1998), percent foreign born, state and local spending as a percentage of GDP, and the change in the size of the Republican House delegation between 2008 and 2010.

The Tea Party in 2011: Slow but Steady Decline

In this section, we look at the fate of those Tea Party groups who were active as of November 2, 2010, a total of 824 groups.[v] We find that, a year after the midterm election, about a third of Tea Party groups appear to have stopped updating their websites, the result of a relatively steady decline over the year (Figure 1). 68% of Tea Party websites (561 of 824) are still active online.

[FIGURE 1]

[1] Competitiveness was calculated as follows: COMPETITIVENESS = 100 - (% vote for winner in 2006 + % margin of victory)/2

We believe this web activity can be understood as a measure, though imperfect, of the overall activity of a local Tea Party group. To the extent that it miscounts overall activity, we expect it is a conservative measure. When members of a group cease to update their event calendar, post news articles, participate in online forums, or produce newsletters, it seems plausible to imagine that the group is no longer an active political force.[vi] The problem with this measure is more likely to be that a small number of people, or even a single individual, continue to update the website even as membership drops off and face-to-face activism ceases.

To address this limitation, we use a second measure of Tea Party activity: the frequency with which the group holds meetings and participates in other local events. The vast majority of Tea Party websites feature either a monthly calendar or a listing of upcoming and past events; for 707 of the 824 sites, we could estimate an event frequency during both of our searches. We recorded this data on a scale of 0 to 4, where 0 denotes no local meetings or events, 1 denotes meetings less than monthly, 2 monthly, 3 more than monthly but less than weekly, and 4 weekly or more frequently.

[FIGURE 2]

We found that there was a substantial decline in event frequency by the end of 2011 (Figure 2). Two hundred seventy six groups were no longer holding events by the end of 2011, and there was a decline in the number of Tea Parties at all level of activity. Nonetheless, not all groups saw their event activity decline; 350 groups were at least as

active at the end of 2011 as they were at the start, and 93 groups were meeting more frequently. Within an overall trend of decline, there is significant variation to explain.

Explaining Tea Party Persistence

From our dataset, we can distinguish several important aspects of a local Tea Party's engagement with the larger movement. We know the other websites they linked to, the organizations they perceived as trustworthy sources of information or other resources for their membership. In addition, we know the kinds of issues Tea Party members were talking about in early 2011. Were these characteristics correlated with the persistence of a local Tea Party group? In this section, we look at simple differences of means to see whether groups that linked to certain organizations or talked about certain issues were more likely to be active a year later.

Links to Organizations

Tea Party groups frequently link to materials from news, advocacy, and policy organizations that they think would be relevant for their membership. More developed and engaged Tea Parties may link more frequently to other organizations, either at the national or local level. But there may also be a causal connection. Tying one's local Tea Party website to other organizations, either national or local, may provide Tea Party groups with access to greater resources and support to keep the group interested and active. Figure 3 shows the mean difference in event frequency for groups that linked to certain national organizations compared to those that didn't. The line segments mark the 95% confidence interval for those differences.

[FIGURE 3]

Sites linking to Fox News had, on average, an event frequency score that was about .20 higher than sites that did not link to Fox News. This result is statistically significant at the 5% level. By contrast, sites that linked to other national organizations did not have a statistically significant effect (though links to local Tea Parties are very near the threshold).

Issue References

In their discussion boards, newsletters and blogs, Tea Party groups discuss the issues that matter to them. Differences of means suggest a correlation between certain issues of interest in early 2011 and Tea Party persistence at the end of the year. Groups referring to budget and spending issues ("Budget") in early 2011 met considerably more frequently a year later.

[FIGURE 4]

Figures 3 and 4 do not include any controls for local conditions or other explanatory factors. For instance, since Tea Party activists are typically older conservatives, areas with larger populations of senior citizens, or areas that are more conservative, may have a larger pool of potential recruits to draw from, and therefore might survive longer. Areas of high immigration, a key issue for Tea Party activists, may trigger prolonged Tea Party

activity. Though the Tea Party is primarily a political phenomenon, it is possible that local economic conditions would affect grassroots activism. To understand these various factors in relation to each other requires a more complex model.

Hypotheses

Organizational ties matter. We expect ties to local Tea Parties, either through a state federation or a more casual network, to be particularly predictive of Tea Party persistence. Locally linked Tea Parties would likely benefit from a network of logistical and moral support, and their coordination would make it easier to have a significant political impact. Joint activism allows for larger rallies and broader lobbying of state or local government, the kind of events that would likely keep existing members feeling effective and powerful and that would encourage new participants to join in.

Links to most national organizations seem less likely to predict persistence. Fieldwork and surveys suggest that most local Tea Party members know little about the national organizations that adopted the Tea Party name (Mummolo 2011). But some organizations have built significant ties to grassroots groups: organizing conference calls, holding conferences, and giving groups small amounts of funding for travel to major protests. A link to these national groups may serve as a proxy for which local Tea Parties are most engaged in these nationally organized endeavors. We might expect groups to persist more often than groups that did not ally themselves with a national organizer.

