

**ENHANCING ACTIVIST COMMITMENT THROUGH FRAME ALIGNMENT  
AND THE AMPLIFICATION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY: HOW THE TEA  
PARTY UNITES ITS DIVERGENT MEMBERSHIP**

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## **Abstract**

The TEA Party Patriots arose in 2010 following a series of socio-political events: the housing crises, the passage of the Affordable Health Care For America Act, and an increasing public outcry from right-wing pundits on network news stations. After a “call” for a Chicago TEA Party by reporter Rick Santelli of CNBC, the TEA Party was launched. In 2013, the organization consisted of over 600 chapters nationwide. This dissertation uses the case study of the TEA Party Patriots to examine sentiment pools, framing, identity, and commitment in a social movement organization. As a large, geographically expansive organization, the TEA Party is host to five distinct activist types, which can be thought of as sentiment pools internal to an organization: the Christian Conservative, the Constitutionalist, the Reformed Liberal, the Libertarian, and the Conspiracy Theorist. All five of these sentiment pools have distinct understandings of the role of the state and the rights of citizenship. They also have divergent explanations for social problems such as racial inequality. The TEA Party organization, then, employs frame alignment strategies to increase the movement organization’s collective identity and subsequently foster activist commitment. This is primarily done through frame amplification, promoting the values that all five sentiment pools share: the belief that they are fatherly citizens dedicated to saving childlike Americans who are preyed upon by the villainous left, the three pillars of the organization, and racial colorblindness.

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## **THE TEA PARTY: IDEOLOGY, FRAMING, AND THE FIVE SENTIMENT POOLS**

Maxine, a white Midwesterner in her fifties, completed law school frustrated that she and her peers were never asked to read the Constitution during their studies. Since graduation, she has left formal legal practice to homeschool her children because she fears the progressive indoctrination they may face in public schools that deny a place for God. Maxine believes that the separation of church and state has caused moral corruption in American society as exemplified by an increase in abortion – which she links to genocide – and same sex marriage. She believes that Christians are persecuted and punished for their faith, while the state celebrates Islam and Wicca. Recently she ran for, and won, local political office in the Midwest.

Timothy, a white, Midwestern, 70-year-old grandfather, retired from the automotive industry, is genuinely concerned about the future of his family if the United States government continues to operate in ways that extend beyond its role as explained in the Constitution. He spends most of his time talking to others about the nation's founding documents and their parameters. His concerns stem from a perception that Americans have become entitled: rather than serving their country, they expect the nation to serve them. As a result, he fears that the United States will become a bankrupt nation with a tyrannical state that controls the actions of its members.

Alison, a white stay-at-home mother of two in her thirties who lives on the East Coast, cares deeply about racial inequality. In particular, she blames the overreaching state, exemplified by welfare and the War on Poverty, for the challenges disproportionately faced by people of color. When not with her children, Alison runs the

minority outreach program at her local TEA Party chapter. In this role, she works with children in Section 8 Title Housing to empower them through ideas regarding fiscal conservatism, individual responsibility, and free market capitalism. Alison's goal is to help them overcome poverty.

Wayne, a black man in his thirties from Detroit, works rotating shifts at the airport of a major metropolitan area. Raised in poverty, Wayne spent his free time as a child in the library and put himself through college at an online for-profit institution. He thinks that if he had been born in a different time or place he may have been a lawyer, congress member, or presidential candidate. However, Wayne doesn't blame anyone or anything for the place he is in his life. Rather, he deeply believes that all people are responsible for their own choices and that it is up to everyone, as individuals and families, to make the best of things: to work hard, to earn wealth, and to use that wealth as an extension of oneself.

Aaron, a multi-racial father in his 50s living in the Midwest, works full time at a large public land grant university. He spends most of his day working at his desk, listening to podcasts delivered by Infowars, a popular online news source for conservatives. Aaron is very concerned about biased information perpetuated by mainstream news and a loss of United States sovereignty at the hands of Jews and elitists in the United Nations who are seeking to dominate the globe. He fears that Americans will be rounded up into FEMA camps and killed in order to reduce the population and maximize elitist power.

These five individuals represent the diversity of concerns and social backgrounds held by members of the TEA Party Patriots, the largest of three TEA Party

organizations<sup>1</sup>. The TEA Party Patriots is a reform-oriented social movement organization that employs themes of right-wing populism (Berlet 2012). Started in 2009, its moniker, TEA Party, is an acronym for Taxed Enough Already and symbolizes a return to the Founding Fathers. TEA Party members believe that they have begun a second American Revolution (Meckler and Martin 2012).

The TEA Party emerged following the 2009 “rant” of CNBC Reporter Rick Santelli. In this speech Santelli called for a “Chicago Tea Party” primarily focused on resisting the housing bailout proposed by Obama (CNBC.com 2009). Santelli called for President Obama to allow citizens to vote on how they want tax dollars spent: whether they wanted to give it to “the losers’ mortgages” or if they wanted to “buy cars and buy houses in foreclosure” for people who “might have a chance to actually prosper” and, thus, “reward people that could carry the water instead of drink the water” Santelli went on to suggest that Americans do not want to assist people who are in foreclosure due to their responsibility for the crisis. This message resonated with members of organizations already in existence, including FreedomWorks, ResistNet, and the Our Country Deserves Better PAC. These organizations, along with massive financial contributions from libertarian millionaires Charles and David Koch through their Americans for Prosperity Foundation, formed the basis of the TEA Party (Burghart 2012; Disch 2012).

The TEA Party’s main goals include promoting government fiscal responsibility, limiting government control, and bolstering free market capitalism (TEA Party 2011). According to Mark Meckler and Jenny Beth Martin, two founding members of the TEA Party, fiscal responsibility demands that the government “honors and respects the freedom of the individual to spend the money that is the fruit of their own labor”

(Meckler and Martin 2012: 22). They believe that the government must be fiscally responsible as to not overtax citizens (and thus restrict freedom) or to rack up high levels of debt (placing national sovereignty at risk). Constitutionally limited government demands that the operation of the federal government be limited by founding documents and that states, localities, or individuals fulfill remaining obligations in society. Finally, the goal of free market capitalism seeks to limit government intervention in, and regulation of, businesses (Meckler and Martin 2012).

The movement organization has grown dramatically over the past two years and currently boasts chapters in all fifty states, the Virgin Islands, and Washington D.C. (TEA Party 2011). The movement's current power is evident in their election of forty-five federal representatives in the 2010 election and incredible influence in shaping the Republican Party (Pickler 2010, Babington 2010, Woodward 2010). This increasing support and influence has led many to argue that the TEA Party has become the mainstream right (Jonsson 2010, Saad 2010, Williams 2010). Evidence of this is the perceived influence the TEA Party had on Romney's campaign, leading him to lobby for "some tea party-friendly positions" and pepper his speeches "with lines that play to the tea party crowd" (Arrillaga 2012) or the success of Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, and other conservative legislatures, in curbing the strength of unions in their respective states (Greenhouse 2011).

Maxine, Timothy, Alison, Wayne, and Aaron each represent a subgroup of activists with distinct concerns regarding the role of the state and understandings of racial inequality. Maxine seeks to reinterpret the perceived mandate separating church and state and infuse the state with religion, arguing that America is dissolving due to moral

corruption. Timothy deeply believes that by strictly adhering to the Constitution the United States can be saved from bankruptcy and social corruption. Alison fears that the government preys on people with less social power and wants to challenge this overreach by empowering people of color and poor people through teaching them the values of personal responsibility. Wayne seeks to reduce state intervention in the everyday lives of American citizens. Finally, Aaron aims to restrict the actions of the state, but his desire stems from a fear regarding government takeover by secret elitists. Ordered by the extent to which they view the strength of an ideal state, each activist exemplifies a distinct sentiment pool of activists within the TEA Party Patriots.

Traditionally social movement scholars have studied sentiment pools, groups of people with shared values and complaints regarding social or political issues (Snow et al 1986), external to social movement organizations. One could think of them as potential members of a given social movement organization. Social movement organizations seek to recruit members of sentiment pools in order to increase membership, strength, and influence.

The case study of the TEA Party suggests that, rather than sentiment pools only existing outside an organization, it is possible for social movement organizations to consist of multiple sentiment pools that unite around their shared demands. In the TEA Party, these sentiment pools represent a broader cross section of conservatives as activists hold a variety of beliefs regarding the role of the state and explanations for racial inequality. This phenomenon presents particular questions for scholars of social movements: How, despite the disparate and sometimes contradictory aspirations and demands of activists, does the TEA Party manage to act as a relatively coherent social

movement organization? How does the organization reconcile competing demands and secure the commitment of activists? This research demonstrates that the TEA Party employs frame alignment strategies, typically used to recruit members to social movement organizations, to foster member collective identity and secure commitment across sentiment pools.

In this introductory chapter, I provide an overview of the data collection process and resultant sample. I subsequently explain the distinct sentiment pools and the rise of the TEA Party Patriots vis-à-vis right-wing movements throughout history. Finally, I present an examination of the puzzle that the TEA Party Patriots present for framing theories given these distinct sentiment pools.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

Data were collected over three years (from 2009-2012) and include 45 in-depth interviews, ranging from 45 to 90 minutes in length, with active members in the TEA Party Patriots. Interview data are supplemented with participant observation at movement meetings and special events, as well as content analysis of organizational emails, website information, and online forums. The sampling frame consists of a convenience sample of five state directors and forty rank-and-file members from thirteen states nationwide: California (N=1), Illinois (N=8), Iowa (N=1), Massachusetts (N=1), New Hampshire (N=1), New York (N=2), North Carolina (N=2), Ohio (N=1), Tennessee (N=1), Texas (N=1), Virginia (N=4), and Washington (N=1), but primarily Minnesota (N=21).

To recruit participants, I was given the opportunity to speak at the beginning of meetings; this led to approximately 40 percent of my interviews. Contacting activists from a variety of chapters on Facebook by searching for TEA Party chapters and posting

on the wall of the chapter page, led to an additional 30 percent, most of whom were interviewed via Skype. Finally, the remaining third were contacted through email addresses obtained from the national TEA Party Patriots website. These interviews were conducted in person and via Skype. While more information on the participants in this sample is explained below, a chart that lists participant pseudonyms, their age, race, state of residence, occupation and estimated annual income can be found in Appendix A.

Participant observation was conducted at the regional meetings of two chapters in the state of Minnesota as well as additional locally-run workshops and events. One chapter routinely hosted 60 participants at weekly meetings in a local community center while the other had up to 300 attendees for monthly meetings at a local bar.

Interviews began by asking participants to tell the story of how they came to join the movement organization and the reasons for their continued activism. From there the conversation went a number of ways, all of which probed further into the factors they feel contributed to their ongoing membership and commitment. Participants were asked about movement goals in general, their personal goals with the movement, and where they get the bulk of their information concerning topics related to mobilization.

Following this introductory conversation, activists were asked what they saw as the shortcomings of the U.S. government, how they think these problems could be overcome, and what they think an ideal government would look like. Activists were also asked about their feelings towards the different political parties, the current administration, and public figures such as Sarah Palin, Michelle Bachman, and Nancy Pelosi.

In order to examine ideas about race, gender, and class, participants were asked what they saw as the biggest problems facing the United States today. From there the conversation was directed towards issues of immigration, affirmative action, abortion, the recession, and other relevant topics. Interviews also investigated ideas of the national community and how their opinions are informed by race, class, and gender. For a full list of interview questions, please see Appendix B.

Radio broadcasts and the Internet serve as the primary method of dissemination for right-wing ideology and the recruitment of first time activists (Shafer 2002). Internet publications, discussion forums, listservs, radio broadcasts, and additional sources were analyzed in order to examine movement frames. In order to complete this analysis, I subscribed to movement listservs, downloaded and coded all emails, webpage information, and forum content on official websites during the time of my research.

Limits to this study included the method of using state directors as a primary contact for interviews with members of the TEA Party Patriots. As a result, the rank-and-file members they referred may have been filtered. However, in some states, interview participants self-selected into the study after receiving an email sent to a statewide listserv, reducing concern of censorship. However, self-selection could lead to people with stronger views dominating the sample. Secondly, the general fear and distrust among right-wing groups of academics presumably shaped the information members provided (Pitcavage 2001). The range of responses suggests that participants generally felt comfortable. In part this could be due to my positionality as a young, white woman. Typically activists seemed to treat me as if I was their child or grandchild and they were tasked with educating me on the ways of the world. A final potential shortcoming could

come from the use of Skype, rather than meeting activists in person, as this may limit rapport and cause participants to withhold information.

## **MOVEMENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

The ages of participants roughly formed a bell curve with a median age of approximately 55: 0.5 percent were in their 20s, 22.5 percent were in their 30s, 12.5 percent were in their 40s, 30 percent were in their 50s, 22.5 percent were in their 60s, and 7.5 percent in their 70s. According to Skocpol and Williamson (2012), TEA Party activists are typically over 45 and often between the ages of 60 and 80.

There are a variety of careers represented among activists. In my sample, members worked as lawyers, realtors, administrative assistants, business executives, and civil servants, among other careers. Four were unemployed and blamed Obama for this condition. The median income for an individual in my sample was \$40,000, above the individual median income for the nation as a whole at \$26,588 (\$29,924 for white people) (United States Census Bureau 2010). Previous work suggests that TEA Party activists are primarily older, white and middle class and, thus, weathered the recession better than many Americans (Skocpol and Williamson 2012). However, TEA Party members tend to be in a financial predicament whereby they are concerned about the economy and the recession's impact on what they perceive as money earned from their personal hard work, but are also unable to receive government services aimed at helping low-income individuals such as Food Stamps or subsidized health care (Skocpol and Williamson 2012). As a result, they feel attacked from both people below them in the social hierarchy benefitting from such programs and perceived elitists whom they view as making policy decisions that privilege the undeserving (Hofstadter 1965; Berlet 2012).

Most participants in my sample were white (99.5 percent). The exception was Wayne, who is black, and Aaron, whose father is Japanese and mother is white. This reflects the broader TEA Party demographics in the state of Minnesota and nationwide.

The role of race in the TEA Party has been disputed. Some scholars, such as Skocpol and Williamson (2012) argue that, while TEA Party activists are more likely than other Americans to believe that “racial minorities are held back by their own individual shortcomings”, they also are very concerned with charges that they are racist and work to prove to others that “they held no animosity toward black people” (69). However, other scholars argue that race is central to TEA Party mobilization as evidenced by demonization of Obama, the use of racial epithets by members, and racially coded anti-government sentiments (Burghart and Zeskind 2010; Lowndes 2012). Lowndes (2012) convincingly argues that race is central to TEA Party organizing but operates covertly. Specifically, he demonstrates that inherited populist notions regarding threats to the white middle class by people of color, coupled with the election of a black man to the presidency, has shifted “white populist anger almost entirely upward toward the state itself” (Lowndes 2012: 153). In other words, the state, with Obama as a figurehead, has come to represent racial minorities. At the same time, welfare rates have decreased and crime rates have fallen, eliminating these issues as possible targets for mobilization. Thus, TEA Party targets have “increasingly been nonracial”, including unions and “universal entitlement programs” (Lowndes 2012: 153). Race and the TEA Party is discussed further in Chapter IV.

## **MOBILIZATION AND GENDER**

Scholarship conducted in the 1990s and 2000s on right-wing social movement organizations found that many people – particularly middle-class heterosexual white men – joined the ranks of Patriot, militia and extremist groups due to a perceived loss of social and political status as a result of globalization, the women’s movement, and the Civil Rights Movement (Kimmel and Kaufman 1995, Kimmel 1996; Ferber 2000; McVeigh 2009). Specifically, scholars have concluded that changing gender roles in society are instrumental in mobilizing men to join such movements (Ferber and Kimmel 2004, Vandyke and Soule 2002, Gibson 1997). Many TEA Party activists believe that the state – secretly dominated by Jews and feminists – has feminized, or disempowered, middle class men (Abanes 1996; Vandyke and Soule 2002; Ferber and Kimmel 2004). As a result, gender is a central theme to movement mobilization (VanDyke and Soule 2002) and men of this demographic turn to social movement organizations as a site to redefine and construct masculinity (Kimmel and Kaufman 1995; Ferber 2000, Pfeil 1995), perform a historical form of masculinity through acting like warriors (Kimmel and Kaufman 1995, Pfeil 1995), work to reassert male dominance in society (Messner 1997), and construct spaces to participate in traditional gender roles (Blee 1991).

Scholars suggest that right-wing movements reify traditional gender roles, despite the presence of women in their ranks; yet, aside from this division of labor, are not more sexist or patriarchal than broader society (Berlet 2004). In contrast, the female activists in the TEA Party Patriots hold a variety of powerful positions within society and the movement organization (Vogel 2010; Rosen 2012). While the exact gender breakdown of the TEA Party is not known, estimates suggest that between 45 and 55 percent of TEA Party activists are women (Skocpol and Williamson 2012; Vogel 2010) as compared to

47 percent of the Republican Party (Newport, Jones, and Saad 2011a) and 55 percent of the Democratic Party (Newport, Jones and Saad 2011b). Sixty percent of the state coordinators are women as are 56 percent of the national coordinators (Vogel 2010). Moreover, two of the TEA Party founders were women<sup>2</sup>: former Republican consultant Jenny Beth Martin and blogger Amy Kreber (Rosen 2012).

Activists in my sample violate traditional gender roles in their professional lives. Among all of the female activists, only one worked as a stay at home mom: Alison, who held a leadership position within the organization as the co-chair of the minority outreach committee. Other activists, such as Maxine and Sarah, are lawyers. Samantha and Mariah are business consultants. Victoria is a real-estate agent, Becky a software developer, and Jane a gas station attendant. Two women work in traditionally female occupations: Anne, a teacher and Jaimee, a nurse. Three female activists are unemployed: two, Holly and Mary, both blame Obama for the loss of their jobs. Holly wrote software for a GM dealer, and Mary ran her own business.

TEA Party activists largely support female figureheads, such as Sarah Palin and Michelle Bachmann. Rosen (2012) suggests this represents a form of conservative feminism, marked by a confluence of traditional gender roles of motherhood and self-sufficiency. Palin goes by Ms., rather than Mrs., she credits Title IX for her sports participation in college, and believes that women should participate in the public sphere. Palin recognizes the need for women to earn an income and does not fear aligning herself with feminist organizations, such as Feminists For Life (Rosen 2012).

Many TEA Party activists adore Palin. Samantha describes her with glowing excitement: “She’s my height and she’s probably thirty pounds lighter. She’s the tiniest

little thing you've ever seen. And just as bubbly and just as nice as she is a gorgeous person. She's attractive on TV... She's fifty-five years old." Samantha approves of Palin's positions and strength saying that Palin has "very good intent and I think that she would be very tough. I think that she would probably make a halfway decent president."

Nationwide, TEA Party activists also generally support Michelle Bachmann (Seitz-Wald 2012; Travis 2011b). However, my sample suggests that activists may have more ambivalent feelings towards the Congresswoman. Despite the fact that Bachmann is liked by activists, some are concerned that Bachmann, and to an extent Palin, are not presidential material. Samantha is concerned with their feminine characteristics and public appearance: "Bachmann has the same problem that Sarah Palin had. She talks in that high voice and everybody thinks they are ditsy. And she sometimes does say things a little off actually. So but I know her I do like her." In contrast, Zach and Samantha's image of a potential Bachmann presidency is one of brute force typically associated with masculinity:

If she wins...she will be very strict with institutionalism and that will cause this OWS [Occupy Wall Street] to rise up even more. They will be armed this time. There will be great chaos in the cities and a lot like it was in the sixties. And worse. And she will bring them to the state troopers and she will be supporting them and... she will get tremendous support from the military and that will be the end of it.

As mentioned, previous scholarship on gender in right-wing social movements suggests that activists would be likely to adhere to strict gender roles as white men seek to return to a previous era in which they held a greater proportion of social power (Berlet and Lyons 2000). However, as is evidenced by movement discussion, movement demographics, and the character of movement participants, this is not the case in the TEA

Party Patriots. Importantly, while traditional gender roles are not rigidly adhered to within the TEA Party, it is the case that the movement organization does serve as a site for the reclamation of masculinity as activists indirectly establish themselves as protectors of the nation through feminizing or infantilizing other American citizens, particularly those on the Left.

### **THE SENTIMENT POOLS**

Zernike (2010a) suggests that members of the TEA Party share general values but that it “certainly had its fringe elements” which included “birthers insisting that President Obama was a Kenyan-born Muslim infiltrator, people carrying posters of Obama as a witch doctor [and] those who insisted the federal government was going to sequester its citizens in reeducation camps” (5). However, my research suggest that these “fringe elements” are actually a strong subset of the TEA Party Patriots making up one of five different types, or “sentiment pools”, of members. From this research on the TEA Party Patriots it is clear that five sentiment pools of right-wing activists emerge: the Christian Conservative, the Constitutionalist, the Reformed Liberal, the Libertarian and the Conspiracy Theorist.

#### ***The Conservative Christian***

Christian Conservatives such as Maxine are primarily concerned with the relationship between religion and the state, suggesting that the historical separation of church and state is ill-willed and a misinterpretation of the Founding Fathers’ wishes. Christian Conservatives conclude that in “the Founders time, the country wasn’t a Christian society. It was a Christian nation. Unfortunately we are not that now anymore” (Samantha, a Minnesota activist). Related to this concern is discussion on social issues

such as abortion and same-sex marriage that many other activists avoid. Further, they see the role of the state to protect the rights of the majority against minority “special” interests. Like Constitutionlists, Christian Conservatives attempt to ground their claims in founding documents though they emphasize different elements and come to distinct conclusions. Christian Conservatives make up approximately nine percent of my sample.

### ***The Constitutionlist***

Constitutionlists, including Timothy, are primarily interested in verifying that the state stays within the bounds of the Constitution. They seek to limit the power and size of the government, by eliminating all programs that are not explicitly outlined within the document. They suggest that such a move will restore access to natural rights – those ordained by God. Constitutionlists are distinct from Libertarians in that they are less interested in civil rights, such as marriage, and seek to maintain government agencies outlined in the constitution, such as the Post Office, that many Libertarians seek to abolish. Constitutionlists constitute approximately 33 percent of this sample.

### ***The Reformed Liberal***

The third sentiment pool, of which Alison is a member, is the Reformed Liberal. These are activists who identified as liberal in college, but became conservative after an “ah-ha” moment, many of which are related to “realizing” that state support hurts people of color or the poor. Of the activist types they are the most interested in racial inequality, but this concern does not translate to civil rights for other groups, such as gays and lesbians. Many members of this sentiment pool begin with a progressive critique of institutions such as the education system, but ultimately make conservative conclusions about why inequality exists and how to fix it. When compared to other types of activists, it is clear

that Reformed Liberals show more interest in issues of social equality and focus less on those of individual liberties and the Constitution. Among the different activist types, this group is also the most likely to discuss the impact of historical social and political forces on individuals' lives. Reformed Liberals make up nine percent of the sample.

### ***The Libertarian***

The fourth sentiment pool of right-wing dissidents, of which Wayne is a member, is the Libertarian. These activists identify as fiscally conservative and see the only role of the state as providing protection for citizens through the military and police forces. Many of the people who fall in this category identify as supporters of Ron Paul. They oppose social service programs, including Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security; resist imperialism and foreign intervention by the United States; and generally support same-sex marriage, contending that the state should not be involved in marriage. Furthermore, they feel that a state that is too intrusive in limiting individual freedoms is likely to get out of hand, and will become like Nazi Germany. These activists are typically male and younger than those in the other categories and often do not fit the demographics of the organization in other ways: many are racial or religious minorities. People in this category also tend to be more educated and wider read than other activists. Libertarians constitute 20 percent of my sample.

### ***The Conspiracy Theorist***

The final sentiment pool is the Conspiracy Theorist. Aaron and other Conspiracy Theorists possess a significant distrust of the state, which exceeds that of other activists. They believe that the government is secretly controlled by the United Nations or Jewish elites. As a result, they fear a rounding up of Americans and the decimation of a

proportion of the world's population and seek to limit the role of the state and end governmental support for marginalized people, who they view as receiving undeserved and unneeded benefits. Conspiracy Theorists strongly reflect ideas of the militia and Patriot groups that have come before them (Abanes 1996). Conspiracy Theorists make up approximately 29 percent of my sample.

Despite these different approaches to the state and inequality, members of these five sentiment pools continue to act collectively under the TEA Party umbrella. The TEA Party uses frame alignment to foster the collective identity of members and enhance activist commitment to the organization and its shared goals.

### **DEFINING “THE RIGHT”**

In order to understand the internal dynamics of right-wing organizations, one must first define what it means to be right wing. According to Diamond (1995) “to be right wing means to support the state in its capacity as an enforcer of order and to oppose the state as a distributor of wealth and power downward and more equitably in society” (6).

However, this definition is limited as some, including the Ku Klux Klan, have, at times, advocated for the downward redistribution of wealth or, like the militias, advocated for total government overthrow (Berlet and Lyons 2000).

Other scholars, such as McVeigh (2009), view a right-wing social movement as one that “acts to preserve, restore, or expand rights and privileges of a relatively advantaged societal group” (38). McVeigh and his colleagues view right-wing movements as advocating for the rights of a few, rather than limiting those of the majority. However, contemporary movement organizations, such as the Minutemen Civil Defense Corps, clearly advocate for the reduction of civil rights for certain groups.

Among other policies, they propose repealing the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment as a key pillar of their platform.

For this project I turn to a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be right wing, namely, a relational understanding of the term. Berlet and Lyons (2000) suggest that the reason it is difficult to define what is a right-wing movement is because the term right wing is constructed in contrast to a perceived left wing. Thus, what is a right-wing movement is historically grounded in a particular socio-political moment (Berlet and Lyons 2000). Using this dynamic definition, a deep analytic understanding of the nature of today's right wing is possible.

### **MOVEMENT CLASSIFICATION AND CASE SELECTION**

Right-wing movements are understudied and, as such, there is not a clear, scholarly consensus on how they should be categorized (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997, Berlet and Lyons 2000, Ferber 2004). Professional organizations, such as the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization dedicated to the research of right-wing groups and prosecution of hate crimes, place right-wing groups into three categories based on their targeted enemy: hate groups, nativist organizations, and the Patriot movement. Hate groups espouse animosity or violence towards people of a particular race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. Nativist groups are those that target immigrants specifically as the preeminent problem facing the United States. In their efforts nativists not only work to make immigration laws more restrictive, they also confront and intimidate migrants. Finally, Patriot groups oppose what they see as a tyrannical government working to limit dissent (Potok 2010, Beirich 2010). Though this method of classification is useful for the purposes of the Southern Poverty Law Center and other

professional organizations, it fails as a comprehensive classification system. For example, groups that organize around principles of Christian fundamentalism are excluded.

In contrast, noted researcher and journalist Chip Berlet classifies right-wing movements by the type of change they seek. Berlet (2004) highlights three sectors of right-wing mobilization: the extreme right, the dissident right, and the conservative right. The extreme right includes militant insurgent groups that “reject democracy, promote a conscious ideology of supremacy, and support policies that would negate basic human rights from members of a scapegoated group” (22). The extreme right, therefore, consists of hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and the National Socialist Movement. The dissident right is made up of social movements aiming to reform society, rather than overthrow it, and includes anti-immigrant organizations, Patriot and militia groups – of which the TEA Party Patriots is an example – the Christian Right, and movements opposing welfare and Affirmative Action. Finally, the conservative right is constituted by reform-oriented political movements and includes such organizations as the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute.

On the surface, Berlet’s classification method may appear weak as it fails to take into consideration the different targets of similarly classified groups. For example, Berlet’s method places both Patriot movements (which advocate for massive reduction in government control and spending) and the Christian right (which fights for policies aligned with Christian fundamentalism) within the dissident-right category (Berlet 2004). However, it is unclear as to how distinct ideologies are between movements on the right. Previous research suggests that all right-wing movements share ideas about white superiority, gender roles, and the state, but that distinct movements forefront different

targets for mobilization (Berlet 2004)<sup>3</sup>. Thus, while Patriot movements may share notions of white superiority with hate groups, they are distinct because their primary focus is on a perceived tyrannical government.

Despite unclear borders between social movements, there appears to be some scholarly consensus on the ideologies employed by the right. According to Diamond (1995), right-wing organizations mobilize along three issues: the maintenance of a moral order privileging native-born white males and the nuclear family; the support of free-market capitalism; and defense for the sovereign nation state, especially against the evils of communism (Diamond 1995). In a similar mapping, Toplin (2006) constructs a three-tiered typology of right-wing activists mirroring the three ideologies outlined above. These types include Culture Warriors, Stealth Libertarians, and Hawkish Nationalists (Toplin 2006). Cultural Warriors seek to return to a previous, idealized, era. They aim to maintain the key elements of a perfect society: the nuclear family, low crime rates, and sexual conservatism. Stealth Libertarians fight for free market capitalism and seek a limited form of government, particularly related to social issues. Hawkish Nationalists are particularly concerned with U.S. foreign policy and seek to support military power and overseas intervention in the defense of U.S. interests (Toplin 2006).

These three ideologies are present in most right-wing organizations, but distinct groups forefront them in different combinations. This section briefly traces the development of the three ideologies through movements and demonstrates how they form the basis of the five distinct sentiment pools in the TEA Party Patriots.

### ***Moral Order and Culture Warriors***

One central ideology of right-wing movements is the fight for a moral order that benefits native-born white men and the nuclear family. Well-known groups that forefront the moral order ideology includes elements of the White Separatist movement: the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), National Socialist Movement (NSM), Skinheads, the Christian Identity Movement, Focus on the Family, and the Moral Majority.

Right-wing moral ideology consists of particular beliefs regarding race in society. In its most extreme form this is characterized by the belief that people of different races should be separated. As a solution, adherents propose an all-white nation to be housed in the Pacific Northwest (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2000). Part of this effort requires, according to some movement organizations, the overthrow of a government secretly run by Jewish elites, called the Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG), reflective of the sovereign nation ideology discussed below.

These organizations share a fundamentalist religious orientation, used to justify their perspective. Many members are millennialists, believing that Jesus will return within the next 900 years (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2000). Additionally, contemporary right-wing organizations have a shared, but largely unknown, history in the religious tradition of British Israelism. British Israelism was a religious movement that began in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and argued that the British were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. Devotees believed that England, and its descendants in the United States, were God's chosen people (Schlatter 2006).

Between WWI and WWII the religion was infused with anti-Semitism and white supremacist rhetoric and developed into Christian Identity. By 1970, Christian Identity had become the most important vehicle for the spread of white supremacist theory

(Schlatter 2006). Christian Identity reinterprets the creation story and the demographics of the Bible. Among other claims, adherents argue that all of the Biblical characters are white, that Adam was not the first person, but the first white person, and that Cain is the son of Eve and Satan (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2000).

The growth of the 1920s Klan was, in part, the result of evangelism and the work of fundamentalist Christian leaders. As many as 40,000 protestant ministers joined the Ku Klux Klan and permitted the organization to recruit within their congregations (Wade 1987). However, it was also the result of changing power dynamics in society as white men who join the Klan are often motivated by a desire to “preserve or restore status benefits” (McVeigh 2009: 198). This is not unique to the Klan: changing gender roles and an increase in civil rights for people of color resulted in a perceived loss of social and political status for middle class white men, which led to an increase in membership for Patriot, militia, and extremist groups (Kimmel and Kaufman 1995, Kimmel 1996; Ferber 2000; McVeigh 2009).

Militia movements also employ aspects of the moral order ideology, but it is filtered through broader ideas regarding the need for a sovereign nation state and free market capitalism. Contemporary movements have a high population of born-again Christians that causes devotees to be more susceptible to conspiracy stories because of their prior exposure to millennialist and end-of-days theories (Abanes 1996). Thus, many militia members are so affected by religious ideas that they move to isolated areas, stockpile food and weapons and wait for the arrival of the anti-Christ (Abanes 1996). Similarly, the Posse Comitatus (described in the next section) was highly influenced by ideas of the Christian Identity movement.

Moral order has not only been important in extremist organizations, it is also central to more mainstream right-wing organizations. Starting in the 1970s right-wing preachers took to the airwaves to present solutions to emerging social problems in society. Casting social changes such as increasing sexual promiscuity, the use of illicit drugs, and other social problems as the result of changing social values, these preachers attracted followers by presenting achievable solutions: returning to an idyllic past marked by the nuclear family, patriarchy, and a celebration of white middle-class values (George and Wilcox 1996).

Four of the most well known preachers of this movement include Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, James Dobson, and Bob Jones III (George and Wilcox 1996). Falwell began an organization called the Moral Majority that worked alongside his college, Liberty College, to spread Christian fundamentalism (Hardisty 1999). Falwell and his organizations provided people who felt unsettled and angry because of recent social changes with a voice and method of fighting to preserve social morality. Falwell's popularity grew substantially from the 1970s to the 1990s (Hardisty 1999). Robertson founded the Christian Broadcasting Network in 1960 as well as the Family Channel. The Family Channel is now owned by News Corps and has been renamed ABC Family; however, it continues to air Robertson's fundamentalist television show, the 700 Club, twice a day due to a clause in the sale contract. Robertson also owns Regent University in Virginia Beach (Robertson 2013). In 1971 Dobson, a psychologist and evangelical author, formed a group called Focus on the Family, which advocates for conservative social policy. He left Focus on the Family in 2003 and now runs an organization called Family Talk that airs an evangelical radio show (Gorski 2009; Buss 2005). Finally, Bob

Jones III was the president of Bob Jones University in South Carolina from 1971 until 2005. This fundamentalist Christian University is known for its historic ban on interracial dating and dancing as well as its support of and from President George W. Bush (Murphy 2010).

