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Living Together and Voting Together: The Impact of Congressional Boardinghouse Networks on Voting Patterns, 1825-1841

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In the early part of the XIX century, American politics had a local flavor. Power resided most often in the county or town, sometimes in the state, and only rarely in Washington, D.C. (Dahl 1989; Young 1966). Weak parties proved incapable of articulating national political identities and Congress operated in large part reactively to the given issues of the day. While a true national stage for politics would not emerge until the end of the century (Clemens 1997) the political divisions of the 1820s posed a severe challenge for the newly formed Republic. The dangers of factionalism so clearly spelled out by James Madison in Federalist #10 appeared very concretely in the second decade of the nineteenth century for example, when bitter fights ruled the life of Congress.

Yet despite the political fragmentation that characterized this period, by 1830, the contours of a national political stage had emerged (Formisano 1983). For certain, the process of political consolidation that created the stage for national politics could not be accredited to the new parties that formed from the ashes of the Republicans and the Federalists. The Whigs and the Democrats continued to be weak organizations as were their predecessors—in 1836, for example the Whig ‘party’ had at least 4 presidential candidates (Formisano 1974). Historians have looked at the underlying social and economic processes that from the early nineteenth century began transforming the United States from an agricultural country to an industrial super power in order to explain the emergence of national politics amidst weak parties (Marshall 1967). Political scholars have instead argued that consolidation of politics on the national stage emerged from the presidential campaigns that created awareness of the regions from which candidates emerged (McCormick 1966). In this paper, however, we set these underlying processes firmly in the background and focus on a more proximate cause for the ideological consolidation that led to the emergence of a national political stage—Congressmen’s living arrangements.

Our argument is simple. Congressmen who lived together in what were known as boardinghouses had more opportunities to interact with each other and, therefore, to influence each other’s opinions (Bogue and Marlaire 1975). The fact that Washington, D.C. at the time was largely a town “under construction” that offered few alternatives to the routines imposed on Congressmen by their jobs magnified the impact of the residential informal networks. These networks, more than the parties or the presidential campaigns, became the basis for the formation of a national political stage (Young 1966).

That a venue—the boardinghouses in our case—rather than a party, or system of parties, could become the basis for the consolidation of a political system is not surprising. Parties themselves are often born out of venues with ideology following the more or less lucky first gathering. For example, in writing about the Jacobins of 1789, Maurice Duverger argued that members of this party gathered together because they all came from the same region of France. They became an ideological group, a party, only afterwards, when the French Assembly was transferred from Versailles to Paris. “This time, no room in a café being available, the leading spirits hired the refectory of a convent, and it was under the name of this convent that they were to become famous in history” (1954: xxv). In this account, the relationship between political opinions and

political parties is the reverse of what most casual observers imagine. In revolutionary France, representatives got together first and then recognized their common interests and ideological similarities. This paper claims that boardinghouses—not cafes or monasteries—played a similar role in post-revolutionary American politics. The result of the discovering of common interests across multiple localities led to the emergence on the national stage of the North / South divide—the main cleavage of national politics during the nineteenth century (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

In this paper therefore we do not model the formation of the American second party system. Instead, we are interested in analyzing the underlying institutional process of ideological consolidation that sustained the emergence of the key cleavage of American politics—the division between Northerners and Southerners. We ask the following question—given the fact that American parties remained weak organizations, which institutions generated the structuring of positions between a Northern bloc of congressmen and its equivalent in the South so that their political differences consolidated on the national stage?

Of course, we do not want to fool anybody—Washington, D.C. was not (and perhaps still is not), Paris. No cafes existed within the perimeter of the city during the period of our analysis. James Sterling Young reports that when the government arrived in Washington, D.C. there were only 109 permanent structures (brick and stone) and that the War of 1812 only made things worse (1966). What existed, however, and what political scientists have largely overlooked, were boardinghouses, places where Congressmen lived while serving in Congress. These boardinghouses became the basis for the formation of informal networks of Congressmen and, our evidence shows, for the recognition of common interests above those of local politics. The boardinghouse was the institution underlying the emergence of the North / South cleavage in the first part of the nineteenth century.