For several reasons, links to Fox News seem likely to predict persistence. A group that links to Fox News may be more attuned to the news generally and more politically

engaged. Moreover, Fox helps to create a community of meaning for American conservatives and played a crucial role in mobilizing the grassroots Tea Party in 2009. Groups that linked to Fox News may have, on average, a greater connection to this source of mobilization. For all of these reasons, we would predict that links to Fox News correlate positively with local group persistence.

Finally, we expect groups that stick with the core, fiscal messages of the Tea Party to be more likely to survive than organizations that veered into other areas of interest, including social issues and religious concerns.

Results

To the test the hypotheses that a Tea Party's choice of organizational ties and issue of interest are associated with Tea Party persistence, we estimate a series of multilevel models where Tea Parties are nested within states. To put our hypotheses to the most rigorous examination possible, we test them against both measures of Tea Party persistence: web activity after November 2, 2011, (what we will refer to as "web survival") and these groups' change in event frequency over the course of 2011.

Web Survival

First, we estimate the independent association of Tea Parties' web content on the likelihood of Tea Party websites still being updated after November 2, 2011. We ask, for instance, is a focus on the budget or on immigration associated with the likelihood of web survival? To ensure that web content isn't acting as a proxy for simply having a complex website or an active group, we control for two characteristics at time zero: the group's

event frequency and the complexity of their website.[vii] This allows us to estimate the association between our variables of interest and survival, net of general group activity in early 2011.

[TABLE 1]

As hypothesized, we find that Fox News is associated with Tea Party survival (Table 1). This correlation was evident in the simple differences of means and persists even when we include a wide array of other variables. A Tea Party website that had a link to Fox News in early 2011 was significantly more likely to continue to be an active website. Linking to Fox News increases a group's probability of web survival by 13.5 percentage points, when all other variables are held at their means.

Additionally, we find that when we include an interaction term for Fox News and citizen ideology, it appears as though most of the effect of Fox News is occurring in more liberal states (higher ideology score). The inclusion of the interaction term causes the main effect of Fox News to go to zero. We will discuss this result in more detail in our discussion.

Unlike links to Fox News, links to advocacy groups and think tanks do not correlate with the survival of a local Tea Party website. As Table 1 indicates, links to any "advocacy organization," including Tea Party Express, Freedom Works, Americans for Prosperity, Campaign for Liberty, and the 9/12 Project, did not increase the probability of survival. Nor do ties to national think tanks, the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute. Surprisingly, links to local Tea Parties also do not predict survival.

Based on this result, however, it is possible that links to one particular organization might be a predictor of Tea Party website survival, and that this result is getting "drowned out" by the links to other, less relevant organizations. Tea Party Patriots, for instance, has invested substantial energy in organizing and supporting local Tea Party groups, building a national network of affiliated groups and offering support to local groups to improve their web presence (Skocpol and Williamson 2012). In Table 1, we break out a single result ("TPP Affiliate") to denote the local Tea Party groups that not only linked to Tea Party Patriots but adopted Tea Party Patriots logos or other branding. Despite whatever support or resources they may have received, these groups were not significantly more likely to survive than others. In fact, the (statistically insignificant) estimate is negative. We also tested links to each of the other advocacy organizations and think tanks separately; all of these variables failed to predict Tea Party web survival.

By contrast, the issues a Tea Party group chose to discuss on their website do help predict their survival. Groups that discussed the hallmark Tea Party issue, government budgets and spending, were more likely to survive than groups that did not discuss this issue. Though we find that Tea Party websites that discussed religious matters were less likely to survive, we are hesitant to put much weight on this result. In different specifications of the model, the estimate on the religion variable loses its significance, and the negative correlation between religious language and Tea Party web survival is not present in the simple differences of means.

We also find evidence of some state and local effects. Local Tea Party web survival does not seem to correlate with electoral variables; neither the change in the size of the Republican House delegation nor the projected electoral competitiveness of a

district for 2012 seems to have influenced the web activity of local Tea Party groups. But Tea Parties in richer communities and in higher spending states are more likely to survive, although the effect of these variables is small.

Event Frequency

Measuring whether or not a Tea Party maintains its website is only one measure of group persistence, and likely overestimates Tea Party activity. In this section, we estimate whether web content predicts change in a Tea Party's event frequency. Event frequency is likely a stronger measure of Tea party persistence than website maintenance and therefore, should web content really matter for persistence, we should see it associated with changes in event frequency.

Below we present results from a multilevel model on changes in event frequency (Table 2). Our results mirror the findings for web survival. We find that links to Fox News are significantly associated with higher event frequency over time, while links to other organizations are not significant. As in the previous model, the Fox News variable is doing its work in liberal states. Referring to budgets and spending once again predicts more Tea Party activity. Again, though religious language is negatively correlated with event frequency, this result is not robust to model specifications that include different controls and other functional forms.

