Evidence of Absence: The Progressives and Strategic Non-Voting in the House, 1907-1925

by

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Submitted to the
Department of Political Science
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

The Progressive movement presents a puzzle for analysts of Congress: a deeply divided Republican party that appears in roll calls as extremely unified and homogeneous. Historical records and theories of Congress suggest that part of the answer lies in missing votes - legislators abstaining in order to reduce cross-pressure between their party and constituents, and the Speaker using quorum calls to exclude disloyal Republicans. Using imputation to “fill in” the missing vote data from the 60th House reveals that missing votes had the effect of concealing Republican heterogeneity. This preceded the revolt against Cannon in the 61st House, and was more common for the non-Insurgents who faced the strongest cross-pressure. This pattern continued under Democratic rule in the 62nd House, fading out after the GOP revolt in the Speakership elections of the 68th. This evidence of non-random missingness can help resolve the puzzle of the Progressives, and inform historical study of Congress.

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1 Introduction

The Progressive movement reshaped American political life, ushering in an age of government activism that was unprecedented in American history. The Progressives built a powerful insurgent faction within the Republican Party that ultimately joined with Democrats to break the power of their own Speaker of the House in the famous 1910 “Cannon Revolt” of the 61st Congress (Harrison 2004). And yet, in conventional methods of scoring Congress like NOMINATE, the Progressives are invisible (Poole and Rosenthal 2009). The Congressional parties of the early 20th Century score as extremely homogenous, unified, and conservative. In this paper, I will argue that this seeming contradiction can be partially explained by the role of missing votes. The early 20th Century was the historical peak of abstention and non-voting in the House, and treating these non-votes as missing data reveals a more heterogenous Republican Party.

The historical record supports not only the account of division within the Republican Party, but also significant patterns of missingness. Cannon’s leadership style and stranglehold over the House created strategic incentives for ideologically extreme GOP legislators to not vote. This paper argues that there is conditional missingness in the data rather than completely random missingness, a situation wherein missingness might materially impact measurement. The model of the data-generating process inherent in NOMINATE, which assumes missingness is ignorable (Poole and Rosenthal 2009, 273), squares poorly with the reality of the House in this period.
This paper attempts to resolve some of this puzzle by revealing suppressed heterogeneity in the Progressive-era House, focusing on the 60th through 68th Congresses. The institutionalization of leadership power along with growing heterogeneity in the Republican caucus led to growing cross-pressure for many members, and many used abstention to partially resolve this pressure. This led to a party that appears more homogenous than it was in practice - while the Insurgents were the most visible example, this behavior was most prominent among non-Insurgent members that faced a higher degree of cross-pressure. Furthermore, we see that when control of the chamber flipped from GOP to Democratic hands in the 62nd Congress, the newly heterogenous Democrats began to show very similar patterns of strategic abstention. This pattern of meaningful abstention continued in the lead-up to the revolt against Speaker Gillett in the 68th Congress, dissipating after the Progressives extracted their reforms.

This work contributes to a larger literature on evaluating Congress. Some Congress scholars have taken issue with scaling Congress based on roll-call voting. The largest issue brought up is selection bias; there is a great deal of activity in Congress other than roll-call votes, including a large majority of votes taking place via other mechanisms (Clinton 2012). The roll-call record may sometimes be a poor reflection of preferences in Congress, or even a satisfactory summary of activity. Missing votes present a similar issue - if the roll-call record is being consciously censored, then roll-call scales may be a poor summary of preferences (Rosas et al 2014, Rodriguez and Moser 2013). The role of missingness in the Progressive era suggests that missingness
may materially affect estimates of revealed preferences based on roll call votes. This result suggests that contextual evidence can be very valuable in formal evaluation of historical Congresses.

2 The Institutionalization of the House

The period leading up to the 60th Congress was a time of great institutional innovation in the House. The period of 1890-1910 was marked by institutional innovation giving the speaker far greater power over the agenda (Polsby 1969). The Speaker had long had a strong role over the Chamber, but these changes under first Reed and then Cannon placed almost complete control in Speaker Cannon’s hands by the time of the 60th Congress (Peters 1990). The key innovation which gave Cannon his “tyrannical” power over the chamber was the introduction of Reed’s rules - while Reed’s rules were effective at giving the Speaker agenda power, they also increased the degree to which a speaker could move policy further away from the policy preferences of moderate members.

The pre-Reed rules in the House had extremely weak agenda control - not only for the Speaker, but for all actors in the House. Bills were handled in the order of introduction (“regular order”) except for bills that met unanimous consent or gathered a 2/3 majority for suspension of the rules (Cox and McCubbins, 2004). Dilatory motions and quorum denials were also common - the minority party could insist on
regular order and then slow the process in order to exert an agenda veto on the majority party’s bills. The upsides of this system should be fairly clear for minority members (or dissenting members of the majority party) - it provided a non-median pivot point, similar to the Senate filibuster. Analogously to the legislative filibuster, it expanded the gridlock interval and made it more difficult for the majority party to enact policy change (Krehbiel 1998).

Reed’s rules and allowed the Speaker to effectively exert control over the floor. Under Reed’s reforms in 1890, the Speaker gained a number of key powers limiting members’ dilatory powers - she was no longer required to recognize members raising dilatory motions, could count all physically present members for quorum purposes, had a decrease in quorum numbers, could win cloture with a majority vote, and could refer bills to committees without a vote (Binder, 1997). The rules also codified the role of the Rules committee in considering bills. Rules was empowered to pass privileged bills immune to dilatory motions, and could do so to create special rules governing the consideration of bills. Thus the Speaker, as chair of Rules, gained the power to alter regular order at will and curb dilatory motions, effectively gaining the power to decide which bills came to the floor.

Reed’s reforms helped elevate his lieutenant Joe Cannon, a Republican from central Illinois, as a central parliamentarian. Cannon was already long-tenured in the House by 1890, first elected in the 42nd Congress (1873-1875). Reed appointed Cannon as the chair of Appropriations and one of the three members of Reed’s majority
on the 5-seat Rules committee, along with Reed and future President William McKin-ley (Remini 2006). When Reed resigned from Congress in 1899 over opposition to American expansion overseas, the post was held for two terms by Republican David Henderson of Iowa. When Henderson resigned in turn, Cannon was elected as Speaker in 1903.

