

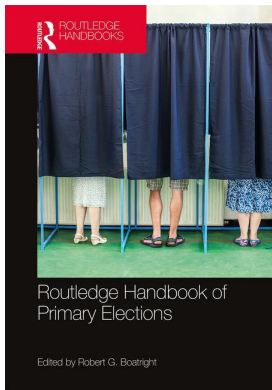
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Caitlin E. Jewitt, Sarah A. Treul

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IDEOLOGICAL PRIMARIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE IN CONGRESS

Caitlin E. Jewitt and Sarah A. Treul

Fred Upton, a moderate Republican, was first elected in 1986 to represent the people of Michigan's fourth congressional district.¹ Perhaps due in part to the district's location on the shores of Lake Michigan,² one of Upton's most prominent issues early in his congressional career was environmental regulation. As recently as 2007 Upton worked across the aisle with Democrats to pass the Energy and Independence and Security Act, which, among other things, promoted the production of clean renewable fuels, offered incentives for the development of plug-in hybrids, and banned the manufacturing of incandescent light bulbs. In 2009 Upton even spoke about the importance of reducing emissions and, while attending the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, stated that lowering emissions would be good for the world (Sheppard 2011). In fact, Upton's climate change positions were so out of line with mainstream conservative thinking of the time that in 2010 when Upton's name began circulating among Republicans as a potential chairman for the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, many conservatives came out against Upton, calling him a RINO (Republican In Name Only). During the battle for the committee chairmanship, the Tea Party organization FreedomWorks launched a campaign against Upton, portraying him as pro-environment and pro-regulation. Despite the opposition, Upton went on to become the chairman of the Energy and Commerce committee in the 112th Congress (2011–2012), a position he served in until the 115th Congress.

While the above portrait of Upton paints him as fairly moderate on the environment, the environmental and regulation record of Upton shifted dramatically post-2009 with his environmental issue positions becoming increasingly conservative. What led Upton to reevaluate his moderate stances on the environment? Since any legislator's primary goal is reelection (Mayhew 2004), we suggest the best answer to this question might be found by looking at his campaigns for reelection. More specifically, we turn to the effect his primary campaigns had on his legislative behavior, given that competition for many members of Congress has shifted from the general election to the primary stage. In 2010 Upton faced a primary challenge from the Tea Party in his bid for reelection – his first serious challenge since winning office in 1986 and his first primary challenge since 2002. The 2010 Republican primary pitted Upton against former Michigan state representative Jack Hoogendyk. Hoogendyk ran to Upton's right with the backing of the Tea Party, Club for Growth, and Right to Life Michigan. He ran his campaign on an ideological platform, frequently suggesting that Upton was too moderate to represent the residents of Michigan's sixth district. Although Upton managed to defeat Hoogendyk in the primary, he did so by less

than twenty percent of the vote. Upton's close primary contest is a trend in primary campaigns. Primary challengers from the extreme of the party are increasingly targeting incumbents, hoping to capitalize on a primary electorate that tends to be more ideological in its preferences.

Despite Upton's victory, the real story here might be the long-lasting effects the Hoogendyk campaign had on Upton's record in Congress. Hoogendyk's competitive, ideological primary challenge signaled to Upton that a significant portion of his reelection constituency (Fenno 1978) was not supportive of his more moderate positions. After the 2010 election, Upton's issue positions and legislative behavior clearly shifted. This shift was perhaps most evident on environmental issues. On December 28, 2010, after defeating Hoogendyk and winning the general election, Upton penned an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, co-authored with Tim Phillips, President of Americans for Prosperity, titled "How Congress Can Stop the EPA's Power Grab." In making the case for Congress to step in and delay the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) regulation of carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases, Upton and Phillips wrote, "[T]he principal argument for a two-year-delay is that it will allow Congress time to create its own plan for regulating carbon. This presumes that carbon is a problem in need of regulation. We are not convinced." After facing an ideological primary challenge Upton clearly shifted his stance on carbon regulation, becoming less environmentally friendly. In one way, Upton's issue position shift on the environment can be seen as a victory for the Hoogendyk campaign platform. Even though Hoogendyk himself was not victorious, his more extreme policy agenda position prevailed.