These figureheads and their organizations have had great influence on conservative politics (Hardisty 1999). Christian fundamentalism bred a following of “born-again” Christians who “read the Bible literally, and fervently oppose secular modernity” (Hardisty 1999: 17). By 1992, they “gained control over much of the Republican Party’s base” (Berlet and Lyons 2000: 261) through grassroots organizing. Pat Robertson spoke at the Republican National Convention in 1992 and by 1994 Republicans had won a substantial number of seats in Congress with the support of white evangelical Christians (Hardisty 1999; Diamond 1995).

### ***Free Market Capitalism and Stealth Libertarians***

Libertarianism seeks a limited state regarding individual rights and the operation of the economy (Diamond 1995; Hardisty 1999). One key component is the fight for free market capitalism and the reduction of taxes, particularly for the rich. In sharp contrast to activists engaging with the moral order ideology, some libertarians support rights for same sex couples, access to abortion, and the legalization of drugs, due to their ardent belief in individual freedom. Importantly, libertarians believe that a free market economy and political system will inevitably lead to rights and freedoms for individuals (Hardisty 1999) and that government programs necessarily limit personal rights and freedoms by either bolstering the weak or making people dependent on the system (Hardisty 1999).

Libertarians employ the work of statesmen and scholars to ground their beliefs. For example, some use the Declaration of Independence as their guiding document and interpret Jefferson's speeches and writings as expressing increasing fear of state control (Hardisty 1999). They similarly idolize the work of Ayn Rand, particularly *The Fountainhead*, a novel depicting a dystopic future with an overreaching state limiting individual achievement. Adam Smith's work, *The Wealth of Nations*, forms the basis of their belief in the free-market economic system and individual rights (Hardisty 1999).

Until the recent emergence of the Ron Paul revolution, few large-scale movement organizations featured libertarian ideology. Rather, as mentioned, these ideas took a backseat to those regarding morality or a sovereign nation state. One exception is the Cato Institute, founded in 1977. Cato is a think-tank located in Washington D.C. that seeks to promote the "principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets and peace" (Cato.org 2013). Charles Koch and Edward Crane initially ran Cato; the current president is John A. Allison IV.

The more recent Ron Paul Revolution has allowed conservative libertarianism to enter the spotlight. Ron Paul is a medical doctor and politician from the state of Texas. In the 1980s he ran for President on the Libertarian ticket and then reran as a Republican in 2008 and 2012 (Paul 2013). Ron Paul has written extensively on issues related to Austrian economics, the Federal Reserve Bank, and other libertarian ideas. His son, Rand Paul, is a senator from Kentucky and shares his libertarian views (CNN 2009). Though there is a dearth of scholarly research on the very recent rise in the Pauls' popularity, it is clear that they are currently influencing Republican politics. For example, at a 2013 meeting of CPAC – the Conservative Political Action Committee – Rand Paul won a

preliminary straw poll indicating Republican support for a 2016 presidential bid (Blake 2013).

### ***Sovereign Nation State and Hawkish Nationalists***

An additional issue of importance to many right-wing organizations is that of the sovereign nation state. This battle began with early nativist movement organizations seeking to preserve U.S. sovereignty by resisting immigration, but is also quite clear in more contemporary organizations such as the Patriot movement, the Posse Comitatus, and the John Birch Society.

The Patriot movement has grown most significantly since the election of President Obama and consists of several subgroups of activists including the militia movement, tax resisters, and sovereign citizens (SPLC 2009; Pitcavage 2001, Stern 1996, Mulloy 2008). The contemporary movement, emerging in the 1990s, is largely an offshoot of an earlier organization, the Posse Comitatus (Latin for “power of the country”) (Stern 1996; Levitas 2004).

The Posse Comitatus was initially established to aid law enforcement in arresting lawbreakers in rural western states where policing was difficult. However, with the influence of Reverend William Potter Gale, the movement began to promote armed insurrection against people of color, arresting them for violating the law, and convicting them in civilian trials. Gale started the Posse Comitatus in the 1970s and the Christian Patriot Movement in the 1980s (Levitas 2004).

Gale was conflicted. He was the son of Jewish immigrants and, although he had identified as Jewish for the first part of his life, Gale abandoned his Jewish identity while serving in the U.S. army, changed his name, and became an avid supporter of the

Christian Identity movement (Levitas 2004). In 1963, Gale wrote *Faith of our Fathers* as text for his new church. This document served as an early form of Posse ideology and was rooted in the idea that the original sin was race mixing, specifically that of Eve with the devil. It also taught that Cain was the father of Jewish race and that Noah renewed the human family but his children committed a second fall by marrying Canaanites. Wesley Swift, a leader in the California Ku Klux Klan and Christian Identity Movements, inspired Gale's ideas (Levitas 2004).

The Posse Comitatus was founded as a loose band of vigilantes and survivalists who believed that the U.S. government was an illegitimate body, run by an international Jewish organization they termed ZOG: Zionist Occupied Government, that had usurped the rightful state. In that narrative, the Posse claimed that the Holocaust was a cover story for Jewish invasion of the United States (Pitcavage 2001, Schlatter 2006). Members of the Posse believed that the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment had never been ratified and black people are not legal U.S. citizens; therefore, they do not support federal efforts to defend black civil liberties (Levitas 2004, Pitcavage 2001).

Today's Patriot movements share many of the Posse beliefs, as well as those of other right-wing groups. They oppose the use of paper money and believe the Federal Reserve is illegally producing money now that it is no longer tied to the gold standard. Organizations oppose abortion, immigration, gay rights, and affirmative action and support individual property rights and homeschooling (Abanes 1996, Mulloy 2008). Members also strongly emphasize the ability of an individual to survive on their own and typically support alternative medicines (Pitcavage 2001). However, the issue of key import to them is that of gun control. Patriot members do not simply believe that people

have the right to gun ownership, but that it is necessary for all citizens to be armed in order to oppose the emerging tyrannical government (Pitcavage 2001, Mulloy 2008). They see the current federal government as a puppet state established for use by the New World Order: a global socialist conspiracy run by the United Nations (Pitcavage 2001, Mulloy 2008). In this New World Order, all national borders will be destroyed and, in their place, a totalitarian regime will be produced, forcing all people into slavery to support bankers, wealthy elites, socialists, and liberals (Abanes 1996). Militia members believe that the U.N. will revoke family ties and force all people to become the property of the state and that everyone will be issued identity numbers instead of names. Evidence of this impending take-over can be seen in FEMA, which is secretly building concentration camps to hold U.S. citizens; black helicopters conducting surveillance over U.S. citizens; and the EPA's introduction of fluoride into drinking water which creates docile behavior among the citizenry (Abanes 1996).

Patriot organizations generally oppose undocumented migration and often overlap with nativist and militia organizations. Nativism has also grown out of a tradition of white supremacy and has been one of the largest social movements in the U.S. for the last 150 years (Knobel 1996). This tradition of opposing those perceived as foreign and having preference for people deemed native, has an extensive history in the United States (Perea 1997). Following the War of 1812, white citizens felt the need to define U.S. national identity. "Good Americans" were those who embodied ideals of individual responsibility and civic engagement. Activists cast people of color and non-Protestants as disloyal outsiders. Nativist movements typically work within the political system and were most successful with the rise of the Know Nothing party of the mid-1800s. Despite

the ultimate demise of the party, nativism continued to line the foundation of fraternal organizations and other social movement organizations, including the Ku Klux Klan (Knobel 1996). During World War II, nativist movements targeted German and Japanese people, resulting in the imprisonment of over 70,000 Japanese-American citizens and between 30,000 and 40,000 non-citizen Japanese legal residents (Perea 1997). The movement continues to pit U.S. citizens against perceived aliens and rationalizes its efforts in the guise of preserving cultural values and national character (Knobel 1996).

As a solution to perceived problems, modern Patriot groups seek to limit federal power and increase state's rights (Abanes 1996). Members believe that the United States was established as a republic and needs to return to its republican roots: state's rights must be prioritized and people should be armed to facilitate that process (Mulloy 2008). While not all members support violence, radical members who vow to uphold the Constitution and defend white residents from all enemies (including the government) dominate the movement (Abanes 1996). Many Patriot members are also anti-environmentalists who feel as if the government has deemed animals more important than people and view anti-grazing, anti-logging, and anti-ranching activists as eco-terrorists (Abanes 1996).

A more mainstream organization featuring elements of this ideology is the John Birch Society. Founded in 1958 by Robert Welch Jr., of Welch's candy, this organization seeks to fight communism and limit the power of government (thus, they share elements of the libertarian ideology as well). Named after John Birch, a Baptist missionary and intelligence officer killed by Chinese Communists during WWII, the organization seeks to support government programs "enforcing law and order and global U.S. military

supremacy” but also to limit programs intended to “regulate business, promote civil rights, and provide welfare services.” (Diamond 1995: 53). Members believe that international bankers and Jewish elitists secretly control the United States and, at the time, Soviet Russia (Berlet and Lyons 2000). They further fear organizations that may be actors in this conspiracy including the Council on Foreign Relations (Berlet and Lyons 2000).

The primary tactics of the organization are letter writing campaigns and literature distribution, as a way of sharing their worldview with others (Diamond 1995). During the 1950s the organization worked closely with Joe McCarthy to purge suspected communists from the federal government (Diamond 1995). It is currently headquartered in McCarthy’s hometown of Appleton, Wisconsin. The organization also works to elevate particular candidates to political office, including a failed attempt at electing Barry Goldwater to the presidency in 1964 (Berlet and Lyons 2000).

### ***The Relationship Between the Extreme and Mainstream Right***

Right-wing movements have roots in repressive populist organizing in which movements “combine attacks on socially oppressed groups with grassroots mass mobilization and distorted forms of anti-elitism based on scapegoating” in order to preserve or strengthen systemic privileges and power (Berlet and Lyons 2000:1). Such movements typically define and target those they identify as leftist elites and focus their anger toward those they see as vulnerable. These groups reflect the interest of two sectors of society: working and middle class whites who benefit from white privilege but resent the successes of white elites and fringe members of the white elite who distort anti-elitism in order to acquire political power (Berlet and Lyons 2000).

Scholars and the public typically view the movements discussed above as extremist groups, but they all have roots in mainstream politics: the Ku Klux Klan arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a popular progressive reform movement. Furthermore, members in extremist movements are neither on the fringe of the political right nor marginal extremists (Berlet and Lyons 2000). In the case of nativism, the line between extremist movement and popular opinion merge: although most white residents benefit from the presence of migrants, many are sympathetic to the message of nativist movements (Perea 1997). The successful interment of Japanese Americans, and recent passage of Arizona SB1070 are powerful examples of this success.

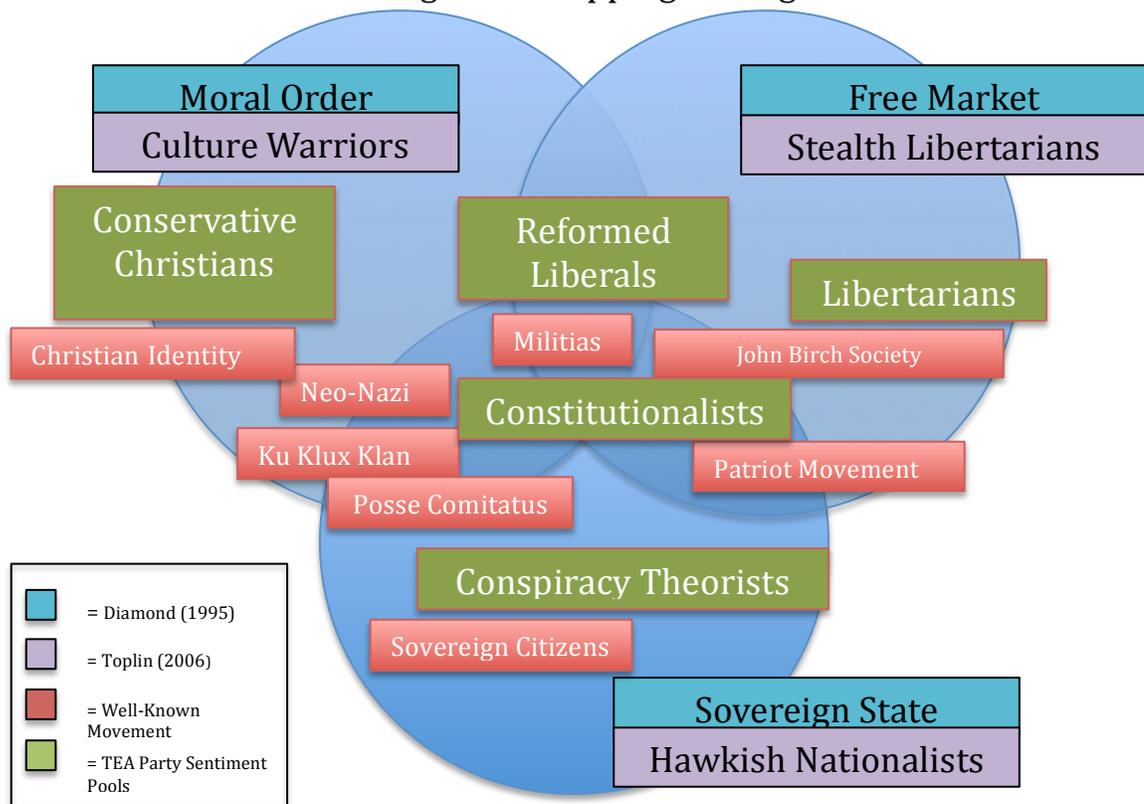
The similarities between right-wing extremists and the mainstream right are what make these movements particularly important. White-founded institutions continue to marginalize people of color and deny them the basic rights of citizenship (Alexander 2012; Feagin 2006). Right-wing movements begin by placing people of color outside of mainstream society through the use of propaganda and discrimination. They reinforce cultural ideas of us vs. them by constructing clear in-groups (Aryans/whites) and specifically naming threats posed by outgroups (intermarriage, crime, job loss). Subsequently, activists employ cultural practices of objectification and dehumanization in order to cast people of color as inferior and threatening. Right-wing extremists and mainstream whites then use negative stereotypes of people of color to justify discrimination, scapegoating, and violence (Berlet and Lyons 2000). It is this same process that justifies the over incarceration of black men, rationalizes the slashing of social services, and perpetuates blatant racial inequality in U.S. society. To that end, right-wing movements have had major victories leading to the war on drugs, repressive

immigration laws, U.S. military intervention abroad, gun rights, and neo-liberal economic policies (Berlet and Lyons 2000, Diamond 1995). There is no doubt that these organizations have, and continue to have, strong influence in shaping mainstream politics (Berlet and Lyons 2000).

***The Emergence of Five Sentiment Pools***

The TEA Party sentiment pools combine elements from the mainstream and fringe right organizations. Rather than consisting of three ideologically based groups, they represent five subsets of right-wing thought, each with distinct combinations of these three conservative ideologies. As is shown in Figure I, the sentiment pools reflect a complex mapping onto and engagement with these ideologies:

Figure 1: Mapping the Right



Elements of the moral order ideology have strongly influenced the Christian Conservative sentiment pool in the TEA Party. While some sentiment pools, such as the Constitutionals and Libertarians, virulently resist the infusion of religion and the state, this sentiment pool seeks to promote Christianity, which they view as a marginalized religion, prevent same sex marriage, end legal abortion, and defend conservative American values.

Other sentiment pools have also been influenced by the moral order ideology, but these ideas are filtered through additional ideological concerns. For example, Reformed Liberals are worried about issues of morality: they are actively involved in churches and many joined the TEA Party through faith-based institutions. However, their understanding of what is moral is influenced by their deeply held belief in free market capitalism. Thus, questions of morality are related to issues of the dependence of poor people on government support or the failings of the education system to teach all children equality. Constitutionals, falling in the center of the diagram, are concerned about morality but, based on the influence of other ideologies, believe that an ideal society will be achieved with close adherence to the Constitution.

Conspiracy Theorists primarily expresses ideas regarding the sovereign state. They share the fears of previous right-wing groups such as the Patriot and sovereign citizen movements regarding the secret domination by global elitists and international bankers. Of particular concern to them are the United Nations, its impending takeover of the United States, and the Council on Foreign Relations.

Libertarians are fundamentally influenced by the ideas of free market capitalism. This sentiment pool's beliefs mirror those described above. However, the

Constitutionalist sentiment pool also engages with these ideas as they also seek a limited government and are concerned about the loss of civil liberties. However, unlike Libertarians, who are primarily influenced by ideologies regarding free market principles, notions of a sovereign state and morality concurrently shape Constitutionalist ideas and thus, their concerns are filtered through a strict adherence to the Constitution.

The TEA Party has had direct involvement with the actors mentioned above whom promote each of these ideologies. Ron Paul and Rand Paul have been strong supporters of the TEA Party. Charles Koch, founder of the Cato institute, along with his brother Fred Koch, a founding member of the John Birch Society, is one of the largest funders of the TEA Party. The distinct ideologies of right-wing thought have merged in the TEA Party Patriots and are forefronted by distinct sentiment pools in the organization.

## **RECRUITMENT AND COMMITMENT**

Movement organizations use a variety of tactics to recruit members. Two of their most common strategies include capitalizing on existing social networks and widely casting nets to attract potential allies (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001). Through understanding this recruitment process, one can more clearly explore the strategies for and importance of increasing member commitment.

Recruitment of activists into social movements can be complex: movement participation is typically not rewarding in the same way as other participatory actions. Furthermore, the cost of activism can be high and includes the possibility of punishment by authorities or community ostracism (Rochon 1998). Yet, people participate in social movements for a variety of reasons. First, actors are imbedded in social networks with shared identities (Mueller 1992). People join movements due to their personal

commitments to issues but also because of the desire to be a part of a group (Tarrow 1998). Secondly, activists interpret meaning through relationships with others and are situated in distinct social locations (Mueller 1992). Third, even though movement participation is typically tempered by social and political forces that discourage a sense of agency among working people and a culture that constructs “collective helplessness,” people do have a sense of personal efficacy, believing their actions make a difference (Gamson 1992; Ferree 1992). Finally, actors often behave in irrational ways for valid reasons or in meta-rational ways. Activists may behave impulsively, emotionally, and irrationally, but do so purposefully. People consider more than the immediate consequences of their action, often seeing themselves as morally obliged to participate in mobilization as part of a larger community (Ferree 1992; Rochon 1998).

People join movements when they see their own destiny as tied to that of a larger group. Participation intensifies as movement solidarity heightens and activists feel confident that others in the group will fight alongside them (Rochon 1998). These feelings operate in concert to produce a form of collective identity: a shared sense of self constructed through interactions between group members and focused on movement actions and structures (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994). Feelings of connectedness and identity work to strengthen activist ties to the movement and inspire additional society members. Movements capitalize on these identities by constructing movements around the personal and collective identity of members (Rochon 1998; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001). Within a movement, identity is intertwined with mobilization and is highly interactive. It is through the dynamics of identity production that action is produced and, via collective action, identity is refined (della Porta and Diani 1999).

Feelings of connectedness also empower movement actors to take risks and face challenges (della Porta and Diani 1999).

Commitment matters deeply in the success of social movement organizations. According to Tilly (1999), commitment, combined with worthiness, unity of members, and size of the organization, determines a group's strength and likelihood to impact society. Commitment reflects the connection that activists have to the group of which they are a part and affects their likelihood to stay in the organization over time as well as participate in the more demanding parts of organizing. Not surprisingly, the greater commitment an individual has to the organization, the more likely that he or she will make sacrifices for that organization.

Commitment is fostered in movements as a result of activist identification with the organization, its members, and its message. More specifically, the more a member identifies with the "group's moral and ideological framework" the stronger influence the group has on the "member's sense of authenticity" and, as a result, their level of commitment increases (Gecas 2000: 104). For example, McAdam (1986) found that within a movement organization some activists are more committed than others and that this commitment depends on several factors including prior engagement with activism as well as the strength and size of support networks. Examining participants in Freedom Summer, McAdam finds that those who had been involved in other civil rights activities, deeply identified with the ideology and goals of the movement organization, were embedded into activist networks, and did not have strong personal responsibilities such as a family were the most committed. Similarly Hirsch (1986), in his study of a Chicago community organization, argues that the key to deepening commitment from activists is

to convince them of an ideology: a common struggle with a clear solution. He further finds that polarization, or resistance from broader society, can strengthen the bonds between movement members as they view themselves as correct and others as wrong.

### **FRAMES AND COMMITMENT**

When not capitalizing on previously established social networks, movements must base their efforts on popular discourses and personal identities in order to recruit activists to their organizations. In the packaging of the movement for the public, movement organizations typically employ frames, which serve as an easy method of spreading the message of activists to a broader audience. It is also possible that social movement organizations, such as the TEA Party, may use these same strategies to increase member commitment.

A frame is “an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one’s present or past environment” (Snow and Benford 1992: 137). Activists intentionally construct frames as a way to package their movement to others (Noakes and Johnston 2005: 7). Movement frames are communicated to movement members and the larger public through two processes: articulation and amplification. Frame articulation is the process of connecting events, using cultural symbols and knowledge, in a way that compels people. In short, it is the process of explaining movement perspectives in a simple and accessible way. In contrast, frame amplification is the process of highlighting particular events and issues of the broader movement, such as the use of bumper stickers (Noakes and Johnston 2005). While any

movement may use a variety of frames, two key types include collective action frames (CAFs) and master frames.

Collective action frames (CAF) are frames employed by specific social movement organizations to highlight the injustice of a social condition or describe normative actions as intolerable (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 2001). The process of framing allows movement actors and people in larger society to make sense of actions and events in a particular way. Movement actors construct collective action frames to make both diagnostic and prognostic attributions: placing blame for an injustice and aligning the movement as the only solution (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 2001). Movements accomplish this through the production of three CAF components: injustice, agency, and identity. The injustice component determines a guilty party to blame for an injustice. In this narrative, the perpetrator needs to be a clear target. Abstract targets, such as ‘society,’ ‘hunger,’ or ‘the system,’ have the potential to undermine an injustice frame due to their failure to identify specific actors as responsible for the injustice (Gamson 1992). Importantly, in simplifying the enemy, the frames of movements are often unable to explain the social conditions that give rise to injustice and the role of individual actors are subsequently exaggerated (Gamson 1992). The agency component motivates people by convincing them that social conditions can be changed through collective action and is bolstered by the identity component that constructs a collective “we” of movement members and their allies in opposition to “they” who have opposing values (Gamson 1992).

Master frames operate in a similar way to collective action frames, but on a larger scale. While CAFs are used by individual movement organizations, master frames shape and are employed by several movement organizations simultaneously (Valocchi 2005).

Like collective action frames, activists use master frames to explain a social problem and potential solution (Snow and Benford 1992). Movements feed off of one another and employ each other's frames to varying degrees over their lives (Valocchi 2005).

Frames are only successful if they can build upon common social discourses and be packaged for larger audiences (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 2001; Snow and Benford 2000). Such knowledge is important in movement mobilization as people view the world based on their cultural traditions and not any sort of tangible 'truth' (Jasper 1997). Framing is an active process that weaves new ideas into existing cultural discourses through four processes: frame bridging, the process of linking two or more frames that are related but were previously unconnected; frame amplification, the magnification of a frame through the use of slogans, promotions, or other tactics that capture the essence of a movement; frame extension, the expansion of a frame to new areas that are important to the target audience; and frame transformation, the modification of old meanings into new ones (Snow and Benford 2000, Tarrow 1998).

As mentioned, to succeed, frames must resonate and engage with popular discourse. This alignment is dependent upon frame consistency (internal logic), empirical credibility (external logic), and the authenticity of those delivering the frames. Resonance is also reliant upon the frame's congruence with the experiences of the public; centrality, the level to which the movement issues matters to the audience; and narrative fidelity, the importance of movement narratives in the discourses of the dominant culture (Gamson 1992; Noakes and Johnston 2005). At the same time, frames need to encompass a range of demands, rather than a single solution. Through this process, frames must also strike a

balance whereby they are neither too radical nor asking too little with regards to social change (Hewitt and McCammon 2005).

This dissertation extends previous theoretical work on social movement theory through asking whether or not frame alignment strategies can be used, not only as a recruitment tool, but also to increase commitment by promoting member identity with the social movement organization and reducing conflict within a movement organization. Of particular interest is the finding by McAdam (1986), and Hirsch (1986), that commitment rests in part on identifying with movement ideology and goals. Given that frames often reflect the worldview of their developers, the frame alignment strategies that lead to successful activist recruitment could also be employed to deepen the commitment of movement members. Through connecting the frames of activists via frame alignment processes, organizations such as the TEA Party may be able to produce a shared identity between movement actors, increasing activist commitment and reducing intra-organizational conflict.

Recognizing the use of frame alignment strategies and the presence of sentiment pools within movement organizations is particularly important with regards to right-wing movements. For example, Blee (2002) argues that many of the women who join racist organizations are not racist upon entrance, but develop racist ideologies through participation in the group. Rather, entrance into the organization occurs through contact with a current group member. Blee (2002) further argues that members are “rational... political actors trying to gain advantages or stave off threats to their social, political or economic status” (31) and that members are not “brainwashed or crazy” (31). Rather, activists resonate with elements of the movement organization and slowly develop stories

that align their own self-interest with the group and its goals (Blee 2002). This process may be akin to frame alignment. Thus, if this is the case of the KKK, it is likely that other right-wing groups recruit activists through social networks and that frame alignment happens after membership recruitment has occurred.

This dissertation explores how these different understandings are negotiated within the movement and the conflicts that they generate, or fail to generate, among members. How do the sentiment pools frame the role of the state, the rights of citizenship, and explanations for racial inequality? Given the distinct sentiment pools of the TEA Party, does the need for frame alignment continue after members have joined the organization? How is a collective identity developed and commitment strengthened? How is conflict between sentiment pools minimized, despite their different perspectives?

### **THE OUTLINE**

Chapter II examines the discordant frames employed by each sentiment pool regarding the state and the rights of citizenship. Each sentiment pool is explored in greater depth, drawing on participant interviews and notes from TEA Party events. This chapter sets up clear boundaries of the sentiment pools.

Chapter III interrogates the use of frame amplification to invigorate and magnify the collective action frame regarding the responsibilities of citizens, specifically exploring the evolving role of morality and responsibility in the unification of activists on issues. Specifically, activists, reacting to a perceived increase in entitlement in society, create a collective identity through constructing TEA Party members as fatherly, protecting childlike Americans (who are both lazy and entitled) from the villainous Left. These shared values are promoted through the use of frame amplification as a tool to

increase activist commitment, fostering the process of choosing to ignore differences to unite under key shared values.

Chapter IV analyzes the distinct framing employed by the sentiment pools regarding issues of racial inequality and shows that the distinctions between sentiment pools can be porous and quite complex. Activists engaging with ideologies regarding the sovereign nation state – such as Conspiracy Theorists and Constitutionals – employ a racial denial frame: arguing that racial inequality does not exist but is perpetuated by people of color or elitists to divide the nation. Those engaging with libertarian ideology – Libertarians and Constitutionals – see racial inequality as the result of individual shortcomings of people of color, similar to Bonilla-Silva's (2009) abstract liberalism frame. Moral order ideology leads activists in the Conservative Christian and Constitutionalist sentiment pools to frame racial inequality as the result of cultural shortcomings, engaging with ideas from Moynihan (1965). Finally, a fourth frame is employed by some Libertarians and Reformed Liberals wherein the state is blamed for racial inequality: particularly programs supported by the Left: the War on Poverty, Welfare, and teachers unions. Despite these different understandings of racial inequality, the TEA Party uses frame amplification to unite the sentiment pools under a shared value of colorblindness.

Finally, Chapter V ties together these arguments and demonstrates, again, how important frame alignment can be to the commitment of activists and muting of intra-organizational conflict. This chapter provides an analysis of framing strategies and suggests a tertiary level of framing is occurring in the TEA Party. It also provides an overview of additional mechanisms that may contribute to activist commitment: the

effects of age and retirement on activists seeking meaning and community and the organization's position as a hybrid social movement and political organization which presents opportunities for the distinct sentiment pools to share their unique beliefs with one another. While these mechanisms are likely to play a role in activist commitment, frame alignment is clearly the most significant organizational tactic employed to increase solidarity.

## **FROM RECRUITMENT TO COMMITMENT: SENTIMENT POOLS AND THE STATE**

During the lead up to the 2012 Presidential primaries, a series of straw polls were conducted among TEA Party activists, all with distinct results. Outsiders interpreted these polls as reflecting a lack of clarity regarding which Republican candidate TEA Party activists supported. This confusion has been interpreted by some – including TIME Magazine reporter Alex Altman - as evidence of indecisiveness among TEA Party members (Altman 2011).

The first poll occurred in February of 2011 at the TEA Party's Phoenix summit. Talk show host and businessman Herman Cain, known for his simple tax plan placing income, property, and sales tax at a flat rate of nine percent, won the poll, taken live at the event. Congressman Ron Paul of Texas, famous for his libertarian views, won the concurrent online poll (Travis 2011). Seven months later, Herman Cain won two straw polls: one in Illinois, where he was the only candidate who campaigned (Hudzik 2011), and one in South Carolina (Acosta 2011). Herman Cain left the primary race in early December due to allegations of sexual harassment and abuse (Blumenthal 2011) and former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, renowned for favoring strict immigration policies and seeking to reinterpret notions of the separation of church and state, won the subsequent straw poll, with Representative Michelle Bachman (R-MN), famous for taking strong stances on a variety of issues and adored by conspiracy theorists, close at his heels (Seelye 2011). One month later, in January, former Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA), viewed as a social conservative and admired by Christian conservatives, took the Florida straw poll, followed by Gingrich (Levinson 2012). In Minnesota, in February of

2012, Santorum and Paul led a straw poll held at a local meeting with 300 members in attendance.

These distinct results do not indicate indecisiveness nor a “splitting” or “fracture[ing]” of the organization, as asserted by the media (Altman 2011); rather, they highlight the diversity of beliefs held by members. Members have distinct perspectives regarding the role of the state and responsibilities of citizenship and, as argued above, can be divided into five categories: Christian Conservatives, Constitutionlists, Reformed Liberals, Libertarians, and Conspiracy Theorists, each separated by their beliefs regarding the role of the state and rights of citizenship. This chapter explores how the distinct categories, which I consider sentiment pools, that make up the TEA Party Patriots understand the role of the states. Sentiment pools are groups of people with shared beliefs, but scholars suggest they are not (yet) connected to social movements. The case of the TEA Party demonstrates that this may not be the case; rather, this movement organization consists of distinct groups with shared beliefs. Whereas previous research has shown that movement organizations use frame alignment strategies - connecting the frames of the movement to those held by sentiment pools - to recruit members (Snow et al 1986), the TEA Party uses similar strategies to increase member commitment. This chapter also suggests that this phenomenon in the TEA Party may reflect a new trend in social movement organizations and may be shaped by its expedient rise and large size both numerically and geographically.

## **UNDERSTANDING OF THE STATE IN RIGHT-WING MOVEMENTS**

To understand the distinct beliefs held by TEA Party sentiment pools, it is important to examine historical ideas regarding the state promoted by right-wing organizations. Right-

wing social movements have generally posited three theories regarding the state. First, they have promoted an ideology asserting that the state is a barrier to achievement and equality for white men and, instead, privileges the rights of minorities. Typically infused with ideas of religion and racial superiority, this belief has been embraced by organizations ranging from the Ku Klux Klan to Focus on the Family. Such groups challenge the state to restore the rights of the nuclear family and the middle class. They typically blame the state for, what is perceived as, increased difficulty for success in the United States and turn to religious solutions regarding morality of citizens and the state (Hardisty 1999).

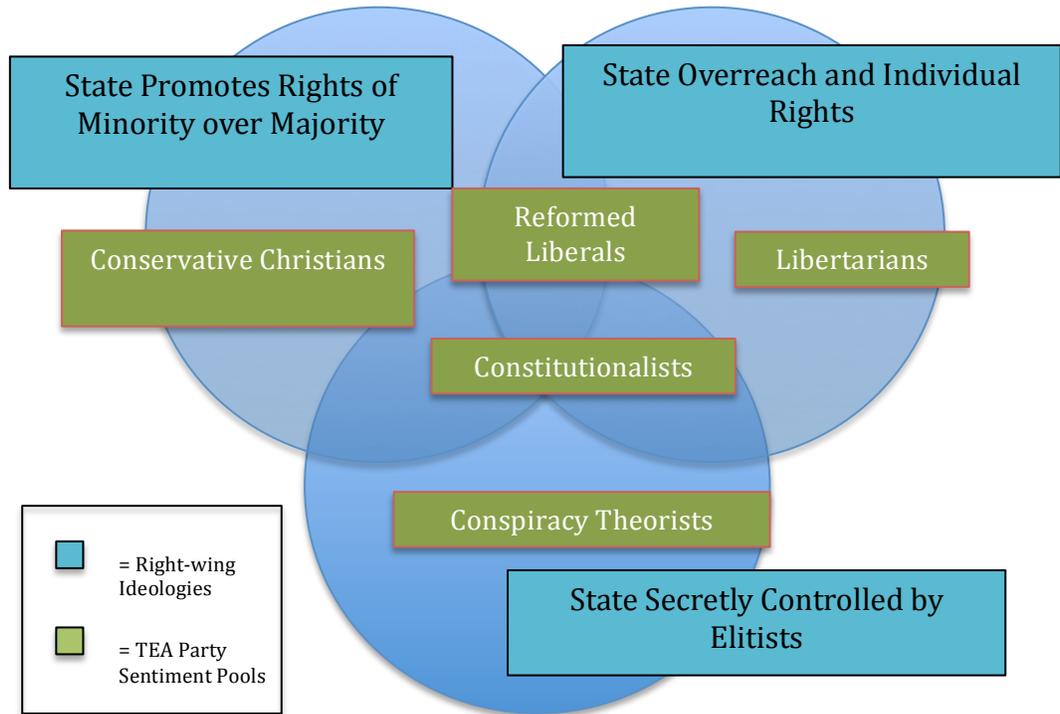
Second, the right has argued that the state restricts rights by assuming too much power and that only by decreasing regulation and promoting free market principles can order be maintained. Those whom claim this libertarian identity typically believe that the state limits rights of all citizens due to its overreach (Diamond 1999; Hardisty 1999). They seek a reduction in the size of government and an increase in social rights ranging from same sex marriage to the legalization of drugs, due to their deeply held belief in individual freedoms (Hardisty 1999). Libertarians believe that by operating on free market principles, the rights of citizens will be restored (Hardisty 1999).