Cannon's reign was distinguished by his tight control of the chamber. Cannon exerted near-total control over the agenda in a manner generally held to far exceed even the excesses of "Czar Reed" - frequently changing committee chairmen or delaying committee appointments as a form of discipline (Remini 2006). He was ruthless in exploiting his right of recognition to suppress dissent and amendment motions and would manipulate the effective composition of Congress through his power of quorum calls (Alexander 1916). He also had an important substantive difference from Reed - whereas Reed was not marked by strong ideological beliefs and agenda, Cannon was a devoted conservative. He was a staunch advocate for traditional Republican positions - light taxes, light regulation, and the tariff. This sat uncomfortably with the Progressive movement sweeping the country, particularly the Republican Party. Cannon faced challenges both from above, in the person of President Roosevelt, and below in the form of liberal Republicans.
3 The Rise of the Progressives

The Progressive movement was a liberal movement, with its political expression centered in a Republican party dominated by conservatives. The Progressives grew out of the emergent American urban middle class at the turn of the 20th Century, centered in longtime Republican strongholds like New England and the Upper Midwest (McGerr 2003). The Progressive philosophy advocated broad reforms of society, on both the individual and governmental level, aiming at creating a peaceful and prosperous society. Progressive activism coalesced around Prohibition in the late 1890s, but expanded vastly in scope in the 1900s and began to focus squarely on governmental reform. They are best known for their attacks on government corruption and political machines, but also pursued an expansive and radical agenda in governmental regulation of business, poverty alleviation, and even environmental protections.

The Progressive basis of electoral power was centered in the Republican Party of the West, Midwest, and New England, personified by President Roosevelt and Governor (and then Senator) Robert LaFollette (R-WI). Roosevelt was elected as Vice President to the conservative President William McKinley, Cannon’s old ally in the House, but embraced the values of the Progressive movement after he ascended to the Presidency in 1901 following McKinley’s assassination (Smith 1985,1). Governor LaFollette won the 1900 Wisconsin gubernatorial election as a Republican and set to work pursuing an aggressive Progressive agenda (Smith, 1985, 291). Governor LaFollette focused on regulation and reforms to limit the political and economic power of
Roosevelt took this agenda national, and made serious legislative strides forward during the Henderson speakership. Roosevelt passed a series of regulatory acts limiting the power of the railroads and creating the Department of Labor and Commerce (Remini 2006, 267). This was in some sense the tip of the spear for Roosevelt’s intentions - he envisaged an ambitious agenda extending to ending child labor, food and drug regulation, ending the tariff, and workers’ protections.

Roosevelt’s unstoppable ambitions came crashing into the immovable object of Speaker Cannon after the latter’s ascension in November 1903. Cannon stood foursquare against Roosevelt’s progressive ideas, along with a small coterie of like-minded Republicans mostly from the urban Northeast called the "Stalwarts". His key allies were Reps Soreno Payne (R-NY), John Dalzell (R-PA), James Tawney (R-MN), James Mann (R-IL), and Nicholas Longworth (R-OH). Payne chaired Ways and Means, Tawney Appropriations, and of course Cannon retained chairmanship of Rules (Remini 2006, 269). Cannon and his clique of Stalwart conservatives, using the mechanism Reed had built, were able to effectively shut down Roosevelt’s progressive agenda. While Cannon allowed through a few popular priorities such as the Pure Food and Drug Act, he shut down major initiatives opposed by business such as tariff reform and the eight-hour workday.

As Republicans increasingly represented a range of constituencies broader than their old base in the Industrial Northeast, intraparty heterogeneity rose and the divi-
sions within the party became increasingly severe (Brady and Epstein 1997). George Norris (R-NE), who eventually led the Cannon Revolt, was one of a large cohort of Progressive Republicans from the Midwest and New England, popularly known as the "Insurgents". This initially loose coalition of Republicans, varying size from the low 30s to mid 40s in number over the 59th, 60th, and 61st Congresses, were primarily based in the Midwest, Plains states, and New England (Rubin 2013). They clashed with Cannon’s Stalwarts on issues of regulation in general and particularly on issues relating to the railroads, which Cannon staunchly opposed. Even before the revolt in the 61st Congress, insurgent Republicans in the 60th seriously and publicly considered a move to rein in Cannon (Jenkins and Stewart 2012).

Historians of the period show us a Republican Party torn between its conservative leaders and Progressive reformers. The high point of Progressive presence in the House was the 60th Congress (1907-1909), President Roosevelt’s last. President Roosevelt stepped up reform efforts in the 60th, proposing vast reforms of virtually every area of economic life. Congressional Progressives drove the reform agenda from below, often in alliance with liberal Democrats (Harrison 2004). But these reforms were consistently stymied by Cannon, stimulating the organization of the Insurgent bloc which was to strip the Speaker of many of his powers in the subsequent 61st Congress (Berdahl 1949). In short, the Republican Party of the period was highly heterogenous and losing its sharp ideological differentiation from the Democrats.
4 The Missing Progressives

However, it is notoriously difficult to find evidence for ideological division in the GOP’s roll call record. NOMINATE scores in the 1900s and 1910s show an extremely homogenous and conservative Republican Party, in a highly polarized chamber (Poole and Rosenthal 2009). In fact, the early 20th Century was by far the most polarized period in post-Reconstruction Congressional history, and the Republican Party scores on both W-NOMINATE and DW-NOMINATE as extremely conservative (Theriault 2008). This seeming discrepancy between historical accounts and quantitative measures has led some scholars to conclude that NOMINATE may be inappropriate for the early 20th Century (Caughey and Shickler 2014). In roughly half of all roll-call votes in 1907-1909, the Republican Party was completely unanimous (Harrison 2004). Brady and Epstein (1997) rely on votes for one specific tariff for measurement of the diversity they seek to measure, because the roll-call record as a whole is so uninformative.