We will show evidence that boardinghouses exerted influence on the individual voting behavior of Congressmen. In particular, we will show that it was only when Congressmen from the South lived with other Congressmen from the South that they realized their commonality of interests. The same occurred in the case of Northerners. The homogeneity of the residential networks exerted political pressure on Congressmen to vote in alignment because it reinforced the emergence of a dominant perspective. Further, we will use a particular aspect of our data—Congressmen that moved between boardinghouses at the end of first session—to separate the impact of selection from that of political influence. Rather than choosing to live together on the basis of common regional interests, Congressmen recognized these interests because they lived together.

While we have evidence showing that boardinghouses influenced the voting of Congressmen, and that the direction of this influence reinforced the North / South divide, we are still in the process of coding and analyzing more data for showing the ideological consolidation at the national level that boardinghouses generated. Thus, the conclusions that this paper draws are necessarily tentative.

Politics in Washington, D.C., circa 1820s

Congressmen of the early nineteenth century hated Washington, D.C. as much as contemporary Congressmen hate it today. In those days, however, the hate for the new capital was not just another rhetorical trick in the politician's bag. The city had very minimal infrastructure and, for example, the low ground in between the White House and Capitol Hill was, literally, a swamp! At the beginning of the century, very few buildings existed. Young writes: "When the government arrived in 1800, only 109 "permanent" structures (brick or stone) stood in all of Washington, to house the 500 families already residing there and an additional 300 civilian members of the

government, many of them with families of their own. The commissioner then reported 372 dwellings as 'habitable,' but, as a cabinet officer noted, 'most of them are small miserable huts'" (1966: 22). The war with England in 1812 only made things worse. When Congressmen returned to the city in 1814, they found the situation so desperate that talks of abandoning Washington, D.C. for good became dominant. Indeed the House came within nine votes to decide in that direction.

In this unforgiving environment, Congressmen stuck together. In the early part of the century, the great majority of Congressmen were part of boardinghouses, also known as messes. Young reports that messmates took their meals together, lived together and spent most of their leisure time together. Messes were largely established along regional lines, yet states were rarely unified in a single mess. Messes had up to 30 members. While the number of Congressmen residing in boardinghouses progressively declined with the passing of time, it remained a salient phenomenon until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Undoubtedly, Congressmen thought living in Washington, D.C. was onerous also because of the distance of national politics from the seat of their real power—the county or the state. In the first two decades of the century, Congress more resembled organized chaos than a functioning political institution (Formisano 1983). There were no formally recognized party leaders and seniority as a basis for political rank was very weak. Fueling this lack of leadership stood deeply engrained political practices. For example, Sarah Binder reports that, although by the 1820s referral of bills to standing committees would become far more routine, 'Jeffersonian' attitudes toward the legislative process continued to have legitimacy: "...subjects were debated on the floor in the Committee of the Whole before being sent to ad hoc select committees for drafting as a bill" (1995: 1096). For a few Congressmen, the weak institutional setting that Congress offered and the precarious infrastructures of the city proved too much to bear—resigning the national post in order to return to local politics was a common practice in the 1820s.

National politics was not only a dispersive environment but was also very heterogeneous. Disparate issues dominated Congressional life during the 1820s, such as, for example: (a) the composition of a delegation to the Panama Congress (19th Congress); (b) military appropriations (20th Congress); (c) the Indian Removal Act (21st Congress). On these issues and on several relevant others that we do not report for lack of space, Congressmen sorted themselves out on the basis of locally, state-centered interests rather than using a national outlook. The byproduct of this was that politics at the Federal level had a muddled ideological structure. For example, during the 18th Congress the W-NOMINATE score for all rollcalls (Poole and Rosenthal 1997) returns an ideological space fractured along five dimensions. Things improved marginally during the 19th Congress.

In sum, national politics in the 1820s appeared very weakly organized, with Congressmen mostly loyal to their local interests and anxious to leave the Capital as soon as possible. However, because the majority of Congressmen lived together, small communities formed. By spending time together in boardinghouses Congressmen became aware of similarities across regional differences and, in a manner very similar to the emergence of parties in Europe (Sartori 1976), they developed a common ideological ground. In the remaining part of the paper we will show that this process of ideological consolidation at the national level led to the emergence of the North/South cleavage.