[TABLE 2]

A Tea Party that linked to Fox News and discussed the budget, and whose other characteristics resembled the mean Tea Party, would be meeting in 2012 at a meeting

level of 1.8, about once a month. In contrast, a Tea Party group that did not link to Fox News or discuss the budget, and whose other characteristics resembled the mean Tea Party would have an expected meeting rate in 2012 of 0.4, a score that does not reach the level of "meeting less than monthly."

Discussion and Next Steps

Over the course of 2011, the activity of existing Tea Party groups declined significantly. But reports of the movement's death are, at least as of early 2012, greatly exaggerated. Hundreds of groups are meeting as or more frequently than in earlier periods. In addition, we find consistent correlations between the kinds of issues and organizations featured on a Tea Party website, and the activity of that group a year later.

Though Tea Party members are often social conservatives, most Tea Party leaders have stressed the centrality of fiscal and budgetary concerns. Our results suggest that this strategy was a wise one. Groups that referred to budgets and spending, the hallmark issue of the Tea Party, were more likely to maintain active websites and event calendars at the end of 2011.

The correlations between links to national organizations and Tea Party persistence present an interesting puzzle. Tea Party websites that link to Fox News are considerably and significantly more likely to persist than those that do not, an effect that is persistent across models. Links to other national organizations, either singly or grouped together, have no such predictive power. To explain this finding will involve additional research into the role of Fox News in the Tea Party since 2010. There are at least two potential theories that might explain this result.

First, groups that link to Fox News may have higher-information members who regularly watch the news, and who might also be more web-savvy or more competent organizers. We do not, unfortunately, have coding for other news sources that Tea Party groups may have cited in 2011. This theory is complicated, however, by the results we see for conservative think tanks like Cato and Heritage. Think tank reports, articles, and blogs regularly appear on Tea Party websites, much as Fox News articles do, and yet they do not correlate positively with Tea Party persistence. If links to Fox News were simply a proxy for group members' overall level of engagement or information, it is unclear why links to Heritage and Cato, found on hundreds of Tea Party websites, would not have the same effect.

There may also be something unique about links to Fox News. It is possible that links to Fox News by a Tea Party group are a proxy for a higher or more intense level of Fox News watching by those Tea Party members. Fox News is widely watched by Tea Partiers, but the amount or intensity of attention to Fox News does vary. A 2010 CBS News-New York Times poll found that, of those who claimed to support the Tea Party, 63% watched Fox News, while 77% of Tea Party activists, those who had been to a rally or donated money, were Fox News watchers.

Increased attention to Fox News might provide Tea Party groups with a kind of information that is different from that provided by think tanks, information that encourages Tea Party activism. For instance, Fox News content could include more videos, the kind of engaging content that keeps members visiting their Tea Party website abreast of the local group's activity.

The interaction of Fox News and the ideological climates in the various U.S. states is suggestive of a more interesting explanation, however. Links to Fox News only predict Tea Party persistence in liberal states, where other reinforcements of conservative beliefs are less readily available. Local Tea Party activists in more liberal surroundings may feel an especially strong need to participate in a nationwide conservative community of shared identity, values, and interpretations of reality – and Fox provides exactly that. Indeed, our data raises important questions about the role of Fox News in sustaining a community of meaning and sense of shared purpose for conservatives isolated from other sources of support.

To fully understand the role of Fox News and other conservative media in Tea Party persistence will require additional research. In the next phase of this project, we will examine how the Tea Party is discussed on Fox News after the 2010 midterms, look in greater depth of the activism of the Tea Party in a few key states, and delve more deeply into how local Tea Party groups use news sources.