The history of the period suggests that the invisibility of the Progressives may stem from censoring of what made it into the roll-call record. There is much more that goes on in Congress than roll-call voting, and an established literature demonstrating rolls calls may be unrepresentative. Recorded votes represent a small portion of Congressional votes, and an even smaller portion of Congressional activity, and if it is nonrandom it may affect evaluations of Congress (Clinton and Lapinski 2008). The question of which votes and issues go to the floor is highly nonrandom, and voting
roles are consciously shaped by Congressional leadership in order to achieve strategic goals on both policy and member management (Jenkins and Stewart 2003). Both formal theory and simulation studies have considered the effect of this roll-call selection bias, and have concluded that it may substantially change the results compared to a world where roll-call votes were representative (Carrubba et al 2006, Carrubba, Gabel, and Hug 2008).

Less studied is the fact that members’ roll-call record itself is censored. Cannon’s stranglehold on the floor meant that the House operated in practice under a “closed rule”, of no amendments - legislators did not get the chance to vote their consciences, but were forced to take or leave roll calls as they were. Representative Gardner of Massachusetts, raging against Cannon in a floor speech, protested that under Cannon’s “tyranny”, “Members must choose between two evils” (Congressional Record, 60.2). Many members simply chose not to choose, or were simply prevented from doing so; Cannon was ruthless in manipulating quorum requirements to exclude cross-pressured members from votes (Alexander 1916). The historical record suggests a tremendous amount of cross-pressure due to the increasingly heterogenous Republican Party, an interpretation supported by a broader Congressional literature. I will argue that cross-pressure should increase missingness in a systematic way, and may offer a partial answer as to why Progressivism is so difficult to observe in the roll call records.
5 Cross-Pressure and Strategic Missingness

Scholarship grounded in the rational-choice perspective - particularly the methodology that led to NOMINATE - reject the conception of meaningful abstention. Instead, the general expectation is that voting is a collective good (Olson, 1965) and members will abstain unless there is a powerful countervailing reason. There is evidence that abstention is simple shirking (Rothenberg and Sanders 2000, AJPS), though replication casts doubt on this analysis (Carson et al 2004). Pivotality is one motivation to vote, but abstention is unrelated to potential pivotality (Poole and Rosenthal 2009 (278), Rothenberg and Sanders 2000, Public Choice). Another explanation is the high cost of voting - Poole and Rosenthal (2009, 275) have suggested that travel time to Washington drives abstention, which fits poorly with the fact that abstention peaked in the early 20th century. Finally, the working alternative of formal theorists is that legislators who abstain are indifferent to a bill’s passage (Poole and Rosenthal 2009, Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers 2004) - but as Poole and Rosenthal admit, “the game-theoretic model does not account for the data” (278). And so many analysts have looked outside the voting chamber.

An alternative theory is that members abstain in order to somehow further their electoral standing. Mayhew (1974) famously wrote that legislators are “single-minded seekers of reelection”, which guides their behavior in all things. One of the most important reasons to vote in Congress is public position-taking, which communicates to constituents the ideological position of the legislator. Yet it is not always clear what
is the best position for a legislator to take, because they face conflicting demands on the position they ought to take. It is often not clear whether a legislator is best served by moderation or extremism.

In the most proximate reelection concern, members have an incentive from their district to be relatively moderate. Under the median voter theorem, the politician who is closest to the median voter in their constituency will win the election (Downs 1957). In practice, politicians do not seem to converge to the median position, but instead remain divergent in the US (Ansolabhere et al 2001). However, this does not mean there is no incentive for moderation. Politicians can reap electoral rewards for moderation, and face pressure from their constituents to be ideologically moderate (Jacobson 1996, 2004). Beyond just ideological moderation and election positioning, there is strong demand from constituents for partisan moderation: voters care explicitly about party unity and loyalty and punish it at the polls (Canes-Wrone et al 2002). In the immediate short-term realm of the next election cycle, there is a strong incentive for Congressmembers to position themselves as moderates both by explicit positioning but also by showing party disloyalty. Previous studies have shown that constituents do respond to roll-call voting (Ansolabhere and Jones 2010), and so legislators must consider their immediate electoral incentive when taking roll-call votes.

There are second-order electoral incentives to help re-election chances by displaying loyalty to the party. Even the most secure members will face primary challenges, and all members worry constantly about the prospect (Fenno 1978). The activists
who make up these primary electorates not only do not demand moderation, but reject it; they will often explicitly aim for selecting more extreme members to stand election in the district (Bawn et al 2012). As a result, in order to please the primary electorate party members are incentivized to be relatively extreme (Brady, Han and Pope 2007), which can entail more extreme voting. Within Congress, party leadership wields considerable influence over members’ fates. Party leadership controls committee assignments, and will preferentially hand out desirable assignments to members who back the leadership and toe the party line (Cox and McCubbins 1994, 2004). This was one of Speaker Cannon’s most powerful weapons. Voting against the party on leadership-driven votes is particularly frowned-upon. These committee assignments are often quite important to members, especially if their district is particularly affected by its purview (Adler and Lapinski 1997). Committees are a prime source of “pork barrel” funding that can be funneled back to the home district, which can be extremely important in ensuring a members’ reelection chances (Stein and Bickers, 1994, Levitt and Snyder, 1997). But party members cannot access those reelection resources without showing party loyalty and supporting the leadership’s initiatives in Congress. This is all too often in direct conflict with immediate reelection goals of showing moderation and independence.

Both principals - voters and party actors - rely on roll call votes to evaluate legislators, which presents a problem for analysts of Congress. Any quantitative indicator used for performance evaluation becomes an unreliable metric as it is subject to gam-
ing behavior. (Campbell 1976). Members are aware that both voters and leadership care about roll-call voting and face contradictory pressures from both principals on how they should be voting. Abstention is a relatively low-cost way to resolve this pressure - not pleasing either principal, but not antagonizing them. Abstention can also be induced by the Speaker, if he manipulates quorums in order to exclude these cross-pressured legislators. However, if missingness is strategic then that undermines the assumption from NOMINATE and rational-choice theory that abstention is ignorable. Instead, strategic missingness requires a conscious strategy for accounting for the missing data.