Upton's behavior shift may have paid off electorally as well; Hoogendyk once again challenged Upton in the 2012 primary, but this time Hoogendyk lost by over 30 percent. Primary voters rewarded Upton for shifting his issue agenda to the right. Although anecdotal, we believe Fred Upton's ideological primary challenge and the subsequent shift in his legislative behavior and policy positions is indicative of a larger trend. We expect that with competitive, ideological primaries becoming increasingly common, those incumbents fortunate enough to win reelection are responding to these challenges by shifting their legislative behavior to signal to the electorate (particularly primary voters) and potential primary challengers that they are not only responsive, but also are more ideologically extreme than previously thought.

Changing Primary Challenges

As Boatright (2014) demonstrates, the number of primary challenges and competitiveness of those challenges has waxed and waned over the years. The 1970s, for instance, saw a rather steady level of primary competition, but this fell off in the 1980s. Perhaps in part due to redistricting (e.g. Hetherington et al. 2003; Carson et al. 2006), 1992 then saw a massive increase in the number of competitive primaries. From here, the number of competitive primaries once again steadily declined throughout the remainder of the 1990s and then began to increase again post-2004. Looking at a more recent period of time, Figure 12.1 shows the number of competitive primary challenges from 2002 to 2012. For the purposes of this figure, a competitive primary is operationalized as one where the incumbent received less than 75 percent of the vote.

Though there is variation in the number of competitive primaries over time, the reason behind the competitive primaries has also evolved. The competitive primary challenges in the 1970s occurred as interest groups backed progressive primary challengers on particular issues (Brady et al. 2007), whereas today, the central reason for the increased level of primary competition is ideological. That is, primary challengers are throwing their name in the ring to challenge incumbents precisely because they do not see the incumbent as ideologically extreme enough. For example, Hoogendyk challenged Upton in the 2010 Republican primary because he believed Upton to be too moderate on issues including abortion, the environment, and taxes.

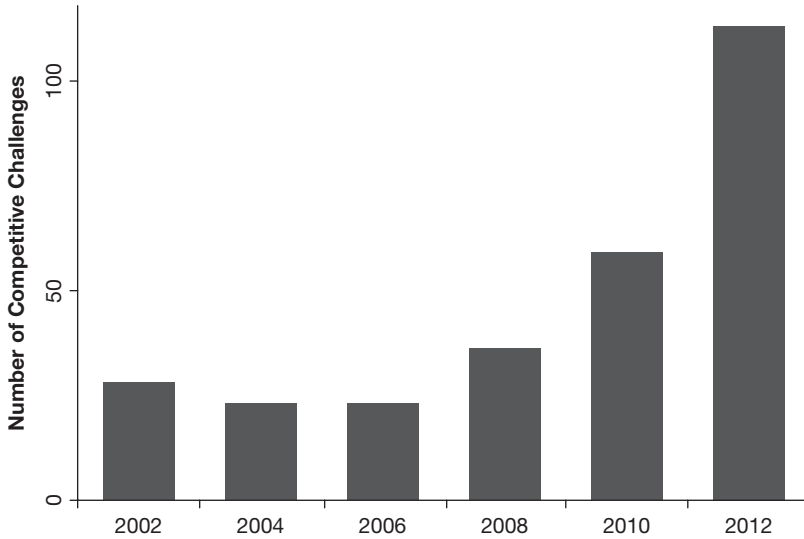


Figure 12.1 Competitive Primary Challenges 2002–2012

Recent congressional primaries more frequently pit a new type of challenger – an ideological challenger – against incumbents. These candidates are distinct in that they frequently target the incumbent from the party’s more extreme ideological flank. In other words, incumbent Democrats are challenged by candidates more liberal than they are and incumbent Republicans are challenged by more conservative candidates. Even if they do not win, these ideological primary challengers tend to perform well, as primary voters often exhibit a strong preference for more ideologically extreme candidates (Brady et al. 2007).

Previous research indicates that the primary electorate is often more ideologically extreme than the general electorate (Brady et al. 2007; Burden 2004; Jacobson 2004). Given the ideological extremity of the primary electorate compared to the general election electorate, is it not surprising that recent ideological candidates have found primaries to be fertile ground to launch congressional campaigns. In the wake of *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010), which lifted restrictions on campaign donations from outside funding sources, it is now possible for an ideological challenger to be well-funded without having to self-finance or rely on party support. While Boatright (2014) finds no evidence for the level of primary competition being different today than it was in the past, he finds that the financing of these challenges has changed over the course of the past decade. Primary challengers today, particularly ideological primary challengers, are raising more money and much of this money is coming from donors (individual and otherwise) who reside outside of the district. The willingness of financial contributors to support candidates advocating for more extreme positions enables these types of candidates to emerge. Additionally, many of these ideological challengers rely on small donations from around the country. These contributions, coupled with the involvement of interest groups such as the Club for Growth and MoveOn.org, provide circumstantial evidence for the nationalization of primary challenges and that there are donors (individual and otherwise) who want to unseat incumbents or, at the very least, send these incumbents a strong message about their ideological positions and policy preferences.