FIGURE 1

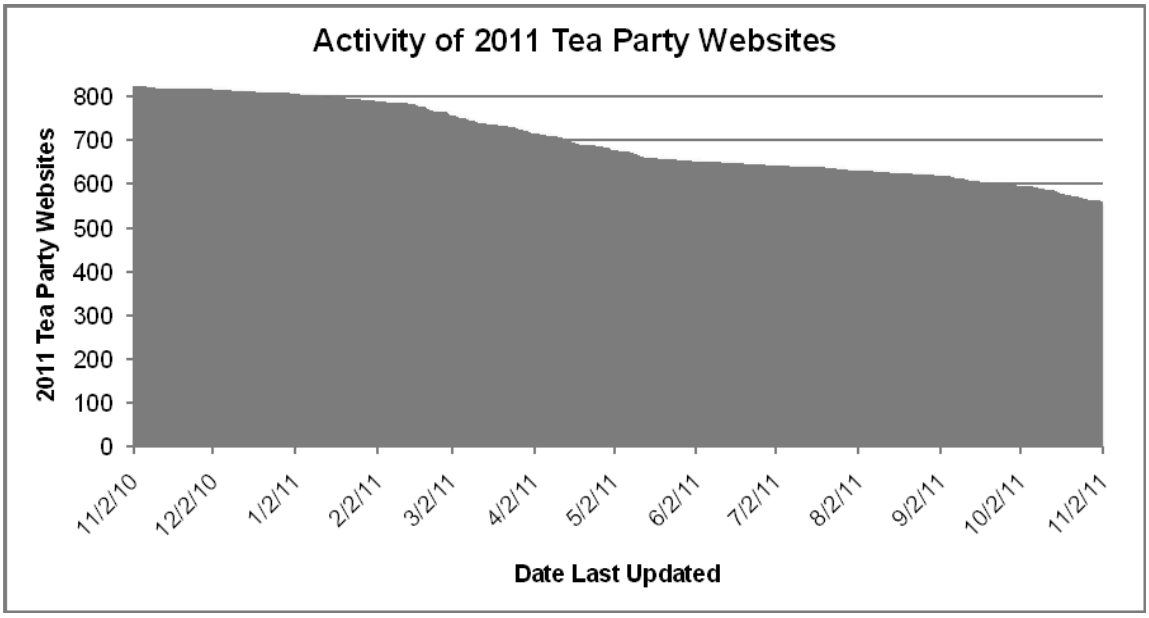


Figure 1: About 68% of Tea Party websites updated on or after November 2, 2010, were still being updated a year later.

FIGURE 2

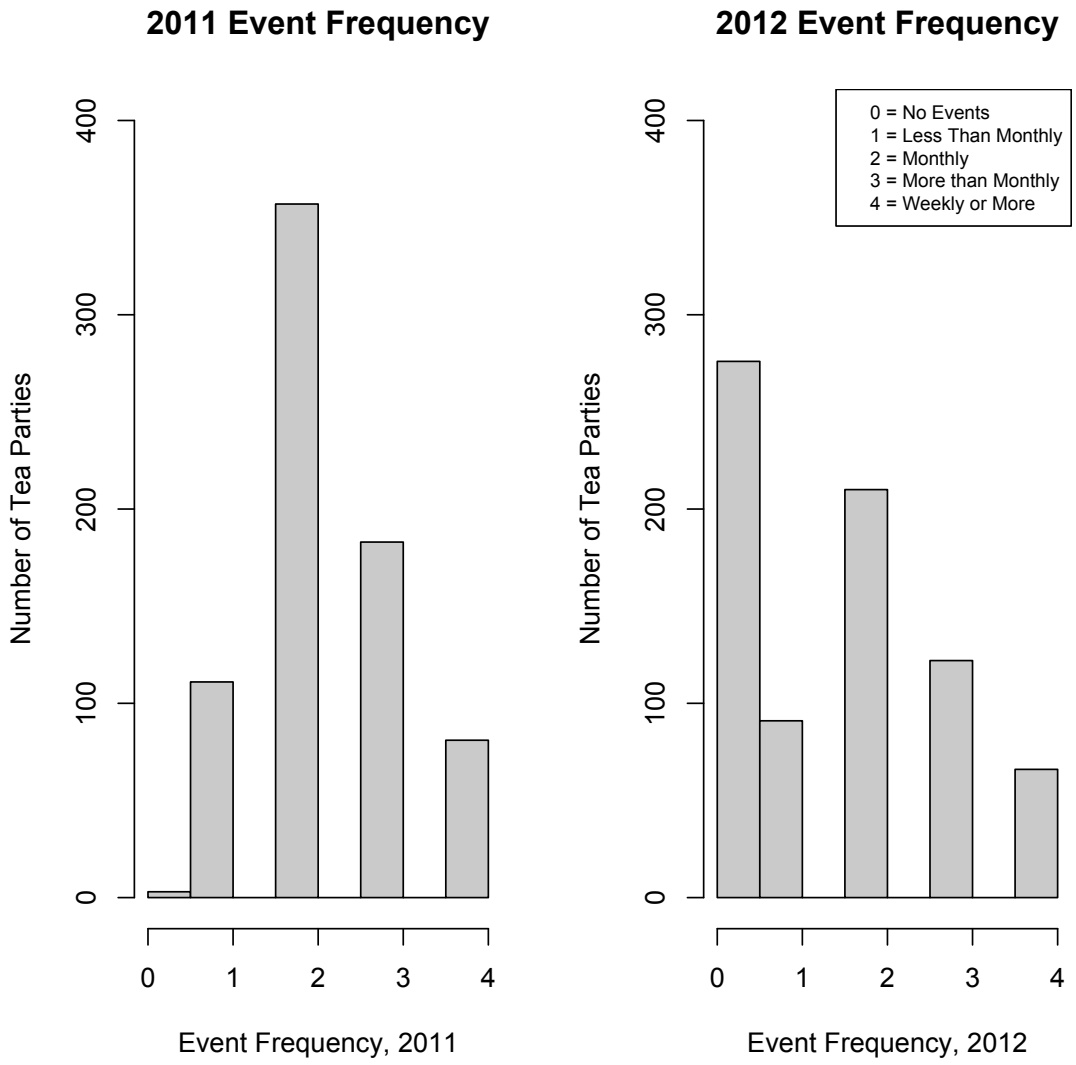


Figure 2: Decline in overall Tea Party group event frequency, 2011-2012.