Third, the right has, at times, argued that the state's sovereignty is threatened: that it has been infiltrated by global elitists who seek to control the populace and eliminate national borders (Diamond 1995; Toplin 2006). Distinct movement organizations embrace and employ each of these ideologies to different extents at different times. Groups, ranging from the Patriot Movement to the John Birch Society, hold this belief. Adherents typically fear several potential elitist groups including communists, a secret

international Jewish conspiracy called ZOG (Zionist Occupied Government), feminists, and the United Nations (Abanes 1996; Mulloy 2008). As evidence of this elitist takeover, adherents cite the construction of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) camps throughout the nation to hold citizens against their will, the Federal Reserve Bank's decision to disconnect the U.S. dollar from the gold standard, and the political indoctrination that occurs in schools (Abanes 1996; Mulloy 2008).

The TEA Party, consisting of five sentiment pools, hosts members who believe each of these theories to different extents and in different combinations. As will be discussed further throughout this chapter, Conservative Christians primarily adhere to the ideology regarding morality and the state's reduction of rights for the majority; Constitutionals employ elements of all three belief systems; Reformed Liberals merge ideas regarding morality and those seeking the reduction of state power to preserve individual rights; Libertarians embrace beliefs regarding the overreaching state restricting rights and opportunities for individuals; and Conspiracy Theorists primarily promote fears regarding secret, elite control of the state. This division is depicted in Figure 2, a simplified version of Figure 1.

Figure 2: Sentiment Pools and Right-Wing Ideology



Earlier studies of the TEA Party Patriots have falsely suggested that the organization’s approach to the state is united and consists of reducing the size of government and following a restrictionist interpretation of the Constitution (Zernike 2012a). For example, Skocpol and Williamson (2012) found that TEA Party members generally held great “reverence for the Constitution” (48) while advocating for selective use of its decrees and pushing for specific amendments. The activists in their sample oppose what they view as entitlement programs for undeserving portions of the population (low-income people of color) but supported those that they felt people earned, such as Social Security and Medicaid. As a result of this perspective, some scholars have concluded that the TEA Party has a problem regarding hypocrisy, or “picking and choosing” elements in the Constitution to focus on (Zernike 2012a: 76).

Previous research has provided too simple an explanation of the TEA Party

membership; rather, there is a remarkable diversity regarding perceptions of the state, its role, and the rights of citizens. What on the surface appears like hypocrisy is in fact distinct sentiment pools expressing views regarding the role of the state. My analysis demonstrates that activist understandings of the state are not uniform. Even when activists appear to agree, often their motivation is distinct. For example, most sentiment pools concur that the national debt is of grave concern. However, Constitutionlists root their fears in the fact that it is not explicitly written in the Constitution that debt is acceptable and it may lead to a loss of state sovereignty, while Libertarians are concerned with the impact it has on taxation and civil liberties.

### **CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIANS: THE STATE NEEDS TO PROTECT THE MAJORITY FROM SPECIAL INTERESTS**

Conservative Christians see the role of the state as protecting the rights of the majority against minority “special” interests. This includes preserving the rights of Christians through eliminating the falsely mandated separation of church and state and legislating moral values such as marriage. For example, Maxine suggests that the biggest problem facing the U.S. today is the “destruction of traditional values...and removing God from all aspects of society” and that Obama has “destroy[ed] the fabric of society” since taking office. These ideas reflect those held by other right-wing religious groups such as Focus on the Family or the Moral Majority.

Maxine and Robert are two activists who represent this position among TEA Party members. Maxine is in her mid-fifties and from Minnesota. She attended law school and is currently working as a homemaker. Robert is a Baptist minister in a suburb

outside of the Twin Cities in Minnesota and hosts a conservative talk radio show. He is in his forties and has young children.

Both Maxine and Robert are concerned with the false notion of the separation of church and state and both begin with an analysis of the historical development of this constitutional misinterpretation. According to Maxine it all starts with “the establishment clause, which gives us freedom of religion.” However, she argues: “the Supreme Court is turning that on its head and giving us freedom from religion.” Robert actively challenges this separation by teaching constitutional law from the pulpit.

According to Maxine, religion and the state were deeply intertwined through early American history. It began with the pilgrims who came for “religious freedom” and continued in the states of Massachusetts which “established their own state church and they forced the people to pay taxes” and Virginia, a state in which “if the people didn’t come to church or if they didn’t baptize their kids, they could be whipped or fined.” Thus, though people came to this country for religious freedom, the United States has a long history of state associated religion.

Robert draws support for the assertion that the United States has always intertwined religion and government by highlighting quotes from famous Americans. He quotes George Washington saying: “It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God or the Bible.” And concludes: “we can see that George Washington really doesn’t go for this whole separation of church and state thing, right?” He also cites Andrew Jackson as arguing that “‘the book’ the Bible, he is talking about ‘is the rock upon which our republic rests,’” concluding that “Andrew Jackson...obviously does not fall for the separation of church and state thing either.”

Robert then “do[es] a flip” and villainizes the notion of separating church and state by linking its supporters to Hitler and Karl Marx. He does this by presenting quotes advocating the separation of church and state: “the church must be separate from the state” and “but we shall ensure the purging from our public life all those pastors who have mistaken their profession, who have ought to be politicians and not pastors.” Robert then asks the audience who made these statements, to which they yell “Barack Obama.” Robert responds: “Well, you are close. Adolf Hitler actually said that... isn’t that amazing? Adolf Hitler said that. So, we see the fascists, Adolf Hitler, wanted the separation of church and state.” From Hitler, Robert suggests that communists also wanted the separation of church and state: “Did you know that the communist’s manifesto says ‘in order to ensure the citizens freedom of conscious, the church and the USSR is separated from the state and the school from the church. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of antireligious propaganda is recognized for all citizens.’ Article 124 of the Soviet Union Constitution, 1947.” By citing Hitler and communists as supporters of the separation of church and state, Robert actively vilifies the position, and affirms his support for the integration of religion and government.

Maxine argues that the First Amendment does not establish the separation of church and state; rather, it establishes religious freedom. Maxine states: “We have six different things within the First Amendment. And I’m going to focus on just the first one tonight: ‘No laws respecting an establishment of religion’... Also, with regards to religion, the second part of it ‘nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof’. That is called the free exercise clause.” Rather, she demonstrates, it was Thomas Jefferson, who was not involved in the writing of the Constitution, who is credited with writing the phrase

“separation of church and state.” Robert adds that this was done in a letter to the Danbury Baptists in which Jefferson wanted to convince the concerned congregation that the government wouldn’t be “interfering with the church” and that it would “protect the church.” Robert suggests that Jefferson and other Founding Fathers were concerned with the government posing a threat to church, not the inverse: “He said the government, if you give them an inch, they’ll take a mile. When they take a mile, they’re going to weaken the church. They are going to weaken our ability to speak out against those things. They are going to weaken our ability to teach our kids morality.” As evidence, Robert cites a case in Canada in which homeschoolers “are unable to teach their own children in their home that the homosexuality is wrong. Now, you may agree or disagree with that, but I believe in the right of parents to teach their kids anything they want to, particularly in their own home.”

Of particular threat, according to the Conservative Christians, is the Supreme Court who “has really screwed up a lot of stuff”, particularly around issues of primary concern, prayer in school and public participation in the pledge of allegiance. Maxine traces the history of the notion of separation of church and state beginning with the Iverson case in 1947 in which the Supreme Court ruled that the state of New Jersey to “use tax payer money to pay for bus transportation for children to Catholic or private schools.” While this decision isn’t surprising, she suggests that Justice Hugo Black cited Thomas Jefferson’s statement that “there should be a wall of separation between church and state” in the decision and as such his statement has been used as precedent in future cases.

Maxine continues by explaining that in 1962 the American Civil Liberties Union filed suit in the Engle vs. Vitale case, which “kicked God out of schools.” The case centered on the issue of “whether the reading of a nondenominational prayer at the start of a school day violated the establishment clause.” Justice Black wrote this decision citing his comments in the Iverson case as precedent. This pattern continued to the 1963 Abington Case that ruled that the Bible cannot be read in schools and the Lemon vs. Kurtzman case of 1971 that ruled that tax money cannot go to Catholic schools for education purposes. The Lemon case, according to Maxine, further established “the Lemon test” which “is used to validate basically everything.” The Lemon test has three “prongs” used to measure the constitutionality of a case. According to Maxine:

The first part is “the statute must have a legitimate secular purpose.” If there is no secular purpose – boom! Unconstitutional. The second part: it cannot have the primary effect of inhibiting or advancing religion, that is the effects test. And the third, it cannot promote excessive entanglement between church and state, that is the entanglement test. So, if you violate any one of these three, it is unconstitutional. And using the lemon test, just about everything became unconstitutional.

This test was applied in the Wallace vs. Jaffree case in 1985. At issue in this case was whether or not schools could have a moment of silence in which “students could pray or not.” Jaffree “was a stunning atheist” and refused to just “tell [his] kids they didn’t have to pray” saying he “didn’t even want them around people who were praying” nor did he want them to leave the room saying: “I don’t want my child ostracized so I chose to sue the state.” The court ruled that there was no secular purpose to a moment of silence because, according to Maxine, “it establishes a state church.” Maxine feels as if “That is as ludicrous as you can imagine and it is so far from what our founding fathers intended.”

One of the reasons that Christian Conservatives believe it is important to unite church and state is because they view it as essential for values to be enforced through laws. They argue that without such a mandate society will crumble. For example, Mark, a Minnesotan in his sixties, argues that “religion, morality, and knowledge are necessary for good government, shall forever be encouraged” and that the Founding Fathers agree. As a result, they “established that education was important and a religious and moral education was absolutely important” concluding that “establishing religion and morality is the reason for having public education.” Similarly, Maxine argues that immorality is increasing: “the older I get the more I see the morality breakdown” and gives the specific example of abortion, which she connects to “genocide”: “you know I was in college when abortion became legal and, at that time, I really bought into this thing that a woman has the right to do that. You know, a woman has a right to her own body. But, does she really have a right to kill a human being?” She argues that: “every society has allowed genocide of some sort... I was trying to understand this because the connection [between abortion and genocide] because ... if you look at China you know female infanticide is too one-sided. If you don’t value human life, which is a natural right, then all of a sudden when I turn 80 some panel is going to look at me and say... ‘your sense of usefulness is now over, how would you like to die?’” Maxine believes that the erosion of social values, through the separation of church and state, inevitably leads to horrible occurrences in society.

Unlike other, more radical groups, employing the belief system regarding morality, such as the KKK, Conservative Christians do not overtly support ideas of white supremacy. Rather, they use cases in which religion has reformed racists as evidence that

a nation requires strong moral guidance: for example, the Wallace vs. Jaffree case featuring infamous Alabama governor, George Wallace. As a justification of the importance of religion, Maxine suggests that he was reformed from his racist tendencies because of becoming a Christian:

I'm going to tell a little bit of history about George Wallace... When he was first made governor in, I believe it was 1963, when he got up there he said "Segregation now, segregation forever." And that is when he was governor. Then, in 1972, he was shot... He spent the rest of his life in a wheelchair. Now we are in 1985, he is defending the right to have a moment of silence at the beginning of school when children could pray. Now does that sound like a guy that would say "Segregation forever"? No. You know what happen? He became a Christian. Isn't that a great story?

Maxine's story serves great purpose in establishing the benefits of Christianity and provides evidence of the potential held by intertwining morality with the state.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Robert points to the case of William Wilberforce, featured in the film *Amazing Grace*. He argues that the story is "about Christians who got involved to end slavery in England" and shares the role of the church in ending "the slave trade industry in the entire United Kingdom." The credit given to ministers extends to the United States: "Ending of slavery in the United States. That was another result of the pastors preaching from their pulpits that slavery was wrong. How can you enslave somebody who was given rights and freedoms from God? You see how all of this transfers to Christians - we have to be a voice in their community." Robert also cites the fact that Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist pastor and Republican as evidence that he and others like him are on the correct side.

One issue, which Conservative Christians cite as a symptom of the degradation of Christian morals, is the Pledge of Allegiance. Of particular concern is the proposal to

remove the words “under God” from the rite. According to Maxine, not having a federally established religion does not preclude people from participating in the pledge: “this is a quote from James Madison, who wrote the Constitution ‘Congress should not establish a religion and enforce the legal observance of it by law, nor compel men to worship God in any manner contrary to their own conscience.’ That is easy to understand. Does that mean we aren’t allowed to say the pledge of allegiance? Not at all!” However, in the 2002 case of *Newdow* “the ninth circuit [ruled] that the pledge of allegiance must be banned from public schools because of the words ‘under God’ . Maxine casts *Newdow* off as “a devote atheist” who didn’t have custody of the child who was in school and saying the pledge. Maxine sarcastically suggests: “fortunately, our Congress stepped in” and “had a resolution of indignation.” Frustrated with this action, she states: “They were indignant. How many of you are indignant? Well, that is all they did. So that is why we the TEA Party, we still have a lot of work to do.”

Similarly, Conservative Christians are concerned about the rulings that prohibited the Ten Commandments from being posted on public buildings. Maxine cites the 1980 case of *Stone vs. Grant* questioning whether or not the Ten Commandments could be posted in school classrooms. The court ruled that they could not. Subsequently, there were twenty-four additional Supreme Court cases ruling that the Ten Commandments couldn’t be posted. Maxine suggests that the reason there are so many cases is because it serves as a fundraising tactic for the ACLU or, as she calls the organization: “Assault Christian Liberties Unmercifully” which she further implicates as a communist organization. Robert also suggests that: “The ACLU that was started by the communists, that was run by the communists, that was funded by the communists. The goal is

totalitarian government trying to take away your freedom and my freedom. That's what separation of church and state is all about."

While the state falsely divides itself from the church, Christian Conservatives believe it concurrently forsakes the rights of Christians for religious minorities. Maxine suggests that the state gives power to other religious practices including witchcraft: "witchcraft is being practiced in my classrooms which I objected to and they said no" while Roberts points to special provisions for Muslims: "in Minneapolis, you have the Muslim cab drivers who wouldn't pick up people that had wine." Christian Conservatives use examples like this as evidence that the rights of the minority restrict those of the majority.

Recent social changes regarding abortion and same-sex marriage are evidence, to Christian Conservatives, that the separation of church and state is leading to a moral crisis in society. When discussing a bill that would require religious institutions to provide contraceptive coverage to employees through their health care plans, Robert suggests that this is "just setting a precedent for mandatory abortion coverage." Furthermore, he suggests that: "Cecil Lecture, the CEO of Planned Parenthood was the top advisor to the Obama Administration on the very issue of mandatory coverage of contraceptives" and believes that it is counterproductive to their mission: "Why would Planned Parenthood be involved in contraceptives – you'd think they wouldn't want contraceptives. That's hurting their business of abortion, right?"<sup>5</sup>

Christian Conservatives view marriage as a sacred right and argue that it comes with a responsibility for procreation. Thus, Robert justifies the limitation of marriage rights for same sex couples by discussing the importance of marriage to society:

“Although, I will say this about marriage. Marriage is particularly an important issue to society because it is the foundation of which a society is built.” Maxine agrees arguing that:

Marriage should be between a man and a woman...and that just goes back because the purpose of marriage is that you come together and create a family you create life. Naturally you create life. So its one of those natural law issues... As far as redefining marriage no, no it should not be done. It still needs to be the standard it still needs to be that. It fits. It makes most sense to the vast majority of people and again it’s our innate wiring.

Conservatives suggest that: “Marriage is between a man and a woman” and dismiss the religious components of marriage by stating: “we are a Christian Nation, not some annex of Norway or Sweden where anything is OK. We were founded on the Christian principles as taught in the Bible and that is what we are.” This notion that what is “natural” should be legitimated by the state is common among Conservative Christians and sets them apart from other TEA Party members.

Christian Conservatives are primarily concerned with the relationship between religion and the state, suggesting that the historical separation of church and state is ill-willed and contradicts the desires of the Founding Fathers. Christian Conservatives conclude that in “the founders time, the country wasn’t a Christian society. It was a Christian nation. Unfortunately we are not that now anymore.” Related to this concern is discussion on social issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage that activists from Libertarian or Constitutionalist sentiment pools discourage due to their potential divisiveness.

**THE CONSTITUTIONALIST: RETURN TO A PREVIOUS,  
CONSTITUTIONALLY LIMITED, STATE**

Constitutionalists embrace elements of all three right-wing belief structures. They believe that the state hurts the majority in order to promote the rights of the minority; that it is overextended and, as a result, violating civil rights; and that it has been influenced by external powers. Rather than operating independently, the three ideologies influence one another and modify the way they manifest in the sentiment pool. Thus, unlike Libertarians who support the privatization of nearly all government services, Constitutionalists seek to maintain federal programs such as the Post Office, but not education. Rather than believing that international Jewish bankers or the United Nations have secretly overtaken the United States as a Conspiracy Theorist would, Constitutionalists see the state as threatening its own sovereignty through the IRS, the national debt, and the Federal Reserve Bank. These activists view as a solution to the loss of rights for the majority and reduction in national sovereignty, “go[ing] back” to the Constitution and limiting the size of the government to that explicitly mentioned in this founding document.

Constitutionalists believe strongly in the republican model of governance and feel that it has been violated, resulting in a loss of sovereignty and civil rights. In the United States’<sup>6</sup> sense of the concept, a republic is a form of governance that does not practice a direct democracy, but in which citizens have indirect control. Citizens elect representatives whom make and vote on laws on their behalf. Timothy, an activist in his seventies from Minnesota and retired from the auto-industry speaks with pride about the creation of the republic in the United States: “According to the story, when they...left the constitutional convention, [a woman] supposedly asked Ben Franklin: ‘so, what did you accomplish in there? What did we get?’ and Ben Franklin said to her: ‘a republic, if you

can keep it.” Zach, a chapter leader in Minnesota, tells the same story, but elaborates on “what a republic is.” He warns: “today we are losing our republic.” He thinks that “most of our elected leaders don't even know what a republic is” and defines it as having two parts: “the first part is that the supreme power rests in the citizens who have the right to vote. The second part is the citizens exercise their power by electing representatives to represent them.” He then reiterates that: “We do not have a democracy. We have a republic, limited by the Constitution.”

The Constitutionalist connection to religion is less conservative and tied to Christianity than that of the Conservative Christians. However, the moral order ideology influences their interpretation of U.S. history and the founding of the beloved republic in that they apply a moral framework to justify the state's structure. Zach argues that “Revolutionary heroes” such as “George Nicholas” were motivated because of their experience with King George. The King “had been way too strong and they are trying to get away from that and yet they recognize that, under the Articles [of Confederation] there wasn't enough power.” As a result the Founding Fathers “established the concept of federalism” and split power between the federal and state governments: “the Tenth Amendment says that states have rights and the Ninth Amendments says that... whatever rights are not specifically given to the federal government are going to be with the people and with the states.”

Constitutionalists believe that the republic has been lost and cite as evidence an erasure of civil rights. According to Timothy: “In my opinion, we've lost our republic. We just haven't accepted or recognized it yet. We live in the land of the free and the home of the brave, but they will tell you where you can smoke and not, they will tell you

what kind of light bulb to use, amongst all sorts of other things. Our liberties, our freedoms, our sensibilities have been chipped away at. At some point, the structure that is constantly being chipped at will collapse.” Like Libertarians, Constitutionalists see the loss of civil rights as a large societal problem. However, the two groups diverge in their proposed solution. Libertarians believe the state can only be controlled if it is run on free market principles. Constitutionalists, instead, believe the solution is strict adherence to the nation’s founding document.

Like Libertarians, Constitutionalists fear a loss of civil rights and liberties as a result of government overreach. However, they do not see the threat to liberties as an outcome of any government action but only the overt violation of limitations placed by the state. Thus, rather than seeing an increase in statism and loss of liberties due to things like war, Constitutionalist ideas regarding the shrinking of the state are merged with notions of rights for the majority and are concerned specifically with detrimental, unconstitutional laws. Consider Timothy’s fears: “Which freedom, which liberty, is OK to lose? ... The answer then is none... And it is happening. I see that as very dangerous, what Americans are forced to go through at airports... I’m all for safety but I’m also a realist and I know you can’t build the perfect mousetrap. So, if we are willing to sacrifice our Fourth Amendment rights because we might have something, which other ones are you going to come up with a legitimate argument to take away?”

This discussion of rights is further shaped by this sentiment pool’s engagement with religion and morality. Samantha is a white woman in her fifties from Minnesota who has a career as a business consultant. Though Samantha is not Christian, she does believe that there is a foundational morality shared between all human beings: “One way is that

instinctively within us, we are made the way we are by our Creator. But deep inside the vast majority of people innately know right from wrong. You know it is wrong to take my life. I know it is wrong to kill you.” According to Samantha, the rights threatened by an agnostic state are “natural rights”, given by God, held by all citizens. First, she argues, all people have the right to “self governance, to own private property, and to enjoy the fruits of our own labor. It is natural law that we have the freedom to choose, the right to associate, the right to speak or believe, [to] freely pursue our own happiness.” Further, she argues that this is “the root of conservatism and this is the root of Americanism. This is who we are.” Samantha’s concern with natural law leads her to be particularly interested in freedom. For her, this means to be “free from an overly centralized and all-powerful national government” because “as Jefferson also said: ‘Where there is a concentration of power, there is corruption’ and then there is a loss of the God-given natural unalienable rights.”

The Constitutionalist’s libertarian-influenced perspective operates through moral order ideology and is thus imbedded with the issue of privilege. Samantha and other Constitutionlists see their natural rights threatened by minorities who get extra state assistance at the expense of the majority. Among these rights is the right to self-preservation. According to Samantha: “this goes way, way back to even the time of Caesar and they talked a lot about that we have to have it because we have a right to self-preservation. You have a right because if you have that you have a right to protect yourself.” However, she argues, people on the Left have taken this right out of context in the attempt to promote equality: “Progressivism has taken that to a different level. Now, as far as being equal – from what they said – Jefferson explained it very well. That, what

they mean [when they say] that all men are created equal is that we have equal worth in the eyes of God and that, under law, written law... So you have to be very careful when you start talking about [the idea] that we are all created equal because the progressives say we should have equal outcomes, and that's not what it is about." Timothy makes a similar claim arguing: "The National Center [for] Constitutional Studies has put together a 28 bullet point list of the principles of liberty... One of the ones that, that I've zeroed in on... is number seven on the list of the principles of liberty. It says the proper role of government is to protect equal rights. Not provide equal things." Mary does not believe that this means people should live in poverty, but that the state is not responsible for ameliorating it: "Does it mean that people go destitute, absolutely not, but that is up to the family, the community, the churches, the local governments to take care of. Not the federal government."

The intersecting ideologies of moral order, libertarianism, and state sovereignty lead Constitutionalists to a very narrow solution for social problems; activists argue that to preserve rights the nation must strictly adhere to the Constitution. For Samantha, returning to the Constitution as the basis for determining the role of the state is fundamental. She suggests that to do so properly one must understand the social context in which the Constitution was written: "We can't start with the Constitution, you have to understand what they were saying in the Declaration of Independence, you have to understand why they had a revolution." Samantha concludes that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were based on... "natural law": "Their main beef was that they believed in natural law." Thus, in order to preserve natural rights and maintain national sovereignty, Constitutionalists seek to restrict the state, not with free market

principles like Libertarians, but to the specific guidelines in the Constitution highlighted, according to Timothy, in “Section 8” which “defines 21 or 22 powers delegated to the federal government.” He says that this section “talks about the military, it talks about the Post Office, [and] infrastructure stuff.” However, Timothy is frustrated because “in some of the discussions I've had with other constitutional scholars... they will tell us about 70 percent of what the fed does today is not in the Constitution.” Evan, a college professor in his fifties from Illinois, is another activist who argues this view. Evan argues: “My hope is that people return to the founding principles of this nation... The U.S. Federal government has grown far more powerful than was ever envisioned. It should be operating within the constraints set down in the Constitution.”

Constitutionalist ideas regarding national sovereignty and elitist takeover is mitigated slightly and shaped by libertarian and moral order ideology. It subsequently manifests itself in the fear that current politicians are violating their oath of office by not accurately upholding the Constitution. Timothy suggests:

All of our elected officials take an oath to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. Article 2, Section 3 directs the President, for instance, to take care that the laws be faithfully executed... I looked at this amnesty thing that the executive order that Bush pushed through, it mirrors the Dream Act that Congress said ‘no, no, no’ to. Well, now we have a President that... said, ‘what I don't get done administratively, what I don't get legislatively, I'll get done administratively’... I don't care if it was Bush, I don't care if it was Reagan, I don't care who it is that does that. It is not OK. You took an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution. You just violated Article 1 Section 1... it says all legislative powers are granted to the United States Congress, not to executive orders.

Timothy believes that Obama should be impeached for this, and other, actions. Kyle agrees and believes that the “executive orders put in place by Obama” are the greatest challenge currently facing the nation. Constitutionlists also fear judicial action that

appears to be law making. According to Kyle, a white truck driver from Washington in his sixties: “We need to move back to implementing the Constitution and fire judges who want to make law instead of enforce the ones already on the books.”

These beliefs also manifest themselves in mistrust of the federal taxation system and the IRS. Constitutionals believe that people should only be taxed on consumption in order to preserve morality and civil rights: “We should never have [had] an IRS. We were supposed to always be taxed by consumption [as] they talked about in the Federalist Papers.” (Samantha). David agrees: “The foundation of the tax is unsound. It’s unsound economically, it’s unsound constitutionally, and it’s unsound morally... the only viable solution to this problem that we have right now folks, is a nationally addressed sales tax, otherwise known as the fair tax.” David, and other Constitutionals “want to abolish the IRS tax, the IRS, and income tax and withholding tax.” Importantly, sales taxes are usually regressive and disproportionately hurt the poor, whereas income tax is progressive and places greater onus on the wealthy. This solution reflects ideas regarding morality and preserving the rights of the majority.

The Constitutionalist’s deep concern regarding the national debt also reflects a merging of the three right-wing ideologies. They seek to restrict spending to that explicitly designed in the Constitution to preserve moral order, majority rights, and national sovereignty. Consider Timothy’s remarks: “The Constitution provides an answer. When this debt crisis is being kicked around political persons, the idea for a constitutional amendment came up... I thought, you know, its all well and good but we’ve already got guidance that’s being overlooked ... If we look into Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution it very specifically says to the government – we the people, the bosses

– are granting you the authority to do these things and anything you don't see there, you can't do.” He argues that the current political system has it backwards: “instead of the Fed coming to us and saying we need 800 billion dollars and we need it by next Wednesday, now its we the people in the position to say ‘here is what your budget will be’ and either you get the job done for those dollars or you’ll be replaced in the next election.” Thus, Constitutionalists believe that politicians made a mistake in allowing the debt to grow. According to Becky: “I would have let the government shut down rather than let the USA race to \$16 trillion in debt.”

Evan thinks that the “biggest problem” is the “size and scope of the federal government” including “spending massive amounts of borrowed money.” Richard, a retired army nurse from Illinois agrees, citing the most prominent issue as the fact that the United States has an “Out of control government debt - 16 trillion dollars and out of control government spending... They have expanded government far beyond the scope it was ever meant to be expanded.. [and] have stepped way beyond the bounds of the Constitution.” Activists fear this increasing debt because they believe it is providing a way for China, which owns over \$1 trillion of the U.S. debt, to control the United States and reduce national sovereignty.

Because few powers are clearly outlined in the Constitution, and they believe that adherence to the Constitution is necessary to preserve the republic, Constitutionalists promote states rights. Whereby Libertarians want limited government involvement on all levels, Constitutionalists support the right of states to determine social and economic policy. According to Richard, the solution to many social problems is “minimal federal government involvement in our lives, power returned to the states.” Gus, a purchasing

manager in Virginia in his forties, explores how these efforts are justified by the Constitution suggesting that an ideal America would give “state and local governments the majority of power per the Tenth Amendment.” One example is education, which is not explicitly outlined in the Constitution. According to Timothy, “our founders were very careful to say the government needs to stay as far away from education as possible so that it doesn't turn into propaganda.” He also argues that dismantling the Department of Education would save a great deal of money if we “took it right out of the equation.” He argues the states should be in charge of such programs so that people can have greater influence.

An additional program viewed as unconstitutional – and an issue for the states - by this sentiment pool is the Health Care Initiative under President Obama. Becky suggests that: “Obamacare is unconstitutional and, if the Supreme Court lets it stand it must be repealed.” She then further asserts that this is an example of how “Obama does not recognize the limits placed on his administration by the U.S. constitution.” Timothy argues that Mitt Romney’s plan in Massachusetts, incredibly similar to the Affordable Care Act, was “living within the constraints of the Constitution... because it was the state. If the state wants to try something, and maybe it'll turn out to be a good experiment, who knows, but if the state wants to do that, it is still within their – the boundaries of their state Constitution, go for it.” But, because Obamacare was implemented at the federal level, it violates the Constitution. Timothy suggests: “I have little doubt that, if we had some prudent constitutionalists making the decision, Obamacare will be found completely unconstitutional.” One strength of state-level decision making is that programs are easier to modify or retract and citizens who disapprove can leave the state:

“If it doesn't work, it's more easily taken back. Folks don't like what is going on? They can move.” At the state level, he argues, it is simpler to express one's opinion: “I can, if I'm unhappy, I can go over to St. Paul every weekend and hold a sign, say I don't like whatever, cheese sandwiches, I can protest that. To get to Washington and ask these birds to change their spending habits is a lot harder to do.”

Like most TEA Party activists, Constitutionalists oppose programs such as Social Security; however, the distinct sentiment pools have different motivations for this position. While Libertarians are concerned about the program's impact on civil liberties, Constitutionalists reject it as “unconstitutional” (Timothy). Timothy views Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid as illegal: “I'm a baby boomer so I'm coming up against that. It's unconstitutional. I see it nowhere in the Constitution that the government has anything to do with that.” Timothy supports Paul Ryan's (Representative from Wisconsin, running mate of 2012 presidential candidate Mitt Romney) plan to “phase off” these programs.

The Post Office is clearly established in the Constitution and, as such, Constitutionalists who may support the privatization or dismantling of Social Security, see funding for the Post Office as necessary, while most other activists types see the possibility of privatizing mail delivery. For Constitutionalists such as Samantha, what needs to happen to the Post Office is a return to the original guidelines in order to more efficiently run the system: “I'm gonna assume that they're running an organization again inefficiently. They may want to go back to the operations manual. See where they're off base.”

In addition to opposing programs not clearly outlined in the Constitution,

Constitutionalists are opposed to political conversations regarding social issues because they are rarely “really covered under the Constitution” (Keith, 60 year old man from Minnesota). The merging of the different right-wing ideologies leaves Constitutionalists with a more conservative take on the issue of same sex marriage than Libertarians, but a more progressive perspective than Conservative Christians. Constitutionalists argue that the current social problems of society are a result of the state “not following its Constitution” (Keith) and, as a result, generally support civil unions, operated at the state level, for same-sex couples, but not marriage. According to Becky: “They should be allowed a civil union - and law should spell out what this does for them.” Similarly, Evan suggests: “I am OK with civil unions, but I see no need for special privileges based on sexual orientation” and Richard argues: “A civil union is OK but don't call it a marriage.”

While Libertarians and Constitutionalists both seek to restrict the size and scope of government, they do so with different motivations. Constitutionalists seek to return to a strict interpretation of the Constitution, particularly regarding the services provided by the state. As a result, they focus on different programs for dismantling and, though both are concerned about rights, Constitutionalists are specifically fearful of a loss of rights that they see as resulting from a Constitutional violation.

### **THE REFORMED LIBERAL: THE STATE AS SUPPORT FOR CITIZENS**

The third sentiment pool is that of “the Reformed Liberal.” These are activists who identified as liberal in college, but became conservative after an “ah-ha” moment, many of which are related to “realizing” that state support hurts people of color or the poor. Of the activist types, they are the most interested in racial inequality, but this concern does not necessarily translate to civil rights for other groups, such as gays and lesbians.

Among the different activist types, this group is also the most likely to recognize the impact of social structures on individuals' lives. Reformed Liberals engage with moral order and libertarian ideologies, which interact in a way that minimizes each of their strengths. Thus, morality is engaged with in the sense that Reformed Liberals use religion as a foundation for their thoughts regarding the state. However, rather than fearing the state provides greater rights for minorities, libertarians beliefs lead them to view the state as hurting people of color. Similarly, ideas regarding the overreach of the state are filtered through areas of concern often held by groups focused on morality such as welfare and schools.