The amount of financial support behind ideological primary challengers, coupled with the primary electorate’s dissatisfaction with the status quo and moderate policies, likely contributed to

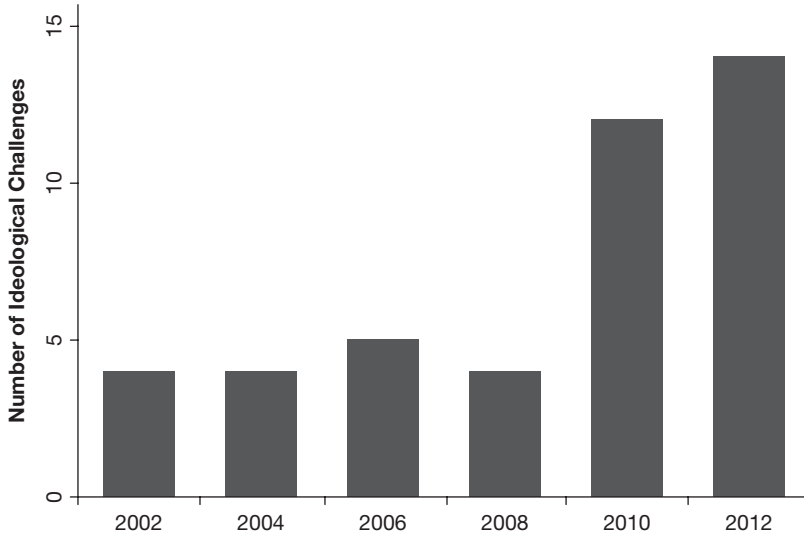


Figure 12.2 Ideological Primary Challenges 2002–2012

the large increase in ideological primary challenges. Figure 12.2 demonstrates the rise in ideological primary challenges from 2002 to 2012. In this figure, and elsewhere in this analysis, ideological challenges are measured as those that focused on the incumbent's positions perceived to be too moderate mounted from the left for Democrats and from the right for Republicans; these are based on the categorization and data presented in Boatright (2014).

What is particularly interesting about these ideological challenges is that, for the most part, they are a subset of competitive primaries. In other words, most of the ideological primaries that occur are competitive, which is concerning for incumbents seeking to return to Congress. For many incumbents, the fear of losing an election has shifted away from the general election and to the primary election, particularly as they observe these increasingly frequent ideological challenges. This is especially the case in districts that lean reliably to one party, as there is often no true competition in the general election. The data bear out an incumbent's fear of a primary challenge, as Tables 12.1 and 12.2 show that primary challenges that come from the ideological extreme tend to be competitive as well.

Table 12.1 Ideological and Competitive Primaries, 2002–2012

	<i>Non-competitive</i>	<i>Competitive</i>	<i>Total</i>
Unknown challenge	2	60	62
Non-ideological challenge	455	180	635
Ideological challenge	1	42	43
Total	458	282	740

Notes: This table examines cases where the incumbent faced a primary challenge and won. A competitive primary is one where the winning candidate received less than 75 percent of the vote. An ideological challenge is one where the primary challenge was ideologically positioned to the right for Republican candidates and to the left for Democratic candidates. An unknown challenge is one where there was a primary challenge, but no clear, compelling reason (e.g. ideological, scandal, age) for the challenge.

Table 12.2 Ideological and Competitive Primaries, 2010–2012

	2010		2012		Total
	Non-competitive	Competitive	Non-competitive	Competitive	
Unknown challenge	1	22	0	13	36
Non-ideological challenge	100	26	90	86	302
Ideological challenge	1	11	0	14	26
Total	102	59	90	113	364

Notes: This table examines cases where the incumbent faced a primary challenge and won. A competitive primary is one where the winning candidate received less than 75 percent of the vote. An ideological challenge is one where the primary challenge was ideologically positioned to the right for Republican candidates and to the left for Democratic candidates. An unknown challenge is one where there was a primary challenge, but no clear, compelling reason (e.g. ideological, scandal, age) for the challenge.