Data

The 19th Congress marks the beginning of our period of analysis. We chose this starting point because it is traditionally considered the institutional birth of the second party system. Using

several different sources, we constructed a database with all Congressmen from the 19th to the 26th Congress. First, we coded the information of where Congressmen resided in Washington DC from Goldman and Young (1973), which lists the names of the boardinghouses for each session and the names of the people that resided there.

Next, we looked at ICPSR study 3371, Database of Congressional Historical Statistics 1789-1989, for biographies about each Congressman. We also gathered rollcall data from voteview.com, which has been curated by Howard Rosenthal and Keith Poole. Finally, we pieced this information together with committee assignments taken from Charles Stewart's website at MIT.

For each session in the period from 1825 to 1840 (the 19th to the 26th Congresses) we know the identity of each Congressman's boarding mates and their voting records. Three things are worth noting about boardinghouses. First, the number of Congressmen in each boardinghouse changed session by session. This is because other guests, non-Congressmen, also lived in these establishments and occupied some of the rooms. In our data, we do not have the identity of these other residents.

Second, the number of boardinghouses appearing in the directory also changes session by session. Some boardinghouses remain in the directory for all of the sessions while others appear for few sessions or for a single session. This source of variation is, however, less problematic than the previous one because we know exactly when Congressmen lived in private dwellings, that is, not in a boardinghouse. Our data include the residence of all Congressmen for each session, regardless of their type of residence. Therefore, although the number of boardinghouses changed with each session we are confident that our database includes all the boardinghouses active during the period 1825-1840.

The third important piece of information regarding boardinghouses is that a subset of Congressmen moved at the end of each session from one boardinghouse to another. Given that we know their voting records before and after the move, this switching of boardinghouses allows us to create a quasi-experimental scenario for untangling the impact of selection and influence. We will come back to this point more precisely in the hypothesis section but the analysis of Congressmen that moved between boardinghouses (movers) makes possible the development of a strong causal argument about the effect that residential informal networks of Congressmen generated.

Despite the richness of information contained in our database, we have no direct data on the network of relationships between Congressmen that lived in the same boardinghouse. We do not have proof, for example, if Congressman X became a friend with Congressman Y while living in the same boardinghouse. Therefore, we assume that boardinghouses provided a natural locus for the formation of informal networks. The conditions in Washington, D.C. described above potentially exacerbated the salience of boardinghouses in creating informal networks because few places for local gathering existed at this time in the city. Further, historical secondary evidence confirms our intuition. Congressmen living in the same boardinghouse had frequent interactions with each other. In light of all of this, we think that our decision to use boardinghouses in order to capture informal networks of Congressmen is very plausible.

Given the lack of infrastructure in DC, the self-reported addresses for the boardinghouses have several inconsistencies. It was sometimes difficult to determine whether boardinghouses with similar names appearing in successive sessions were in fact the same residence. In order to disambiguate these cases, we did our best to uniquely identify the location of boardinghouses using a historical map of the city. This helped to resolve most of the ambiguous cases. When in doubt, we treated similar boardinghouses as separate residences, so as not to give them a false persistence through time. A possible consequence of this strategy is to suppress the effects of

boardinghouse influence on movers, as some of those movers perhaps did not actually move. As this suppression would be counter to our hypotheses, any results we find may in actuality be stronger than the reported values.

The table below reports briefly some of the information about boardinghouses for each Congress included in the analysis. The empty rows are those for which we are still in the process of coding data.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics about boarding houses

Two things are readily spotted. The first is that the majority of Congressmen resided in boardinghouses. The second is that almost half of the Congressmen moved between sessions.

Hypotheses

The precarious state of Washington, D.C.'s infrastructure made the boardinghouses one of the few venues where Congressmen could convene informally and socialize. Although we do not have data on the informal relationships among Congressmen, we take the boardinghouses as proxies for these relationships. Congressmen living together shared and often discussed political ideas or the issues of the day. Away from home, boardinghouses created small communities for their residents.