One example of an activist in this sentiment pool is Alison, a TEA Party member from Virginia. Alison is a young woman, married, and a mother of two. She does not work outside of the home, has decided to homeschool her children, and spends a lot of time engaged in TEA Party activism. Alison's "ah-ha" moment occurred at church when she heard somebody speaking about the difference between giving and lending to people in need, and the impact that such an act has on an individual: "He wasn't even speaking on politics, he was speaking on charity, he was speaking on the microloans as a method of charity that have sprung up." She was really touched by a response to a question by a congregation member:

One of the congregation raised their hand and said "why do you give them loans versus just outright gift?"... He said "well, we found, is that when you give something to somebody you automatically put a gap between you and that person and you establish yourself as a higher and you're telling them these are my leftovers and this is my handout and this is what I think you deserve to have but when you loan it to them the indirect message is you are my peer, we are equal and we will enter into a business agreement together because I believe you are my equal and you can handle this."

This idea really resonated with Alison and she decided: “Yep, I’m on the wrong side of this.” From this point on she decided that welfare programs were hurtful to poor people: “[I] kind of flipped and see entitlement programs not as helping people as much as hurting them.” Alison suggested that she had failed to understand this in the past because she had always interpreted scripture to match her beliefs but that understanding welfare this way was placing the Bible first. Moreover, it is what led to her joining the TEA Party Patriots: “When I went back and revisited scripture, quite honestly, with an unbiased view, and not looking for scripture to back up my position, but trying to find my position to line up with God’s position. That’s how I came to be in the TEA Party.”

Alison is primarily concerned with issues of racial inequality and, along with other members of her TEA Party organization, coordinates a “Minority Outreach Committee.” Through this committee, Alison and her peer, “an African American gentleman”, work with the coordinator of a Section 8 housing development. They have developed a curriculum including tutoring, arts and crafts, and history lessons. She suggests that it isn’t schoolwork, but it does have a goal of “present[ing] the most correct history.”

Merging the ideologies of moral order and libertarianism, Alison recognizes that public schools are “failing miserably, especially for minority children.” In particular, she thinks that children of color are “locked into a mindset that they have to live a certain way or that, basically that success is not possible for them.” The mechanism for this self-worth, according to Alison, is “an ideology”, that of the welfare system. Thus, her goal is to: “break that and try to help them see how free markets and capitalism and conservatism actually works for everybody, not just rich fat white people.” Part of the

limitations Alison thinks that the welfare system imposes is an inability among children of color to “dream big.” The children she works with believe that they need luck in order to be successful, and that it is unlikely to happen for them. She responds by telling children “it is possible for you and you have to do something to make it happen.” Despite caring deeply about inequality and recognizing some structural influence on individuals, Alison has little awareness of the broader impact of racism in society on one’s self-image.

Employing libertarian and morality ideologies, Alison blames the failure of schools on two factors: teachers unions and the shift towards vocational schools. Alison sees teachers unions as an example of unnecessary regulation and distorted morality and, thus, views them as uninterested in the welfare of the children in the classrooms: “The major teachers unions [are] saying that ‘we have the influence that we have because of power, it’s not because we are trying to do what is right for the kids’, which is clearly, clearly, obvious.” Alison provides a rather scathing analysis of the use of standardized tests, arguing that teachers are more interested in keeping their jobs and having students pass these exams: “the way they train their teachers to teach is to keep their jobs and to have kids pass the tests not really learn something.” Alison tells a detailed story to emphasize her point:

I saw a cartoon one time that had a teacher sitting at a desk saying “we only have one exam” and he was speaking to a group of animals. It was a monkey, a fish, an elephant, a giraffe, and a varied group of animals. He said “we only have one exam, and it’s to go climb that tree.” And that is like the public education system. We’ve only got one way to test you and this is it. And, because you are a fish and you try to climb a tree, you are going to be labeled as an underachiever, someone who’s not making it... and that follows kids throughout their life. It might not be that they are incapable of learning, they are just not capable of learning in a room with

kids and a teacher screaming at them. They might – you know, need a different way to learn and that’s what I think is so wonderful about charter schools is that there is that competition there.

Alison, and other Reformed Liberals provide a liberal critique of the education system: that it is teaching students to pass standardized tests that are largely unfair. However, embracing ideas of morality, she places the onus for this model on the teachers unions, rather than on the federal government, which enforces this model of testing.

The second critique of the education system is what Alison sees as a shift towards vocational training. This, too, reflects issues of morality regarding the state. Citing a book by a woman whom Alison asserts was the Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan, she argues: “what you can see in this timeline is this cavern in education and it’s...to stop teaching critical thinking skills and to teach a trade.” The book, The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America was actually written by Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt (1999), who actually worked as a Senior Policy Advisor for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the Department of Education under Ronald Reagan. Iserbyt argues that the education system is trying to erode parental influence over children by eliminating curriculum around religion, morals, and patriotism in order to prepare children for a socialist society (Iserbyt 1999). However, this conspiracy is not what Alison highlights, rather she suggests that this shift towards vocational school undermines childrens’ ability to think critically, again, a traditionally progressive critique of education. Nevertheless, Alison’s next step is to suggest that this vocational track is intended to make people poor and thus dependent on the welfare system: “If you teach a trade then people are dependent. If you teach them to think critically, they become independent. And I think

it's very transparent in our society today that there is a very, very, large movement. A very large push towards dependency on the state.”

Tom makes a similar claim, critiquing a system that forces people who may not be qualified to go to college in order to secure employment. He first critiques the standardized testing system: “I’m not necessarily in favor of things being done by test setup I guess, that may be where I diverge from my colleagues on the right. I believe that education should be something that you pick up through experience, not necessarily by test.” In contrast to Alison, Tom supports vocational education and presents a criticism of the societal emphasis on college:

I’d also prefer a greater emphasis on vocational schools or technical trades, because let’s face it – not everyone is cut out like you or I to go to college for four years, or maybe they can’t afford it... But we are still in desperate need of those that can handle simple manufacturing, jobs that are still decently paying yet they don’t require as excruciating training as something that you or I would be going for.

Thus, Alison and Tom, like other Reformed Liberals, share a structural critique and begin their analysis with a fairly progressive critique of the education system, but ultimately draw conservative conclusions based on state dependency or increased options for citizens.

This concern regarding the dependence of people on the welfare system is echoed by Donna, a TEA Party activist from Illinois. Donna accidentally joined the TEA Party by inadvertently registering online to host a TEA Party meeting, when she thought she was just gaining information. Donna is middle aged, and was self-employed until, in her words “Obama destroyed my business.” Rather, she dedicates fifty to seventy hours a week to TEA Party activism.

Donna suggests that Democrats in particular seek to expand their power to make people dependent on the state so that they'll vote for them. In her eyes, it began with the War on Poverty, which she views as evidence of an overreaching state limiting individual rights. She argues that it actually caused more people to be impoverished: "The War on Poverty. It actually just created more poverty because you can get more welfare even if you were single." Moreover, their dependence was only logical: "I mean if you are willing to hand people money to not work, why should they work?" According to Donna: "we survived without any Social Security, before it had been invented. And it was because families took care of each other. Then the government stepped in and said "well, we'll do it" so families don't have to take care of others. So it's not only hurt family structure."

Specifically Donna argues that the War on Poverty destroyed the black family: "I mean it, you are talking about welfare destroying the black communities, geez. You know, they were actually on their way to prosperity before the great programs to end poverty." After Johnson's War on Poverty, "Black women realized that 'I can get more welfare if I am single' and it just destroyed the black family." The solution, according to Donna and other Reformed Liberals, is to fix this state dependency: "We have to make people realize that being dependent on government is not the answer."

Larry, an activist from New York who suggests that Democrats intentionally targeted black people with this state dependency, mirrors Donna's perspective: "The Democrats always had a sullied name with black people. They thought 'here is a way to win them back, give them free tax payer money.'" According to Larry, the provision of welfare undermined the black family, making women no longer dependent on men:

You already have very strained marriages and familial relations because of the lack of economic opportunities and what would happen is that you would have a couple would get into an argument and she would kick him. He might hit her. Whether you are black or white, women didn't have it easy... Domestic abuse was something common. She says "Get the heck out of my house" and he leaves, goes down to the bar, and he sulks with his friends and his friends are like "you've got kids with her, you've got to make this right, go back and apologize." And he goes back and apologizes to his woman and first thing she says is "I don't need you." Because now she has the government dole.

Thus, women receiving welfare benefits no longer had to put up with abusive husbands and, according to Reformed Liberals, this caused black men to be unproductive in society: "He goes back to his friends and he has idle hands now, no job, no family to care about, and sons that are growing up without fathers and seeing this is their only option." Thus, according to Larry, welfare causes black people to continue to live in poverty and remain enslaved in American society: "The welfare guaranteed that they'd stay in the hood forever and they wouldn't be integrated. The public housing would then go up in the same bad neighborhoods. And, before, keeping people trapped and keeping them slaves. You could be a slave in your own mind. Slavery is a state of mind more than anything, because it isn't too obvious, they used welfare to enslave their minds."

As is evidenced in the examples of Alison, Donna, and Larry, Reformed Liberals have a greater understanding of the impact of structure in American society. Many of them begin with a progressive critique of things such as the education system, but ultimately make conservative conclusions about why inequality exists and how to fix it. When compared to other types of activists, it is clear that Reformed Liberals show more interest in issues of social equality and focus less on issues of individual liberties and the Constitution.

## **THE LIBERTARIAN: PRIVATIZE THE STATE TO PRESERVE LIBERTIES**

Libertarians are suspicious of the state but, unlike Conspiracy Theorists, do not believe that the state is a puppet operated by an international conspiracy. Rather, they believe that state support hurts citizens because of its overreach into social affairs. Libertarians view the role of government as quite limited but, unlike Constitutionists, think that ideal limitations are narrower than currently outlined in the Constitution. Libertarians oppose unnecessary war, social service programs including Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, and generally support same-sex marriage, contending that the state should not be involved in the institution. Libertarians are quite concerned with “out-of-control spending with taxpayer money” and seek a reduction in federally funded wars and entitlements.

Anthony is a self-employed TEA Party member from California. He is currently in his fifties and deeply fears government overreach and manipulation of citizens. He suggests: “the Government cannot stop spending our money, can't balance a budget and wants to control our lives.” In order to prevent these problems, Anthony argues that the United States needs to “shrink the size and power of our huge government... [with] less regulation and lower taxes.” Anthony and other Libertarians hold grave concerns about the wasteful spending of the government and believe that the only solution is to apply free market principles to the state.

One act of the state of particular concern for Libertarians is war, which they view as an overreach of the state except in cases of clear, overt national defense, unlike activists from other sentiment pools. Anthony sums up the Libertarian position regarding war saying: “Libertarians like myself believe that the only reason violence should ever be

used is in repelling attackers. This is true for individuals, as well as nations. Self-defense is the only justifiable form of violence that exists.” Thus, Anthony makes a moral claim regarding violence stating that war violates basic principles of justice.

Duster and Jason share Anthony’s concerns regarding the state engagement with warfare. Duster is an independent contractor from Illinois. He is in his thirties, and is concerned that, without change, the United States will be a place unsafe for his children. Jason is a 35-year-old activist from North Carolina. Both men feel that war is one horrifying way that the state exercises powers it doesn’t possess. Jason argues that war is too financially costly and needs to be limited to defensive action: “these wars are bankrupting us, and beyond the fact that our troops are doing such things as guarding poppy fields and propping up military dictators against the will of their people, we would be much safer and less prone to attack if our military was in a defensive (rather than offensive) position. Station them here in America, and it would be suicide for another nation to attack us.” Similarly, Duster suggests that the United States needs to “end needless wars” because of the financial costs and threat it poses to liberty.

Libertarians further argue that war is overly costly of human life. These beliefs are rooted in the broader fear of government overreach hurting citizens. As the state overextends its power to start or fight wars, it directly hurts the people involved in fighting them. Samuel and Leonard are two activists who discuss this in their interview. Samuel is an activist from Minnesota in his sixties. Samuel had a challenging life and struggled with alcoholism. Yet, political activism is in his blood: many of his relatives have run for and served in political office. Samuel opposes war, including the war in

Vietnam, because “the sacrifice of American lives was so wasteful, that I just was upset. I protested against the war.”

Leonard is a young activist from New York City. He is Jewish and believes very strongly than Austrian economics, the theory behind free market capitalism, complements Judaism. Regarding warfare, he explains how state overreach hurts the nation: “Think about World War II... World War II was a raging success for statism, for nationalism, for government. Because that was truth that government can save the world. And, it was a pretty damn impressive war. But the bottom line is, that when you are coming off of a win like that, it covers up all of the nastiness that is really in government underneath...” He further ties these ideas to his Jewish heritage and asserts that WWII was not about helping Jewish people: “I’m not saying we shouldn’t have fought WWII, I’m just saying it had nothing to do with saving the Jews. Nothing. And if you look into Jewish history, you’ll know that.”

In addition to warfare, Libertarians fear the loss of civil rights as a result of government service programs. They believe that programs such as the Affordable Care Act, passed in 2010, restrict the rights of those providing health care. This restriction occurs in two ways. First, it limits the rights of taxpayers by using their money for people who may not deserve it. One activist who makes this argument is Wayne, a young, black man from Detroit who currently lives in a suburb of Minneapolis. He grew up poor in Michigan and moved to Minnesota, currently working in transportation. Wayne expresses disdain with the health care bill because he does not feel that such programs are a human right and thus hurts those paying for the program: “I took great exception to the notion that health care is a fundamental human right because, to my mind, you can’t have a right

to something which requires someone else to provide it.” Wayne likens the new healthcare plan to slavery: “if I can lay claim to a right which requires somebody else to produce something than I am effectively advocating for slavery. In my mind it is no different than somebody who has a plantation. They’ve got a field and they say ‘I need my field to be plowed therefore I have some claim that you do it.’”

Libertarians resist government services because they view them as a threat to civil liberties. These activists fear that the state will restrict rights when involved in social issues and thus do not support government intervention. When asked about his opinion on same sex marriage, Leonard suggests that making same sex marriage illegal is foolish and unnecessary control by the federal government: “Keeping people from marrying whom they want to marry...for me social issues is always like let people do what they want and the less they are going to do bad things anyway. You can’t stop people from doing shit for starters. You know what I mean? They are going to do it anyway. If you outlaw something they will just do it more.” Leonard doesn’t endorse same sex marriage; rather he likens it to a “bad” thing, but still does not believe that the state should be involved in making decisions that affect people’s relationships. It is also interesting to note that he believes that “you can’t stop people from doing shit”, thus he finds agency even in the face of feared government overreach.

Duster and Jane support Leonard’s suggestion that state intervention in the issue of same sex marriage is an overreach, but also argue that it violates constitutional rules regarding the separation of church and state. Duster believes that the state needs to leave people alone: “let them marry. It doesn’t bother me one bit, whatever they want to do on their own time is no bearing on myself.” Jane is a gas station attendant in Iowa. She is in

her thirties, a practicing Wicca, and is particularly concerned about the overreach of the state as it violates its mandated separation from religion. She argues: “I don't think the government should have anything to do with marriage in the first place. The courts should only get involved when there is a custody battle or for divorce for the splitting of assets. Marriage is a religious function, and you can not impose one form of religion upon very basic rights.”

The issue of same sex marriage and the separation of the state from social issues, is also important to Libertarians because of a need to protect individuals and people in minority positions. Jane suggests, paraphrasing Ayn Rand, that “Individual rights are not subject to a public vote; the majority has no right to vote away the rights of the minority; the political function of rights is precisely to protect minorities from all oppression by the majorities. The individual is the smallest minority on earth. Those who deny individual rights, cannot claim to be defenders of minorities.” Anthony, sharing this belief that the majority should not make decisions affecting the rights of people in the minority, links the current marriage battle with that of interracial marriage of the past and the over restriction of rights: “Incidentally... marriage licenses were first created after the war between the states in order to give the government the ability to deny people the right to intermarry.”

This issue also highlights the problem with the state endorsing behavior. Libertarians believe that by providing benefits for a particular policy, such as marriage, the state is endorsing it. Libertarians argue that the state should not be in the business of endorsing human behavior. In 2012, when Wayne was interviewed, Minnesota was gearing up for a vote on a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in the

state. In discussing this vote, Wayne argued that the state shouldn't be involved making family law: "I personally believe that family law should not be in the Constitution, I'm not a fan of the marriage amendment." Specifically, Wayne feels as if the state should not have a role in supporting, through the provision of benefits, any particular lifestyle: "And the gay marriage issue is one where I think that is what we are seeing is for generations states have seen it, seen fit to endorse marriage as an institution, as a behavior, and, frankly...I don't think government ought to be endorsing anything."

In addition to believing that the state shouldn't endorse behaviors or actions such as marriage, Libertarians also feel that the issue of same sex marriage is one of contracts. Because it is a matter of private contracts between consenting adults, they do not believe the state should be involved. Wayne, like Leonard, is not disinterested in the state's involvement in same sex marriage due to a sense of equality for gay and lesbian relationships. Rather, he morally rejects such relationships: "I don't want to endorse a homosexual relationship. And, the argument that you hear from gay rights activists that articulate it in the form of an inherent right, to have your relationship endorsed, that is something that I disagree with." Nevertheless, he supports the rights for couples to enter into contractual relationships: "Contractual arrangements between individuals are their own business. I don't get to tell you what contract you can and cannot enter into and what it means to you and so, if you strip away all the nuance, I'm totally comfortable with, and it sounds ridiculous to say, because it shouldn't even be a question, we should all be comfortable with people entering into whatever contractual relationships they want to enter into." Anthony agrees. He "has no problem" with same sex marriage and states: "marriage is a contract, and consenting adults have an unlimited right to contract."

Unlike Conservative Christians, Libertarians support the separation of church and state. Mentioned above in relation to the issue of same-sex marriage, Libertarians fear that any policies or actions that connect religion and the state necessarily restrict the rights of individuals: both adherents of the religion and others. Wayne's argues:

I am a religious person, I consider myself to be a Christian, I have very strong convictions about my theology and my doctrine, but... I have personally built a wall of separation between my religiosity and my politics. And I don't see a conflict there... And my relationship with God... is about my relationship with other people in so far as how I personally as an individual choose to interact with other people, but at no point does it become a theocracy. At no point does it become 'OK now I have to impose upon you these values that I've adopted for myself'

Wayne views state sanctioned, or endorsed, religion as violating his rights to practice religion as he wants but also the rights of others to not practice his religion. Wayne does believe that "morality has a place in politics...but it is an objective morality, you know, it is a morality that is discernable by the facts of reality, not because I read a book that said, or I had a vision where I was told, and that's, you know, being a religious person, its not to begrudge anybody their vision or their book. Its that that's not an authority that you can impose upon me and from a Christian perspective." Leonard agrees and argues that he believes that, with regard to religion, "it is better that the government not have any role."

Deregulation and limited government, Libertarians believe, will increase personal freedoms either through the use of private contracts, as described above, an increased investment in rights by representatives, or simply a decrease in government intervention. According to Anthony: "I hope to help improve the world by successfully reducing the size and scope of government at all levels. I hope to help improve the world by replacing

elected leaders who sign off on torture, war, and attacks on our freedom (leaders such as Bush, Obama, and the establishment in both parties) with elected leaders who will...place the protection of freedom above all other concerns.” Anthony places the issue of personal freedoms at the center of his concerns regarding the nation. He argues: “the widespread belief that you can make yourself safer by giving up some of your freedom is the biggest problem facing the United States today. This belief is played out on the international stage as well as the domestic stage. Every expansion of government which diminishes our freedom is justified under the auspices of economic or defensive security.” He would like to see the Obama administration: “follow through with his promises to end these wars, close Gitmo, stop the warrantless wiretapping and torture, and allow states to have medical marijuana.” Sharon, a teacher from North Carolina, agrees that the most important thing needed to improve the United States is to “limit government and increase[e] personal freedom” because the current government is “bloated... too big and intrusive... in my pocket...[and] in my bedroom.”

Leonard also believes that the only way to improve society is to stop government overreach and inevitable restrictions of rights. Leonard argues: “You have got to get government out of business. And what happened was I just kept stressing ‘government out of business, government out of business’ but then you realize ‘what is business but your life?’ Life is your business and now is the moment that I really rose to finally like ‘I gotta get government out of my life’.” When Leonard began to apply libertarian ideals to his life and religion, he concluded that the overreaching state was the cause of the holocaust: “The Jews were singled out by governments because we were the only ones that didn’t make usury a sin. So, in so many ways, the Jews were strong-armed into their

situation. They were strong-armed into even financing wars that would kill their own people... At the same time... all Jews were banned from Vienna... unless the state decided that you were good enough, or useful, then they would keep you. But you were only good as long as you were useful.” He argues that, if the state is not limited, the US will become socialist and statist, similar to Nazi Germany: “The right-wing is not Hitler. Hitler is a leftist.”

In order to preserve civil liberties, Libertarians believe that the state should run like a business. This suggests a reduction in regulations and an increase in competition without intervention or limitations. Take, for instance, the issue of campaign financing. Anthony argues that the current system has created a situation in which lobbyists dominate: “The legislators do not listen to anyone except lobbyists.” Wayne also speaks about the dangers of the current system: “It’s the very same people who argued for campaign finance... who are doing everything - sitting behind closed doors, in a proverbial smoky room, to figure out how to get around it... And, all that is doing, all it is doing is... making the political process less accessible to where folks like you and me can’t just go do it. We have to be part of some hierarchical structure which necessarily creates this sort of elitist system.” On the surface it appears as if Wayne is taking a progressive stance against large corporate donations to political candidates. However, the point he makes is quite distinct: “It makes it less accessible and it makes it less accountable because everybody’s, out of necessity, hiding. Hiding who they are, hiding how much money they are spending, hiding where it is coming from, and everybody knows that’s what they are doing.” Thus, Wayne sees the danger of the system in the secrecy and limitations.

While it may seem like increased regulation would resolve this issue, Libertarians disagree. Rather, they believe that free market principles should apply to campaign financing. Wayne argues that he would “tear it all down. I would have no campaign finance restrictions whatsoever.” It isn’t that Wayne fails to understand the political sway money can buy: “yeah, I get the argument for that, you want to know that, whose talking through the puppet mouth.” Rather, he believes that ideas will win the day, and that people will vote based on political platforms. Thus, he argues:

If you remove the campaign finance restrictions... it would be much more accessible and possible to oust somebody like that because you could rally a couple millionaires together who are pissed off because they are being adversely effected by that...if one corporation or one industry gets behind a particular candidate, gets them in office and gets them to start going a bunch of stuff for them, they are going to be hurting somebody else who has also got money in a competing industry or a competing sector of an industry and that person’s going to have an incentive to get that person out. So, the same competition which refines commerce will refine the political process if you let it work.

Thus Wayne sees the potential for elections to operate much like competitive markets and supports decreased regulation for campaigns.

Libertarians fear an overreaching state, particularly one that may infringe on civil rights and liberties. They are opposed to unwarranted government funding and thus resist offensive war, welfare, Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Additionally, they generally support civil rights, including same-sex marriage, contending that the state should not be involved in social issues.

### **THE CONSPIRACY THEORIST: THE STATE AS PUPPET FOR GLOBALISTS**

Conspiracy Theorists are suspicious of the state and seek its limitation. They believe that the state is secretly controlled by the U.N., Jews, or both, and fear a U.N. takeover of the

world. As discussed in chapter one, these views emerge out of those from other right-wing groups, such as militias and Patriot movements, preceding the TEA Party Patriots. Militia members see the current federal government as in the process of instituting a puppet state established for use by the New World Order: a global socialist conspiracy run by the United Nations (Pitcavage 2001, Mulloy 2008). Such ideas have grown from a longer history of paranoia among the political right (Hofstadter 1965). Within the TEA Party, this is reflected primarily in fears of a puppet state run by international Jewish bankers and the United Nations.

TEA Party activists representing the Conspiracy Theorist sentiment pool believe that the United States has lost sovereignty to global elitists and that, instead, a puppet, or shadow, government is in operation. For example, at one meeting Ann, a self-employed Minnesotan in her fifties, suggested: “we have a shadow government” and asked if others understood this: “Does everybody realize that? We actually have shadow government going on?” Activists cite President Obama as a “Manchurian Candidate”, “un-American” and “a puppet for a much grander plan” (Jaimee). Charles, a retired Minnesotan in his seventies, positions the United Nations as acting in the shadows: “We know that the UN is a threat to American sovereignty. To our Constitution and our Bill of Rights. And specifically to private property ownership.” He argues that the UN has infiltrated the legal system via activist judges and is operating federal agencies such as: “the EPA, the NOA - National Oceanography and Atmospheric Administration, Fish and Wild Service [sic], Forest service, Bureau of Land Management. Many other agencies are also part of the problem.”

Ann further presses the point that the shadow government is not solely orchestrated by Democrats, asking: “Who are the elite?” to which members shout out answers such as “CFR”, the Council on Foreign Relations, “Newt Gingrich” as a member of CFR, “Cheney”, “Vin Weber”, and “Condoleeza Rice.” Ann then pushes people to investigate the various players in the puppet government: “please look up the Council on Foreign Relations, the IMF, the Trilateral Commission, the Club of Rome, the Bilderberg Group, please find out who these members are.” She directs activists to do this research: “The John Birch Society actually sent me some really good links and you can go to their website or you can call them and they’ll give you the links.” Ann then stresses the importance of this work: “We need to know... look at Gingrich, he is a globalist. We know that, but a lot of people didn’t.” Matthew further asserts that the puppet government operates within both the Democratic and Republican parties: “Guess what? The conservatives should be ashamed because they are the biggest shadow government of all.”

While some activists like Ann focus on the members of the puppet state, others concentrate on those pulling the strings. Aaron is a Midwesterner in his sixties. He works at a large public university and spends most of his day listening to right-wing podcasts while at his desk. One of the principle concerns for Aaron is, what he perceives as, the impending Jewish takeover of the U.S. economic system, and perhaps the world. This leads him to be cynical of the state more broadly, believing that it has been coopted by people who intend to take away rights for true Americans. This is actually one critique he has of Glenn Beck, that Beck doesn’t share his understanding of Jewish domination: “that’s why I eventually left Glenn Beck because he leaves out a huge, a huge aspect of...

what the world looks like and how it affects us. And let me just be real blunt about this, he doesn't really talk about how the Jews have a lot to do with, you know, the money aspect." More specifically, Aaron believes that Jewish people have a lot of wealth and power in American society: "You know, they pretty much own all of the media, they own all of Hollywood, they own all of smut, they own all of the radio, print media. They own all of the banks and all the brokerage firms. They own everything. Okay? So they control all of the money." Specifically, he believes that one man, "a Rothschild" controls the secret Jewish government: "I do believe the world is operating under like [a] secret government, so like the person at the top is a Rothschild, and he's Jewish."

In order to maintain control the elitists, whether they are Jewish bankers or the United Nations, maintain control through rigging elections, producing fear through terrorist events, and robbing people through the Federal Reserve system. Regarding voter fraud and election rigging in the United States, Aaron argues that in some states federal election results were determined months ahead of the election: "I really believe that there's a lot of voter fraud going on right now, and there's documented evidence of it, videos of it - the one that I saw today was that there's an ABC news release out of Illinois, and they already have the outcome of the election written up, and they haven't had the election yet...just to let you know, Ron Paul got three percent."

Similarly, Aaron sees the government conspiring to hide evidence from September 11, 2001, to incite fear in the population and strengthen control. He suggests that the government orchestrated the plane crashes and cites as evidence, that "when the column of the building starts collapsing, it collapses straight down... [but] you've seen the plane going through a corner of the building, and they're saying that it was the heat of

it... there was all the debris going out the other side of the building and you see this big fireball... why does the building collapse so uniformly?" He continues: "there is one footage that I saw where it's pretty up close at the building, and you can see explosions coming out of the window above where it's starting to collapse. And then like ten floors below or twenty floors below there's some other explosions going on." Concluding that the conspiracy is "obvious to me" he then suggests that there was an additional attack, that isn't reported on: "there was another building that nobody ever talks about, and it was called Building Number Seven. It hadn't been touched by the planes, but it fell just like the other three!" Aaron, like other Conspiracy Theorists, believes that the government conspires against its citizens but fails to explain why such actions are taken.

Finally, elitists maintain control through the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank. He argues that European bankers control our debt: "So who do we owe that money to? We don't owe it to the federal government; we owe it to...the people who own the Federal Reserve... the big banks, all the European banks." Moreover, Aaron argues, these banks make money off of Americans: "They're able to create all this money out of thin air and make it easy for people to borrow, and... every time they will print one dollar, they can loan it out to somebody, that dollar gets put in the bank. The bank takes that dollar and they're able to lend 90 cents out to somebody else." He confounds this action with the U.S. deficit, suggesting that both are methods used by "globalists" to control America: "And so the way for the globalists to be able to do that is for us to be in so much debt that they can just kind of collapse the system because some day, those loans will have to be paid off."

This control operates through the Federal Reserve Banks ability to regulate

inflation. For example, Jaimee, a nurse in Massachusetts, suggests that the Federal Reserve Bank is a “banking cartel”, insinuating that it artificially fixes prices and the economy by no longer being “on a gold standard.” The use of the word cartel suggests back door agreements to dupe the populous for the benefit of the state. Activists largely believe that this state is not run by a government but, instead, by “globalists.” Belief in the duplicity of the Federal Reserve Bank has existed among the right since the Federal Reserve’s founding in 1791 (Diamond 1995).

Perhaps the clearest example of Conspiracy Theorist beliefs regarding an international conspiracy can be seen in their fears regarding Agenda 21. Agenda 21 is a sustainability initiative led by the United Nations – another possible puppeteer. Agenda 21 is voluntarily implemented in supporting nations and is nonbinding. The program was developed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It seeks to reduce poverty in developing nations, promote a more sustainable population, change patterns of consumption, curb deforestation, protect fragile ecosystems, conserve biodiversity, limit pollution, increase rights for women, children, and indigenous populations, and invest in science, technology, and education, among other things (United Nations Environment Programme 1992). However, many people on the political right oppose Agenda 21, arguing that it is a violation of American sovereignty (Kaufman and Zernike 2012; Carey 2012). Conspiracy Theorists in the TEA Party go further, and argue that Agenda 21 is a conspiracy by the United Nations to curb civil rights and liberties of Americans (Kaufman and Zernike 2012; Carey 2012)<sup>7</sup>.

The Conspiracy Theorist sentiment pool of TEA Party activists in the Midwest are so concerned about Agenda 21 that they host full day workshops on the program and its

local implications. At this workshop, and other discussions on the United Nations and Agenda 21, the fear of this puppet government emerged. Aaron, for example, believes that the United Nations is controlling the U.S. military and directing the actions of President Obama: “You have the military who takes orders from the U.N., you have a president who takes orders from the U.N.” Sarah a 55-year-old lawyer from Minnesota, similarly suggests that the United Nations is currently passing laws in the United States and that their right to do it, though currently unconstitutional, is on the way to becoming law: “OK, and one other question related to Agenda 21... the U.N., do they have the right to pass laws that affect ‘we the people’? ... Not currently. We are bringing it to that level.”

According to people reflecting this sentiment pool, the domineering relationship between the United States and United Nations has developed over time. Sarah discusses this at a meeting on Agenda 21, arguing that, in 1992, President George H. Bush signed Agenda 21, but it was not ratified by two-thirds of the Senate, as required by the Constitution which “gives the President the authority to enter into treaties provided two-thirds of the Senators concur”<sup>8</sup>. Sarah and other activists fear that “if the treaty...is ever ratified by the Senate, Agenda 21 becomes law equal to and along with our Constitution” and are dedicated to “prevent[ing] that from happening.” Subsequently, Obama secretly implemented Agenda 21 through an executive order. Ann asks: “June 9, 2011. What did they do? Signed an executive order establishing the World Council... It was exactly Agenda 21. It’s set up to ensure America will participate in Agenda 21. Food production, land use, outdoor recreation and water use.” Thus, even without a ratification of Agenda 21, the federal government, as a puppet of the United Nations, has implemented this

program<sup>9</sup>.

The elitists also have plans in place if their subtle domination fails. This consists of an impending national imprisonment and mass murder. As a part of this initiative, activists believe that the United Nations seeks to decimate the global population by 85 percent. According to Sarah: “God gave us the life, liberty and pursuit of property... We’ve already talked about how they are taking away our liberty. They are taking away our property – property is our means of pursuing happiness. They are also taking away life – if you look at the U.N. global biodiversity assessment report, page 673 it states: ‘human population needs to be reduced by 85 percent.’” She then poses the rhetorical question: “How do you do that?” and answers by stating: “You kill people!” Thus, the United Nations, through Agenda 21, is “trying to take away our life, liberty and property.”

Many activists believe that widespread killing has already begun. Aaron argues “globalists like George Soros, Bill and Melinda Gates” are committing genocide, as a tool of the U.N. under the guise of humanitarianism:

Bill Gates is going around talking about how there is way too many people, and he’s got this formula... ‘population plus’ - it’s all supposed to equal zero to be able to sustain life. So the one thing that he said would be the most efficient is to lower that population... He’s talking about half the people in the world. So right now, the easiest thing for him to do is go to places like Africa because nobody cares about - oh, they’re just a bunch of savages getting killed, you know. But he’s letting everybody else think that, oh, we’ve got these vaccines that are gonna help this population, we’re gonna help them with malaria, and they are actually going there to kill people.

It isn’t only Bill Gates, but other humanitarians such as Angelina Jolie and Madonna who are orchestrating this decimation of the human species: “people look at them and think

‘what wonderful people these guys are’. But really... they are a bunch of eugenicists too.” Specifically, he suggests, they are helping the United Nations gain ground in Africa and that the United States’ presence on the continent is a result of U.N. influence: “I’ll often wonder. Why the hell? Why are we in Africa? I realize today why we’re over there is because the U.N. wants to go over and start gobbling up as much land as they can”<sup>10</sup>.