Table 12.3 Ideological Challenges and Quality Candidates, 2002–2012

	Non-quality Candidate	Quality Candidate	Total
Unknown challenge	46	16	62
Non-ideological challenge	543	92	635
Ideological challenge	29	14	43
Total	618	122	740

Notes: This table examines cases where the incumbent faced a primary challenge and won. An ideological challenge is one where the primary challenge was ideologically positioned to the right for Republican candidates and to the left for Democratic candidates. An unknown challenge is one where there was a primary challenge, but no clear, compelling reason (e.g. ideological, scandal, age) for the challenge.

That is, ideological extreme primary challengers tend to receive a substantial share of the vote. From 2010 to 2012, twenty-five of the twenty-six primaries that were classified as ideological were also competitive. From 2002 to 2012, forty-two out of forty-three ideological challenges were competitive, with the incumbent receiving less than 75 percent of the vote. If an incumbent is challenged ideologically in the primary that challenge is likely to also result in a competitive, or close, primary.

That ideological challenges tend to also be competitive is likely the result of the monetary support these candidates have and, perhaps most importantly, the fact that many of these ideological challengers are quality candidates, who have previously held elected office. Between 2002 and 2012, fourteen of the forty-three ideological challengers were quality candidates.

Effects of Increasingly Competitive and Ideological Primaries

Although it is interesting to note the fluctuations in competitive primaries and the rise in ideological primaries, we are focused on moving beyond these descriptives and exploring their consequences. Past research offers conflicting findings as to whether primary competition hurts the eventual nominee in the general election (e.g. Bernstein 1977; Kenney and Rice 1984) or helps (e.g. Born 1981; Kenney 1988). The work of Jewitt and Treul (2014) sheds some light on this by taking advantage of the Tea Party’s presence in the 2010 Republican primaries. Using the Tea Party as a measure of divisiveness – separate from competitiveness – the authors find that competitive Republican primaries and competitive Democratic primaries increased turnout in the general election. They also conclude that divisive Republican primaries, where there was

a Tea Party candidate in the race, increased the party's vote share in the general election.³ We build on the framework of Jewitt and Treul (2014), and maintain that there is an important distinction between a competitive primary, which indicates that the election was close, and a divisive primary, which signifies a division or fissure within the party. Here, instead of utilizing the presence of the Tea Party as an indication that the primary was divisive, we expand the measure of divisiveness to include ideological primary challenges.⁴ We contend that an ideological challenge, as opposed to a primary challenge based on age, scandal, or local issues, signifies a serious divide within the party, qualifying it as a divisive contest. In sum, we believe it is essential to examine the effects of both ideological (divisive) and competitive primaries.

Additionally, we are less concerned with the influence of a competitive or divisive primary on electoral outcomes and more interested in the effects on legislative behavior. We aim to assess the role a divisive, ideological primary has on the congressional behavior of members of Congress who are fortunate enough, like Representative Fred Upton, to return to Congress after an ideological challenge. We posit that, like Upton, these returning incumbents might be susceptible to behavior shifts due to stiff primary competition coming from the ideological extreme of the party.

Given the increase in and recent prevalence of competitive and ideological primaries, we ask whether these new types of challenges are having an effect on the behavior of incumbents once reelected. We explore the impact of these ideological challenges above and beyond the effect of a competitive, but non-ideological, primary challenge. Similarly to what we observed in the case of Fred Upton, we suspect that incumbents who defeat ideological challengers in the primary and go on to win the general election might change their legislative behavior in order to fend off a future ideological challenge. Their goal is to alter their behavior in Congress and be more ideological so that they are less likely to have an ideological challenge in a subsequent primary.

As ideological challenges become increasingly common and incumbents fear these challenges, perhaps more than a general election challenge, members of Congress may have to reconsider where to position themselves on an array of issues. As Boatright (2014, 101) notes, “[the party] establishment has become less able to protect its members from its conservative flank and [. . .] so called cross-pressured legislators must increasingly worry about protecting both their right and left flanks.” Since many of the most competitive primary challenges today are coming at incumbents from the ideological extreme flank of the party, members are rightfully concerned about this type of challenge. Given this, it is worth exploring how ideological primary competition influences the behavior of the incumbents lucky enough to be reelected to Congress.