Sociologists have shown the importance of informal networks in the functioning of organizations and institutions (Meyer and Rowan 1977). More recently, political scientists have also turned their attention toward informal networks to analyze political behavior in Congress (Fowler 2006) and the formation of political parties (Schwartz 1990). In line with this research, our broad hypothesis is that the networks created by the boardinghouses in the nineteenth century influenced the political behavior of their residents. In the remaining part of this section, we refine this broad hypothesis in three directions: first, by specifying the mechanism through which the boardinghouse exerted influence on Congressmen; second, by stating the political consequences of this pressure; and third, by stating a causal argument about how this mechanism operated.

Boardinghouses influenced political behavior because they created informal networks of people living there. They were, in this sense, more than just a place where Congressmen lived; they formed the basis of small communities. Because of this, the political profiles of Congressmen residing in the same boardinghouse can be used to discern the mechanism that exerted pressure. In particular, we hypothesize that the greater the number of people with a similar profile living together—being from the same region, party, profession, etc—the stronger the amount of political pressure of the informal network on the individual political behavior. Thus,

H1: Larger and more homogeneous boardinghouses exerted greater pressure on the voting behavior of their residents.

Given the salience of local, state-centered politics, recognizing common interests across different locales meant that Congressmen from the South or the North would vote more with their colleagues on either side of the two blocs rather than across. Because it was by living together that Congressmen realized their common interests outside of local towns and counties, our hypothesis is that territorially homogeneous boardinghouses led to the emergence of the North / South cleavage on the national stage. Whereas voting independently of larger groupings would imply the persistence of a local outlook—a Southern Congressman ignoring regional orientation as a meaningful distinction, for example—voting with one's own side would mean the emergence

of a national stage for politics—a Southern Congressman recognizing common interests with other Southern Congressmen.

H2: Congressmen living in territorially homogeneous boardinghouses voted as to reinforce the North / South cleavage, everything else equal.

Yet, in order to causally show that the emergence of the territorial cleavage was a consequence of living arrangements, a closer look at how Congressmen selected boardinghouses as their residences is necessary. It may be the case that the consequence of pressure on each Congressman to vote in alignment with other boardinghouse members was that Congressmen voted differently from what they would have voted had they lived somewhere else (or alone). However, it could also be the case that Congressmen chose to live with people that they thought were politically similar. Network analysts call this phenomenon homophily—the tendency to become friend with people similar to us (Watts, Dodds, and Newman 2002). If homophily was at play, the pressure of the boardinghouses would operate to reinforce the political opinions of its residents. That is, Congressmen would select where to live and, in our implicit model, who to befriend, on the basis of the political behavior of other residents. In such case, our argument about boardinghouse pressure would need to be inverted: Congressmen selected boarding houses on the basis of the communality of interests with the other tenants.

To untangle a pure influence effect from the issue of selection, we look more closely at the voting records of the group of Congressmen that moved between sessions for each Congress in our data. If movers selected the second boardinghouse on the basis of the political behavior of its residents, the Congressmen who lived in the selected boardinghouse during the previous session are expected to have a political profile similar to that of the mover. Instead, if movers selected the boardinghouse irrespective of the political profiles of its residents, we expect not to see similarities between the profiles of its residents and the mover during the previous session. Further, if informal networks exerted political influence, we expect that the mover's voting records correlate highly with the records of Congressmen at the destination boardinghouse during the current session. More formally:

H3a (homophily): If a Congressman selected the boardinghouse to move to on the basis of the political profile of its residents, a positive and strong correlation exists between the voting record of the mover and the voting records of the members of the destination boardinghouse during the first session.

H3b (influence): If the pressure of informal networks caused a Congressman to change his voting behavior, the voting records of the movers will be weakly correlated with that of Congressmen living at the destination boardinghouse at the end of the first session, and strongly correlated with the voting records of Congressmen living at the destination boardinghouse at the end of the second session.