FIGURE 3

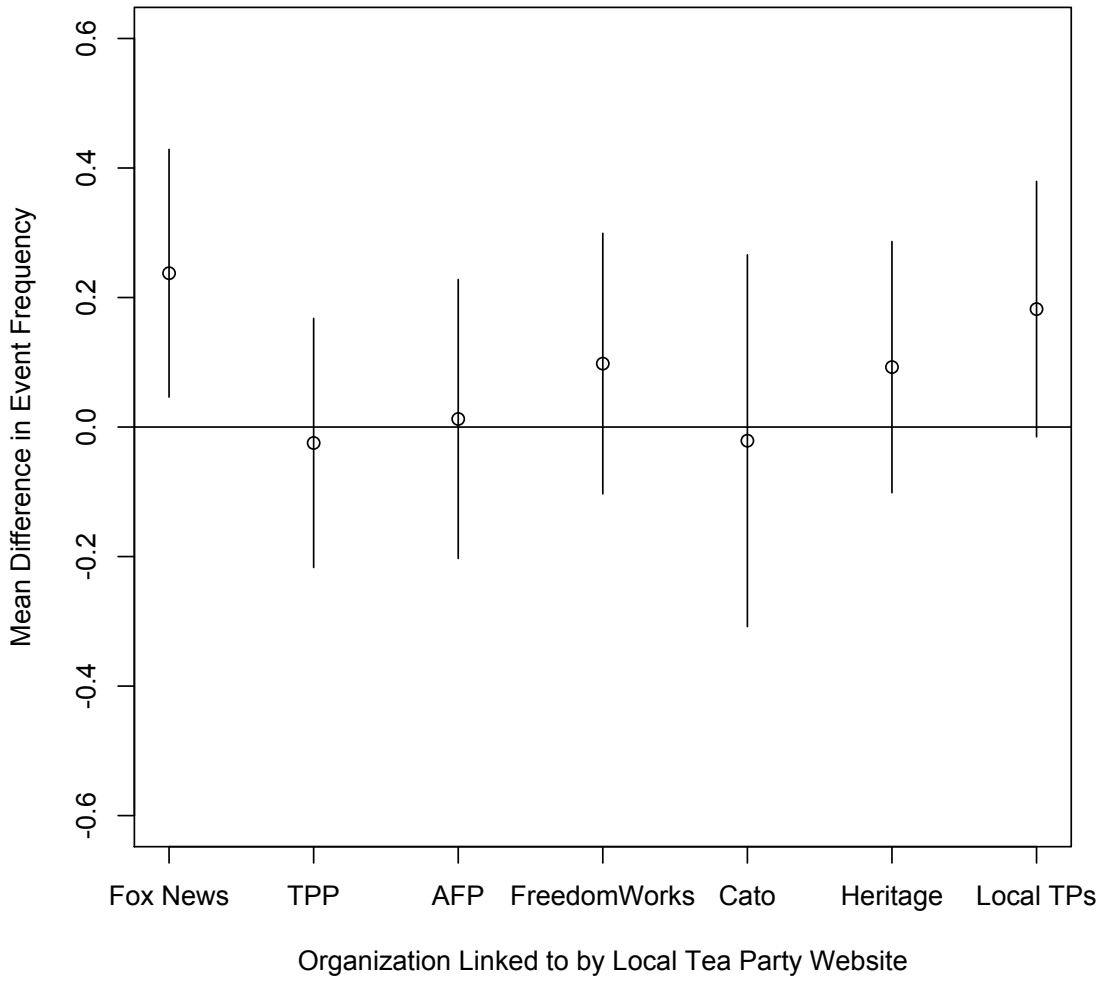


Figure 3: Mean difference in event frequency for Tea Party groups linking to different organizations.