Expectations

As noted above, past literature on the consequences of primary competition typically examines the effect of the primary challenges on general election success, rather than on behavior in Congress. Much of the previous literature suggests that competitive primaries tend to hurt the eventual nominee in the general election (e.g. Bernstein 1977; Kenney and Rice 1984). The eventual nominee may be wounded in the general election from a competitive primary because voters are unwilling to shift their support from their preferred candidate to the eventual nominee. Theoretical explanations as to why voters may be hesitant to support the party nominee include that voters may be turned off by the intra-party conflict, may experience a “sore loser” type of effect, may possess feelings of disgruntlement, indifference, or alienation toward the nominee, or they may have ideological concerns about how closely their personal views align with the ideological positions of the nominee (Kenney and Rice 1987; Southwell 1986; Sullivan 1977; Blake and Mouton 1961; Stone 1986; Zipp 1985).

While the majority of previous scholarship on the effects of competitive primaries centers on the general election, there is some more recent work examining the consequences of primaries on congressional behavior (e.g. Boatright 2014; Hirano et al. 2010). Hirano et al. (2010) utilize NOMINATE scores to test changes in roll call behavior and uncover little evidence that primary election outcomes contribute to extreme roll call voting records. The authors suggest that their findings indicate that the increase in extreme ideological primary challenges, or the threat thereof in the case of Hirano et al. (2010), is not what is driving polarization in Congress. That is, the more extreme voting we see in Congress today cannot be the result of these ideological challenges pushing members of Congress to the extreme in their voting behavior. In his comprehensive work on congressional primaries, Boatright (2014) also examines whether primary challenges affect the congressional behavior of winning incumbents in the next Congress. He examines the consequences of several types of primary challenges on congressional behavior using changes in NOMINATE scores. Regardless of the type of primary challenge, even for extreme ideological challenges, he also finds little meaningful change in a member's NOMINATE score (Boatright 2014). Each of the aforementioned authors expects primaries to pull members of Congress away from the political center, but these various empirical investigations mentioned above all fail to find this effect on congressional behavior.

We diverge from previous literature on the effect of ideological primaries, which finds that members who faced such challenges do not become more ideologically extreme in their voting, by proposing that the effect of ideological primary challenges is conditioned on whether the member belongs to the majority or the minority party. That is, members of the minority party who face an ideological challenge do not have the option of voting against their own party to illustrate that they are more extreme. Thus, for a minority member returning to Congress after an ideological challenge the only option is to continue to vote with her party. For members of the minority, facing an ideological primary challenge should not affect their observable party behavior in Congress. However, a member of the majority party who faced an ideological challenge is in a more tenuous position. The member can, of course, continue to vote with her party, but this allows for little signaling to ideological primary voters and potential future challengers that the member is now more ideologically extreme. Therefore, we expect that a member of the majority who is returning to Congress after an ideological primary will actually be increasingly likely to vote with the minority party. For majority members, especially in today's polarized Congress, fear of being pegged as a puppet of the party, and continuing to vote the party line might, once again, encourage an extreme ideological challenge. These members find it beneficial to vote *against* the majority party, as a way to signal their maverick behavior. Voting against the majority party allows them to claim ideological extremism and independent behavior – hopefully warding off a future extreme, ideological challenge.

In addition to asserting a conditional relationship that influences congressional voting behavior, we also are able to leverage our data that parses out primaries by more than just their level of competition. Prior to this investigation, only Boatright (2014) has broken out primary competition and its behavioral consequences by more than just a measure of competition. We employ a measure of divisiveness, which we operationalize below as an ideological primary challenge. We believe that these ideological primaries indicate a split in the party and signal that at least some members of the party do not believe the incumbent is extreme enough. We capitalize on our ability to focus on the effects of divisiveness while controlling for the competitiveness of the primary challenge.

As previously mentioned, Boatright (2014) also includes a measure for type of primary (ideological or not) and a measure of competitiveness (whether the incumbent was held to less than 60 percent of the vote) in his model assessing the consequences of primary challenges on

congressional behavior. However, Boatright fails to find an effect and we believe this is the direct result of not taking into account the conditional relationship about majority party status. We do not expect all members to change their behavior uniformly when challenged by an ideological extremist in the primary. Rather, we expect members in the majority party will vote *less often* with their party following an ideological (divisive) primary challenge than they did before the primary challenge. For members of the minority party, we expect to see no differences in voting behavior following an ideological primary challenge.