Statistical Model

We focused the analysis on the North / South division. For each session we calculated the percentage that either a Southerner congressmen voted with the North or vice-versa. We calculated this percentage using roll calls for all congressmen. For example, if a Southerner voted to pass a particular bill along with the majority of Northerners, and the majority of Southerners voted against it, then that individual was considered to have voted with the other region. We then took the number of all such occurrences for each member over the total number of votes in a particular session, and created a variable for each Congressman in each session that ranged between 0 and 1. This became the dependent variable in our analysis.

The fact that politics was deeply local was our starting assumption in developing this measure. If Congressmen focused exclusively locally, they would be indifferent to the territorial cleavage. Conversely, if Congressmen developed a sense of their common interests, they would tend to vote significantly less with the opposite side. In line with historical literature (Levine 1992), we discarded as anachronistic the fact that voting in opposition with one's own bloc would indicate the emergence of a pan-American political stage. Thus, considering the salience of local politics at the time and in line with H2, we interpreted voting with the opposite side not as evidence of ideological structuring at the national level but on the contrary, as evidence of weak national politics.

We considered our dependent variable as capturing a latent individual's propensity to see politics as either informed mainly by local, state-centered issues or by national issues. This latent dimension can take values greater than 1 if a Congressman's political orientation is strongly towards the other region, or smaller than 0 if a Congressman saw communality of interests with his own region. In this latter case, politics at the national level would result in the emergence of the North / South cleavage. Because of the nature of our dependent variable, we treated the interval between 0 and 1 as a two-sided censoring estimation problem and employed a Tobit model with left and right censoring for our analysis (Tobin 1958). More formally the model we estimated using the VGAM package in *R* was the following:

$$y_i^* = x_i' \beta + u_i$$

$$y_i = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } y_i^* \leq 0 \\ y_i^* & \text{if } 0 < y_i^* < 1 \\ 1 & \text{if } y_i^* \geq 1 \end{cases}$$

Where y_i^* is the latent individual propensity observed only within the interval 0, 1 and x_i is a vector of explanatory variables, beta is a vector of unknown parameters and u_i is the disturbance term.

We used control variables at the individual level and at the level of the boardinghouses. At the individual level we coded a series of dummy variables (being in the Jackson Party, coming from a slave state, being a lawyer or businessman, having military experience, being a college graduate, being a new congressman, being a member of the House) and the individual's age. At the level of the boardinghouse we used the same control variables but in the form of proportions, i.e., the proportion of Jacksonians living in the same boardinghouse, the percentage of college graduates living in the same boardinghouse, etc. We also controlled for the size of the boardinghouse, i.e., how many congressmen lived together during a given session.

The mechanism of social pressure

The relevance of the pressure mechanism is independent of its political consequences. A boardinghouse could have reinforced the regional identity or it could have generated a new cross regional, more national, political outlook. What we care to show in this part of the analysis, is the mechanism through which this pressure was exerted. According to H1, the pressure of the informal networks depended on the homogeneity of the boardinghouses. With respect to our dependent variable, and controlling for individual attributes, we expected that a more homogeneous boardinghouse would generate more pressure toward shaping a Congressman's vote, irrespective of its direction (H1). A positive effect would mean a greater likelihood of voting with the opposite side, that is, of thinking that the larger aggregates South or North don't matter much compared to local issues. In this case, national politics remains weak. A negative sign

would mean a smaller likelihood of voting with the opposite side, that is, a greater tendency of seeing similarity of interests with Congressmen from the South or the North. In such a case, national politics would emerge as a relevant stage for Congressmen. H2 predicts a significant and negative effect of the boardinghouses in that they would operate toward making the Northerners (or Southerners) more aware of their common interests across states, counties and towns.

We tested this hypothesis for each session of Congress between 1825 and 1833 and also for the two sessions of the 24th Congress (1835-1837). We are currently in the process of coding more data for the 23rd, 25th and 26th Congresses (see Table 1 above). The table below reports the results of the Tobit model for the 1st session of the 22nd Congress as an example. The same analysis was repeated for all the sessions in our data.