Activists believe that the United Nations has set up camps through FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Association, in order to detain and kill American citizens. Aaron argues that the Federal Government, under the guidance of the United Nations, is orchestrating a “gun-grab” through churches: “I think what a lot of the churches have done is they have accepted money, bribes through gifts from the federal government, and a lot of them have been trained that under chaos, they will plead with their parishioners to turn in their guns.” Sarah, too, suggests that the federal government is seeking to take guns from citizens: “We have to be very vigilant. What is going on with the Second Amendment? The right to bear arms? Agenda 21 is huge on taking away our right to bear arms.” She suggests that the UN, through the federal government, wants to take guns from people so that they have “no ability to fight back.”

Activists further believe that, while citizens are losing their rights to possess guns, government institutions are being armed. According to Ann: “I’m afraid of our government, that is why I have guns. And it’s interesting to watch what goes on and what’s in the budget. Our IRS now has guns. They bought a bunch of high-powered weapons. Why does the IRS need guns?” Charles then counters: “Why does the Department of Education need guns?” Ann agrees: “Why does the Department of Education need guns when you can’t even have a pizza that you eat in the shape of a

gun? Did you hear about this student? He ate his pizza into the shape of a gun, he was suspended for four days. That is absolutely nuts.”

Aaron suggests that after this “gun-grab” the government is prepared to imprison its citizens and place them in concentration camps: “I believe that there is gonna be chaos coming to us because they’re got all these things already set up, they have these FEMA camps where they’ve built these prisons, or you can call them concentration camps, all throughout the United States, for the last five to ten years that I know of. And a lot of it, they’re utilizing these bases that they don’t use anymore, and so like they have these areas that are self-contained, they’ve got everything there to house thousands of people.”

Aaron suggests that the goal with the FEMA camps is to create tyranny in the United States so that the United Nations can more easily secure control. Aaron states: “I’m sure they want total tyranny, that’s what their end goal is.” Currently, he suggests, that American citizens are under surveillance and that this is to make them easier to round up. He describes the camps in detail:

They had like these... plastic casket-liners... they were big enough to fit five bodies in there... Each one of the camps, what they have, you know like a lot of the military bases, if they’re surrounded by a fence they usually have the top row facing out. But in the FEMA camps they have ‘em facing in, to keep people from getting out, not from coming in. So yeah, I think they’ve got it all planned, that either they’re gonna kill these people or they’re gonna die because of what the chaos is during it. So they’ve got all that prepared. And then I saw that they even have a FEMA camp right at LA International Airport... they have these gates, there are turnstiles where you can go in but you can’t get out, and then they have all these like buildings that are like office. And I don’t think it’s really there for people to stay. So they have an exit onto the tarmac. So I think that people who go in there are gonna go onto planes and disappear forever...

The effect of Agenda 21 is not only the destruction of life and loss of property rights; it will also have important implications for broader culture. For example, Mariah

argues that Agenda 21 is deeply involved in issues related to abortion and same sex marriage. According to her, the judges controlled by puppeteers act illegally to strike down abortion laws and, as a result: “Abortion is basically legal in all states.” This is because “abortion is also highly supported by Agenda 21 - they worship at the alter of abortion.” Similarly, the “gay agenda” is “huge in Agenda 21.” These two policies are tied to the U.N.’s efforts at domination because it leads to the “break down [of] the family. The family is the unit that is fighting against [the] implementation of Agenda 21 and, if they break down the family, there will be no stops to it. Families that are already broken and on behalf of gay marriage, the Agenda, they're breaking down families.”

Conspiracy Theorists believe that public education is a tool used by the global elitists, through the puppet state, to indoctrinate children. At one TEA Party meeting members showed the film “IndoctriNation”, a documentary about how U.S. public schools are indoctrinating children “with a humanistic, man-centered program that fragmented the family and undermined the influence of the Church.” This documentary and the conversation that occurred afterwards suggested that the public school system was teaching children to be feminists, atheists, socialists, and encouraging them to be gay<sup>11</sup>. As a result, many TEA Party activists are particularly fearful of the perceived indoctrination that occurs in school and, as a result, homeschool their children.

Ann is fearful about the culture in public schools and what it means for her own son regarding his behavior. Her five-year-old grandson was put on ADHD medication that Ann categorizes as “a psychotropic” saying “this is an amphetamine base they bring into a developing central nervous system.” She believes that they do this to a child “who has nothing wrong with him except the schools no longer can discipline and they don’t

want kids squirming”<sup>12</sup>. Ann blames the Obama administration for this situation: “they got Kathryn Sebelius out there that Obama appointed saying that by the time kids are in kindergarten - they are putting forward \$500 million to make sure our kids sit still in school. They got to drug them.” Ann feels as if this is part of the larger deception and manipulation on the part of the Left: “Well let’s lead sheep right into the collective, you know, pot over here that’s exactly what it is. That’s what makes me angry. It’s not right. It’s not natural. It’s not moral. It’s controlling. It’s this whole one world government, U.N. based.” By connecting this deception by the Obama administration to the feared “one world government”, Ann more broadly establishes it as deceitful and dangerous.

Mariah is also concerned with the propaganda spread in public schools. As a result, her children are homeschooled. Nevertheless, Mariah shares a story about a time in which she had public school attending children in her car:

About two years ago, I was driving a bunch of boy scouts - my son is the only one in his troop that was homeschooled, the rest were all public school kids. And, so, the boys were being squirrely and so I said to them: “stop all the noise or you are going to cause global warming.” There was an immediate silence. And then one of the boys said, “well, how will we do that?” And I realized “Oh, I have just infringed on their religion, almost” and I said “well, I’m just kidding. You can’t cause global warming, it doesn’t exist.” There is another moment of silence and then one of the kids said “my teacher says it does.” I mean, they are indoctrinating our children and the children are afraid of what is going on in the world and that they are causing it.

Mariah believes that public school children are indoctrinated with elitist propaganda, such as that regarding global climate change. Further she thinks that it has the potential to cause fear and pain for students. Mariah further argues that the federal government is intentionally trying to lower test scores to “create an emergency so that the federal government has to take over education.” She believes that this is happening on the Right,

as well as the Left: “Jeb Bush is pushing that right now and he is known as a conservative.”

Mariah’s daughter is now in college at the University of Minnesota or, what Mariah calls, “the University of Marxism.” In this discussion she first dismisses the importance of public university education by suggesting that her daughter “is seeking a degree in science, a BS. And there is some truth to that.” Secondly, she suggests that the indoctrination occurring at public school also occurs at the university level. In order for Mariah’s daughter to graduate “she must have two classes in the category of social justice.” Mariah reiterates her problem with this: “[that] this is even a category and it’s required of those who are seeking a degree in Science!” She then parallels social justice with socialism: “She has to have Marxism 101 and 102 before she can graduate.” Mariah believes that the university examines students upon admittance, measuring their level of socialist indoctrination: “They have now started something where... the incoming freshmen have to take an outcome based test... Why would you have an outcome based test because that means you have already planned the desired outcome? Really, you want them to be Marxist. And, what they are doing with this test, is finding out where they are, pinning the conservatives and figuring out ‘OK, these kids are going to need a lot more indoctrination.’” In response, Mariah complained to the University: “I said ‘I don’t want my daughter to take this test.’ And they said ‘Well, she has to.’ I said: ‘Excuse me! But, that wasn’t part of the application process. We have a contract going here where she applied and that wasn’t part of what we knew.’ And they said: ‘Well, no, its not mandatory but she has to take it.’” Mariah then joked about the idiocy of these contradictory statements: “And, I said: ‘Well, those two terms are mutually exclusive -

if its not mandatory she doesn't have to take it.” In the end, Mariah's daughter did not take this test and, in fact, Mariah says the exam was abandoned. Now, she argues, the University is “flagging individuals and making sure that, by the time they graduate... they will be Marxist.” Mariah concludes that there is a liberal conspiracy controlling education: “They own our education. It is up to us to put the brakes on it... There are some scary things about what is going on with education, we've seen that.”

Matthew tells additional stories regarding the indoctrination that occurs at public universities and suggests that it is part of the international take over of the United States via Agenda 21. He argues that the University is “very favorable to the Agenda.” Particularly though one of its programs: “the Institute on the Environment.” Matthew suggests that everyone who uses electricity pays for this institute through a fee on their monthly bill: “Where does the money come from? Oddly enough, Xcel Rate Payer money goes to pay for this.” Specifically, the state redirects money taken from Xcel to “the Institute on the Environment. Which is part of the Agenda 21.” Matthew argues that this institute hosts anti-democratic speakers. In particular, a Mr. Otto who they claim argues that: “we have to get rid of democracy because we are not getting the environmental agenda passed at the federal level.” Matthew argues that the university, via this institute, is on the edge of developing the environmentalist agenda: “I go to [these] seminars because [it] brings in the future insanity of the environmentalism... You'll love this. The series, the name of the series of lectures...is ‘Frontiers on the Environment’... Government agencies, the PCA<sup>13</sup>, our version of the EPA, is behind a lot of stuff... The theory is that if we implement this Agenda we will prevent pollution from happening.”

Charles, a retired activist in his seventies, pushes Matthew's argument further by

implicating other university programs. He claims that the university's "Humphrey Institute... is driving a lot of what we are talking about and its all being paid for by tax dollars." This leads Matthew to describe the insidious nature of the environmentalist agenda through the University: "they go department by department at the University and find some similar effort. I just picked out one because of the February 8th speech coming up. But, you know, by no means that's all that is going on at the University."

Conspiracy Theorists also have clear ideas regarding what will happen if this global takeover is allowed to progress arguing that if things don't change there will be financial ruin in the United States. First the "dollar becomes worthless" (Joel), which leads to "financial collapse" (Joel) after which, according to Harold, "America will devolve into chaos and confusion... We'll have hyper inflation and massive unemployment. People will starve and there will be riots in the streets. Groups will attack groups, blaming each other. There will be no order. It will be the law of the jungle. Every man for himself. There will be no investment because capital will not be secure."

This collapse of the U.S. economic system will enable the secret elites to fully take over, resulting in a dictatorial or socialist state. Jaimee, for instance, argues that the United States will "become like Panem." Panem is the mythical nation described in a popular book series, *The Hunger Games*. The fictitious nation is marked by dictatorial control in which the government provides food and goods to citizens in exchange for their civil rights (Collins 2008)<sup>14</sup>. Others fear a change mirroring those of Soviet Russia stating, as Harold does, that "Government is susceptible to takeover by liars and propagandists as we saw in Soviet Russia and Germany. America is not immune to this influence." Still others predict the United States becoming a communist nation "like

China” (Shawn) or a divided nation like “Yugoslavia” (Harold). More specifically, they believe that the increasing numbers of Latino immigrants will “appeal to the UN to be carved out to make their own country led by its own indigenous Spanish speaking population, as happened with the breakup of Yugoslavia” (Harold). One of the possible causes for this imprisonment is an impending race war, as a result of the economy and Obama presidency. According to Harold: “That’s kind of a policy of Obama, even though he goes out there and he talked about how he was gonna be this president who was gonna be this big unifier. Well, he doesn’t unify anybody because he’s always setting the whites against the blacks and yeah. So, I think there will be a race war but only because it’s forced on us through the economics.”

While previous scholars have suggested that activists who share the beliefs discussed in this section are “fringe elements” (Zernike 2012a), my research found that Conspiracy Theorists are a large and important subset of the TEA Party, and need to be taken seriously. In some ways, these members take the fears of the other sentiment pools and magnify them, sewing a grand narrative of betrayal and domination. These ideas reflect a broader set of beliefs among right-wing activists, beginning in the 1860s (Hofstadter 1965).

## **SENTIMENT POOLS AND THE TEA PARTY**

The TEA Party Patriots consists of five sentiment pools, with distinct understandings of the state as influenced by different right-wing ideologies. Conservative Christians seek legislation uniting church and state to preserve the rights of Christians and promote morality in society; Constitutionalists, merging the three right-wing ideologies, fear a loss of rights for the majority, a reduction in national sovereignty, and an overreaching state

and seek to verify that the state follows the strict guidelines in the Constitution; Reformed Liberals fear the state's overreach causes destructive behavior on the part of citizens; Libertarians, fearing a loss of individual rights at the hands of an overreaching state, believes in using free market principles to run the nation; and Conspiracy Theorists seek to limit the state because of their belief that it is a puppet for global elitists. The existence of these five sentiment pools within a single organization leads one to question whether or not the TEA Party is unique in its disparate membership.

As mentioned, previous work suggests that, for a social movement to be successful and to increase membership, movement leaders need to connect the beliefs and positions of their organization to that of unmobilized sentiment pools (Snow et al 1986; Evans and Hudson; 2007). In addition to increasing membership, appealing to sentiment pools can also increase the amount of resources available to a particular social movement organization (Zald and McCarthy 2002). Zald and McCarthy (2002) argue that, based on the level of discord – or separate sentiment pools – within a mobilized population, one or more movement organizations would be created given appropriate resources (Zald and McCarthy 2002). This implies that each developing social movement would only be able to support a single sentiment pool. The TEA Party challenges this notion, as it is a single movement organization that arose with unification from five distinct sentiment pools.

Donatella della Porta (2005) finds a similar exception in her work on local and international social fora. Also citing previous social movement literature arguing that movement organizations consist of groups with high levels of similarity, she demonstrates that the global fora is quite heterogeneous regarding activist background and political interests. Della Porta suggests that, rather than fragmenting the organization,

movements made of people with distinct political interests and backgrounds may be the future of social movements. Rather than calling them sentiment pools, della Porta centers the discussion around identity and uses the term “tolerant identities” to explain how activists are able to cooperate around shared issues while disagreeing on others. Rather than a weakness or detriment, the increasing “inclusiveness” provides opportunities for greater networking and sharing of ideas (della Porta 2005:186).

The TEA Party shares certain characteristics with social fora that may account for some of the need for increased “tolerant identities.” First, both organizations are geographically broad: the social fora exists across the globe, while the TEA Party features over 600 chapters in the United States. Furthermore, each have relatively large membership: the World Social Forum hosts over 100,000 activists annually (LeBlanc and Luce 2003) while the TEA Party claims approximately 67,000 members. Both of these factors may contribute to the need of the organization to manage multiple sentiment pools.

The TEA Party does differ from the social fora in multiple and important ways that may also contribute to their willingness to engage across sentiment pools. First, though purporting to be a grassroots organization, the TEA Party actually emerged as the result of both top-down and bottom-up organizing. Emerging in 2010 following the housing crisis, economic recession, and a “rant” by Rick Santelli on CNBC, the TEA Party received a disproportionate amount of international attention from the media (Chinni 2010) and financial backing from business moguls such as the Koch brothers (Rich 2010). At the same time activists who share the fear of government policies that benefit the poor at the expense of the middle class – the topic of Santelli’s rant – rose to

the occasion, with an estimated quarter to half a million people participating in “Tax Day” rallies occurring in 750 cities nationwide (Lorber and Robbins 2009; Jonsson 2009; Murray 2009). As a result, people whom hold distinct ideologies joined the TEA Party, seeing it as a place to accomplish some, but perhaps not all, of their goals.

Secondly, because of its rapid growth and media attention, the TEA Party has come to straddle a line between social movement organization and political party. Like social movement organizations, members meet weekly or monthly and strategize ways to create social change (particularly regarding the size and scope of the state), hold rallies and events to draw attention and make political statements, and seek to claim legitimacy in the public eye (Tilly 2004). However, like a political party, they run and elect candidates and have been given airtime by media outlets to share their perspectives. For example, following the 2011, 2012, and 2013 State of the Union addresses, media outlets allowed the TEA Party caucus to give a rebuttal following that of the Republican Party. Such an act by the media gives a level of legitimacy to the organization that social movement organizations do not typically benefit from.

It may be challenging for people on the Left to think of the TEA Party as an inclusive organization. However, it is evident that members have agreed to tolerate the identity and ideology of others in order to achieve shared goals. Activists in the TEA Party see their membership as a strategic choice and are aware of the diversity in opinions held by group members. For example, Wayne states that people in the TEA Party has “kind of an unwritten rule” that they “don’t take up” issues that are “inherently divisive.” This primarily includes social issues, but also some fiscal ones regarding the Post Office or other government institutions. This decision is because activists are aware

that, if they did take up divisive issues “[their] coalition would fracture because there are a lot of folks who go this way on it and a lot of folks that go that way on it and then within those faction there are factions and its just a big mess.” Similarly, Victoria argues that activists “agree to disagree” in order to fight for the “real, solid goals” they share along with “positive means” of “achieving them.”

While TEA Party members are aware that they are sacrificing aspects of their beliefs, they find ways to adapt the three pillars to match their particular ideas. For example, Maxine, a Christian Conservative, links the pillars to her faith in morality: “The TEA Party stands on these three things: free markets, fiscal responsibility, and constitutional limited government. Do you know without morality we can’t have free markets because if we are all trying to screw each other out of money, guess what? It ain’t going to work. Fiscal responsibility. If we don’t have morality, guess what? It’s not going to work. Limited government? That’s not going to work without morality.”

Thus, the TEA Party appeals to a variety of sentiment pools with its three pillars of free market capitalism, constitutionally limited government, and individual responsibility. It isn’t that all of the sentiment pools whole-heartedly support the three pillars, nor that their demands are completely met and supported by the TEA Party. Rather, the TEA Party, with its relatively great amount of money, influence, and media attention, provides a logical place to invest their energy for the accomplishment of some of their goals.

As a result, the TEA Party operates with these five distinct sentiment pools and must continually work to align activists in pursuit of their common ideals. This is accomplished through frame alignment strategies aimed at increasing unity and

commitment between members. The rest of this dissertation explores these processes. Chapter III investigates the use of frame amplification to unite activists from the distinct sentiment pools by amplifying shared beliefs regarding their position as national fathers, helping protect Americans from the Left. Chapter IV presents the complex example of racial inequality, highlighting the distinct frames of activists and their unification under an amplified frame of colorblindness.

**INCREASING COMMITMENT THROUGH FRAME ALIGNMENT –  
CHILDLIKE AMERICANS, THE VILLAINOUS LEFT, AND THE FATHERLY  
TEA PARTY ACTIVIST**

Reporter Rick Santelli of CNBC is often credited with launching the TEA Party through a conversation, termed a “rant” by media outlets, in February of 2009. In this speech Santelli called for a “Chicago Tea Party” primarily focused on resisting the housing bailout proposed by Obama (CNBC.com 2009). He demanded: “Why don’t you put up a website to have people vote on the Internet as a referendum to see if we really want to subsidize the losers’ mortgages; or would we like to at least buy cars and buy houses in foreclosure and give them to people that might have a chance to actually prosper down the road, and reward people that could carry the water instead of drink the water?” Santelli went on to suggest that Americans don’t want to “pay for [their] neighbor’s mortgage that has an extra bathroom and can’t pay their bills.” Santelli’s words are credited with launching the TEA Party movement across the United States (CNBC.com 2009).

Santelli’s rant resonated with people who became TEA Party activists and was the beginning of the formation of a TEA Party identity. He presented three types of Americans: undeserving people who lost their homes in the mortgage crisis, irrational progressive politicians, and hard working Americans. Since this 2009 rant, the TEA Party has refined these categories into the following three frames:

- 1) The Childlike American: A subset of Americans whom TEA Party activists construct as entitled, ignorant, apathetic, and easily victimized by the destructive tendencies of the Left. This story combines historical ideas

regarding the undeserving poor with more recent perceptions of increasing entitlement among younger generations.

- 2) The Villainous Left-wing Politician: Progressive politicians and activists who are viewed as predatory – intent on gaining power through deceiving and controlling citizens. This reflects historical constructions of the Left as elitist and the cause of suffering for middle class white men.
- 3) The Fatherly TEA Party Activist: Members present themselves as heroic, protecting the nation from recklessness and saving Americans from themselves through holding them accountable to themselves and their families.

One may question how members of the five sentiment pools could subscribe to this common narrative. Indeed, Jasper and Poulsen (1995) argue that shared identity is not a prerequisite for joining a social movement, but can be constructed through movement participation. Rather, individual “movement identities” (Jasper 1997) have the potential to lead to a collective identity once a social movement organization is mobilized (Snow and McAdam 2000) and that such an identity is essential to organizing an effective issue-based movement organization as it serves to unite people with distinct backgrounds and experiences (Snow 2000).

One potential method of achieving a collective identity is through the use of frames. A frame is “an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one’s present or past environment” (Snow and Benford 1992: 137). Frames are employed by movement organizations to create a collective

identity among members through the construction of an antagonist. This image is then employed to create an “us” to oppose the “them” (Gamson 1988, 1992; Hunt and Benford 1994; Hunt et al 1994; Klandermans 1997). Movement identity often develops through the creation of dichotomous categories: rich: poor, men: women, black: white, straight: gay, or American: foreigner. These categories are constructed to acquire meaning and used to formulate a self-identity between group members cumulating in a collective identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Fraser 2000). In the case of the TEA Party this process is slightly more complicated in that there are three identities constructed: the antagonist – the Villainous Left, the imperfect victim – the Childlike American, and the hero – the Fatherly TEA Party. The development of this identity is not static, but a dynamic process that involves a constant negotiation of identity between group members throughout the process of organizing (Hobson 2003).

The TEA Party seeks to strengthen collective identity through these frames and uses frame amplification to unite the five sentiment pools. Frame amplification is the magnification of a frame through the use of slogans, promotions, or other tactics that capture the essence of a movement and is one of four frame alignment strategies used by social movement organizations (Benford and Snow 2000, Tarrow 1998). Frame amplification increases the collective identity of activists and, as a result, commitment to the organization. Once a collective identity is formed, activist commitment to the organization is increased. Identity is instrumental in getting people to both participate in an organization and to maintain their participation over time (commitment) (Polletta and Jasper 2001). In fact, the largest cause of movement dissolution is the destruction of a

strong collective identity or an identity that no longer mirrors the image of a movement (Polletta and Jasper 2001).

In the TEA Party, the frames of the Villainous Left, Childlike American, and Fatherly TEA Party, are amplified to form a shared identity and minimize the disruption potentially caused by the distinct beliefs of the sentiment pools. It allows activists to focus on the issues they agree with –their shared identity – and minimizes the attention given to discordant issues. This chapter examines how the TEA Party constructs this tertiary identity system by analyzing the identity frames constructed by activists: the Childlike American, the Villainous Left, and the Fatherly TEA Party. It then provides an overview of how activist identity and commitment is strengthened through the process of frame amplification.

### **THE CHILDIKE AMERICAN, THE VILLAINOUS LEFT, AND THE FATHER-LIKE ACTIVIST**

The tertiary identity narrative used by the TEA Party has a common place in American society and mirrors the stories of superhero movies, comic books, and Disney films: an evil force seeks power and brainwashes or enslaves the innocent population whom are saved by a central hero. The narrative also has a deeper social history specific to the political right and represents an extension of the “strict father morality” explored by Lakoff (1996). Lakoff demonstrates that people on the Right and the Left have distinct moralities, though often employ similar metaphors. One of the moralities held by the right is that of the “strict father”: a metaphor of patriarchal authority predicated on the belief that the world is dangerous and that the key goal is survival. From this morality, the three frames emerge.

Lakoff argues that the right subscribes to the belief that good fathers teach their children values such as self-discipline, sacrifice, and independence and that good children follow this moral code. This is taught through strict punishment when the values are threatened and high rewards when they are met. This morality, then, should protect the children from the dangers of society – in the case of the TEA Party, left-wing politicians.

In the case of the TEA Party Patriots, Americans who are not members of the organization are framed as childlike, a narrative that emerged from two other social scripts: that of the undeserving poor and the narcissistic, or entitled, young American. The United States' welfare program, and general attitudes toward the poor, mirror those established under the Elizabethan Poor Laws of the 1600s (Katz 1989). Starting in the early 1900s (and concurrent moves towards capitalism and democracy), American politicians began to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor. They believed that welfare-like programs hurt poor people by continuing a cycle of poverty and that using taxes to fund such programs was akin to stealing from the rich (Katz 1989). Poor people, in this narrative, were constructed as lazy parasites taking advantage of hard working Americans. Possessing their own culture (the culture of poverty), scholars and politicians argued that “the poor” lack morality, such as in the case of modesty and prudishness; are apathetic or passive; lack impulse control and forward thinking; and have weak moral and psychological strength (Katz 1989). Despite a slight decline in this moral narrative during the Great Depression, the argument that poor people are somehow deficient was fully restored throughout the 60's, 70's, 80's, and 90's (Katz 1989). Michael Harrington, who was the first to apply the culture of the poor

argument to the United States, claims that the only way to free people from the trap of poverty is for well-meaning sympathizers to lift them from their situation (Katz 1989).

Today Americans continue to believe the narrative of the culture of poverty. In 2001, National Public Radio, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University conducted a poll of nearly 2000 U.S. residents over the age of 18 on issues related to poverty. Their poll finds that 48 percent of respondents believe that people who are poor are “not doing enough to help themselves out of poverty.” Furthermore, 70% think that drug abuse is a major factor (24% a minor factor) in causing poverty; 54% blame single-parent families as a major factor (32% a minor factor); 52% see a lack of motivation on the part of poor people as a major factor (35% a minor factor); and 57% believe that a “decline in moral values” is a major factor (29% a minor factor). Additionally, 21% of those polled believe that poor people have lower moral values than other Americans; 69% believe that there were jobs available for those who wanted them and 46% believe that “poor people have it easy” (NPR /Kaiser/Kennedy School Poll 2001). It is this population with whom Santelli’s rant connected leading to a massive influx of TEA Party members.

Since the emergence of the TEA Party, many states have responded to the sentiment that people in poverty are poor due to their own shortcomings and are thus not deserving of federal assistance by creating additional barriers for access to welfare in an effort to weed out the undeserving (Cooke, Rohde, and McNeill 2012). For example, in 2011, three states – Arizona, Florida and Missouri – passed laws requiring drug testing or screening for people on public assistance, four states did in 2012 (Utah, Georgia,

Tennessee, and Oklahoma), and twenty eight states put forth proposals in 2012 to do so (National Conference of State Legislatures 2012).

To construct the frame of Childlike Americans, TEA Party activists combine talk of the undeserving poor with a more contemporary ideology regarding an increasing entitlement among youth (Twenge et al 2008). Twenge (2006) examines Generation Y, or what he calls “Generation Me” and concludes that young people ascribe to an increased culture of the individual and possess higher levels of self-esteem as a result of changing educational curriculum. Starting in the 1970s – following “the political turmoil of the sixties” (Lasch 1979: 4) – schools began to emphasize the importance of self-worth among kids, which has led to an increase in narcissism among this cohort. At the same time, parents have allowed their children to have greater influence in household decisions, further inflating their egos (Sutherland and Thomspson 2003). Lasch (1979) argues that this has led to a reduction in interconnection between people and a shrinking power of collective identity. As a result, people suffer from a desperate search for fulfillment and meaning, which is absent given their superficial focus and loss of personal relations (Lasch 1979).

The TEA Party, then, merges notions of increasing narcissism with ideas surrounding the culture of poverty in order to create the metaphorical category of the Childlike American. These melding narratives frame Americans as entitled: apathetic, lazy, self-interested, and believing that they deserve handouts from the state. Activists then, following Harrington’s suggestion, frame themselves as strict parents who try to save Childlike Americans from themselves. Thus, Santelli’s rhetoric resonated with many middle-aged and older Americans who perceive that their social status is threatened by an

increasing sense of entitlement among certain sectors of the population (specifically the 43% of Americans who did not think that: “the government should help homeowners facing foreclosure” (Marshall-Genzer 2009) and are motivated to facilitate change.

In contrast to the Childlike American, the Villainous Left is framed more simply. Within the identity narrative, moral strength is central to being a good person and citizen (Lakoff 1996). Thus, being evil is failing at this goal and encouraging others (Childlike Americans) to do the same. This includes the encouragement of dependence (welfare), laziness and apathy, or self-indulgence (narcissism and entitlement). The content of these categories has been long expressed by politicians and supported by the media. Republicans perceive the Left as elitist while constructing themselves as humble and righteous (Frank 2004). In the TEA Party’s construction, the Left seeks to control and prey on the Childlike Americans, turning them into entitled and narcissistic leeches.

Childlike Americans are framed as lacking discipline and easily susceptible to the Left’s encouragement of evil. In this metaphor, the “strict father” is tasked with training children to survive in this world. Fathers are expected to discipline children when they fail to meet desired moral standards, praise them when they do, and arm them against the temptations of the Left. To do this, violations of social codes must be met with strict punishment, and accommodation with great praise in order to strengthen the moral character of the child (Lakoff 1996). The TEA Party, as a “strict father”, seeks to teach Childlike Americans the value of independence and hard work, to hold themselves and others accountable, and to participate in the political sphere. Because parents better understand the interests of the child than the child itself, through this process,

metaphorical children are prepared to defend themselves against the evil in the world (Lakoff 1996).

### **THE CHILDLIKE AMERICAN**

TEA Party activists fear a loss of integrity to the republican system of governance and the ideals of free market capitalism due to what activists see as an increasing sense of childishness and entitlement among Americans. In an era where it is not socially acceptable to suggest that people be given unequal rights because of their race or gender, the TEA Party focuses on changing social morals. Thus, the TEA Party works to preserve historical values through framing themselves as strict parents, promoting self-reliance and independence in contrast to Childlike Americans.

TEA Party activists extend the narrative of the undeserving poor to encompass the broader American public. Americans are framed as undeservingly entitled: expecting to be pampered by the government. For example, Timothy, a Constitutionalist, suggests that people today have inverted the moral code of the past. He begins by discussing historical notions of citizenship: “Perfect illustration: John Kennedy. In his inaugural address he said ‘Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country’” and juxtaposes this with something he saw “two weeks ago” on the internet: “a video from one of Maxine Waters town hall meetings – there was a gal there that stood up and very demonstratively, very adamantly, told Maxine ‘I want to know what my country is going to do for me now.’” This reminded Timothy of “Kennedy's address” and, to him, signifies an increasing selfishness among Americans.

TEA Party activists react to this change in culture with fear of the severe implications it has for U.S. society, specifically that Americans believe it is the duty of

the government to take care of the people. Thus, lazy citizens, unwilling to work hard, poach off the system. According to Timothy: “some guy is offering his solution of how to fix the economy and get people houses and stuff, and he makes a comment about, it’s the job of government to make sure that people have jobs.” Timothy suggests that this notion is “absurd stuff” and is left with a sense of sorrow for the younger generations: “as I look at so many of these issues, the things that are going on, continue to go on, my children, my grandchildren, will not know the America I was born into.” An America that, according to Timothy, has distanced itself from its moral origins “one of the big things about not paying attention [to] that [which] our founders would have wanted to pay attention to. Number one, of course, being God and country, and two being covered by our Constitution.”

The frame of Americans as entitled goes beyond simply believing they deserve access to public services by infiltrating the culture as a whole. Activists agree with scholars that this cultural shift began with the previous generation, but believe it is most exaggerated in contemporary youth who are notably more politically progressive than older generations. Timothy suggests that it began with the baby boomers: “I came from a generation, you know, the baby boomers... We had been in wars. It seems that my generation kicked the Pandora’s Box wide open. Do what feels good. The man is bad. Do what you want, no responsibilities. And I think we’ve begun the seeds of some very poor attitudes and beliefs. This entitlement business, it’s all about me, me, me.” Sarah, a Conspiracy Theorist, agrees with Timothy and places the advent of the entitlement mindset as “part of the progressive cultural shift in the 60’s.” She argues that this era “was anything goes... the boundaries were down.”

In this view, Americans, embracing a shifting morality, like that of the undeserving poor, are lascivious and stuck in a maladaptive psychology. Sarah shares a story that she debated with her (progressive) niece: “[imagine] a woman that’s only been married once she has five kids from three different men. Doesn’t want to fit in. Thinks, you know, everything is horrible in this country but stays here, of course, and lives off the system. Now here’s a woman that’s going to do nothing but defend her lifestyle.” Sarah then brings the discussion back to her niece, who thinks that this fictional person should be supported by the state – encouraging poor morality. Sarah retorts: “Now how can you argue with that? You can’t.” Sarah believes that, as a result of this cultural shift and increased entitlement, many Americans choose to enjoy the carnal pleasures of life and live “off the system” while being disrespectful of the country providing for them. She sees this as a fact, and is frustrated that her niece (whom is a Democrat) does not share her resolve.

As with the narrative of the undeserving poor, activists believe that Childlike Americans lack drive and responsibility. One particular offence is that they are not politically engaged. Many activists, such as Joel, a Conspiracy Theorist, cite “seeing all the ignorance” as the hardest part of being in the Tea Party. Becky, a Constitutionalist, reports having: “been told they don’t want to hear it [or an] ‘eyes rolling’ comment on Facebook.... Most folks are too busy living life to see what is happening.” Recent scholarship suggests that, in addition to being entitled, the generations of today are increasingly apathetic. Specifically, the people of Generations X and Y – born between 1960 and the early 2000s – are less likely to pay attention to news media, be involved in politics, and care about public affairs (Bennett 2000, Soule 2001). TEA Party activists

fear this cultural shift will have severe moral implications for society.

Libertarians, such as Leonard, share the frustration regarding apathetic and selfish citizens. Leonard reflects on the unwillingness of Americans to investigate information they are given and is appalled by Americans blindly (and gluttonously) obeying the President:

When Bush was in and... the World Trade Center gets knocked down and he tells people to go shopping and I was really thrown by that. I was like "Shopping?" and the next thing I know people were spending money they didn't have. I knew they didn't have money. There was this big deal where someone got new siding on their house and a driveway. And next thing you know everyone has to have granite counter tops. And how is that? People driving around with rims on their cars. I couldn't recognize my mall anymore. I was like "where do the regular people shop?" Everyone was acting like they were rich.