FIGURE 4

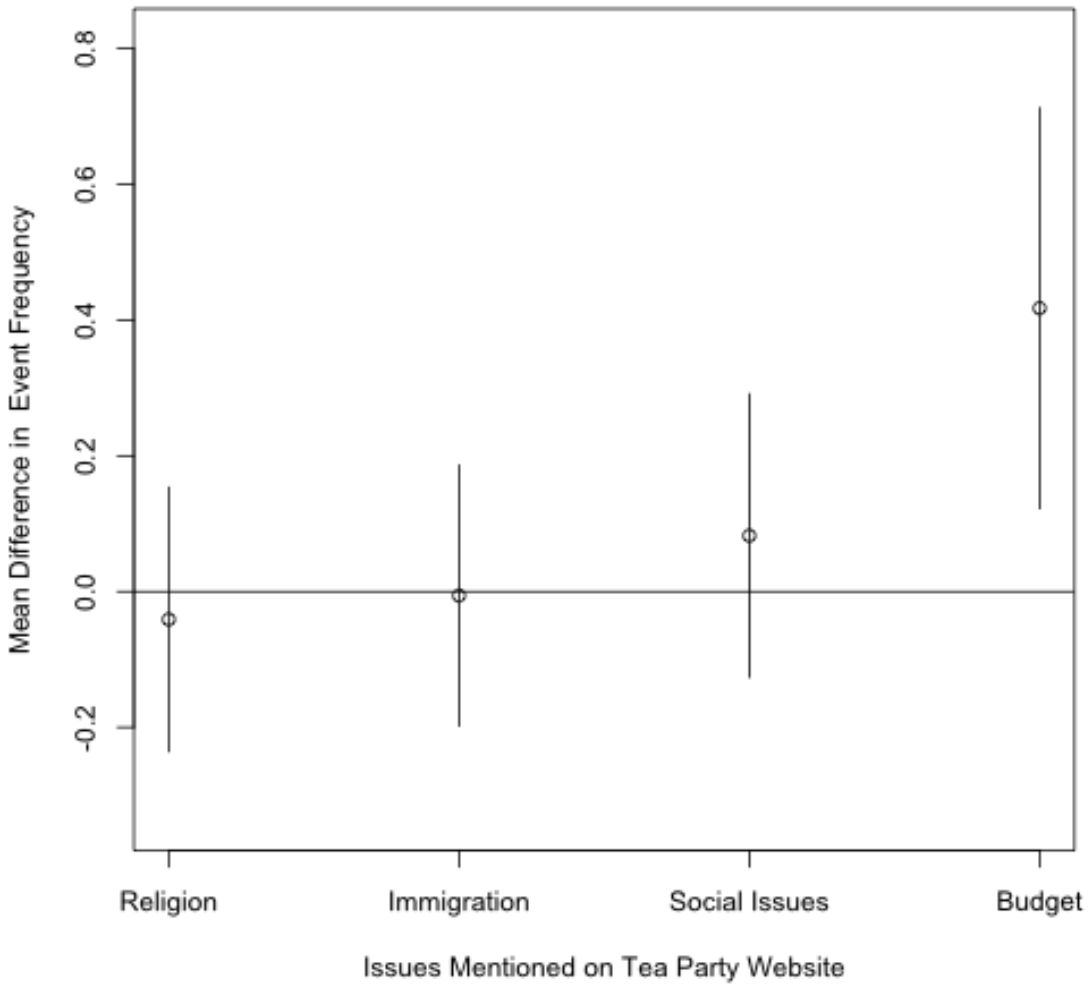


Figure 4: Mean difference in event frequency for Tea Party websites referring to different issues.

Table 1: Logistic Model of Tea Party Website Survival

	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Event Frequency	0.343**	0.120	0.326**	0.123	0.345**	0.122	0.351**	0.122
Web Content								
Fox News	0.498*	0.239	0.554*	0.244	0.560*	0.244	0.363	0.258
TPP Affiliate	-0.270	0.260	-0.251	0.265	-0.293	0.265	-0.309	0.268
Links to Advocacy Organizations	0.024	0.307	0.058	0.311	0.063	0.311	0.026	0.312
Links to Think Tanks	-0.283	0.233	-0.262	0.237	-0.251	0.236	-0.242	0.237
Links to Local Tea Parties	0.168	0.241	0.134	0.247	0.171	0.248	0.189	0.250
Total Links	0.084	0.046	0.082	0.047	0.078	0.047	0.077	0.047
Issues								
Religion	-0.609**	0.230	-0.644**	0.233	-0.630**	0.233	-0.614**	0.232
Social Issues	-0.117	0.266	-0.088	0.271	-0.078	0.271	-0.082	0.272
Immigration	0.043	0.217	0.029	0.223	0.056	0.225	0.026	0.226
Budget and Spending	0.494+	0.276	0.523+	0.282	0.608+	0.285	0.594+	0.286
Local Context								
Percent White			-.5740	.616	-.574	0.623	-.631	0.628
Percent Over 65			0.263	1.662	0.171	1.650	0.097	1.656
HH Income (Thousands)			0.016**	0.007	0.018**	0.007	0.018**	0.007
Electoral District Competitiveness			-0.850	0.727	-1.045	0.763	-1.189	0.771
State Context								
State Ideology					0.004	0.009	-0.003	0.009
Change in Rep House Delegation					0.205	0.761	0.197	0.757
State Spending (% GDP)					0.107*	0.047	0.091	0.048
% Foreign Born					-1.328	1.944	-1.018	1.945
Fox * State Ideology							0.973*	0.456
N	615		615		615		615	