Theory and Hypotheses

Competitive Primaries

Given the mixed findings regarding the role competitive primaries play in general election outcomes, we have no a priori expectation regarding the effect a competitive primary challenge plays on changing a member's legislative behavior once reelected to Congress. Research on competitive primaries has found that some of these primaries hurt the winning candidate in the general election, but other studies find this effect to be overstated. We expect, therefore, that it is not primary competition so much as the *type* of primary competition that influences the incumbent's behavior when returning to Congress. This leads us to generate one hypothesis regarding primary competition:

Hypothesis 1: A competitive primary will not affect a member's voting behavior upon returning to Congress, holding all else equal.

Ideological Primaries

Given prior literature that shows different effects for competitive primaries and ideological primaries on general election outcomes, we expect to find similar results when examining congressional behavior in the following Congress as well. Therefore, unlike with competitive primaries where we do not expect to observe legislative behavior changes, we do expect the presence of an ideological challenger to influence congressional behavior. It is first important to note that we do not believe an ideological primary challenge is enough to warrant a change in a member's legislative behavior. The member must also know that her changes in voting behavior are observed by constituents, potential challengers, and potential campaign contributors.⁵

Given the importance of observational behavior change to the member we do not think members of the minority party will change their legislative behavior (in any observable way). Minority party members have no real method by which to demonstrate behavioral change (based on votes) after an ideological primary challenge.⁶ That is, for a member of the minority party who faced an ideological primary and would now like to demonstrate a behavior change, she cannot show, using votes alone, a more extreme ideological position as, at the end of the day, the vote will still appear as cast with the minority party and against the majority party. There is no clear way for a minority party member to demonstrate via a vote that she is more ideologically extreme than she was in the previous Congress.

On the other hand, a member of the majority party, who faced an ideological primary challenge, does have the opportunity to change her roll call behavior. In this case, the member has a choice with regard to her voting behavior after returning to Congress. The member can continue to vote with the majority party *or* the member can change her voting behavior and vote *against* her party more frequently. If the majority party member continues to vote with the majority party it signals no behavior change to the electorate, future ideological challengers, or donors.

However, if the member occasionally votes *against* the majority party these votes can be used by the member to signal to key principals that she is not simply a pawn of the party leadership, but rather an independent (perhaps more ideological) member. Unlike a member of the minority party, a member of the majority party has the option of disobeying the party leadership. She can cast a vote against the party as a way to signal publicly that the party is not extreme enough.⁷ Of course, these votes against the majority party will appear as if the member is supporting the minority party, but, in reality, the incumbent is simply signaling ideological independence from the majority party. The goal for the majority party member who behaves in this way is to ward off the emergence of future ideological challengers in the next primary election. Based on this, we expect ideological primary challenges to affect returning members of Congress differently depending on their party status. This leads us to generate two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Among minority party members who face an ideological primary challenge, we will not observe a difference in their propensity to vote with their party when compared to members of their party who face a non-ideological primary challenge.

Hypothesis 3: Among majority party members who face an ideological primary challenge, we will observe more votes cast against their party than before the primary challenge when compared to fellow party members who face a non-ideological primary challenge.

Data and Methods

We develop and test our theory by analyzing primary challenges in the U.S. House of Representatives from 2002 to 2012 and corresponding voting changes in the following Congress. Given our research question, the unit of analysis is House incumbents who face a primary challenge (any type), win their primary, and win the subsequent general election and return to Congress. We compare House members' voting behavior in the Congress prior to and immediately after the primary challenge.

Since our expectation is that the relationship between ideological primaries and voting is conditioned on whether a member of Congress is a member of the majority party, we are interested in the extent to which a member of Congress votes with or against his party upon returning to Washington. Therefore, rather than examine NOMINATE scores, we are more concerned with the extent to which a majority party member displays ideological independence, especially on important (easily observable) issues. We capture whether a member of the majority party is exhibiting ideological independence from his party by the percent of the time that the member votes against his party. We operationalize this as the percent of time that the member votes with the Minority Party Leader on key votes. We choose to use key votes as these are thought to be votes that are the most salient. According to *Congressional Quarterly*, key votes are selected based on the extent to which they meet one or more of the following criteria: a matter of major controversy, a test of presidential or political power, or have potential ramifications for the nation and the lives of Americans. Given these criteria, key votes are often likely to be more partisan. Additionally, given their selection criteria, these are the votes the general public is likely to be more aware of, as they are more likely to generate media attention or be the focus of members, parties, or future challengers. Therefore, a member of the majority party who faced an extreme ideological primary challenge may be more likely to vote against her party on these votes to prove that she is truly independent in her voting behavior.⁸

To reiterate our expectations, we do not expect the presence of a competitive primary alone to influence a member's propensity to vote with its party on key votes. However, we do expect the presence of an ideological primary to have an effect on the member's frequency of voting with the party depending on whether the member is a part of the minority or the majority party.