Through this talk, Tea Party activists frame Americans as blind followers, or self-indulgent lemmings. In the minds of Tea Party activists, other Americans lack drive and passion to find the truth in society and politics. This ignorance or laziness marks the difference between Childlike Americans and good fathers.

Many activists frame Americans today as possessing a form of stubborn ignorance, even when it works against their own best interest. This mirrors the story common in the culture of poverty argument that the poor are trapped by their own psychological condition. Consider Jane's argument: "People will not accept that they can vote in a third party. They will not accept that not all Republicans are against human rights. They will not accept that Democrats have lied to them. They will not accept that Socialism is not true Freedom." TEA Party activists, such as Jane, a Libertarian, believe that their knowledge and understanding of the world and peoples' actions are absolute. Thus, those who refuse to see it are ignorant or unwilling to entertain reality. Sarah's

frustration with her family reflects this perspective: “My family says stuff so matter of fact in front of me and I go ‘where did you get that?’ And they can’t tell ya. ‘Well prove it.’ ‘Prove it.’ They can’t. Well, well, well then they’re off on another track. ‘Well prove it. You just said something is fact. Where is that stated?’” Again, Sarah is explaining frustration with how others, particularly those on the Left, cling to a willing ignorance rather than provable truths, which she sees her perspective as embodying. Like children, they change the subject and avoid challenging conversations.

Reacting to what they perceive as a change in cultural values, TEA Party activists draw on social narratives regarding the culture of poverty and narcissism and construct Americans as childlike: entitled, ignorant, and apathetic. This mirrors broader social narratives regarding the culture of poverty and increasing narcissism beginning in the 1970s.

### **THE VILLAINOUS LEFT**

TEA Party activists frame American citizens as entitled, ignorant, and apathetic. In turn, they create a narrative framing Democratic leaders as manipulative and capitalizing on this entitlement and ignorance. For example, Kyle, a Constitutionalist, believes that Democrats take advantage of their entitlement by duping Childlike Americans: “That’s the problem for people who voted for Obama have in understanding how empty all his promises and dreams are and that they are nothing more the smoke being blown up their collective butts. They want to give the responsibility of their lives over to a government promising to take care of them.” Tea Party activists believe that Democrats are capitalizing on the evolving culture of entitlement in America and have become deceitful, manipulative and destructive in their efforts to maintain control of the U.S. government.

Obama, used by TEA Party activists as a figurehead of the Left, and other Democrats are constructed as sneaky or deceitful, like the villains in superhero films. In turn, they demand a return to the central morality of the nation, as explained in the Constitution. For example, Matthew, a Conspiracy Theorist, suggests: “When you work off the assumption that liberals apply the law equally to everybody. They don’t. They apply the law only when it is convenient.” Matthew continues by constructing progressives as deceitful and TEA Party activists as morally superior:

Liberals view truth as an obstacle. You and I view truth as a tool. You and I look at the Constitution and we say: “this is a tool that we are going to use”, right, to govern our society. It is a tool that we use. It helps us... Truth is a tool to a conservative. To a liberal? Truth is not a tool; it’s an obstacle. The Constitution is in their way... from the agenda they want to pass so they have to trample it, they have to excuse it, they have to redefine it... That is the difference in philosophy. So... lets not ever make the mistake that liberals apply the law equally to everybody. They only apply it when it’s convenient for them. That’s it.

Thus, TEA Party activists frame the Left as self-interested and manipulative through a belief that they do not apply the law equally or fairly. This serves to rally activists against the morally inferior Left.

The deceitfulness of Democrats becomes more important as one considers them to be “illegitimate moral” forces – promoting a false morality for Childlike Americans – with great social power (Lakoff 1996). According to Kyle (Constitutionalist), American support for the villainous Obama is based on his manipulative script: “Social change is an emotional response in pursuit of a leader to take charge and calm the fears of those who believe in the current cause. This how Obama got elected. He promised to fulfill people's dreams and fix the imaginary hurts they felt needed healing.” Through falsely raising people’s hopes, the Left manipulates the emotions and fears of the broader populous.

Programs established by Democrats are also deceitful and destructive to childlike citizens. Yet, Democrats promote them with lies, further brainwashing Americans. Holly, a Libertarian, uses her unemployment as an example: “Barack Obama destroyed my business so he left me lots of time to – to work against him...I wrote software for car dealerships, and when he took over GM... he put a lot of my GM dealers out of business. They just told them to close and then he did *Cash for Clunkers* and switched all the used cars, and my used car dealers couldn’t find inventory so they went out of business...he says that he saved the car industry. He destroyed the car industry.”<sup>15</sup> Activists believe that Democrats intentionally eliminate good jobs for Americans to create greater addiction to welfare and ensure their election.

Democrats are perceived as brainwashing Childlike Americans by preventing the freedom of speech for conservatives. Timothy, Constitutionalist, shares the story of Rush Limbaugh:

I have in my desk drawer a copy of a letter that was sent to [Rush Limbaugh’s] boss by Harry Reid... signed by 52 democratic senators. Two of which were... senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. And this letter was sent to [Rush Limbaugh’s] boss, basically, it was saying, ‘shut him up’... Like Rush or not, it doesn't matter, its not what he said, he truthfully called a phony soldier a phony soldier, but that letter was sent to his boss...They sent it to even the syndicating company through which the show was licensed, basically saying ‘shut it up’. And that is why I have that letter, because we have concrete proof in writing, signed by majority leader Harry Reid, 52 senators. Freedom of speech means nothing<sup>16</sup>.

Again, Democrats are framed as deceiving Childlike Americans by silencing opposing viewpoints. In the process, they are constructed as violating the very moral code of the nation, as outlined in the First Amendment: the freedom of speech.

Christian Conservatives such as Maxine use this narrative to explain how the Villainous Left violates the law and acts as an illegitimate moral force. She argues that they violate the First Amendment: “when they talk about the separation of church and state, it is not in the Constitution. It is not in any of our founding documents, it just simply means just exactly what the First Amendment says, which is that the federal government would not establish a national religion that everyone would be forced to be a part of. That is all it means. And it has been extremely distorted from the thirties on... We want accuracy. We want truth. We want this country to be less chaotic. And the progressive policies create chaos<sup>17</sup>.” Though other sentiment pools are less interested in the issue of the separation of church and state, they share fear and suspicion of the Left. Sentiment pools are able to employ the collective narrative even when it is shaped by their specific concerns.

TEA Party activists further frame Democrats as villainous by suggesting that they are secretly plotting to guarantee their reelection. For example, Maxine suggests that Democrats are violating the law by seeking to grant full voting rights to the District of Columbia: “Washington, D.C. The federal government regulates that. They are not supposed to have a representative or senators. They are moving to have that. Does anyone know why? So that they can elect some Democrats – it’s a predominately Democratic area and they want to have representation.<sup>18</sup>”

The Conspiracy Theorists and Constitutionals engage with this narrative of the Left as “illegitimate moral authority” by discussing their secret employment of socialism. These activists commonly address Democrats as Marxists or Nazis. According to Joel, a Conspiracy Theorist: “The Democrat party – not Democratic – isn't really liberal

anymore, many of them are Marxist or worse. They are fighting to bring the country more towards the secular progressive point of view. Many of them believe in socialism and want the government to have all the power.” Additionally, Evan, a Constitutionalist, suggests that: “the Democratic party would not be recognizable to Democrats that lived 40 years ago. It has moved to the far left and openly speaks of their preference for socialism and Marxism. Their path is one of destruction for our economy and for our quality of life in this country.” Similarly, Becky, a Constitutionalist, argues that Democrats “are preaching central planning – another name for socialism – I fear that we could be following in the foot steps of Greece.” Right-wing groups have long held fear and distain for socialism, communism, and government overreach (Berlet and Lyons 2000) and while it is clear that neither the Democratic Party nor the Obama administration advance policies that resemble socialism, the fear that they are resonates deeply with activists in the Tea Party.

Perhaps the most poignant example of the frame of the Left as deceitful and preying upon Childlike Americans is be the presumption that President Obama is not a United States citizen and has covertly taken over the presidency. This is primarily engaged with by Conspiracy Theorists, though other activists are similarly suspicious. During one TEA Party meeting dedicated to the discussion of Agenda 21, an audience member interrupted Maxine, a Conspiracy Theorist, to state: “[Democrats] aren't operating on the Constitution, they are operating on a federal state... because Obama doesn't even have to be born in the United States because he is - they aren't operating on it.” Maxine agrees that it may be the case that Obama is not eligible for the presidency and asks if there are any birthers, people who believe that Obama is not a U.S. citizen,

among the audience. She is met with broad applause. The belief that President Obama is not a citizen is reflective of the broader distrust of the Left – if he doesn't meet the basic qualifications for president their fears of a secret puppet government run by the socialist United Nations become valid (see Chapter II). Moreover, if President Obama is lying about being a citizen, he may also be hiding his deep ties to socialism or Naziism<sup>19</sup>.

TEA Party activists construct the Left as capitalizing on the dependence of naïve citizens and deceiving the broader populace to further their own interests. Members of the TEA Party construct Democrats as “mostly liars and fakes” who “sit on high horses and pretend to be socially evolved and understanding when, for the most part, they are elitists that care [about] nothing but keeping their state jobs and making the country become dependent upon large bureaucratic organizations” (Jane - Libertarian). Activists believe that the direction Democrats are taking the country is “wrong. Its sneaky, its not the will of the people, if you don't love America, leave.” (Jaimee – Conspiracy Theorist). They believe that the Democratic style of government has “destroyed this nation. They have expanded government far beyond the scope it was ever meant to be expanded.” (Robert – Christian Conservative).

### **THE TEA PARTY: FATHERS OF THE NATION**

TEA Party activists, framed as the “strict fathers” of the Childlike Americans, seek to secure certain moral values in society. These morals are in direct opposition to those perpetuated by the Left and embodied by Childlike Americans: laziness, dependence, and entitlement. TEA Party activists, in contrast, are strong and independent, they are good role models and rise to the task of setting Americans straight. These characteristics are central to the type of person who joins the TEA Party. According to Tom, a Reformed

Liberal, TEA Party activists are “independent” and have “this inner drive to do things on [their] own.” For activists such as Tom, these values “translated into my political philosophy as well, because above all else, I hate getting help.... I prefer to solve problems on their own, and that way they stick better.”

Activists believe that a second responsibility of citizens is to hold others accountable – to challenge their peers to be independent, self-reliant, and responsible. TEA Party activists, then, embody these values. Wayne, a Libertarian, was not born into a privileged family. As a young, black man from Detroit with an ailing mother, he did not have access to the best schools or health care. Rather, he perceives himself as earning his accomplishments on his own:

It’s self-educated... It was an accident of nature that I was born to the parents I was born to. That I was born in the town that I was born in... I was also an accident of providence that...two out of the four different residences we were in as I was growing up, were within walking distance of a library. And I spent a lot of time at the library. I was reading, I was reading ridiculous stuff at a ridiculous age, that I had no business reading.

Wayne attributes the success that he has had to the choices he made as a kid: to go to the library and educate himself, ultimately earning an online degree through the University of Phoenix in information technology. He then reiterates the fact that one is only responsible for him or herself:

But my point is, is that, who do I turn to to blame? Who do I say: ‘well, it’s your fault, dude, that I was born to these parents, that I was born to these circumstances’. Its nobody else’s fault, its not my fault. And that is normally where the argument stops: ‘Well, its not the kid’s fault that they were brought here illegally or that they were born in this situation’. And, no its not. But it’s not my fault either. And it’s not your fault. And it’s not anybody else in this room’s fault. There are certain things that just happen. That are just accidents of nature, circumstantial, that don’t place a claim upon the labor or the property of another individual.

Wayne believes that the state does not have the responsibility to help those who are disenfranchised or disadvantaged. Nor does he think that citizens have the responsibility to help one another. Rather, one is only responsible for oneself and his or her children. When I asked Wayne who was responsible for helping disadvantaged kids, he responded: “Nobody. I do not have a responsibility to any other human being. Aside from the one that I made. I have a responsibility to that one. But, I do not have a responsibility to any other human being unless I contract out that responsibility.” However, Wayne does suggest that all people value life and are thus likely to help those in immediate danger. For example, he suggests:

If I walked out to my car and I saw some little girl – three, four-year-old little girl about to get hit by a car, my reaction – hopefully – would be go to save her, right? Now why is that? Why, why is it that when I don’t have a – I’m not responsible for her – I’m not compelled to do that, by some moral necessity. The answer is that because I value life, I value humanity.

However, Wayne reiterates that this is not an issue of responsibility:

People interpret it as collective responsibility, but that isn’t what it is. It is an individual judgment that I personally value this person, this situation, this parcel of land, this whatever it is. And, I don’t have any business telling anybody else, nor does anybody else have any business telling me what I should value.

Thus, despite recognizing that it is important to help others in some situations, Wayne reiterates that the decision to help needs to be up to the individual. He suggests that the moral imperative in the situation is not to help others but to make one’s own decisions: “the moral principle there, people misconstrue it. They think that the moral principle is ‘thou shalt save’ but the moral principle is that ‘thou shalt act upon thy own judgment’ and nobody has the right to interfere in that process.” Here Wayne clearly explains the TEA Party view regarding the morality they seek to impose on Childlike Citizens: to take

care of oneself and one's offspring and to leave others to make their own decisions.

TEA Party activists are honorable, unlike the Villainous Left. According to Victoria, a Constitutionalist and activist from Minnesota who works in real estate, members are able to unify despite their different ideas in part because of their personal and collective attributes. In particular she suggests that this is different than activists on the Left, such as the Occupy Movement:

The TEA Party is nothing like [Occupy], from personal experience. We are not there to be rude, to make problems. We want to solve a problem. I feel like the other side is more out there to, they want to make a name for themselves and they don't care how they do it. And most of the time its, they want to make a negative actions. And that is not what the TEA Party is about at all.

She continues: "Clearly I'm biased, but I think [The TEA Party is] way more reputable than all these Occupy Wall Streeters, you know. [We] are not destroying things. [We] are not being crude. [We] are not swearing. Its – [the TEA Party] has real, solid goals and ways of achieving them and positive means."

### ***Defend the Children from Evil***

Lakoff (1996) argues that, in the "strict father metaphor", fathers need to defend children from "illegitimate moral authority" (78-79). In the case of the TEA Party, this means that the state – led by Democrats – is unjustly trying to control the children. Becky makes this connection directly: "As a young adult, you no longer want your parents telling you what to do, who to hang out with, when to go to bed... Why should your government tell you what kind of light bulb to use or car to drive?" This notion, that today's Americans are childlike and influenced by "illegitimate moral authority", is central to the motivation of the TEA Party. Activists view Americans as in need of being saved from themselves and

the republic as needing to be preserved. Activists have high expectations for the behavior of citizens and this nostalgia for a previous era leads them to fight against cultural change.

Activists frame themselves as sacrificing in order to improve the lot of Childish Americans. Samuel, a Libertarian, says that his motivation is to “make life better for other people and, if I benefit also, great! Being of service is important to me. And so if I can, what I can do to help others, I will.” Similarly, Stephen, a Christian Conservative, is motivated by “the potential to directly help others build a better life” and celebrates the efforts of TEA Party activists: “There are thousands of people working across the country to help others succeed without any personal reward or special recognition. These people do more for this country than any number of politicians.” Wayne, a Libertarian, also sees his efforts as helping the greater populous. After first establishing that the current political system is broken, he suggests that “we end up having to take it upon ourselves to try to affect the process until we get it back to a point where we can say: OK, now I can go back and just live my life.” He participates in order to support “folks who previously were content to delegate” but who can’t because “they are not being represented.”

The goal is not simply to improve the lot of current children, but children in the future as well. For example, Jaimee, a Conspiracy Theorist, cites her “future children” as a prime motivation for activism as does Joel, a fellow Conspiracy Theorist, who wants “the younger generation to experience liberty.” Robert, a Conservative Christian, is “concerned about [his] son’s future” and thinks that “Knowing that we are passing on a nation with a rapidly expanding lack of freedom and which is deadlocked into perpetual warfare, and to make it worse we are paying for it by passing on a mountain of debt to

our children and grandchildren. Not only is it morally wrong, but it is national suicide.” Sarah, a Conspiracy Theorist, believes that her “kids’ future is in jeopardy” and believes that other activists share her motivation: “I don't know anybody in the movement who isn't doing this for future generations.”

The Fatherly TEA Party look forward to the day when the American children are grown and they will no longer need to make such sacrifices. For example, Ralph, a Constitutionalist, indicates that his preference is to stop activism, but cannot because of the future implications:

To be honest with you... I don't have to do it anymore... I don't wanna have to do this, you know, for the rest of my life... but I wanna have you know the true results of what we are doing... Hopefully our children and grandchildren will be able to benefit from the fruit of the labors that we have put in today. But, no, I don't wanna be doing this, meaning, hopefully things get fixed faster than that.

Finally, Becky, a Constitutionalist, asserts: “the truth is, we are doing this for you. I think it is unfair for my generation to spend the country into debt and leave your generation with the mess.”

Following Harrington's claims regarding the poor, activists believe that the only way to free Americans from their childhood state is for well-meaning citizens (Fatherly TEA Party activists) to help them see the error of their ways. Evan, a Constitutionalist, feels that Americans are too lazy to seek the truth, a psychological state that enhances ignorance. Thus, he seeks to empower them to be different. Evan argues: “People think that change of any kind is necessarily good. That is not the case. For example, people think Obamacare is about providing health care for people that do not have access to it. However, it is so much more than that. People need to look deeply into what's going on to

affect positive change, not simply go with what they've been told. People need to be rational and get the best possible information available and make their own conclusions.”

TEA Party activists collectively seek ways to engage with Childlike Americans and help them rise above their current positions. Zach, a Constitutionalist, encourages members to “engage our neighbors” to “explain to them what conservative principles are because people have a lot of misconceptions about what conservatism is, or what Republicans are. They think we are rich. They think we are white. They think we are homophobic. They think we are racist. You know that to be untrue, I know that to be untrue.” In order to enlighten the masses, Zach suggests that there is great need to increase conversation between the Fatherly TEA Party and Childlike Americans in the United States.

Outreach to Childlike Americans is also encouraged at the level of the state chapter. Sarah, a Conspiracy Theorist and state leader, describes the place of such dialogue in the TEA Party agenda: “Next year we are really going to focus on how to communicate with a progressive because we know next summer [2012] there are going to be so many neighbor arguments there are going to be family arguments and all that.” She warns activists of the tactics used by Childlike Americans in these arguments: “they are constantly changing the conversation on me you know. You're talking about the debt and they go ‘yeah, but what about jobs’ you know, its like they can't stay focused. If you know what to say back, they can bring them back and just stay factual and don't get upset with them. Laugh at them but don't get upset with them.” Sarah first describes the American public as unable to focus, much like children in school. She then cautions activists to treat them as they would a squirrelly child.

### *Teach the Children Well*

In addition to sacrificing for the benefit of society and protecting Childlike Americans from evil, as national fathers, the TEA Party must teach the masses to be good moral citizens. According to TEA Party activists, good moral citizenship is about accountability: citizens are tasked with holding themselves, others, and the Villainous Left accountable.

One key message children must grasp, according to TEA Party members, is history. Citizens have been fed false information from the Villainous Left, particularly regarding the economic system and intentions of the Founding Fathers. Many activists believe, as Samantha, a Constitutionalist, does, that this is because people on the left “do not have the same start page.” People in the TEA Party “realize that the Founding Fathers gave us something that the progressives are saying they did not.” As such, Samantha believes, people on the left have a misunderstanding of capitalism and the Founding Fathers: “I have a 48 year old niece who has hated capitalism ever since she is 17, has hated the Founding Fathers because they were bigoted, blah, blah, blah. She has misinformation.” The particular problem with the starting page of the Left is that it begins with a misunderstanding of Karl Marx: “Her start page is Karl Marx, she quotes Karl Marx a lot and quotes him out of context.” Samantha attributes this misinformation as the root of her irrationality: “She is extremely misinformed. Which leads to her anger and her emotionalism that puts her on another movement.” While beginning this analysis with her niece, Samantha expands it to include others on the Left: “Progressives, by the way, want to start our history at about 1900, not with the Founding Fathers, isn't that interesting? So, again, it brings in this element of inaccuracy.”

TEA Party activists then seek to reach out to the national children and teach them proper values. Samantha suggests that it's difficult to have these conversations with people: "The biggest thing is that, starting out, we were all kind of scared to say anything. But, after a while you get self-confidence and you start to get a little angry. Especially when they want to argue with you." Thus, she felt empowered to challenge her niece on her "start page": "I told her, I said, you know about natural law? I said, where is your start page? She never answered that. So, what do you know about natural law? And the right to private property. And she said, "nothing." I said, "then you and I really can't discuss because you don't understand what this country really is about. So, I'm now creating doubt in her mind. I'm telling her the truth. Her start page is way off. I think it is Karl Marx."

As mentioned, citizens are framed as immature or selfish. Rather than putting the nation first, they are preoccupied with superficial aspects of everyday life. Tea Party activists expect citizens to set down the remote control and become aware of current events. According to Timothy, a Constitutionalist, this is one of the biggest problems with the election system. He argues: "it's incumbent upon me as a citizen of this country, this state, this city, it's incumbent – now that might interfere with my TV watching – might interfere with whatever, but it really is my right and my duty to make sure that I'm making good decisions at election time."

TEA Party activists also seek to resist the decreasing connectedness of society resulting from increasing narcissism and entitlement by teaching citizens to take care of their own families. Victoria, a Constitutionalist, uses her personal story to share that message: "My sister has three kids under the age of three. And we all try to help her out."

Victoria's family helps out her sister and enables a situation in which she doesn't need to rely on others: "We are not going to rely on teachers to educate - I mean - yes, we are going to send them to school. But, their main education is going to come from home, that is where their values are going to be formed." Victoria sees the main responsibility in education happening in the home. She uses this imperative to explain contemporary problems in society: "you know, a lot of families, they are missing one of their parents or if they are a single parent home they work all day and they are kind of left to raise themselves... on average, like 30 years ago, families spent, I think like 40 minutes around the dinner table – well not the dinner table, just the kitchen table, in a day. And now it's like negative or something. Families don't eat together." Victoria seeks to encourage Childlike Americans to take time for their families, to take care of one another, and to instill values in their children – the values they are learning from the Fatherly TEA Party activists.

Some TEA Party activists extend the scope of care to those in one's local faith community and their connections. When asked what an ideal society would look like, Harold, a Conspiracy Theorist, answered: "People, bound by allegiance to a local church, would be humble, charitable. Their hope would be a spiritual hope. They would be thankful and resourceful. They would look to local families and groups for support in tough times, but otherwise they would be hardworking and generous at the same time. They would not, however, prop up people who were lazy or refused to put forth their best effort."

While TEA Party activists do not believe that the state should care for people whom are struggling, they do support the ideas imbedded in the Elizabethan poor laws

that the community is responsible to help out their neighbors. Duster, a Libertarian, seeks to return to a “‘father knows best’ or ‘Andy Griffin[sic]’ type family values with the modern technology of today and the race relations of small towns who seem to be colorblind.” He argues that this was a time of: “A charitable people who help their neighbor in times of need.” Activists clearly argue that this is key to maintaining independence from the state. In essence, this is what Duster has done: he now, framed as a Fatherly TEA Party activist, is taking care of others by teaching them proper values and empowering them to defend themselves against the Villainous Left.

The Fatherly TEA Party sees this citizen responsibility as potentially taking the place of the state and mitigating the danger of the Villainous Left. For example, Leonard, a Libertarian, argues: “the only promise is that you work hard and do right by your family. It is the only thing you are supposed to do, and follow the Ten Commandments.” He then tells the story of Samuel, a judge from the Bible arguing that it stresses the importance of individual responsibility and independence from the state:

Samuel was the judge. And he was the judge in a world without kings... For at least a century or more in early Israel there was no kings. And so, if you and I are having issues like I need to build a road that gets to my door, through your property. And I compensate you, of course. Or I could be an asshole and I didn't. And that is why you have a problem with me. But, for the most part, I want to build a road through your property. I made you an offer. That wasn't good enough for you. You were like “no way.” Instead of turning to the government to solve our problems, we decide to agree on a judge. And we - and in taking the judge - and still to this day you can have arbitration and you can make decisions... We didn't need a king. And you know what we didn't do in all those years? We didn't go to war.

Leonard suggests, also, that the book speaks against the existence of political leaders:

“[Samuel] tells them exactly what happens when you get a king - he'll steal your kids, he'll start wars, he'll take your money. He'll do all these bad things.” Thus, Leonard, and

other TEA Party activists, see the role of the state as minimal in negotiating personal affairs. Instead, citizens need to take care of themselves, others, and settle their disputes on their own. (A greater examination of the sentiment pools' perception of role of the state can be found in Chapter II.)

### ***TEACH CHILDREN TO BE INVOLVED***

In addition to taking care of oneself, one's family, and close friends, TEA Party activists expect people to be involved in politics. According to Samuel, a Libertarian: "you're involved in civic affairs, it is just part of being a citizen. It is part of being in the country, so, you do it because it is the right thing to do." Thus, people must keep up with current events. According to Evan, a Constitutionalist: "All a citizen has to do is know how the person running for office wanting their vote thinks about fixing important problems facing America. And then do, what for some is the most difficult thing for them. Get off their butts and vote. That's how hard and simple it is."

The TEA Party seeks to teach the American children to hold the Villainous Left accountable by making sure they stay out of office. Timothy, a Constitutionalist, likens elections to hiring someone as an employee and compares it to construction work:

These people are going to be working for us, if I decided I wanted to put an addition on my house, I check out their credentials, and I have them come over and give me a contract and an estimate – here is what I'm going to do, here is the materials I'm going to use, blah blah blah, and I look it over and say OK. If that guy showed up and all of the sudden I see a trailer back up in my yard that has substandard materials, um, he's gotta crew that looks like they just got out of prison and they start building a rectangular building when we had agreed on a square, I'd fire him. Depending upon how much money he wasted and so on, I may even take him to court to recover that.

Timothy asks: "Why do we approach these elected officials any differently?" because he

believes that “We are hiring them to do a job for us.” However, the key problem as viewed by Timothy is a lack of effort on the part of citizens to review and examine politicians:

People – the bosses – we really need to raise the awareness in this country that it is our money – I always think I wish we wouldn’t even call it federal money. When they report a mistake of 60 million dollars worth of federal funds. No! It is all our funds. Whether it comes from the state or - the states, the feds with FEMA, all they are going to give us. No!

Thus, while Timothy is clearly frustrated with the federal government, he expects citizens to become informed and to demand different actions on the part of elected officials. He places the onus on “the bosses” to account for the changes needed for the democracy to function.

Specifically, as they grow into adulthood, the Childlike Americans should, according to TEA Party activists, take the time to understand politicians and to hire people whom are “naturally conservative.” Once grown, these real adults will hold those currently in office accountable to conservative ideals. Maxine, a Christian Conservative, for instance, encourages people to pay attention and “say whoa! We the people are going to throw you bums out when you violate the Constitution” when politicians violate accepted morals. If met with resistance, adult citizens need to speak louder and work harder. Sarah, a Conspiracy Theorist, suggests that citizens need to get loud about the use of taxpayer funds for environmental initiatives: “You need to scream. You need to make some noise on this. Don’t put it off. We are late to this game, folks.” Samantha, a Constitutionalist, echoes this saying: “don’t let them cause you to be quiet.” Rather, in their process toward adulthood, Americans need to “take individual independent action and don’t just wait for groups and new group leaders to do it, we’ve got to find and

support the candidates who really know what limited governmental powers mean, and who will perform fiscally responsible and, of course, support the free-market solutions.”

On their path toward adulthood, Childlike Americans are also taught to hold non-governmental institutions accountable, specifically teachers and corporations. Kyle, a Constitutionalist, shares a story about holding educators accountable. Citing a document attained online from a Texas school district, Kyle describes that “It goes through and it talks about the liberals and the conservatives and as you can see the first two images – the liberal is the angel and the conservative is the devil. And it just goes on and on and on like this.” He extrapolates this document more broadly and says: “This is the kind of stuff that can be happening in your schools” and demands that citizens “participate and listen and take a look in your kids’ backpacks.” Zach, a Constitutionalist, then chimes in and shares a personal story: “I’m a grandparent and I’m constantly bothering my grandkids to see what they bring home. So just because you don’t have a child at school, you can still watch it. And watch it careful.” Kyle then reiterates the call to action: “what we want you to do is look at these backpacks, understand what the kids are thinking.” Kyle continues to explore the possibilities with such action by saying that he approached the teacher and had an “open dialogue” learning that she is a “closet conservative” and “thinks she can’t come out in the schools.” Since this conversation, Kyle has begun bringing conservative politicians to classes at the school, including Tom Emmer, a former candidate for governor in Minnesota. Kyle concludes that by getting involved he “changed the school kids’ mind and moved it forward.”

In addition to hiring conservative candidates and holding those elected accountable, TEA Party activists also expect citizens to demand conservative values of

corporations. Mariah, a Conspiracy Theorist, for instance, believes that people should boycott companies that support left-wing causes such as “cancel[ling] Rush Limbaugh’s show.” These include the brands “owned by Unilever... Slimfast, you’ll have to get ready for spring some other way, Dove, Ponds, Signal, Sunsilk, Vaseline, Sunlight... so, if you find out about Unilever.” She argues that such a tactic “does work” and cites a similar boycott of other companies, including “ProFlowers, Sleep Number Beds, Tax Resolution Services, Carbonite” and argues that “Carbonite’s stock, I believe, went down 12-15%” as a result of TEA Party protests.

In addition to expecting citizens to elect and police politicians, and support themselves and their families, TEA Party activists believe that Americans should be involved in politics. According to Samuel, people have a responsibility to “love your country for good reasons whether it is the freedoms they afford you, the opportunities that everyone has, not just the upper class, it’s a pride. You have to be willing to fight for that.” Being involved in civil affairs is being patriotic.

### **IDENTITY, FRAME AMPLIFICATION, AND COMMITMENT**

Chapter II discusses the distinct sentiment pools in the Tea Party organization: the Libertarian, the Conservative Christian, the Constitutionalist, the Conspiracy Theorist and the Reformed Liberal. These sentiment pools hold a variety of ideologies regarding the role of the state; however, the issues of cultural change, duties of citizenship, and position of the TEA Party activists as national defenders are unifying themes. These themes are framed through a metaphor of family wherein the TEA Party is constructed as a “strict father” seeking to instill values in the entitled, lazy, and ignorant Childlike Americans, and to protect them from the wayward morals of the Villainous Left.

As mentioned, activist commitment is key to the success of a social movement organization. The greater commitment activists have the more likely they are to have sustained dedication to the organization (Polletta and Jasper 2001), to participate in high-risk activities (McAdam 1986), and to make sacrifices for the cause (McAdam 1986). In order to maximize commitment, social movement organizations need to develop a clear collective identity among activists (Polletta and Jasper 2001). The case of the TEA Party demonstrates that frame alignment strategies can be successful in the construction of a collective identity among a complex membership, thus increasing activist commitment.

Social movement research has shown that different sentiment pools can be connected under a shared identity through various frame alignment strategies. The TEA Party uses frame amplification (the magnification of a frame through the use of slogans, promotions, or other tactics that capture the essence of a movement) to reconcile these differences within the movement organization (Benford and Snow 2000, Tarrow 1998). Movements produce three frame elements: injustice, agency, and identity. The injustice element determines a guilty party for the blame of the injustice – in the case of the TEA Party, the Villainous Left (Gamson 1992). The agency component motivates people by convincing them that social conditions can be changed through collective action and is bolstered by the identity component that constructs a collective “we” of movement members and their allies in opposition to “they” who have opposing values (Gamson 1992). In the case of the TEA Party, it is the construction of the Fatherly TEA Party activists who are needed to save the Childlike Americans from the evils brought by the Villainous Left to foster collective identity and increase activist commitment.

Rather than focusing on divisive issues, activists concentrate on their shared

identity: the effort to teach Childlike Americans and take down the Villainous Left. This is particularly true at the weekly or monthly chapter meetings, events, and rallies – the three times activists come together – where the aforementioned frames are consistently amplified. Each meeting features an opening sequence by chapter leaders followed by three keynote speakers. Every week the leaders begin by reemphasizing the identity frames. For example, Marge, a chapter leader, argues that the organization is trying to “change our culture legislatively” through electing conservative politicians: “We’re going to get the right people in there again so we are focusing on what is the character you are looking for.” She suggests that this goal to eliminate the Villainous Left from office is what unites the group: “These are our basic principles and as a result of those principles what are the issues that are really supporting them.” Similarly, Robert, a keynote speaker, suggests that the “focus” of the organization is to fight the Left who falsely train Childlike Americans to act “helpless... looking for a government to bail them out.” Rather, he seeks to “be what is the greatest nation that this world has ever known” by encouraging the development of “individuals whose ability to take initiative and start businesses and work jobs and have children and raise families.” He wonders aloud “How can we increase the amount of liberty and freedom and slow down the growth of government?” Such appeals are made frequently throughout movement meetings, events, and rallies.

This narrative is also constantly amplified through the engagement with the “three pillars” of the TEA Party Patriot organization. These pillars consist of demanding “fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government, and free market economic policies” (TEA Party Patriots 2013). While on their surface these pillars may not appear to match

the central frame of the organization, the parallel emerges when one examines the way in which activists define the pillars in light of the framing discussed in this chapter. For example, Zach defines the first pillar at a state chapter meeting in Minnesota: “First is fiscal responsibility. You don’t write a check if you don’t have money in the bank! Right?! If you ask our leaders to use that concept, it’s going to be good. It is going to be good. Because, you know what? You know them.” In his definition of fiscal responsibility Zach is able to tap into two themes of the movement organizations identity frame: first that contemporary Americans are entitled and expect to receive government services, even if they fail to follow the national moral code of individual responsibility. It also calls upon the notion that the Left overspends and runs social service programs in order to trick Childlike Americans into voting for them.