Table 2: Tobit model for the first session of 22nd Congress

In Model 1, two factors are significant: being a Jacksonian and being newly elected. Both factors operate toward decreasing the national outlook (greater likelihood of voting in opposition, see the positive sign for the coefficients) of the Congressman. However, when controlling for the effect of boardinghouse, both effects wash out. Model 2 shows that informal networks made prevalently of college graduates and newly elected Congressmen significantly altered individual political behavior. While the latter factor continued to decrease the development of a more national outlook, the former factor made Congressmen more tied territorially. Model 2 confirms the fact that political parties were very weak institutions at the time—once controlling for boardinghouses, the effect of being a Jacksonian disappears.

It is Model 3 that displays the most interesting results. The territorial division between North and South emerges very strongly but only once we factor in the interactions. A Congressman from the North living with many other Northerners had -.176 less chances of voting with the other side and therefore it was that much more likely to see his local interests in line with that of other Congressmen from the North (notice that the sign of the coefficient is reversed because we are looking at percentage of Northerners, rather than percentage of Southerners as it is presented in the table). This voting pattern is in line with what we predicted in H2. Similarly, a Southern Congressman living in a boardinghouse with many other Southerners had a greater chance of voting with the interests of other Southerners in mind (compare the magnitude of the negative interaction coefficient with that of “Slave State” at the boarding house level).

The boardinghouse pressure toward pulling Congressman apart on the North / South divide was further reinforced with respect to other characteristics—being a college graduate and a businessman. The only counterbalancing effect happened when considering age—older Congressmen living together tended to be more locally oriented compared to networks made of younger Congressmen. More relevant for the analysis, the size of the boardinghouse emerged to be significant in Model 3. Larger boardinghouses were more likely to push for a national vote than smaller ones, all things being equal. The significant effects reported in Model 3 were operating through the mechanisms that H2 predicted.

While Table 2 confirms that the greater homogeneity of the informal networks was the mechanism that created pressure, it also strongly confirms that boardinghouses were crucial for the emergence of a key divide in American national politics—the North / South divide. The picture below reports the predicted probabilities of a territorial vote by the percentage of Northerners or Southerners in the informal networks. Both lines have a statistically significant and negative slope, with the line for the case of a Southern Congressman steeper than for a Northerner.

Figure 1: *Tobit* model. Predicted probabilities

The effect of homogeneity at least with respect to territory emerged at the interaction level for both North and South but was stronger for the latter case. We repeated this analysis for all the other Congresses currently in our data. The table below focuses on the effect for the South and shows that the interaction effects operated in the same direction as shown in Table 2.

Table 3: Interaction effects

Because for the case for boardinghouses made of mostly Northerners the interpretation of the findings is the same, we do not report a separate table. In both cases, informal networks created pressure through homogeneity and operated toward creating awareness of common interests for Congressmen from the South and the North, respectively. More than parties, Table 3 suggests, the institutional foundation for the North / South split that would become the main axis of American politics was in the informal networks developed on the basis of living arrangements. The next section explores this idea in causal terms: Did the pressure mechanism cause Congressmen to recognize their similarities or were boardinghouses selected on the basis of pre-existing common interests?

A causal argument: The institutional foundation of the North / South divide

A large subset of Congressmen switched boardinghouses between sessions of Congress. This switch creates a quasi-experimental situation because our database contains information not only about the movers before and after the switch, but also about the voting records of the residents in both boardinghouses, the one at the origin (first session) and the one at the destination (second session).

Hypotheses H3a & b pose opposite scenarios. H3a states that if homophily were at play, the correlation of the voting record of the mover with the voting records of the Congressmen in the destination boardinghouse at the end of first session will necessarily be high. Conversely, H3b implies that if Congressmen moved for idiosyncratic reasons, a weak correlation would exist between the voting records of the mover and those of Congressmen at the destination boardinghouse at the end of the first session. More importantly, H3b states that if informal networks caused Congressmen to vote differently, we would expect a discrepancy in the voting records of the movers before and after they switched boardinghouses.

The table below provides evidence of the fact that homophily did not affect movers' choices of boardinghouses. At the same time, the table provides support for the hypothesis that boardinghouse pressure caused a change in voting behavior.