Some evidence suggests that purposive abstention is practiced by Congressmembers. Cohen and Noll (1991) find that members will abstain in order to further their goals of reelection, but the paper has extremely limited external validity - it is focused solely on a series of votes on the Clinch River Breeder Reactor. Members adjust their participation in response to party, voting more often on votes identified as key votes by party leadership (Forgette and Sala 1999). At an individual level, higher abstention in the Senate is associated with electoral marginality and constituency diversity (Jones 2003). If party leaders and constituency preferences can affect members’ level of participation, this suggests that the decision to participate can be driven by cross-pressure. Using both formal modeling and permutation testing, it has been shown that this can materially affect ratings of Congress that rely on roll-call vote scoring (Rosas et al 2014, Rodriguez and Moser 2015). Rodriguez and Moser, using a model
bundling imputation and scoring, found a similar effect in the 107th Senate - mostly ignorable abstention, with strategic abstention from a small number of senators including the party-switching Senator Jim Jeffords (R-VT).

This theoretical background and historical context yields the prediction that missingness should play a meaningful role in Republican voting decisions in this period. The Cannon Speakership features an unusual combination of circumstances: a highly divided majority party, a closed rule on the floor, and manipulation of quorum calls. The sharp internal division of the party leads to a high degree of cross-pressure. Being in the majority is predictive of abstention (Poole and Rosenthal 2009), because members in the majority have less incentive to take votes that might be contentious but could pass without them (Cohen and Noll 1991). And finally, Cannon’s dominance of the floor plays an important theoretical role. Formal theory suggests that closed rules allow for agenda control with fewer “side payments” to legislators and smaller coalitions (Baron and Ferejohn 1989), decreasing the incentive of many Republicans to vote for Cannon’s bills without increasing the incentive to vote against them. And by manipulating quorum calls, Cannon could exclude GOP legislators who might otherwise have voted against him. These factors are highly unusual in Congressional history, suggesting that abstention will be much more significant for scaling than in later or earlier periods. It also predicts that abstention will be less determinative in the minority Democratic party, which lacks cross-pressure because there is little incentive to vote with Speaker Cannon. Furthermore, Democrats most
likely to vote against Cannon would also have been most likely to be excluded from quorum calls, suggesting that would induce little systematic bias. To concretely state the hypotheses:

H1) Imputing missing votes will result in more dispersion within the Republican Party.

H2) The influence of abstention will be largest on the members furthest from the party mainstream.

H3) Similar effects will not be observed within the Democratic Party.

6 Using Imputation for Scaling

The theory demands closer examination of exactly how missingness shapes our scaling of the Progressive-era Congress. NOMINATE operates on the assumption that data is effectively missing at random. As a result, NOMINATE simply drops missing data (Poole and Rosenthal 2009). While listwise deletion may appear like no strategy to deal with missingness, it is in fact a meaningful strategy resting on the assumption that missingness is ignorable. This means our theory suggests that NOMINATE might be a poor reflection of preferences when there is conscious censoring of voting - either through strategic abstention or through manipulation of quorum calling.

The role of abstention is not constant over time, as Poole and Rosenthal address. Instead, it rises from between 10% and 20% in the early Congresses over the course of the 19th Century, eventually peaking at roughly 40% in the 60th House. This
suggests that the time period of the Progressives may be of particular interest in studying the role of abstention. The graph below reproduces the chart from Poole and Rosenthal (2009) with an added loess line to show trends more clearly:

Figure 1: Abstention Over Time
While Poole and Rosenthal lay the primary cause of growing abstention in the travel times from Washington, the cross-sectional data suggests this may not be a full explanation of the prevalence in the House during this period. First is the divergence between the trend in the House and the Senate which begins around the time of Reed’s reforms, and represents the largest sustained gap in rates observed between the House and Senate. There is no appreciable difference in travel times to Washington between House members and Senate members from North Dakota or other Plains states admitted during this time. Furthermore, the argument that travel time from further home districts drove higher abstention is implausible when looked at specifically in the context of the House - the representatives added to Congress during 1890-1910 were a tiny fraction of the House, and even 100\% abstention from roll calls would barely nudge the average, much less drive it substantially up. Travel-time effects, if they drove the increase in abstention, should drive up abstention in the Senate more than the House due to greater representation from new states, but in fact the opposite was observed. While Poole and Rosenthal’s argument about the drivers of abstention may do a good job describing the grand sweep of history it does not satisfactorily explain the changes during the Progressive era.

We can empirically examine the effects of missing votes by considering those missed votes as missing data and adopting an imputation strategy. The voting data is a “roll-call matrix”, comprising all roll-call votes from the 60th Congress. The
roll-call matrix is structured such that each roll-call vote is a column in the data, and each member is a row - so a given cell represents Congressmember i’s vote on bill j. Each vote is either a 1, representing a yes vote, or a 0, representing a no vote. However, some of these votes are missing - either because Congresspeople abstained, or because they had not yet been entered the Congress or had already left (e.g., votes taken after a member dies). While the latter represents an ignorable missingness mechanism, our theory argues that the former is not. We can use imputation to fill in the missing data - in other words, to estimate how the Congressmember would have voted on a given bill if she had voted. The process for doing so is Bayesian logistic regression: we assume that each vote can be modeled as:

\[ Y_{ij} = \logit(\beta X_{jk})^{-1}, i \neq j \]

In other words, each vote on a given roll-call can be predicted by the votes on all other roll calls. This gives us a posterior distribution for each \( Y_{ij} \), and the missing value can be imputed by taking a random sample from that posterior. This procedure is then iterated many times, in order to provide bootstrapped estimates of uncertainty stemming from missingness (Rubin 1987). Multiple imputation is a well-established procedure for dealing with missing data, although it depends on the assumption that the missing-data mechanism is conditionally ignorable. In other words, the observed and unobserved data are drawn from the same distribution, of which some part is
missing. This is a much weaker assumption about the missing data than ignoring it as NOMINATE does. Imputing the missing data by using the observed relationships between roll calls is a much weaker assumption about the missing data, and is more consistent with a theory of Congress that posits meaningful abstention.