Table 12.4 The Impact of Ideological Primary Challenges on Key Votes in the House

	β (Robust Std. Error)
Ideological Challenge	7.57* (2.05)
Competitive Primary	1.05 (1.84)
Majority Party	-1.56 (1.36)
Majority Party* Ideological Challenge	-2.13 (2.59)
Closed Primary	-0.36 (1.35)
Semi-open Primary	-1.51 (1.37)
District Ideology	0.04 (0.023)
Vote Share in General Election	-2.84 (4.09)
In-party Spending	0.42 (0.92)
Constant	80.87* (13.46)
Number of Cases	410
R-squared	0.038
	$F_{(10,399)}$ 11.23

Notes: These cases include U.S. House races between 2002 and 2012 where an incumbent defeated a primary challenger and returned to Congress. The dependent variable is the change in the percent of the time the member voted with the Minority Leader on key votes. Cell entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients with robust standard errors. * $\leq .05$.

The model presented in Table 12.4 displays the effect of ideological and competitive primaries on the change in the percent of the time the member voted with the Minority Leader on key votes. With regard to our first hypothesis, the model shows that the competitiveness of the primary does not impact voting behavior. The presence of a competitive primary decreases the propensity to vote with the Minority Leader on key votes, but it is not significant.

Turning to our second and third hypotheses, when we assess the role of an ideological primary on the member's rate of voting with the Minority Leader on key votes, we see the conditional effect we expected for members of the majority party. First of all, the coefficient on *ideological challenge* tells us that a member of the minority party who faced an ideological primary challenge votes with the Minority Leader on key votes 7.57 percent of the time more often than she did before the ideological primary challenge ($p < .001$).

To examine the effect an ideological primary has on members of the majority party, we calculate the appropriate linear combination by adding together the coefficients on *ideological challenge* and *majority party* \times *ideological challenge* (see Table 12.5). From this we find that a member of the majority party who faced an ideological primary challenge *also increased* the percent of the time she voted with the Minority Leader on key votes compared to a member of the majority party

Table 12.5 Comparing the Impact of Ideological Primary Challenges and Majority Party Status on Support for the Minority Party Leader on Key Votes in the House

β
(Robust Std. Error)
H2: Ideological Minority Compared to Non-ideological Minority
7.57*
(2.05)
H3: Ideological Majority Compared to Non-ideological Majority
6.02*
(2.61)

Notes: These comparisons are based on the model in Table 12.4. The dependent variable for this model is the change in the percent of the time the member votes with the Minority Leader on key votes from the Congress before a primary challenge to the one following it. The two comparisons depict the difference in voting with the Minority Leader when comparing one group to another group and are based on House races between 2002 and 2012 where an incumbent defeated a primary challenge. Ideological indicates that the incumbent faced an ideological primary challenge while non-ideological means that the incumbent faced a primary challenge that was not ideological in nature. Majority means that the incumbent returned to the House as a member of the majority party, while minority represents incumbents who returned to the House as a member of the minority party. * $p < .05$.

who faced a non-ideological primary challenge. More specifically, a majority party member who faced an ideological primary challenge votes with the Minority Leader 6.02 percent more often than she did in the Congress prior to the ideological primary challenge ($p = .022$).

Conclusion

The findings presented here suggest that it is ideological primary challenges, not competitive challenges, that cause a member of Congress to change her legislative behavior upon returning to Congress. Yet, this change in voting behavior is conditioned on whether or not the returning incumbent member is a part of the majority or minority party. Members of the majority party who face an ideological primary challenge become significantly more likely to vote with the Minority Party Leader on key votes in the next Congress, whereas members returning to Congress as a part of the minority party continue to vote with the Minority Party Leader on key votes and, in fact, are found to do so at a higher rate than they were before the ideological primary challenge.

With ideological primaries becoming increasingly common – from 2008 to 2012 ideological challenges were the most common reason for a primary challenge – these findings have implications for representation and responsiveness in Congress. Even though most incumbents successfully defeat these types of primary challenges, the findings presented here demonstrate that even an unsuccessful ideological primary challenge is affecting legislative behavior in Congress. These types of challenges lead to reelected members altering their support for their party in order to demonstrate legislative independence, likely to ward off future primary challenges.