+<.10, *< .05, **< 0.01

Table 2: Multilevel Model of Tea Party Event Frequency

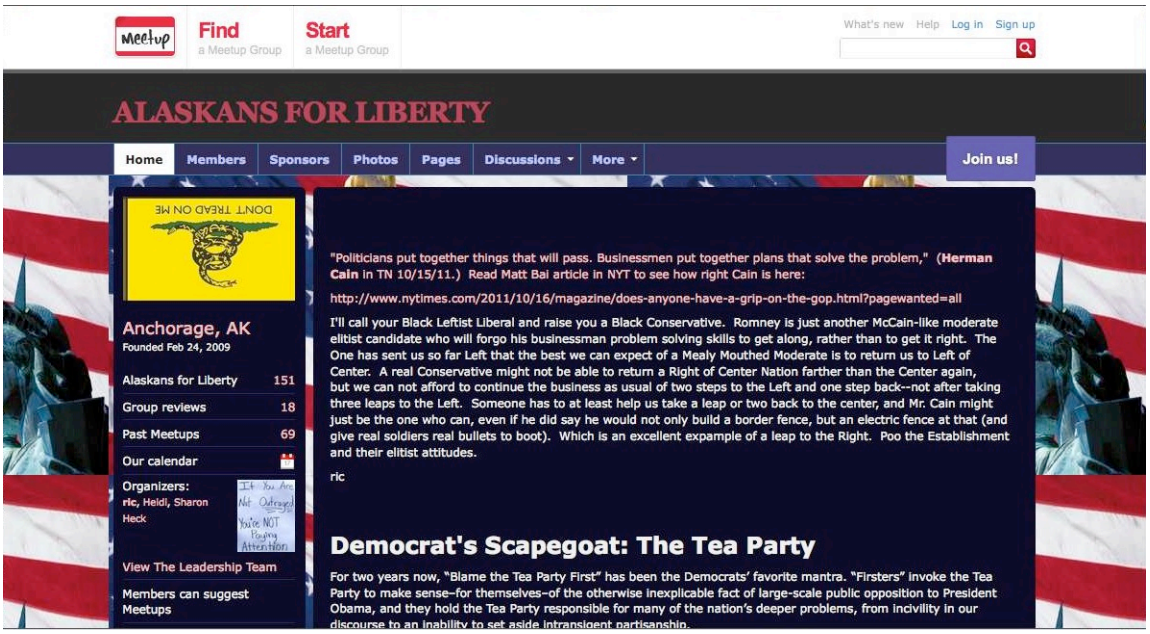
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Web Content								
Fox News	0.273*	0.122	0.290*	0.122	0.285*	0.122	0.168	0.132
TPP Affiliate	-0.086	0.137	-0.088	0.136	-0.089	0.136	-0.093	0.136
Links to Advocacy Organizations	-0.106	0.168	-0.110	0.167	-0.102	0.167	-0.115	0.167
Links to Think Tanks	-0.143	0.122	-0.132	0.122	-0.129	0.122	-0.119	0.121
Links to Local Tea Parties	0.084	0.128	0.085	0.128	0.085	0.128	0.089	0.128
Total Links	0.019	0.023	0.018	0.023	0.016	0.023	0.014	0.023
Issues								
Religion	-0.241*	0.117	-0.251*	0.117	-0.231*	0.117	-0.212+	0.117
Social Issues	0.057	0.139	0.073	0.139	0.053	0.140	0.047	0.139
Immigration	-0.056	0.115	-0.079	0.115	-0.051	0.115	-0.064	0.115
Budget and Spending	0.369*	0.157	0.360*	0.156	0.351+	0.158	0.344+	0.157
Local Context								
Percent White			0.083	0.328	-.005	.334	-.013	.332
Percent Over 65			1.162	0.848	1.162	0.848	1.120	0.844
HH Income (Thousands)			0.006+	0.003	0.006+	0.003	0.006+	0.003
Electoral District Competitiveness			-0.102	0.369	-0.161	0.382	-0.218	0.381
State Context								
State Ideology					0.009+	0.005	0.004	0.005
Change in Rep House Delegation					-0.036	0.429	-0.037	0.420
State Spending (% GDP)					0.006	0.026	-0.004	0.026
% Foreign Born					-1.668	1.152	-1.519	1.105
Fox * State Ideology							0.460*	0.201
N	615		615		615		615	