After imputation, scaling proceeds normally using the “complete” data set. The imputation process produces a large number of datasets, each containing a fully imputed matrix of roll-call votes. Each roll-call matrix can be scaled using open-source R packages that implement W-NOMINATE (Poole et al 2011).¹ This provides many sets of scalings, which can be used for bootstrapped estimates of both point estimates and uncertainty. It can be misleading to compare “raw” scores that come out of the two scoring processes, and so both the W-NOMINATE and imputed W-NOMINATE scores are standardized for comparability. These can then be compared in order to assess our theory: whether missing votes in the 60th Congress are consciously censored and make the party seem more homogenous than it truly is. I predict that after imputation, the Republican Party will look substantially more heterogeneous, whereas there will be little systematic effect on the Democratic Party.

¹W-NOMINATE require a “polarity” - one member designated as a conservative pole around which other members are oriented. The pole chosen was the Representative rated as most conservative from their initial DW-NOMINATE score.
7 House Republican Division in the Progressive Era

The Republican Party in the Progressive Era represents something of a puzzle: despite serious divisions within the party, it was remarkably unified in the House. While Progressives are regarded by historians - and identified themselves - as a distinct faction within the Republican Party, the NOMINATE scores of the House GOP delegation tell a different story. The Republican Party of this period appears remarkably homogenous, and the House is extremely polarized between the two parties. This is also a period of very strong leadership in the House, when Speaker Cannon ruled the chamber and party with an iron fist. The Cannon revolt, when Progressives joined with Democrats to strip him Cannon of many powers, shows that GOP divisions must have been deep indeed. This period presents an excellent example of maximal cross-pressure within the party, when we would expect members to use abstention to reconcile their diverging preferences with party requirements. By focusing on the 60th Congress, the efflorescence of Progressive strength in Congress and the period immediately before the Cannon revolt, this is exactly what we see.
Imputing the missing votes reveals a much more heterogeneous Republican Party (Figure 2). On the left is a scoring of the 60th House ranked according to their conventional W-NOMINATE scores. On the right are the point estimates from using imputed data. While the position of the Democrats have not changed very much, the Republican members are much more heterogeneous and the chamber is much less sharply polarized. Specifically, the standard deviation of the Republicans changed
from .23 points to .33 and an F-test allows us to conclusively reject the null that the
two distributions have the same variance.

Republican legislators used abstention to “shift inwards” towards the rest of the
party. Figure 3 shows the distance between GOP legislators’ imputed ideal point
on the x-axis, and the distance between their imputed and non-imputed ideal points
on the y-axis; a data-point on the 45-degree line represents a representative who
converged to the party median by abstaining. Surprisingly, this is true not just of
left-wing Republicans but also of extreme conservatives, who use abstention to shift
further to the left. The logic of cross-pressure applies to them as well, for while they
faced less conflict with Speaker Cannon they also had to contend with constituencies
at home which may have been less extreme. The end result is that abstention sup-
pressed the heterogeneity in the 60th House GOP as many legislators used the power
of abstention to resolve the cross-pressure they faced. One weakness of this analysis is
that it entangles the two mechanisms - it is impossible to tell which votes are missing
at the members’ volition and which are missing because Cannon excluded them from
a quorum call.

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2 It would perhaps be more desirable to compare Republican legislators’ positions to Speaker
Cannon, but Cannon had too few roll-call votes to construct an initial W-NOMINATE score. At
the time, it was unusual for the Speaker to cast roll-call votes (Alexander 1916).

3 Voting present and not voting are coded separately in the data - however, non-voting could be
caused by many reasons. These include being excluded from a quorum call but absence might as
easily be caused by involuntary absence or by consciously dodging a vote.
Figure 3: Shift in Republican Legislators’ Ideal Points from Abstention

Abstention-Induced Shifts in NOMINATE Score

Liberals Shifting Right
Hughes
Littlefield
McMillan
Gardner

Conservatives Shifting Left
Individual-level observations are consistent with the theory. For example, Representative Augustus Gardner of Massachusetts, who made the complaint that Cannon forced legislators into impossible dilemmas, abstained on many votes that would otherwise have marked him as more liberal. It also solves some puzzles that emerge from the standardized scores - and the largest shifts belong to Progressive legislators. Representative Charles Littlefield of Maine, a well-known Progressive “insurgent” who fought viciously with his party (New York Times 1904), has a NOMINATE score indicating he is quite conservative. However, his imputed score correctly places him on the left flank of the party, meaning that his abstention allowed him to fit more neatly into the party mainstream. Many of the largest shifts belonged to other Progressives, such as James A. Hughes, a liberal Progressive from the very conservative state of West Virginia (Washington Post 1912) whose NOMINATE score placed him on the right flank of the GOP. Not all were Progressives, however - some of the shift reflected more straightforward party-pleasing, such as Samuel McMillan of New York, nominated hastily to fill a vacant seat and fighting off a (ultimately successful) primary challenge (New York Times 1906).

The imputed distance from the party median is highly predictive of the direction and distance that abstention shifts their rating. A bivariate regression of the change abstention induced in NOMINATE on the imputed distance from party median is highly statistically and substantively significant (Table 1). This shows that for each
unit of distance from the party median on imputed NOMINATE score, the effect of abstention will shift a Representative's observed ranking 0.4 points in the opposite direction. This should be interpreted as descriptive rather than causal - however, it shows that the pattern of abstention meaningfully impacts scoring and serves to cover up intra-party heterogeneity.

Table 1: Effect of Ideological Distance on Abstention-Induced Shift

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Change in Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distance from Party Median</td>
<td>-.401***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations 221
R² 0.48
Adjusted R² 0.48
Residual Std. Error 0.230 (df = 219)
F Statistic 202.890*** (df = 1; 219)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
On the other hand, abstention has no systematic effect on measurement of Democratic preferences (see appendix for measurement details). Members do not move systematically based on their distance from party median, and an F-test does not allow us to reject the null that both measurements have equal dispersion. This follows from our hypotheses. Democrats did not face the same cross-pressure that Republicans did, because in this period of high party discipline there would be little incentive for them to vote with Cannon. Furthermore, when they were excluded from a quorum call by Cannon, the vote that went missing was simply another vote that would have been cast against Cannon. There does not appear to be meaningful information in Democratic votes that was lost due to the missingness mechanism.