Table 4: Voting correlations for movers

The first two columns report the average correlation coefficient for the movers with Congressmen living in the origin boardinghouse and with Congressmen in the destination boardinghouse. For all the cases for which we have data, the correlation coefficients in the second column are lower than in the first. This indicates a lack of support for H3a.

Columns 3 and 4 instead provide evidence in support of H3b. Influence operated to increase the correlation between Congressmen in the destination boardinghouse as compared to Congressmen in the original boardinghouse. Correlations in column 4 are always greater than those in column 3 and sometimes by a large margin.

This evidence is not conclusive because it only considers correlations. We are currently in the process of extending the analysis by using a framework borrowed from Propensity Score

Matching (PSM) analysis. Table 4 supports the hypothesis that movers did not choose boardinghouses on the basis of the profiles of the residents. Thus, if we treat boardinghouses as a random assignment, we can stratify the population of movers on the basis of territorial homogeneity of the destination boardinghouse. On average, if movers to a more homogeneous destination boardinghouse changed their voting records with respect to Congressmen living at the boardinghouse of origin who did not move, this would indicate a causal effect of the informal networks. A similar reasoning could be applied to see the effect of the “treatment on the treated”, i.e., relating the voting records of the movers with themselves before and after the move.

Discussion

Our analysis provides support for the hypothesis that boardinghouses formed informal networks that exerted political pressure on Congressmen. The mechanism behind this pressure was that homogeneity with respect to certain individual characteristics, such as living with other businessmen or college graduates, fostered the circulation of ideas that affected the political behavior of the boardinghouse residents. We singled out one particular dimension of homogeneity, that of being from either the South or the North. We noticed that in boardinghouses made up primarily of Southerners, the likelihood of voting with other people from the South on all issues increased significantly. The same is true for boardinghouses composed prevalently of Northerners, although the degree to which pressure impacted political behavior was lower compared to the other case. We take this finding to indicate that Congressmen discovered their common interests while living together.

We developed a causal argument to show that informal networks caused the discovery of common interests rather than the other way around. It was not the case that Congressmen chose where to live on the basis of the profiles of the residents. It was instead more the case that Congressmen discovered similarities with the other Congressmen with whom they ended up living. This causal argument has important consequences for understanding the emergence of the North / South divide that characterized American politics for much of the nineteenth century. Differently from countries in Europe, American parties did not operate as the primary institutions that allowed for the recognition and the consolidation of political interests and ideological positions. Instead, the evidence we amassed for our analysis suggests that at the roots of this process of mutual recognition and simplification of the ideological space stood the informal networks centered on boardinghouses.

These conclusions need to be taken with a grain of salt. In part it is because we are still in the midst of coding some of the Congresses for which we have data and in part it is because we need to strengthen our causal argument. With respect to the first aspect, our expectations are that the inclusion of new data into the current framework will not upset our main conclusions. But as everyone that has done research knows very well, surprises are always possible. With respect to the second aspect, our goal is to extend the causal argument of the analysis as highlighted in the previous section.

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Table 1: Boardinghouse descriptive statistics.

Congress	Years	Members of Congress	Number Living in Boardinghouses*	Average Size of Boardinghouses*	Number of Movers
19	1825-1827	261	218	5.8	115
20	1827-1829	261	182	5.9	102
21	1829-1831	261	197	5.8	125
22	1831-1833	261	209	6	145
23					
24	1835 - 1837	294	239	6.3	128
25					
26					