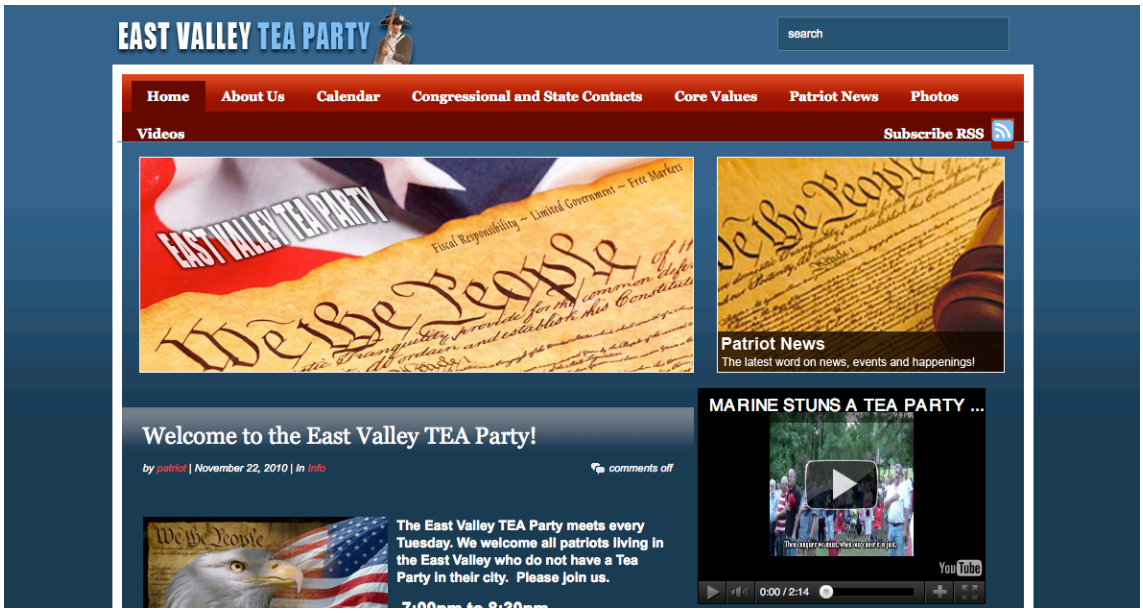
+<.10, *< .05, **< 0.01

Appendix A: Frequency of Links on Tea Party Websites

Link Destination	Link Frequency (n=937)
Fox News	555
Local Tea Parties	543
Advocacy Organizations:	
Tea Party Patriots (affiliate)	161
Tea Party Patriots (link only)	481
Tea Party Express	158
Tea Party Nation	73
9/12 Project	396
Freedom Works	256
Americans for Prosperity	197
Campaign for Liberty	177
Think Tanks:	
Heritage	337
Cato	124
Issues:	
Government Budget and Spending	791
Health Care	593
Immigration	428
Social Issues	239
Religion	361

Appendix B: Sample Tea Party Websites





Garland County TEA Party
info@gctparty.com
3267 Albert Pike, Hot Springs, AR 71913
501-781-5090
e.....Repeal Obamacare
Home
Meetings
Committees
Join
Donate
Your Unalienable Rights
VS
The New World Order
CLICK HERE

White County Tea Party Patriots
It is not enough that we restore the GOP to power
if we don't change the nature of the GOP
WHITE COU
NOTICE!
White County Tea Party Patriots will no longer hold monthly meetings.
We are not disbanding or dissolving, we are simply not holding monthly meetings or inviting guest speakers.
However, we will continue to educate and inform through our website and email connectivity's. Click the above link
for further information. What you hear here, what you learn here, it is your duty to pass it on.
2012 is a defining year for America.
Be Prepared.
Tuesday, March 27 2012
You Tube
Be Informed !
MEETINGS/EVENTS
WHO WE ARE
U.S. SENATE
DISTRICT 2
PRIMARY CANDIDATES FOR INDIANA GOVERNOR, SENATE, CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS
AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAN BE FOUND HERE
60 DAY ARCHIVES HERE
PAY ATTENTION !
60 DAY ARCHIVES HERE
Stay
Andrew
VET

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Endnotes

[i] We thank Harvard undergraduates Will Eger and Andrew Crutchfield for their many hours of web research to build this database.

[ii] Our total is somewhat higher than another database of local Tea Party groups produced by the *Washington Post* in late 2010, which verified 647 local Tea Party groups. The Post relied on phone calls to local group leaders, a process that likely reduced their total. Our dataset has the advantage of being largely independent of movement activists' own assessment of group size and activity, but there are still reasonable questions about its representativeness. Tea Party groups that lack a website are not included, and not every Tea Party group with a website will have been found. Because the dataset is likely skewed towards the larger and more organized groups, our estimate of decline is likely to be conservative. We believe, however, that our sample is very nearly a complete census of local Tea Party groups; many of the groups we found had only a handful of members and held events rarely, and so having a website does not seem to have been a very high barrier for even small or relatively inactive organizations.

[iii] We also recorded whether there was disagreement over the issue by noting whether the reference took the position typically associated with the Tea Party (for instance, opposition to the Obama health care reform) or a position different from the typical view. Across all 900+ websites, opinions contrary to the expected position were noted in only three instances, twice referring to health care, and once referring to immigration reform.

[iv] A national search in February 2012 for new Tea Party groups on MeetUp.com, an organizing platform used by many local Tea Party groups, found 36 Tea Party groups founded between April 2011, when we finished our original search, and the end of 2011. Of these, only 9 groups had more than 25 members.

[v] Our search in 2011 found evidence of about one hundred additional sites that had already stopped being update before the midterm election. We do not include these in our sample, because we cannot know how many other sites may have come and gone in the first year and a half of Tea Party local activism. Instead, we limit our pool to Tea Parties that were still updating their websites on or after the midterm election.

[vi] A number of Tea Party groups moved to a new web address over the course of the year, leaving a link at the old site to send visitors to a new site. We used the new site to get updated data about the group. There are also a small group of websites (XXX), usually quite simple pages, that did claim to hold meetings without enough information to judge how recently the information was updated, as in "the first Thursday of the month" or "every other Tuesday." These sites were given the benefit of the doubt in terms of whether this event information was current. This is why XXX sites are recorded as not updated since Nov 2, 2011, but have a nonzero event frequency.

[vii] We measure website complexity by summing the total number of links recorded.