8 The Cannon Revolt

The 60th Congress was the prelude before the actual revolt, which took place in March 1910 during the 61st Congress. The theory of roll-call censoring does not generate a sharp prediction about whether these members had unusual abstention behavior. The incentive for censoring is fundamentally a spatial function, yielding the pattern of "shifting inwards" for both liberals and conservatives towards the median of the party. However, the Insurgents were primarily located to the left of the Republican median, which generates a set of clear spatial hypotheses:
H4) The Insurgents were primarily located to the left of the party median.

H5) The Insurgents primarily used abstention to shift to the right (i.e., towards the median).

H6) Insurgents are less cross-pressured than other members, and would engage in less strategic abstention.

The movement towards the revolt began in the 60th Congress. Following a series of speeches by Representatives Victor Murdock (R-KS) and John M. Nelson (R-WI) decrying Speaker Cannon’s agenda control, the Speaker struck back with denial of state party support and relegation to undesirable committees (Rubin 2013). The Representatives responded by circulating a petition in order to gauge support for rules changes. The signees were the seeds of the Insurgents, to be supplanted by new Western and Northeastern Republicans elected in the 1908 election. After that election, there were over 30 Insurgents commanding veto power, given the 24-seat Republican majority.

The Insurgents had policy goals, and made common cause with Democrats, who were interested in restraining the majority party’s agenda control. The movement made little progress until the 61st Congress, in large part because they were internally split over whether to pursue a new Speaker or to focus on parliamentary reform (Rubin 2013). The bloc eventually unified around parliamentary reform, both to forestall the prospect of a divisive speakership fight and partially to make the Insurgent cause more appealing to Democratic collaborators. Over the course of 1909, the Insurgents made repeated attempts to force a reform platform to the floor, only to be stymied each time by Cannon pre-empting their move or splitting the coalition by
offering minor concessions.

The key forcing mechanism was a motion from Representative George Norris (R-NE) proposing to strip the Speaker of his seat on Rules and his power of appointment to the body. While Cannon would normally have ruled this motion out of order, Norris relied on the Speaker’s ruling the previous day that motions pertaining to the Constitution took precedent over ordinary House business (Rubin, 2013). Promoting the motion to the floor was the key crack in Cannon’s power, as the Insurgent-Democrat coalition then had the power to force a vote. The Democrats backtracked on an initial deal with Norris, requesting a change from a geographically-focused Rules representation scheme to elections by the full House. As Norris quickly realized, their sudden reticence was based on growing Democratic hopes for taking back the House in the election of 1910 (Remini, 2006). With their expected future majority, the Democrats were suddenly more interested in the power of agenda control - and indeed their reform program retained most of the agenda powers from Reed, e.g., quorum control and the right of recognition (Cox and McCubbins, 2004).

The theory of strategic abstention outlined here does not generate a strong and obvious prediction about the relationship between strategic abstention and the Insurgents. While the Insurgents were ideologically heterodox, they were not necessarily caught in the same cross-pressure between conservative leadership and Progressive beliefs - given that the Insurgents were in open revolt, one might well surmise a lower level of party-pleasing abstention behavior. However, there are more limited
hypotheses that naturally emerge from spatial theories of politics. Specifically H4 and H5 - roll-call scoring will place the Insurgents to the left of the party median, and the Insurgents’ imputed roll-call score will be further from the party median than a version which drops abstentions.

Both of these hypotheses are borne out in practice. When we examine the roll-call scores of the Insurgents, the Insurgents are both generally located to the left of the party median and generally use their abstention to shift their measured ideal point to the right. However, it is immediately apparent that the magnitude of the effect is smaller for Insurgents, who show less change than other legislators with similar distance from the party ideal point.

Comparing Insurgents and non-Insurgents with regression confirms H7 as well. When we include a control for Insurgent status and an interaction between insurgent status and distance from the party median, we see countervailing effects of insurgent status. While the base effect of distance from party median is -.45, the effect of distance from the party median conditional on being an Insurgent is only -.293, suggesting that the Insurgents are engaging in less strategic abstention. This is consistent with the self-selected nature of Insurgent status - these members are not shy about revealing their "type" and were already engaging in open conflict with leadership. However, the interaction of Insurgent status and ideological distance is only significant at the 10% level - the sample size has dropped markedly relative to the full dataset, as we’re limited to the 170 members who had enough votes to be scaled
Figure 4: Difference between Insurgents and Non-Insurgents

**Abstention-Induced Shifts in NOMINATE Score**

- Liberals Shifting Right
- Conservatives Shifting Left

Imputed Distance from Party Median
Insurgents in Blue
in the 60th Congress and remained for the 61st House.

Table 2: Effect of Ideological Distance on Abstention-Induced Shift

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dependent variable:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance from Party Median</td>
<td>-0.455***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurgent</td>
<td>-0.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurgent x Distance</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Std. Error</td>
<td>0.12 (df = 170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Statistic</td>
<td>62.2*** (df = 1; 170)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
This analysis of the Insurgents bolsters the broader argument that strategic abstention stems from cross-pressure. The open Insurgents faced less cross-pressure than non-Insurgent members with similar ideological distance, and accordingly responded less to the incentive to censor their roll-call record.

9 Role Reversal in the 62nd Congress

The Democrats took the House in the elections of 1910, assuming the majority role. The Speakership was assumed by Champ Clark (D-MO), former Minority Leader and architect of the deal with the Insurgents. Like the Republicans, the Democrats had become increasingly heterogenous as elections became nationally competitive and Democrats began increasingly representing urban districts (Brady and Epstein, 1997). Brady and Epstein show that by using instruments such as voting on tariffs, the Democrats in the 62nd Congress were substantially more heterogeneous than Democrats in the 55th through 60th Congresses. On the institutional side, the majority retained substantial power to reward the loyal and punish recalcitrant members. The Cannon revolt had somewhat weakened the Speaker’s agenda control powers, but the same basic dynamics apply to Democrats in the 62nd Congress as to Republicans in the 60th - a party facing cross-pressures between a conservative leadership and a heterogenous membership. This generates natural hypotheses - that the nature of Democratic abstention will change substantially from the apparently-random
H7) The level of abstention among Democrats will increase relative to the pre-Revolt Congress.