Future work in this area remains to be done. First of all, it would be worth linking the votes of the majority party members who, upon return, cast more votes with the Minority Leader with their comments on the votes. Our theory relies on the assumption that these votes are cast to prove that the majority party member is not a pawn of the party, but rather an independent-minded ideologue who will withhold party support in an observable way by voting with the

minority when he or she does not think the majority is being ideological enough. While the intuition behind this makes sense, it would be ideal to match these votes up with the member's talking points. We expect that speeches around these votes would express the member's dissatisfaction with the moderate position of the majority party.

Second, the theory presented here has potential repercussions for the behavior of parties in the U.S. Congress. With ideological primary challenges becoming increasingly common, the findings here show that parties (particularly the majority party) may need to rely on gaining moderate members of a minority party to pass legislation if enough members of the majority party defect. In some ways, this notion is already playing out in Congress. Former Speaker John Boehner frequently struggled to get the majority party membership to coalesce around the party's position, often relying on Democrats in the minority to pass major legislation such as Hurricane Sandy relief, the so-called Fiscal Cliff, and a clean CR for Homeland Security funding. Current Speaker Paul Ryan faces similar challenges in his negotiations with and reliance on the conservative Freedom Caucus within his party. As more members of the majority become reluctant to support moderate or, at least, median positions in Congress, does the majority party frequently have to turn to the minority party to claim legislative victories? Studying this question is somewhat confounded by the majority party's ability to keep divisive legislation off the agenda, but even just for legislation that must pass, the question is vital. This question, and the frequency with which this occurs, has important implications for theories of parties in the U.S. Congress.

Lastly, there is a natural follow-up to this study that explores the likelihood of a primary challenge after a member undergoes changes in her legislative behavior. Do members who become more ideological in their voting behavior, conditioned on which party they are a member of, succeed in fending off future ideological primary challenges?

This chapter demonstrates that members who face ideological primary challenges are certainly responsive to these signals from their constituents when they return to Congress. This suggests that the presence of an ideological primary challenge, even if not competitive or successful, can reap behavioral consequences in Congress. The more ideological extreme primary electorate is influencing the legislative battle in Congress and, as ideological primaries become increasingly common, this victory is only going to grow more pronounced. Ideological primaries have consequences and these types of primaries, above and beyond the typical competitive versus non-competitive dichotomy, need to be taken seriously by the parties, incumbents, and voters.

Notes

- 1 Due to redistricting following the 1990 census, Upton became the representative of Michigan's sixth congressional district beginning in 1993.
- 2 Upton's district is the southwestern-most district in Michigan. It stretches from the Indiana border in the south to the southern border of Ottawa and Kent counties in the north. It includes numerous communities located along the shoreline of Lake Michigan.
- 3 Because the authors operationalize a divisive primary as one where a Tea Party candidate ran against an incumbent Republican, the finding that a divisive primary increased vote share in the general election only applies to the Republican Party.
- 4 Given the authors' measure of divisiveness, we are confident that the 2010 primaries they coded as divisive (those with a Tea Party candidate challenging an incumbent) are a subset of those coded as ideological above. This will be discussed in further detail below.
- 5 This underlying assumption will influence the selection of our dependent variable to be discussed in greater detail below and the conditional relationship we are proposing.
- 6 Although changes in voting behavior will not be evident for a minority party member there are other ways for these members to demonstrate a behavior change. These include, but are not limited to, bill sponsorship, bill co-sponsorship, talking points, speeches, etc. While these are certainly interesting ways to assess the legislative consequences of ideological challenges they fall beyond the scope of this chapter.

The goal of this chapter is to show how the conditional relationship posited here is essential to uncovering findings regarding the effect of ideological primary challenges on legislative behavior.

- 7 It is important to note that voting against the party on more votes in the Congress following the ideological challenge does not necessarily imply anything about the member's ideology. In fact, a fairly moderate member of the majority party might be a prime target for an ideological primary challenge. And for this member, even casting a few votes against the majority party in the post-challenge Congress may be enough to signal ideological independence.
- 8 If there were key votes *Congressional Quarterly* classified as such, but that were votes on which the majority party was rolled on final passage, we do not include these in the calculation of the dependent variable. In these cases, a vote with the minority party would actually be suggestive of a moderate position and therefore they are excluded.

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