At another event Timothy explains that constitutionally limited government means that activists “want to make sure the rules are being followed, that the referees are calling it as they see it as opposed to just fixing the game.” He, too, is referring to the belief that the Villainous Left is violating the law to verify that they will win elections through maintaining control of the Childlike Americans (see discussion on DC voting rights and other instances of Democratic deceit and manipulation explored above).

Finally, free market economic policies are interpreted on the TEA Party Patriots website as the solution to government overreach, exemplified by the Villainous Left and their facilitation of the dependence of Childlike Americans. The TEA Party explains that the economic crisis, and resultant dependence of Americans is due to: “an erosion of our free markets through government intervention”, primarily under the leadership of President Obama. Further, they suggest that “failures in government programs and

government-controlled financial markets helped spark the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression” largely by causing dependence by Childlike Americans on the system as opposed to encouraging individual responsibility. Thus, activists need to prevent “further government interventions and takeovers” that “have made this Great Recession longer and deeper” and “focus on free markets” to create “a more vibrant economy creating jobs and higher standards of living for future generations.” These three pillars are engaged with constantly by activists: in every interview, in every meeting, and on the organization’s website. Through constant engagement with the pillars, particularly following the broader framing of Childlike Americans, the Villainous Left, and the Fatherly TEA Party activist, the collective identity of activists is deepened and, subsequently, commitment strengthened.

To some extent the different sentiment pools map their own frames onto that of the broader social movement. One example, of the Christian Conservatives, comes from Maxine who shapes her understanding of the three pillars and the collective identity through the lens of morality. She argues:

Morality is the fertile soil that freedom grows in. The TEA Party stands on these three things: free markets, fiscal responsibility, and constitutional limited government. Do you know without morality we can’t have free markets?... It ain’t going to work. Fiscal responsibility. If we don’t have morality, guess what? It’s not going to work. Limited government? That’s not going to work without morality... So, without morality we can’t have these things.

Thus, Maxine continues to engage with the central pillars of the organization, but adds her own interpretation as a Christian Conservative. While it is possible that a frame reinterpreted by the various sentiment pools could undermine the collective identity of the movement, it instead allows the various groups to increase their identification with

the broader narrative and solidify their commitment to the organization. This is similar to the notion of frame extension, the expansion of a frame to new areas that are important to the target audience, traditionally used by social movement organizations to align the frames of sentiment pools with that of the social movement organization. It appears that, within the TEA Party, frame extension by individual activists may be a result of a broader organizational effort at frame amplification.

The resultant activist commitment is seen in the sacrifices made by members for the sake of the organization. Part of fatherhood is dedication to one's children. For activists, this occurs through the incredible sacrifice they make to participate in the TEA Party Patriots. This sacrifice primarily takes the form of time. For example, Holly, a Libertarian, spends 50-70 hours a week working on TEA Party Patriots related activities. Similarly, Ralph, a Constitutionalist, spends "easily 40-60 hours a week without even batting an eye" despite working a full time job as well. He reports regularly being awake until 1:00 am and often gets up at 4:00am.

In addition to time, activists demonstrate their commitment by highlighting the fact that they do not get paid for this work and often acquire expenses of their own. According to Holly, a Libertarian: "It pays zero. I mean, we believe in what the Founding Fathers said, your life, your treasure and your sacred honor. Well I still have my life and my sacred honor, the treasure disappeared a long time ago." Mary, a Conspiracy Theorist, also cites the lack of payment as a major challenge, saying it is "not a paid position, all volunteer." Finally, Zach, a Constitutionalist, shares his frustration with the sacrifice: "It's tireless, endless work. It's, it feels like you're beating your head against the wall."

Activist commitment is also reflected in their continued dedication despite the

resistance they meet from the Villainous Left and Childlike Americans. Richard, a Constitutionalist, indicates that there is “little reward” associated with TEA Party activism, and that often rather than payment or encouragement, he is met with “lots of slurs and attacks” from the Left but he “brushes them off and keep going.” Holly, a Libertarian, cites frustration with childish Americans ignoring her emails and other efforts: “At this point I would say only maybe 30-40% of the people I see read my emails, because I can track them to see whether they’re read or not, and if there’s links in there I can see whether people actually click on the links and see what I’m talkin’ about... when I’m so passionate about it and I’m volunteering my time for zero money – goin’ into debt to save the frickin’ country – the least you can do is read emails! Aggravating!”

Finally, commitment is seen in their resilience to continue with their activism despite its inherent frustration and lack of direct reward. For example, Gus, a Constitutionalist, says that, when he is met with apathy he “move[s] on to the next person who may listen and then act.” Similarly, Aaron, a Conspiracy Theorist, perseveres:

Hopefully I can bring attention to a lot of people who are just out there talking about silly crap. You know, oh my God, you should have seen the dress I saw at Macy’s the other day and it was 50% off. You know, it’s like agghhh. [laughter] Yeah, so I mean, that was one of the reasons why I stayed off Facebook in the first place, but you know, now I’m on there and I’ve got, I’ve got, ah, like a mission. So every day I try to go on there and talk about certain things. And, and what I find is going to these TEA party meetings, and I found out that I was in the same boat. Okay so, when you talk to people in the TEA Party, or people who are conservatives, they all pretty much have a single view, okay? ... You know, smaller government, you know, less taxes, free markets, and all that.

Thus, Fatherly TEA Party activists are frustrated with their role as national parents. However, despite this, they remain committed to teaching the Childlike Americans

important social morals.

## **CONCLUSION**

The TEA Party engages with a variety of strategies featured in social movement organizations in order to unite the five activist sentiment pools into a cohesive social movement organization. First, a clear tertiary identity system is constructed. American citizens are framed as childlike: entitled, lazy, and easily tricked by immoral politicians. Democrats are framed as villainous, manipulative, and using the Childlike Americans for their own gain. Finally, the TEA Party is framed as a father figure: seeking to instill values in the children and to empower them to stand up against the immoral forces perpetuated by the Left.

Collective identity is enhanced and commitment secured through the use of frame amplification whereby activists magnify the issues on which they agree and identify – the tertiary identity system. Frame amplification allows activists to focus on the issues that they share and to more deeply identify with the social movement organization. This, in turn, increases activist commitment, prevents divisive conflicts, and provides the movement organization with activists willing to dedicate time, money, and energy to the TEA Party.

**INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY, STATE ORGANIZED ENSLAVEMENT, OR  
JESSE JACKSON? HOW THE SENTIMENT POOLS FRAME RACIAL  
INEQUALITY**

In 2011, TEA Party activist and Orange County Republican National Committee representative Marilyn Davenport widely distributed an email containing a photo with Obama's face on an infant monkey along with the words: "Now you know why - No birth certificate!" (AP 2011). This image and email message reflect a long history of white Americans associating black people with animals, particularly monkeys or raccoons, and implying that they are less than human. This caricature has been named "the Coon" and was established during slavery as a justification for black enslavement and abuse (Jim Crow Museum 2012, The Authentic History Center 2012, Bogle 2001). During the slave era, white people constructed black people as animal-like and, thus, inherently inferior. As a result, white mistreatment or lynching of black people was viewed as insignificant – or even a logical – retribution for behavior that slave owners deemed inappropriate (Bogle 2001). Despite the associated racist connotations, references likening Obama to a monkey are periodically seen at TEA Party events by activists with signs that say such things as "Obamanomics: Monkey See, Monkey Spend" or images of the President's face on a monkey's head with the text "primate in chief."

A year after this email was circulated, Ozark TEA Party activist Inge Marler told a joke, which received widespread laughter at a rally in Arkansas, about a black child asking his mother about democracy: "Well, son, that be when white folks work every day so us po' folks can get all our benefits.' 'But mama, don't the white folk get mad about that?' 'They sho do, son. They sho do. And that's called racism.'" (Parker 2012).

This joke reflects a widespread belief among white Americans that black people remain in poverty because they lack a strong work ethic and are comfortable relying on the welfare system to survive (Bonilla-Silva 2010). It further illustrates a less common, but persistent, idea that racism is a baseless charge invented by people of color to excuse their shortcomings or to deceptively reap unearned benefits (Pellow 2013). Conservative columnists Shelby Steele (2006) and Jonah Goldberg (2012), politicians like Herman Cain (Liptak 2011), as well as radio jockeys such as Glenn Beck (2010) and Rush Limbaugh (2009) frequently articulate these notions.

Despite these examples, TEA Party activists claim – in articles, conversations, on signs, and by voting for Herman Cain (a black businessman and candidate for the Republican presidential nominee in 2012) – that they are not racist. Furthermore, they attempt to expunge blatantly racist members from the organization. Marler, for example, was asked to leave the Ozark TEA Party following her delivery of the aforementioned joke. While Davenport remained in office, many TEA Party activists and Republican National Committee members sought her resignation. Even scholars have found that race is not central to TEA Party activism (Skocpol and Williamson 2012).

Given the juxtaposition between employing racist humor and claiming to be race neutral, how does racism operate within the TEA Party and how do activists explain racial inequality in society? This chapter explores the ways that the distinct sentiment pools frame racial inequality, concluding that the three central right-wing ideologies used by right-wing organizations, as discussed in Chapter I, strongly influence perspectives on racial inequality. These ideologies lead to distinct frames, which are employed at the level of the sentiment pool and reflect nonconformity in TEA Party understanding of race.

How, then, does the TEA Party unite on this issue? This chapter argues that they use the frame alignment strategy of frame amplification, whereby the TEA Party attempts to incorporate all sentiment pools through creating an organizational-level frame to encompass all views. This amplification allows activists, regardless of the sentiment pool level frames to unite under the organizational level frame of colorblindness.

## **RIGHT-WING IDEOLOGIES AND THEORIES REGARDING RACIAL INEQUALITY**

As discussed in Chapter I, right-wing organizations engage with three ideologies centered on the sovereignty of the United States, a social moral order, and libertarianism (Toplin 2006; Diamond 1995). Those concerned with American sovereignty are particularly focused on issues regarding U.S. foreign policy, military power, overseas intervention in the defense of U.S. interests, and the evils of communism. People employing the libertarian ideology fight for free market capitalism and seek a limited form of government, particularly related to social issues. Finally, those concerned with a moral order aim to create a society privileging native-born white males and the nuclear family (Toplin 2006; Diamond 1995).

Different sentiment pools engage with distinct combinations of these three theories resulting in four clear frames regarding racial inequality:

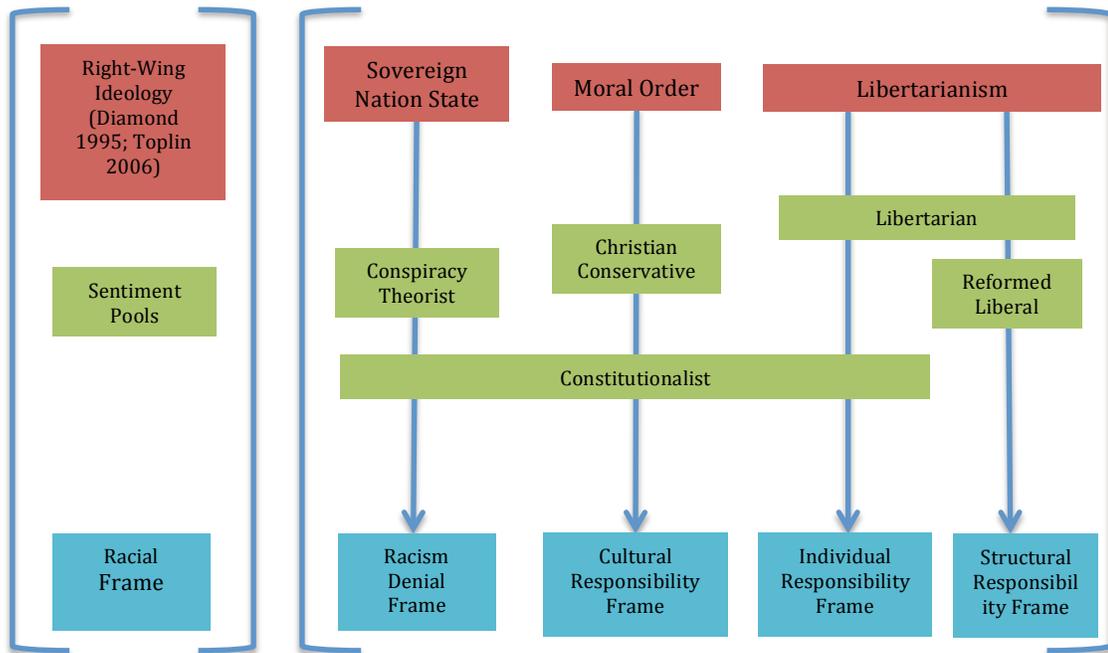
- 1) **Racism Denial Frame:** This frame, employed by Conspiracy Theorists and Constitutionalists, influenced by the sovereign state ideology, argues that racism does not exist. Rather, racial tension is due to the continued discussion about race in the United States. They believe that continuing to talk about race will literally divide the nation by

undermining national unity and sovereignty.

- 2) Individual Responsibility Frame: Libertarians and Constitutionalists, influenced by the libertarian ideology, primarily use this frame. They argue that racial inequality is the result of the individual shortcomings of people of color. This frame ignores structural causes of racial inequality and, as a result, sees any programs or services designed to fix inequality as divisive and an assault to white Americans.
- 3) Cultural Responsibility Frame: Sentiment pools, including Christian Conservatives and Constitutionalists, influenced by the moral order ideology, engage this frame. The frame promotes ideas embedded in the culture of poverty and underclass discourses, arguing that racial inequality is the result of pathological weaknesses in the culture of people of color.
- 4) Structural Responsibility Frame: Reformed Liberals and some Libertarians extend the frames that blame individuals and the culture of people of color. In doing so, they conclude that the state, particularly Democrats, are to blame for contemporary racial inequality. Democrats, through programs such as the War on Poverty and education, intentionally seek to make people of color dependent on the system.

These relationships are summarized in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Racial Ideologies, Sentiment Pools, and Racial Frames



***Racism Denial Frame***

Bonilla-Silva, in his book *Racism Without Racists*, explores four frames employed by white Americans. These include: *Abstract liberalism*, the foundational frame, which applies the ideology of liberalism to race; *naturalization*, which is employed by white people to suggest that “racial phenomena” are “natural occurrences”; *cultural racism*, which employs “culturally based arguments” to explain racial phenomena; and the *minimization of racism*, used by white Americans to discount the persistence of racism in society (Bonilla-Silva 2010: 28).

The racial denial frame, used by Constitutionlists and Conspiracy Theorists, is an extension of the minimization of racism frame as explained by Bonilla-Silva (2010).

These sentiment pools argue that racism only exists because people like Jesse Jackson or Al Sharpton talk about it. Further, they suggest that racism has no contemporary impact

on the life chances of black people. This frame denies systemic racial inequality and sees racism as the acts of individuals or exceptions to a broader level of equality. Thus, they conclude that societal conversations regarding racial inequality at best serve to hurt white people by restricting their rights, and at worst will lead to a breakup of the United States.

Given the engagement these sentiment pools share with the ideology of the sovereign state, this frame is logical. Activists concerned about the sovereignty of the United States believe that foreign groups: the United Nations, Jewish bankers, or European elitists are secretly seeking to control the United States. They maintain their power through social programs and social conversations – such as racial inequality – that deceive Americans and provoke fear.

### ***Individual Responsibility Frame***

While some TEA Party members deny the persistence of racism, others, particularly those engaging with libertarian beliefs, believe that racial inequality exists but blame it on the individual shortcomings of people of color. This is similar to what Bonilla-Silva (2010) calls the frame of abstract liberalism mentioned above (Bonilla-Silva 2010). Notions of equal opportunity, self-reliance, choice, and individualism are stressed to explain inequality. This allows white people to seem “reasonable” and “moral” in their opposition toward efforts to end racial inequality. It further allows them to construct white Americans as the true victims in society, carrying the burden of lazy black and brown residents.

This frame is employed to challenge contemporary programs such as Affirmative Action or to reframe conversations about equal opportunity. For example, white individuals may suggest that Affirmative Action threatens the notion of equal opportunity,

or they may justify the decision of white Americans to live in segregated neighborhoods as one of individual choice, open to all. This perspective ignores the impact of historical, institutional oppression on issues of equality today (Bonilla-Silva 2010). Note, people employing this frame do not deny that racism exists, but argue that state efforts to resolve it are necessarily detrimental to people of color. Rather, improvement can only come through hard work on the part of black Americans.

The sentiment pools employing this frame engage with the ideology of libertarianism. This ideology suggests that free market principles will inevitably lead to rights and freedom for all individuals and that, for this to be possible, all people need to be responsible for their own well-being. Given this framework, any inability to achieve success or greatness is interpreted as the result of laziness or a lack of work ethic.

### ***Cultural Responsibility Frame***

In contrast to members who deny that racism exists or view racial inequality as the result of individual shortcomings, the sentiment pools engaging with the moral order ideology argue that racial inequality is the result of minority culture. This is akin to what Bonilla-Silva (2010) calls the cultural racism frame, which employs “culturally based arguments” to explain racial phenomena. For example, someone using this frame may suggest, as people have insinuated Newt Gingrich did during the 2012 presidential primaries, that black culture is imbued with laziness (Blow 2012).

This framework engages with historical explanations regarding the “culture of poverty” and their intersection with analysis on race. Beginning with the Elizabethan Poor Laws of the 1600s, western societies began to perceive poor people as morally inferior and culturally deficient (Katz 1989). Many centuries later, people throughout the

United Kingdom and the United States continue to believe poor people are lazy parasites taking advantage of other hard working citizens. Possessing their own culture (the culture of poverty), scholars and politicians argue that “the poor” lack morality, are apathetic or passive, lack impulse control and forward thinking, and have weak moral and psychological strength (Katz 1989). Despite a slight decline in this moral narrative during the Great Depression, the argument that poor people are somehow deficient was fully restored throughout the 60’s, 70’s, 80’s, and 90’s (Katz 1989).

In his 1965 report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, Assistant Secretary of Labor, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, applies the culture of poverty argument to black people living in urban areas. He concludes that the high levels of black, urban poverty are the result of overly strong black women who threaten the masculinity of black men and thus cause a decrease in nuclear families and an increase in children born out of wedlock. Moynihan (1967) argues that, without intervention from white society, these problems will continue to flourish and suggests that the state provide a variety of employment and educational programs for black people living in urban areas. Scholars have challenged Moynihan’s theory arguing that he shifts the blame from the racist state to black culture (Ryan 1971) and rests on patriarchal or misogynistic norms (Quadagno 1996).

Given their ideological roots in moral order, Constitutionlists and Christian Conspiracy theorists argue that the culture of people of color is to blame for racial inequality. Moral order ideology suggests that white middle class nuclear families are threatened by social change. They are deeply concerned with the struggle for the rights of the majority, which they see as threatened by minority special interests.

### *Structural Responsibility Frame*

Subsequent scholarship on the issue of urban, black poverty, even among conservatives, has provided a more nuanced understanding of its causes than those engaged with by Christian Conservatives and Constitutionals. For example Murray (1984) employs the culture of poverty argument suggesting that this subgroup of the population lives outside the system, “preying on the mainstream” through the use of social services (Murray 1984; Murray 1999). He suggests that the United States has instituted a “custodial democracy” through which the majority of the population provides for and simultaneously segregates the underclass. However Murray goes on to partially implicate the welfare system, arguing that it enhances this dependence. Wilson (1996), in contrast, constructs a broader argument regarding how people of color living in urban areas become trapped in chronic joblessness because they lack the ability to develop the skills need to obtain jobs. He then, however, recognizes structural causes to this problem including: a lack of access to work, a lack of transportation, and stereotypes held by society towards black men.

These analyses begin with the cultural racism frame, but move beyond it to ultimately, or at least partially, implicate the state. Within the TEA Party, these two causal foci are separated into two distinct frames. Activists from the Christian Conservative and Constitutionalist sentiment pools blame minority culture for the cause of racial inequality, while some Libertarians and Reformed Liberals engage with similar ideas, but frame the state as the cause of inequality. Thus, this narrative, which I call the structural responsibility frame, is distinct from the individual responsibility frame, the cultural responsibility frame, and early scholarly discussion on the culture of poverty in important ways: the plight of the urban poor is not solely their fault; it is the result of an

abusive state that uses welfare-like programs to hurt poor people by intentionally continuing a cycle of poverty (Katz 1989).

Reformed Liberals and select Libertarians employ this frame through their shared ideology of libertarianism. These groups push their analysis further than those using the frames of individual or cultural explanations for racial inequality and implicate the state. This is likely due in part to the conversion of Reformed Liberals from progressives, who more often examine the impact of social structure on individuals (Zucker and Weiner 1993: 939; Robinson 2009). It is also likely a reflection of the fact that most people in these two sentiment pools have had more schooling at the college levels than other sentiment pools and thus may have had more exposure to structural arguments (Weiner and Eckland 1979).

### **FRAMES EMPLOYED BY TEA PARTY MEMBERS**

#### ***Racism Denial Frame***

The minimization of racism frame suggests that many white Americans believe that racial discrimination “is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life chances” (Bonilla-Silva 2010: 29). Activists who engage with the ideology of the threatened sovereign state (the Conspiracy Theorist and Constitutionalist sentiment pools) employ this frame, arguing that racial inequality does not exist, persists because people continue to talk about it, or only exists in the form of individual racists. This frame likely resonates with such activists because it is most in line with the belief that social problems are used to undermine the sovereignty of the nation and are manufactured by elitist puppet masters.

When asked whether or not they thought racial inequality existed in today’s society, activists answered by saying “no”, we “removed it” or “it’s a straw man.” They

further argue that one's race is "not relevant" or "shouldn't and doesn't matter" and thus they will not state their race for "B.S. polls." Rather, activists believe that societal discussions of race cause inequality to persist. For example, Jaimee, a Conspiracy Theorist employed as a nurse in Massachusetts, suggests that racial classification is the reason that racial inequality exists today: "I agree with Ron Paul in the idea that the only reason racial anything exists is because people are still categorized in different races. People are people, ethnicity should never be a question, handicap, privilege or anything else."

In the process of denying the existence of racial inequality, activists construct a complicated story for its presence in social discourse. Many, subsequently argue that Democrats perpetuate the myth of racial inequality. According to Evan, a Constitutionalist and college professor from Illinois: "It exists because people on the Left are constantly playing the race card and demanding special consideration for people of color." This is particularly true of left-wing people of color. For example, when asked if she believed racial inequality still existed, Becky, a software developer and Constitutionalist from Illinois, stated: "Some - not as much as there was 50 years ago. It also varies with location. It is propagated by race baiters, e.g Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson...."

Blaming Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, and the Left suggests that talk of racial inequality is invented in order to benefit certain sectors of the population. Activists, such as Mary, an unemployed Conspiracy Theorist from Illinois, suggest racial inequality only exists "in the eyes of those making money from preaching it." The perception of certain people of color "playing the infamous race card" is common among white citizens and

serves to undermine the experiences of people of color (Bonilla-Silva 2010: 29).

While serving the interests of people of color and Democrats, TEA Party activists claim that discussion of racial inequality hurts hard working white Americans. For example, Harold, a Conspiracy Theorist and Texan working in legal services, suggests that programs such as Affirmative Action: “discriminate against the productive people who are now actively discriminated against by the less productive classes who get an artificial advantage.” In this statement, Harold makes a different case than one would if employing the frame of individual racism. He argues an injustice against productive whites resulting from the invention of a false reality, whereas those engaging with liberalism would cite an infringement due to a violation of free market principles.

By arguing that racial inequality doesn't exist, this frame requires that white Americans are victims at the hands of the Left and people of color. Thus, stories of racial inequality are turned on their head with whites constructed as the victims of a false discourse. According to Joel, a Conspiracy Theorist and activist from Illinois, racial inequality only exists in this society with white Americans as the victims: “white Americans are not treated fairly anymore.” Similarly, when asked what would happen if undocumented migration didn't stop, Richard, a Constitutionalist and an activist from Illinois, stated: “The skin color of the oppressed will change from brown to white.”

In framing the potential for faulty conversation about race to harm whites, the minimization of racism frame also engages religious groups as racial categories. The West has constructed people from the Middle East as racial others who are terrorists, naïve and lustful, nomadic and uncivilized, or providers of oil, any of which make them acceptable military targets (Shaheen 2006; Said 1978). Through this process, Islam and

Judaism have been racialized and white racial fears have increasingly been filtered through language of religion (Joshi 2006; Rana 2007; Said 1978; Shaheen 2006). As a result, members of this religion are targeted in a similar manner to people of color throughout history: via interpersonal hate crimes, institutional discrimination such as racial profiling, and fear regarding cultures associated with Islam (Rana 2007).

While the racialization of Jewish people is most prominently seen in the example of Nazi Germany (Steinweis 2006), right-wing groups in the United States, including the Christian Identity Movement (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997), the Ku Klux Klan (Ferber 2000), and the less extremist militia or Patriot groups (Ferber 2000), have constructed Jews as a feared racial other for decades. Many right-wing activists in these sentiment pools believe that Jewish people secretly control the United States through the puppet government ZOG, or Zionist Occupied Government (Snow 1999), calling into question the extent to which Jews have become white. For example, Aaron, a Conspiracy Theorist from Minnesota, targets Jews with his racial fears: “Let me just be real blunt about this, [Glen Beck] doesn’t really talk about how the Jews have a lot to do with, you know, the money aspect... they pretty much own all of the media, they own all of Hollywood, they own all of smut, they own all of the radio, print media. They own all of the banks and all the brokerage firms. They own everything. Okay, so they control all of the money.”

Activists thus frame the manufacturing of racial inequality and subsequent programs to fix it as hurting Christians. Conflating religion with race, activists suggest that Muslims get special treatment under the law: “in Minneapolis, you have the Muslim cab drivers who wouldn’t pick up people that had wine.” There is also widespread fear of

the power of Islam in schools today, displacing Christianity, which is viewed as unjustly banned from the classroom. In the words of Luke, a Constitutionalist and activist from the Twin Cities metro area: “In the Minnesota Constitution, it specifically prohibits spending state funds on schools for any Christian religion and I’m curious why we spend money on Muslim schools...? Is it just Christian religions that are being suppressed in Minnesota?” This fear of Christianity being victimized is widespread in the TEA Party and both Jews and Muslims are scapegoated.

People employing this frame believe that if rumors of racial inequality are allowed to continue a race war will result and there will be a breakup of the United States: “The southwest part of the U.S. will become majority Hispanic. They will take over the states and local governments. Eventually, they will appeal to the U.N. to be carved out to make their own country led by its own indigenous Spanish speaking population, as happened with the breakup of Yugoslavia.” Thus, people of color are presented by activists as a threat to the United States and, likely, a pawn of the United Nations in their goal of taking control of the United States (see Chapter II). This fear of balkanization based on cultural lines is an extension of the white supremacist fear (or, for some, desire) of an American divided geographically along racial lines. Many members of white separatist groups believe that American society will inevitably erupt into a race war as the result of false beliefs in racial inequality and that the United States will be divided into racial regions (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997).

### ***Individual Responsibility Frame***

While some TEA Party members argue that racial inequality is a farce, others lay blame for injustice at the feet of individuals of color. These activists believe that black people,

whom they view as not sharing the American creed of hard work and individualism, are responsible for racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva 2010). Within the TEA Party, sentiment pools that engage with libertarian ideology, including Libertarians and Constitutionalists, use this frame.

Activists employing this frame argue that programs established to ameliorate racial inequality, such as Affirmative Action, are unethical because they contradict American values of hard work and self-reliance. Take, for instance, activists such as Gus, a Constitutionalist and purchasing manager from Virginia, who “do[es] not believe in quotas. [He] believe[s] in being qualified.” Gus posits that black people are “less productive” or unqualified and, as a result, get an immoral advantage through Affirmative Action programs. This not only ignores historical institutional injustices that led to contemporary racial inequality, but also distorts the program of Affirmative Action, purporting that it allows unqualified people access to employment and education<sup>20</sup>.

The belief that racial inequality is the result of individual shortcomings causes those who employ this frame to justify racial inequality through discussion on how to measure equality. If one values free market principles, they logically argue for measurement on the basis of equal opportunity rather than equal outcomes<sup>21</sup>. According to Samantha, a Constitutionalist and business consultant from Minnesota:

Jefferson explained it very well. That, what they mean that all men are created equal is that we have equal worth in the eyes of God and that, under law, written law, because they knew from history and past cultures, if you don't have a written law, you lose your culture because you are not treated the same under the law so you have a mobocracy or a democracy where one week if we do the same crime they are going to decide you deserve something more severe than me and, under law, you are treated equally. So you have to be very careful when you start talking about that we are all created equal because the progressives say we should have

equal outcomes, and that's not what it is about.

Natural laws are granted not by the state, but by God. According to Samantha, these rights include the right to “life, to self-governance, to own private property, and to enjoy the fruits of our own labor” (Samantha). Using welfare, which activists such as Samantha link to “stealing”, is in violation of the right to enjoy the fruit of one’s labor because they take money from the wealthy to pay for the services of the undeserving poor. Welfare thus violates natural law and inevitably infringes on peoples’ rights causing people to “lose [their] freedoms” (Samantha).

Activists who focus on individual responsibility and believe deeply in free market principles necessarily feel that social service programs are unnecessary and harmful to society. This stems from the argument that no one can be blamed for contemporary social inequality. For example, Wayne, a Libertarian activist from Minnesota, argues that contemporary inequality and one’s place within it is “an accident of providence” and thus, no one is to blame for his or her position within the social system. Because these “are just accidents of nature”, “it’s nobody else’s fault.” Wayne has a unique perspective having grown up in an impoverished black neighborhood in Detroit before moving to Minnesota for work. When I asked him who was responsible for fixing social inequality, if no one was culpable, he said “nobody” arguing that one “do[es] not have a responsibility to any other human being”, aside from his or her own children. Fixing racial inequality is not a “collective responsibility... it is an individual judgment.” To Wayne, history proves the problem with using the government to fix historical wrongs because it bolsters people who otherwise would not put in the needed effort for change. He suggests that in “17<sup>th</sup> century America, you didn’t have orphans and widows dying in

the street” because “there is always going to be somebody there who values that person, even if it’s a complete stranger.” Now, with an overly “intrusive government,” these programs fail to work because “people don’t do anything because they are told to do it.”

Activists employing the libertarian ideology, those from the Constitutionalist and Libertarian sentiment pools, engage with the abstract liberalism frame as constructed by Bonilla-Silva. They frame racial inequality to be the result of a lack of work ethic and subsequent state dependence among people of color in U.S. society. As a result, these activists believe that the state should play no role in fixing racial inequity.

### ***Cultural Responsibility Frame***

When running for the Republican nomination for president in 2012, Newt Gingrich suggested that black children in inner cities should get jobs in their schools as janitors in order to learn a work ethic that was not valued in their culture (Blow 2012). When asked about this proposition, Maxine, a Conservative Christian from Minnesota, defended his statement saying: “there was nothing inflammatory in that. What he said is true. It’s the culture. And he’s talking about changing the culture. I totally support it. He didn’t say anything wrong.” Growing increasingly passionate, Maxine reiterates her point: “He said nothing wrong. He said exactly what needs to be done. These kids need hope. They need direction. They need guidance. What he said [is that] these children live in homes where on Monday morning their father figure doesn’t get up and go to work. How do they know how to [if] they can’t function in a work environment and have a job because they’ve never seen it? He’s absolutely right. Absolutely right.”

These statements reflect the use of, what Bonilla-Silva (2010) calls, the cultural racism frame and Katz (1993) terms the culture of poverty. Activists who employ the

moral order ideology, from the Conservative Christian and Constitutionalist sentiment pools, frame racial inequality as the result of minority culture. This frame allows racial stereotypes historically explained by biology to be re-explained as culture, preventing the speaker from appearing overtly racist. For example, one activist, Stephen, a Constitutionalist from New Hampshire, believes that the reason racial inequality exists today is because “minorities” have a “culture of victimhood” which poses a danger to broader American society.

The cultural racism frame is further used to explain the danger of immigration to society. Activists believe that there is a unique threat facing the United States because of the difference between immigrants today and those of the past. For example, Samuel’s family came from Iceland, but assimilated into U.S. culture: “in town and everywhere else they spoke English. Because [that] language was the language of the country they were living in.” However, those engaging with this frame believe that immigrants today want to bring their culture to the United States, rather than assimilating. Keith suggests that, if we don’t stop migration rates “Our culture will dissolve into something unrecognizable.” The culture these activists ascribe to immigrants is one lacking morals and is thus particularly dangerous to upstanding Americans. Samuel, a Libertarian from Minnesota, argues that the United States will become like Mexico “because that's what they are comfortable with.” This may lead to the U.S. “becom[ing] a nation of law breakers” and will increase social problems including “welfare fraud” causing the country to “go broke.” The implications drawn by people using this frame are quite severe. Richard, a Constitutionalist and retired army nurse from Illinois, suggests, “we

will see our debt rise and we will be unable to care for the people here that are here legally and who are citizens because all those resources will go to illegals.”

Fears regarding the cultural imposition – or American cultural death – apply to groups other than Mexican immigrants. According to Samuel, Muslim immigrants also put the nation at risk: “The idea of the separation of church and state is something that is completely rejected by the Islamic religion. And, I mean, in Islam instead of a congressman, it’d be the Imam of the local mosque. And Sharia law. And I don’t know, I don’t think you’d look good in a habab [sic] or wearing one.” Talk about immigration by people using the cultural racism frame reflect broader national rhetoric which requires that people entering society assimilate to the dominant culture’s norms, yet prohibits people of color from so doing (Lowe 1996). This suggests that progressive immigration policies are a form of cultural suicide, akin to the concept of “race suicide” popularized by President Theodore Roosevelt in a move to increase birthrates among white Americans. Edward A. Ross coined the term in 1901 to explain the potential loss of the white “American” race as a result of immigration (Roediger 2005).