H8) Democrats will take on the pattern of abstention seen among Republicans in the pre-Revolt Congress.

Testing the level of abstention between Democrats in the 60th and 62nd is a simple comparison that invalidates H7. While majority status has been shown to predict abstention (Poole and Rosenthal 2009) it did not happen after the Democrats took control of the House. In fact, the level of abstention among Democrats fell — going from 37.5% to 32.7%, statistically significant with a p-value of .03. This is a surprising result, particularly given the large Democratic majority should decrease the incentive for any Democrat to take potentially problematic votes in order to assure passage (Cohen and Noll 1991).

However, the nature of Democratic abstention changed sharply between the 60th and 62nd Congress. While there was little incentive for purposeful Democratic abstention in the 60th Congress, this was no longer true in the 62nd. The Democrats had taken on a more ideologically heterogenous mix of constituents, representing many long-time Republican districts, and gained the power to reward and discipline members. While the Cannon revolt was taken as a major change in the nature of the majority’s power, in fact the Speaker retained most of the powers granted by Reed. In short, the same institutional structure and incentives for cross-pressure now came to apply to the Democratic party.
When the same analysis used for Republicans in the 60th House is applied to the Democrats in the 62nd, we see the same pattern repeating itself. We take the roll call record for the 62nd Congress and impute the missing votes and compare them against the votes with listwise deletion. While this technique showed no meaningful abstention for Democrats in the 60th Congress, when applied to the 62nd it shows the pattern of strategic and symmetric abstention. Democrats that are more conservative than the party median on their imputed roll calls use abstention to move leftwards towards the party median, and Democrats that are more liberal than the party median on their imputed roll calls use abstention to move rightwards towards the party median.
Figure 5: Shift in Ideal Points from Abstention, Democrats in the 62nd House
This relationship is highly statistically significant and similar in magnitude to the effect for Republicans in the 60th. For Republicans in the 60th House, there was an effect of -.4, indicating Republicans used abstention to decrease the distance from the party median by roughly 40%. For Democrats in the 62nd House, there is an effect of -.33, indicating Democrats used abstention to decrease the distance from the party median by roughly 33%.

Table 3: Effect of Ideological Distance on Abstention-Induced Shift

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable:</th>
<th>Change in Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distance from Party Median</td>
<td>-.327*** (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.04*** (0.008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Observations | 231 |
| R² | 0.58 |
| Adjusted R² | 0.57 |
| Residual Std. Error | 0.1231 (df = 231) |
| F Statistic | 313.9*** (df = 1; 231) |

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
This finding shows that while strategic abstention is not universal to all Congresses, it was an important part of House members’ techniques during the ideologically cross-pressured Progressive era. The forces acting on Republicans before the Cannon revolt applied with nearly-equal force to the Democrats, even with the milder divisions within the Democratic party. So when the majority flipped, Democratic members adopted similar techniques.

10 The Bargain for the Speakership in the 68th House

The Democrats held the chamber from the 62nd through the 65th Congresses (1911-19), generally operating with a fairly loose hand on the tiller from Speaker Champ Clark (D-MO). The innovation had kept most of the agenda control powers from the Reed-Cannon era but decentralized more of the organizational authority. One major change was the institution of the “binding policy caucus”, which centralized authority in the House in the body of the caucus. The caucus could choose its own majority leader by election, as well as elect the membership of Ways and Means. Under the Democratic system, majority party members on Ways and Means would serve as the Committee on Committees which determined committee assignments (Stewart and Jenkins, 2013). The reforms took much of the individual power away
from the Speaker, and could "bind" member’s votes with a 2/3 vote of the caucus. This binding party caucus much more closely followed in form the conception of the "procedural cartel", wherein responsibility was diffused across senior members of the caucus.

When Republicans took back the Chamber in the 66th Congress, they did not strictly follow the binding policy caucus model but kept the Democrats’ norm of caucus election for influential posts. Frederick Gillett (R-MA) was elected speaker, but was relatively weak and policy was generally controlled by the Republican Steering Committee, an eight-member group of party elders led by majority leader Franklin Mondell (R-WY). One thing that had not changed, however, was the conservative stranglehold on policy - the Steering Committee in conjunction with Rules acted to completely control the agenda to meet conservative priorities (Remini 2006). While the power of the Progressives had waned by the early 20s, they still held twenty-some seats in the 67th Congress, a reasonable bloc by most standards but virtually powerless given the GOP’s 302-seat majority.

The crucial Progressive moment came after the Republican majority was cut down dramatically in the 1922 midterms. The Republican House majority was reduced from 302 seats to 225, and the Progressive bloc became the pivotal bloc in the House (Remini 2006). Starting with the lame-duck session of the 67th, the Progressives began working with the Democrats on legislative votes and negotiating about decentralizing reforms in House rules. They struck during the leadership elections at the opening of
the 68th. After Nicholas Longworth (R-OH) was elected to Majority Leader, Mondell having vacated the seat for a failed Senate run, the Progressives torpedoed Gillett’s speakership reelection. They continued to hold his election hostage on ballot after ballot while negotiating with Longworth, eventually winning major concessions and letting Gillett retake his seat. These reforms included the discharge petition, which weakened majority agenda control by letting 150 members bring a bill to the floor. They also ended committee chairs’ pocket veto, which robbed chairs of much of their power to control what left their committee.

The experience with the Cannon revolt suggests that we will see similar effects among Republicans in the 67th and 68th Congresses. Specifically, we should see meaningful abstention among Republicans in the 67th, who face considerable cross-pressure between party leadership. However, this pressure should lift in the 68th Congress for a number of reasons. First, the bare GOP majority in the 68th raises the opportunity cost for Republicans to abstain - the power of their vote has considerably increased, in terms of moving policy outcomes. Secondly, the power of leadership declined - the reforms the Progressives forced at the opening of the 68th weakened many of the carrots leadership had to offer, by weakening the agenda control powers of the posts leadership was able to offer. Finally, the revolt at the beginning of the 68th removed much of the incentive for liberal GOPers to engage in leadership-pleasing abstention - they had already revealed their "type", so to speak. This yields two fairly clear hypotheses:
H9) Republicans in the 67th House will engage in meaningful abstention to move towards the party median.