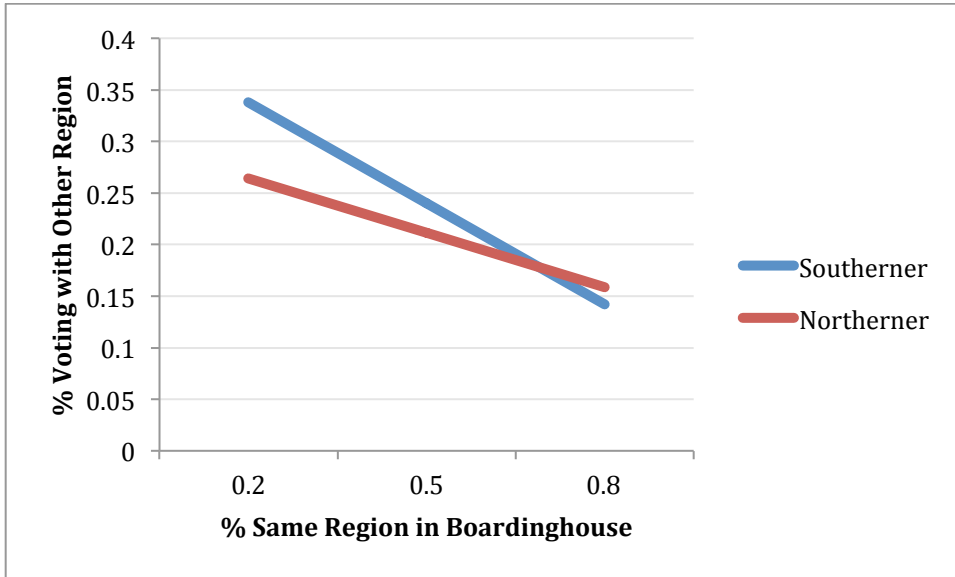
* This excludes all residences with fewer than 3 members

Table 2: Probability of voting with the opposite side. 22nd Congress, 1st Session.

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Intercept</i>			
(Intercept):1	0.08693557	0.1864892	-0.6266386
(Intercept):2	-1.96930291 ***	-2.07358654 ***	-2.20788175 ***
<i>Individual Variables</i>			
Jackson Party	0.05325293 *	0.03780347	-0.01884552
Slave State	-0.01153478	0.05108163	0.28053513 ***
Lawyer	-0.00299088	0.01047968	-0.01230522
Businessman	-0.03649866	0.0102087	-0.00464193
Military Experience	0.03665579	0.02849654	-0.00066678
College Graduate	-0.03133854	-0.00568743	-0.09881904 *
New Congressman	0.05503858 *	0.00327421	-0.04301585
Age	0.00068106	0.00025658	0.02161589
Member of House	0.01310963	0.03454907	0.12426745
<i>Boardinghouse Variables</i>			
Jackson Party		-0.00590448	-0.06406897
Slave State		-0.07551656	0.17629156 ***
Lawyer		-0.04225154	-0.04373594
Businessman		-0.17636722	-0.21818696 *
Military Experience		0.08126194	0.00767451
College Graduate		-0.18340789 ***	-0.33670124 ***
New Congressman		0.15258846 ***	0.09771317
Age		0.00209778	0.02164681 *
Member of House		-0.12885376	-0.00988214
Number of Inhabitants		-0.00168588	-0.01305187 ***
<i>Interactions</i>			
Jackson Party			0.11836338
Slave State			-0.50330988 ***
Lawyer			0.03285951
Businessman			0.04190875
Military Experience			0.04694281
College Graduate			0.20390514 *
New Congressman			0.11504972
Age			-0.00046862 *
Member of House			-0.12769408
<i>Log-likelihood</i>	300.0457	321.3874	348.9528
<i>Degrees of Freedom</i>	401	391	382

Note: * = .05, ** = .01, *** = .001

Figure 1: Full *Tobit* model. Predicted probabilities. 22nd Congress, 1st Session.



Note: Values set to modes or means, depending on whether binary or not, respectively

Table 3: Interaction effects

Congress	South	% South in Boardinghouse	Interaction
19.1		-	
19.2			-
20.1	+		-
20.2	+		-
21.1	+		
21.2	+		-
22.1	+	+	-
22.2	+	+	-
23.1			
23.2			
24.1	+		-
24.2	+	+	-

NOTE: All (+) and (-) significant at .05 level

Table 4: Voting correlations for movers

Congress	1st Session Correlations		2nd Session Correlations		Self-correlation
	With actual board.house	With future board.house	With past board.house	With current board.house	
19	0.51	0.4	0.5	0.69	0.71
20	0.56	0.52	0.35	0.61	0.68
21	0.5	0.46	0.48	0.7	0.35
22	0.64	0.14	0.68	0.78	0.87
23					
24	0.52	0.38	0.38	0.58	0.61
25					
26					