H10) The force of this behavior will drop in the 68th House, relative to the 67th.

Both hypotheses are borne out in practice. Republicans in the 67th House do exhibit the "shifting inwards" behavior characteristic of the pre-Cannon Congress, though the effect size is much smaller than in the pre-Cannon Republicans. However, that effect disappears in the 68th Congress, where it is not possible to reject the null that abstention is unrelated to distance from the party median and the sign of the relationship changes direction. The observed relationship is also much weaker than in the pre-Cannon Congress, with distance from party median explaining a much smaller share of the change from abstention.

Table 4: Republicans In the 67th House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Change in Score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent variable:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance from Party Median</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.03)</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.01)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>307</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Std. Error</td>
<td>.209 (df = 307)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Statistic</td>
<td>3.94*** (df = 1; 307)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Table 5: Republicans In the 68th House

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent variable:</td>
<td>Change in Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance from Party</td>
<td>.01 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>−.02 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Std. Error</td>
<td>.209 (df = 224)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Statistic</td>
<td>.18*** (df = 1; 224)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

11 Discussion and Conclusion

Abstention provides a partial answer to the mystery of the missing Progressives. Speaker Cannon’s stranglehold on the legislative process induced a huge amount of missingness from his members, many of whom chose not to choose on floor votes and many of whom were excluded. This ended up masking a great deal of the heterogeneity in the GOP that historians recorded. This is an argument for measurement techniques that consciously incorporate the missing-at-random assumption, such as IDEAL. The technique this paper employs is not necessarily the be-all and end-all, but by separating imputation and measurement allows us to consciously compare the impact of that assumption on measurement.

One general lesson is that ideal-point scholars should pay close attention to the
data-generating process. Many Republicans faced strong incentives not to vote, and the Speaker faced strong incentives not to let them. Furthermore, rules matter - the closed floor and quorum rules seem to have been crucial mechanisms. Even after the revolt, when the chamber switched hands to another heterogenous party and relatively similar rules, this behavior remained in place. Examination of the historical record points us towards what imputation showed - the missingness mechanism was very far from random, and substantially affected scaling.

Further causal work is needed to study the influence of abstention. Causal analysis to determine what led to this strategic abstention could help flesh out or falsify the underlying theory. The theory of strategic abstention presented here is amenable to causal testing using the rich panel data available from the full history of Congress. Following in the vein of earlier studies, using either panel data methods or plausibly exogenous shocks such as redistricting could allow for an estimate of what causes members to abstain strategically and how they use it to advance their goals.

Substantively, this is a problem of Congresses past more than future. Abstention is a phenomenon that is sliding towards irrelevance in Congress, moving in lockstep in both chambers towards an unavoidable minimum caused by death and illness. Scaling methods that do not account for abstention work perfectly well for the modern Congress, and given the high polarization, unified parties and growing electoral security in Congress (Bartels 2000) there is a general decline in the level of cross-pressure faced by legislators. This accounts for the nearly-negligible effect of abstention in the
modern Congress (see appendix). However, the combination of a very strong Speaker and high abstention proved capable of replicating nearly the same surface-level unity during the Progressive era, yielding observational equivalence between today’s polarized environment and that of Cannon’s House. This analysis shows that while no doubt Cannon’s agenda control was important in the mystery of the "missing Progressives", the evidence from abstention is also an important part of the roll call record during this period.
References


[3] Will Run on Two Tickets: Representative Hughes, R., Also Nominated by West Virginia Progressives. Newspaper article, August 31 1912.


Appendix

11.1 Abstention of Democrats in the 60th House

Table 6: Influence of Distance on Abstention-Induced Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance from Party Median</th>
<th>Change in Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-0.068</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.008)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 165
R²: 0.009
Adjusted R²: 0.003
Residual Std. Error: 0.150 (df = 163)
F Statistic: 1.511 (df = 1; 163)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
11.2 Abstention-Induced Uncertainty

Aside from changing point estimates for some Congresses, abstention introduces unmodeled uncertainty in NOMINATE scores. The nature of the missing votes is inherently uncertain, and a great deal of data is missing from the roll-call matrix. While W-NOMINATE can calculate standard errors due to uncertainty in the estimation process, it does not account for the uncertainty due to missing data. This can be estimated by using a bootstrap technique: we multiply iterate the procedure derived above. We impute missing data on the roll-call votes, scale the resulting "complete" roll-call matrix using W-NOMINATE, and standardize the values. This is repeated many times, and the resulting distribution of estimates can be used to draw both point estimates and empirical confidence intervals. The results show that there is a very large degree of uncertainty introduced by abstention into scalings of Congresses with large amounts of abstention.

The results show that missing data from abstention introduce a great deal of uncertainty into ideal-point measurement. For many legislators their estimated ideal points when dropping missing data falls within the confidence intervals of the bootstrap estimate.\textsuperscript{4} For many, it does not. Furthermore, the width of confidence intervals is not straightforwardly related to ideological scores, with only a weak negative correlation between a member's extremism and the width of their confidence intervals. There are no obvious rules of thumb for analysts in assessing how the unacknowledged uncertainty from abstention may affect point estimates without performing a similar analysis. It is clear, however, that analysts using NOMINATE scores from high-abstention eras should perform some type of sensitivity analysis before uncritically accepting the scores.

\textsuperscript{4}These estimates are based on 500 bootstrap iterations.
11.3 Effects on the Modern Congress

There are very small effects of abstention in the 112th Congress. After imputing the missing data, scaling the new roll-call matrix, and standardizing the resulting scores, they can be easily compared against each other. In the graphs below, the solid dots represent the legislators' W-NOMINATE score with imputed abstentions while the solid circles represent the W-NOMINATE score calculated with abstentions dropped. For all but a few legislators in the 112th, these measurements are indistinguishable from one another.

These results reinforce the idea that abstention's influence varies across historical periods. With the force of cross-pressure much diminished from the Progressives' day, and low rates of abstention as well, it is a marginal influence on the modern Congress. More causal analysis is needed in order to determine the specific roots of strategic abstention.