Maxine uses the metaphor of the Huns in Rome to illustrate the need for the state to end welfare programs which she erroneously believes benefit immigrant groups. She suggests that, if immigration doesn’t stop, the U.S. would share Rome’s fate. Maxine is referring to a broader right-wing contention that contemporary undocumented migration mirrors the historical immigration patterns that caused the downfall of Rome. They believe that “the Huns and other barbarians were the illegal immigrants roaming through the Eastern and Western halves of the Roman Empire” and that the empire attempted to control them through the provision of welfare: “Rome thought they could bribe Attila to

take it easy on their territories. They offered Attila a whole lot of welfare. The more welfare Rome offered Attila, the more Attila laughed at Rome as having grown weak” (Fredvcall 2011). A more accepted historical analysis of the fall of Rome is that the empire was split by a variety of forces within and outside of its boundaries, including internal strife, low levels of loyalty among citizens, growing strength of Germanic groups, as well as attacks by the Huns (Heather 1995).

Constitutionalists and Christian Conservatives, sentiment pools that engage with broader ideology regarding morality in society, frame racial inequality as the result of cultural defects on the part of people of color. They fear a loss of U.S. culture and national identity if immigration is allowed to continue unabated.

### ***Structural Responsibility Frame***

While many activists suggest a lack of self-reliance and work ethic are the cause of racial inequality, and others argue that culture is the cause, some activists center their critique on how social structures impact people’s lives. They have elaborate narratives explaining how institutions perpetuate racial inequality, most notably the welfare and education systems. While on the surface this narrative appears to be in line with the abstract liberalism or culture of poverty frames, it actually shifts the locus of responsibility from black individuals or black culture to the state.

People employing this frame are conscious of the role of the state in institutionalizing racism in the past. For example, Jane, a gas station attendant from Iowa and a Libertarian, suggests the state is responsible for some of the racism of the past: “the Supreme Court has screwed up a number of times... Look back into 1855 we have the Dred Scott decision and that was where the Supreme Court declared that black people

aren't people." Rather than contextualizing the decision in the racial ideology of the time, Jane suggests that it was "an absolutely reprehensible decision" and, in order to fix this decision and others like it "we had the Civil War and that's why we passed the 14th, 15th, and 16th, er, 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments - the Civil War amendments describing that they are people."

Activists engaging in this frame demonstrate awareness of the role that historical injustices continue to have on the present as well as the potential influence the state can have on racial equality in society. For example, the role of the state in constructing or perpetuating racial inequality is present in Leonard's analysis of the Holocaust. Leonard, a Jewish man from New York, suggests that the state is untrustworthy and has the ability to target racial minorities as scapegoats: "the Jews were singled out by governments... all Jews were banned from Vienna... unless the state decided that you were good enough, or useful, then they would keep you. But you were only good as long as you were useful."

Leonard's analysis is also applied to the United States. Leonard first recognizes the incredible disadvantage that black people had historically in society: "they had so many disadvantages coming out of being slaves, fucking slaves, right?" and, what was helpful in overcoming some of this disadvantage was a strong family unit developed through black religious ties suggesting that black people "were always very religious" and, as a result "family is very important to them." To explain today's racial inequality, Leonard suggests that "in the 1960s and even as early as the 50s, clearly, there was so many attempts at keeping blacks separate but equal and all this other shit" and as a result, "there was a Civil Rights Movement happening whether people liked it or not."

Activists often find support for their recognition of the role of the state in

inequality from social scientists, a group often met with disdain by right-wing activists. Nevertheless, Jason, a Libertarian political consultant from North Carolina, suggests that it is clear that the state discriminates against people of color: “It's scientifically proven that the number of black and Hispanic people that are incarcerated for crimes is vastly disproportionate when compared to other races. The fact that the Obama administration rubber stamps this type of policy, instead of railing against it, is proof in the pudding that Obama's administration is not at all concerned with racial equality.” This frame, though related, is distinct from abstract liberalism, placing culpability with the state rather than individual people of color.

The right-wing influence on people engaging with this frame ultimately places blame for contemporary racial inequality on two specific factors: social services and teacher's unions. Activists argue that it is not discrimination in the welfare system that causes inequality; it is the use of welfare and entitlement programs as they result in dependency. However, unlike people who hold individuals accountable, this group blames the state in its role as a predator. Leonard suggests that the state has intentionally manipulated black people through the welfare system. Despite the fact that welfare programs started during FDR's New Deal, Leonard blames the welfare system for black inequality post-1950. He suggests that, before 1950, black people were struggling because of segregation: “You look at a black family in the 1950's, they are already struggling through segregation. Segregation made it impossible for them to really be as successful as they can be.” Further, these challenges forced people to rely on families, despite the stress placed on them. According to Leonard, prior to being on welfare, black women were often forced to take back abusive husbands but, after having access to

welfare, women respond by rejecting their returning husband. As a result: “he goes back to his friends and he has idle hands now, no job, no family to care about, and sons that are growing up without fathers and seeing this is their only option.” Thus, it is welfare to blame for urban poverty: “the welfare guaranteed that they’d stay in the hood forever and they wouldn’t be integrated. The public housing would then go up in the same bad neighborhoods.” Furthermore, it led to a new form of slavery among black Americans, mental slavery: “Slavery is a state of mind more than anything, because it isn’t too obvious, they used welfare to enslave their minds.”

Leonard discovered this secret reading the Moynihan report, which he states is “very damning.” Specifically he argues that, “It exposes the government for literally breaking and destroying the black family unit.” Leonard accuses the state of using black people as “a pawn in a game that they are not even aware of.” Thus, Leonard concludes, “it’s really the welfare - and these phony attempts at making everything fair and equal that are actually harming minorities in general. The black people specifically.” Leonard’s interpretation of the Moynihan report, published in 1965, is rather unique. The report’s central argument is that black families raise children differently than white Americans and that this distinct socialization is culpable for contemporary inequality (Berger and Simon 1974). Leonard rejects this interpretation, which is more aligned with white racial frames of abstract liberalism and cultural racism, to blame the state for contemporary inequality.

The primary actors in this narrative of state abuse are Democrats who intentionally deceive and enslave the poor people of color. Leonard suggests that Democrats “always had a sullied name with black people” and that, as a way of fixing

this relationship, they decided to establish the welfare system. According to Leonard:  
“They thought: ‘here is a way to win them back, give them free taxpayer money.’”

Wayne, a black activist who lives in Minneapolis, but originates from Detroit, agrees: “It is the Left who regards my blackness as a disability which requires their aid to withstand. It is the Left who puts blacks in a place subordinate to their white peers. It is the Left which dictates how blacks ought to act, what we ought to say, and how we ought to think.” Holly, an unemployed Libertarian from Illinois, agrees with Leonard that the War on Poverty has destroyed black families: “Yeah, the War on Poverty. Actually, it just created more poverty. Because you could get more welfare if you were single, and so the black women decided, ‘well, I don’t need you, I can get more welfare when I’m single!’ And it just destroyed the black family! And go back to - all of the problems that we have are caused by government. We have to make people realize that being dependent on government is not the answer.”

People of color are not viewed as ignorant or willful participants in this deception. Rather, activists believe that when the imposed blinders are shattered, people of color will begin to support Republicans. Holly believes that people of color will realize they have been duped by the state “if they lose all their pensions and realize that they’ve been lied to for decades, and maybe they would actually change who they vote for.” Importantly, pensions are lost in all sectors of employment, not simply government, as a result of a weak stock market (Gray 2009) or corporate decisions (Schultz 2011).

The potential manipulation and enslavement by the welfare system exists in all government service programs, leading people in these categories to also oppose Social Security and Medicaid. Holly tells a story about Social Security and the War on Poverty

similar to those regarding welfare. She suggests that the advent of Social Security caused the destruction of families: “Somehow we survived without Social Security before it ever got invented, and it was because families took care of each other. And then government stepped in and said, ‘oh, we’ll do it,’ so families don’t have to take care of each other anymore... If you’re willing to hand people money to not work, why should they work?” Prior to the passage of the New Deal, ideas regarding poverty in the United States were similar to conservative notions today: that poverty was the result of individual shortcomings<sup>22</sup>. Holly further examines this pattern of state organized inequality in the case of Chicago, arguing that Medicaid and Obamacare are tricking people into becoming dependent on the state, so that Democrats will be elected. According to Holly: “Medicaid is destroying Illinois and now we’ve signed on to implementing Obamacare two years early in Illinois, because they’re trying to get more people on Medicaid in Chicago, whether legal or not they don’t care... So [Democrats] have to have these people dependent on government.”

Reformed Liberals who engage with this frame, often suggest a moral or religious case for the ending of state support. Alison, a stay-at-home mom and Reformed Liberal from Virginia, like Wayne, sees dependency as a result of an untrustworthy state as an issue of respect. She tells a story about seeing a speaker discuss microlending programs at her church. According to Alison, one of the congregation members asked why they offer loans instead of gifting their support. The speaker replied that “when you give something to somebody you automatically put a gap between you and that person and you establish yourself as a higher” but that if you give them a loan you convey that “we are equal and we will enter into a business agreement together because I believe you are

my equal and you can handle this.” This analysis made sense to Alison who “kind of flipped” and began to see “entitlement programs not as helping people as much as hurting them.”

People in these sentiment pools are the most likely to engage in activism in support of racial equality. While blaming the state for these problems, such activists often see a potential solution in empowering people through education. Due to her belief in the locus of racial inequality as with the state, Alison and her TEA Party chapter in Virginia started a program in Section 8 housing projects to empower children of color. She and a colleague, “an African American gentlemen”, lead what she calls “the Minority Outreach Committee” which works with kids in housing projects. They provide tutoring services, arts and crafts, and basic history lessons to teach “correct history.”

Activists see the education system as an additional locus for the trickery of the Left, which led to the mental enslavement of people of color. In explaining why this program is needed, Alison suggests that schools are “failing miserably, especially for minority children.” She argues that the schools teach kids that they “have to live a certain way” and “keeps them down.” As a result, her group teaches impoverished children of color that “free markets and capitalism and conservatism actually works for everybody, not just rich fat white people.”

Thus, despite viewing the state as the root of these problems, Alison employs the notion of the American creed to emphasize that anything is possible, if only the children work hard. Thus, she and her colleague help students “dream big” with activities such as a “dream board” which asks students to go “through magazines and cut out pictures to represent the things [they] wanted to achieve in life.” Alison believes that most students

successfully internalize this work ethic. She told me that once they did lessons on “how to save money and that sort of thing” and that children emphasize the need to “save it”, learning these ideas from their grandparents. Alison suggests that the parents who do not teach these lessons simply “don’t know and so they don’t know what to tell them, they believe what is told to them as true.” And, what is told to them, according to Alison, is that they will not have lucky breaks in society and that their hard work will not be rewarded.

When asked who was responsible for the failures of the American school system, Alison does not specifically fault the federal government or programs such as No Child Left Behind. Rather, she blames the “teachers unions” whom she sees as self-interested and dismissive of the students’ needs. As a result, she argues that we “spend more and more money on kids” and that, in turn, “they do worse and worse.” In fact, she suggests, this pattern has existed since the 1970s when teachers unions started encouraging teachers to teach in order to “have kids pass the test, not really learn something.” She sees today’s union members as inflexible and tells a story to that effect:

I saw a cartoon one time that had a teacher sitting at a desk saying “we only have one exam” and he was speaking to a group of animals, it was a money, a fish, an elephant, a giraffe, and a varied group of animals, he said “we only have one exam, and it’s to go climb that tree.” And that is like the public education system. We’ve only got one way to test you and this is it. And, because you are a fish and you try to climb a tree, you are going to be labeled as an underachiever, someone who’s not making it, who’s not - and that follows kids throughout their life. It might not be that they are incapable of learning, they are just not capable of learning in a room with kids and a teacher screaming at them.

Alison believes that charter schools, where teachers are not unionized, can help students more: “They might, you know, need a different way to learn and that’s what I think is so

wonderful about charter schools is that there is that competition there and the school bells are programmed.”

Among activists who believe that social structure impacts racial inequality there is awareness that ending inequality will be difficult. Thus, while primarily focusing on individual empowerment, some do call for state-based solutions. According to Leonard: “You can’t make something that has been institutionalized, like racism, just go away like that. You really can’t.” Interestingly, some activists support additional government attention to ameliorate these structural problems. After concluding that racial inequality is “disgusting and insulting” and that “there should be laws protecting discrimination”, but the government should not be “forcing private business to do any such thing”, Jane concludes that “if there are public schools, then schools with minorities should be given extra attention.” While Jane doesn’t support public schools on principle, believing that education should be privatized, she argues that in so far as these institutions do exist, they need to work towards providing extra support for children of color.

This structural focus also comes into play in some activists’ ideas regarding immigration, placing the onus on the state rather than individual immigrants or Latino culture. According to Henry, a self-employed Reformed Liberal from New York: “Immigration isn’t a problem, in fact we need it. What we really need is to bring back incentive for U.S. companies to bring back U.S. jobs. The so-called ‘illegal’ immigration is a symptom of the entitlement system. We need to bring that to an end.” Similarly Jason suggests: “The problem with immigration is that too many incentives are offered for people to come here (such as in-state tuition) to people who are not paying into the system... It is the system that is to blame for the immigration problems in America, not

the immigrants.”

This frame differs from the frames of abstract liberalism and cultural racism in that it places the locus of blame not on the culture of blacks or a lack of black work ethic, but on the state or – when acting as agents of the state – Democrats. Notably, for people in the TEA Party, this structure-based critique is primarily against programs that they disapprove of: welfare and federally-funded education. Teachers are blamed, rather than proven culprits such as the No Child Left Behind program (Darling-Hammond 2007), the Federal Housing Administration (Lui et al 2006), the slave system (Feagin 2004, Feagin 2006), the Jim Crow system (Feagin 2004, Feagin 2006), and a litany of other institutional forces (Feagin 2006).

This frame employs aspects of analysis by Murray (1984) and Wilson (1996) who argue that poor people of color living in urban areas are trapped there by programs developed by the state to help them. However, this analysis is limited as it fails to engage with the degree to which all structures in the United States are founded upon racism (Feagin 2006). Mills (1997) provides a clear analysis of how these frames continue to perpetuate racial inequality by failing to recognize, what he calls “the Racial Contract”, an agreement between white Americans that equality and justice in the nation’s Social Contract, is for whites only. As a result, all structures and institutions in society continue the oppression of people of color, while programs such as welfare or Affirmative Action provide an image of progress, but make no structural changes. Similarly, Goldberg (2001) demonstrates that racism and racial exclusion have been and continue to be foundational in the construction of modern nation states. Thus, TEA Party frames are logical outgrowths of a racist state yet simultaneously continue to shape its development.

## **CELEBRATING COLORBLINDNESS: FRAME AMPLIFICATION**

Previous research has demonstrated that frame alignment, or strategies connecting the “interests and interpretive frames” between sentiment pools, is important for movement mobilization (Piven and Cloward 1977; McAdam 1982; Gamson et al 1982; Snow et al 1986). The existence of frames alone is not enough for mobilization, rather, what matters is how those ideas are “interpreted and the generation and diffusion of those interpretations” (Snow et al 1986: 466).

In the case of the TEA Party, activists employ a series of sentiment pool-based frames, internal to the organization, to explain contemporary racial inequality. Thus, the TEA Party is tasked with aligning these distinct sentiment pool-level frames with the organizational level-frames in order to heighten resonance. This research shows that activists employ the tactic of frame amplification, the process of highlighting particular events and issues of the broader movement, to draw attention to the organizational level-frame rather than the division brought by those at the sentiment pool-level (Noakes and Johnston 2005).

Frame amplification consists of two varieties: value and belief amplification. Value amplification, which is the form employed by the TEA Party regarding racial inequality, highlights a particular value “presumed basic to prospective constituents” and uses this shared value to mobilize activists. The second form, belief amplification, connects activist beliefs to the need to mobilize (Snow and Benford 1986).

The TEA Party constructs an organizational-level frame of colorblindness that encompasses the frames employed at the sentiment pool level. This strategy works because, despite having distinct explanations for how racial inequality operates, all

activists believe that they are not racist. The notion of colorblindness emerged following the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and reduction in Jim Crow racism (Sears 1988; Bobo and Smith 1998; Bonilla-Silva 2010). This rhetoric is characterized by a denial of one's own racism and the engagement of one or more explanations for racism: individual shortcomings of people of color (Kinder and Sears 1981; Bonilla-Silva 2010); cultural shortcomings of people of color (Bobo and Smith 1998; Bonilla-Silva 2010); the naturalization of inequality (Bonilla-Silva 2010); and the minimization of racism (Bonilla-Silva 2010). The TEA Party engages with the socially acceptable concept of colorblindness to develop a frame that encompasses those of the various sentiment pools.

The colorblind frame can be seen in the claims made by activists from all sentiment pools who unite under an amplified belief that TEA Party activists are not racist. According to Sarah, a Conspiracy Theorist from Minnesota: "As a conservative, I do not view people via group identities and treat people as individuals, not by their race, sexual orientation, creed, or color. I will speak up when injustice is being done, however." Thus, she employs value amplification by uniting all activists under the shared belief that blatant racism is wrong, or at least not appropriate by social standards despite her investment in the ideas of cultural racism. Similarly, Evan, a Constitutionalist, argues that: "People on the right are mostly colorblind. They do not evaluate a person based on the color of their skin. Yes, there are people of all political ideologies that are bigoted, but that's not the general situation." Evan's statement emphasizes the shared value of colorblindness as linked to individual responsibility and self-reliance, and provides an excuse or opportunity for dismissal of the blatantly racist comments made by activists.

The amplification of the social movement organization's frame of colorblindness

to encompass sentiment pool-based racial frames is also done through references to civil rights leaders or black politicians at the group's monthly meetings. For example, Robert, a Christian Conservative, lauds Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., using his words to promote conservative beliefs: "How many of you have heard of Martin Luther King? Did you know that he was a Baptist Pastor? And a Republican at that... He was a Baptist pastor who got behind his pulpit and said 'We're not going to stand for this anymore. We are all given freedom by God, natural law, doesn't matter what color we are'"<sup>23</sup>. Robert, then, demonstrates that the TEA Party is not racist by asking members to be like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Colorblindness is touted as an organization-level frame routinely at TEA Party events. At each TEA Party meeting a different community group or person of color is invited to start the meeting by either reciting the Pledge of Allegiance or speaking to the group. For example, at one meeting, two Somali immigrants, who had only recently become American citizens, were brought to the meeting in order to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Following their recitation, Zach, a chapter leader, commented on how special it was to have two patriotic immigrants at the meeting and invited them to attend again in the future. At a different meeting TEA Party leaders invited an Asian business association to address the group. This organization, made of primarily Hmong immigrants, discussed their journey to the United States and their gratitude to American citizens for saving them from the communist government in Laos. After their talk, Zach glowingly invited them to come to future meetings, as he had with the Somali immigrants. None of the guests ever returned to a TEA Party meeting while I was doing my fieldwork, which suggests that they did not feel welcomed as part of the organization.

By inviting people of color to perform symbolic gestures at TEA Party meetings, activists and leaders are celebrating, or amplifying, notions of colorblindness. Through tokenizing people of color, TEA Party leaders are, in effect, performing the semantic shifts described by Bonilla-Silva (2010). Rather than verbally saying: “Some of my best friends are...”, they do so through actively constructing an image of having friends or allies of color. Semantic shifts, according to Bonilla-Silva allow white American to “mend racial fissures, to restore a color-blind image when whiteness seeps through discursive cracks” (2010: 70). Similarly, through physically creating an image of having friends of color, activists are able to focus the notion that they are all colorblind and gloss over their differences in racial ideology.

Alison makes a similar semantic move when discussing her project in the Virginia housing projects. She says that “that lady that we work with on this project”, whom she describes as African American, was unaware of the TEA Party before meeting them. According to Alison “this lady” was talking to a friend and “mentioned that she was going to work with the TEA Party.” That friend reacted negatively, saying “TEA Party? What are you doing with the TEA Party?” to which the first woman responded: “I looked at her and I told her – and where are you when these kids need help... what I know about the TEA Party is that they show up, that they have somebody at my place every other Thursday just like they said they would and they are out there busting their tails to help these kids.” According to Alison “that lady” then said “you can say anything you want, but the TEA Party’s alright with me.” This story by Alison also emphasizes the colorblind values by promoting the idea that people of color approve of the TEA Party’s activities and are aligned with TEA Party values.

## SUMMARY

TEA Party sentiment pools, influenced by distinct ideologies, employ different frames to explain contemporary racial inequality: Conspiracy Theorists and Constitutionlists deny that racial inequality exists; Constitutionlists and Libertarians place blame for inequality on individual people of color who fail to live up to the American dream; Christian Conservative and Constitutionlist sentiment pools accuse culture; and Reformed Liberals and Libertarians blame the state. In order to function as a single movement organization and to rally activists around a central goal, the TEA Party uses the frame alignment strategy of frame amplification to unite activists under a shared value of colorblindness.

## **CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS OF FRAMES AND FRAME ALIGNMENT IN THE TEA PARTY PATRIOTS**

By the fall of 2011, 41 percent of voting Americans who participated in exit polls said that they supported the TEA Party (Pew Research Center 2011). A year later, in April of 2012, the same percentage of people reported support for the organization (Clement 2012). In the 2010 election, the TEA Party elected 32 percent of the 138 candidates it backed (Moe 2010; Zernike 2010b). Two years later, the TEA Party elected 40 percent of the ten candidates they endorsed (Gray 2012). They have also continued to receive validation from media outlets as exemplified in the airtime given to them, in addition to the Republican Party, following the 2013 State of the Union Address. Historically the political party not in power provides a rebuttal to the address. This year there were two rebuttals: one from the Republican Party and one from the TEA Party (Politico Staff 2013). Thus, it is clear that the TEA Party continues to be placed in a position to affect national and local politics.

It may be the case that TEA Party success in electing national candidates has reached its peak (Arrillaga 2012). However, most chapters have shifted their efforts and are concentrating on electing candidates to local office (Arrillaga 2012). In Minnesota, for example, the chapter meetings are filled with people running for local office seeking the support of the TEA Party. The first 30-60 minutes of each meeting is dedicated to hearing from these guests or members in what the group calls “one-minute moments.” In 2012, TEA Party activists ran and were elected to local offices such as the Bureau of Land Management (where they can fight Agenda 21), city councils, and school boards.

The organization has also had an international influence, with chapters forming in countries from Italy to Japan to Australia (World TEA Party 2012).

While the number of TEA Party groups has decreased (from 1,000 to 600), the organization has not lost its power. Skocpol suggests that this is “a very good survival rate” for a social movement organization and argues that, rather than decreasing in power, they have simply moved from the streets to the meeting room (Skocpol in Arrillaga 2012). Members congregate at community centers, bars, library, and restaurants. They read legal history, current bills, and court decisions. Activists spend hours contacting representatives (Skocpol in Arrillaga 2012) and running for local offices themselves. Foley (2012) argues that the TEA Party has become the base of the Republican Party (Foley in Arrillaga 2012).

One possible factor contributing to their lasting influence could be in the framing strategies of the movement organization. As this dissertation demonstrates, the TEA Party consists of five different sentiment pools internal to the organization: Christian Conservatives, Constitutionalsists, Reformed Liberals, Libertarians, and Conspiracy Theorists. Christian Conservatives believe that state activity reduces the rights of the majority while attempting to aid those in the minority and thus are distrustful of state expansion. They seek resolution through combining Christian morality with the state. Constitutionalsists also fear an overreaching state, but seek to resolve the problems implicit in this extension by limiting the size of the state to that explicitly outlined in the Constitution. Reformed Liberals believe that the overreaching state particularly hurts people of color and low-income families and seek to limit its intervention through empowering these groups with the message of individual responsibility. Libertarians

believe that current social problems are the result of an overreaching state and that the solution is to reduce the size of government, limit regulation, and run the state and economy on the principles of free market capitalism and individual responsibility. Conspiracy Theorists believe that the U.S. government is a puppet for secret elitists, such as the United Nations or Jewish bankers, and that citizens need to arm themselves in defense of the nation. Members of each category engage with different right-wing ideologies (moral order, libertarianism, and the need to maintain a sovereign nation state) in distinct ways.

Nevertheless, the organization successfully unites them under a shared story of national fathers seeking to protect Childlike Americans from the evil forces of the Villainous Left. The organization engages with this frame of parenthood in order to maximize member commitment through creating a strong collective identity. They accomplish this through using frame amplification to emphasize ideologies under which activists unite, such as colorblindness or activists as national fathers rescuing the nation. In turn, activists are able to maintain their distinct frames and, collectively, members “agree to disagree” (Victoria). In this concluding chapter, I re-explore the relationship between the sub-movement level frames of the sentiment pools and the collective action frames of the movement organization, arguing that this case study demands a reanalysis of social movement theory regarding framing and provides insight regarding movement commitment and framing processes.

### **FRAME ALIGNMENT AND FRAMING LEVELS**

The TEA Party, consisting of these distinct sentiment pools, demonstrates the use and success of frame alignment strategies to function within an organization to increase

activist commitment and suppress potential conflict. Commitment to a movement is tied to one's ability to identify with the central narrative of the organization and to share a collective identity with other members. The TEA Party organization uses frame amplification to increase the collective identity held by members – that they are working as national fathers to protect Childlike Americans from the evils of the Left – and is thus able to maximize member identification to the organization and their peers. This identification results in a stronger level of commitment among members and enables the TEA Party to have a plethora of committed members, willing to sacrifice for the cause and “agree to disagree” about certain issues.

The case of the TEA Party demonstrates the existence of a tertiary framing level. There is a previously unexamined level of sub-organizational framing that occurs at the level of the internal sentiment pools. The other two levels have been examined extensively by social movement scholars and include collective action framing at the level of the movement organization and the use of a broader master frame employed beyond that of the TEA Party Patriots, at the level of the social movement. As explained above, the TEA Party Patriots is composed of five sentiment pools of activists who have distinct understandings of the role of the state, the rights of citizenship, and current race relations. These distinct stories are sentiment pool level frames. They operate in the same way that collective action frames traditionally function: to package information in ways that resonate with members.

Despite these distinct sentiment pool level frames, activists remain united as TEA Party members through the broader, movement level, collective action frames. Collective action frames have three functions: they explain the “injustice of a social condition” and

make “diagnostic and prognostic attributions” regarding social phenomena (Snow and Benford 1992). The injustice component, developed by Gamson, “places the blame” on a constitutive “them” and provides a “we” to respond (Noakes and Johnston 2005).

Diagnostic framing is an interpretation of what is wrong and how, while prognostic framing provides a resolution for this problem or injustice (Noakes and Johnston 2005).

This overarching frame provides a language that all of the sentiment pools can employ in their mobilization and unites the organization together. For example, regardless of whether one is fearful of an overreaching state because of a loss of individual rights (Libertarians and Constitutionalsists) or because of a secret Jewish takeover (Conspiracy Theorists), activists can unite under the goal of limiting the government to the programs outlined in the Constitution to protect Childlike Americans from the Villainous Left.

The collective action frame uniting the movement organization consists, in part, of the three pillars of the movement organization: free market capitalism, constitutionally limited government, and fiscal responsibility. A second, more substantial aspect of the collective action frame is the metaphor of the patriarchal family used by activists – which could be seen as an unspoken but shared forth pillar. As discussed in Chapter III, activists are united in their belief that Americans are childlike and in need of protection from the Villainous Left. Thus, TEA Party activists, acting as national fathers, need to teach citizens proper morality and provide them with defense against the Left. This serves as a broader basis for mobilization for all sentiment pools as it explains, or diagnoses, where social problems develop (the Villainous Left and the inability of Childlike Americans to protect themselves) and how they can be resolved (by teaching the children how to behave and hold themselves, each other, and politicians accountable).

Above the movement organizational level, at the level of the social movement, is the master frame. Master frames, though distinct from collective action frames, share some qualities. They too explain injustices while attributing blame and suggested solutions. However, unlike collective action frames they are broader, more generic, and, according to Snow and Benford (1992) serve to “provide a grammar that punctuates and syntactically connects patterns or happenings in this world.”

The master frame with which the TEA Party engages emerges out of a broader history of right-wing populism that provides a unique combination of “attacks on socially oppressed groups with grassroots mass mobilization and distorted forms of antielitism based on scapegoating” (Berlet and Lyons 2000: 1). While not all populist movements are right-wing, some, including those from which the TEA Party emerged, are. These organizations combine anti-elitist scapegoating with efforts to maintain or increase racialized systems of social privilege and power (Berlet and Lyons 2000).

Populist groups can include distinct themes including producerism, antielitism, anti-intellectualism, majoritarianism, moralism and Americanism (Berlet 2012). However the key theme of relevance to the TEA Party is that of producerism. Producerism is the perception that true Americans work hard and produce despite having to fend off the threats of “parasites at the top and bottom of society” (Berlet 2012: 57). Berlet (2012) argues that this can include processes of scapegoating as well as the belief that “proper citizenship is defined by white males” (57). Today’s TEA Party movement engages with historical ideas of right-wing populism, and employs the “producerism” theme as a master frame (Berlet 2012). Members fear that government programs disproportionately benefit the undeserving lower classes in society and that they, as the hard working middle

class, are victims. Simultaneously they target “bad” elites, such as President Obama and the Left while celebrating the accomplishments of those whom they view as positive: corporate elites, creating jobs and fighting for free-market capitalism (Berlet 2012). The master frame is, thus, less specific than that of the collective action frame and is adopted and employed by a variety of social movement organizations (Snow and Benford 1992).

The TEA Party is not necessarily unique in the phenomenon of tertiary framing. Given work by Blee (2002) that demonstrates that people who join racist organizations become racist after becoming a part of the organization, it seems as if the effect of movement frames may exist in other movements as well. Similarly, della Porta (2005) discovered a similar pattern in the global social fora. Nonetheless, there are a few features of the TEA Party that may explain the persistence of distinct sentiment pools within the organization. The first is a characteristic shared by the global social fora movement: the organization is spread out geographically. There are an estimated 600-1000 chapters in the United States, each operating largely autonomously. The characteristics shared by these groups, which may explain the presence of internal sentiment pools, include geographic breadth and organizational size. Perhaps, given these factors, it is inevitable that members would hold very different views yet share central narratives upon which an organization can capitalize. Secondly, TEA Party meetings are not times for the sharing of knowledge between members or sentiment pools. Rather, they generally include a series of speakers discussing issues relevant to the organization, typically amplifying the collective action frame. Thus, there may be less need to reconcile the differences between the sentiment pools. As long as activists are able to unite around the shared ideas regarding the three pillars and responsibility of citizens, the differences can be glossed

over or ignored. Third, the distinct sentiment pools may be a result of the TEA Party's rapid rise. Perhaps Santelli's engagement with the collective action frame resonated with enough people from a variety of perspectives that those who joined opted to capitalize on TEA Party momentum despite having to sacrifice some elements of their personal demands.

### **ADDITIONAL MECHANISMS ENHANCING COMMITMENT**

The case study of the TEA Party Patriots makes several contributions to social movement theory. Previous research has focused on the use of frame alignment to recruit people from sentiment pools external to the movement organization (Snow et al 1986). However, the TEA Party demonstrates that individual movement organizations can actually consist of sentiment pools with distinctive frames. Sentiment pools are not simply potential recruits, but divided groups of members influenced by different ideologies and employing different sub-movement level frames. However, there are two additional mechanisms that contribute: the need for social connection in retirement and the position of the TEA Party as a hybrid social movement organization and political party which provides opportunities for the sentiment pools to share their perspectives with other activists when solidarity is less important.

The willingness of activists to join the TEA Party, despite having to abandon or limit discussion about some issues important to them, may be influenced by an individual's need for social integration. A significant number of activists were recently retired and chose to fill their newly free time with work for the TEA Party, while others site making friends as the best part of being in the TEA Party. For example, Tom, a Reformed Liberal does not always support everything shared at a TEA Party meeting: "I

agree with some things that are thrown out, but not all. Rather, he enjoys being in the TEA Party because “primarily I like to be around people that are engaged and smart.” Similarly, Leonard, a Libertarian, found the TEA Party when they supported him when Facebook unjustly targeted him. He argues that the website kept removing his political pages without just cause and the TEA Party rallied to support him. Thus, while he, too, doesn’t agree with everything the TEA Party does, he is willing to set those things aside for the friendships that he has developed.

Many suggested that the TEA Party provided a social outlet in the place of employment and that it helped them to find friends and meet people in a period of life wherein this can be a difficult task. For example, Jason tells me that he “did not” know anyone in the TEA Party when he joined but since that time: “I have made hundreds of good friends in the past few years in sharing our struggle for freedom and peace.” Becky and Gus agree. Becky argues that: “The other patriots I've met along the way” has been the most rewarding part of being in the TEA Party, while Gus says “I have found a whole new group of like-minded friends since becoming involved in politics.” Similarly, Sam suggests his only friends are people in the organization: “I actually don’t hang out with anybody that’s not TEA Party anymore. Because these are good people... people that believe in the country, and wanna save the country, and care about their kids, and they’re American!” These friendships further contribute to the ability of activists to identify with the social movement organization and, thus, continue to strengthen their commitment (McAdam 1986).

Secondly, the TEA Party is in a unique position as a hybrid social movement organization and political party. This position influences framing processes based on a

temporal dimension: during times of increased mobilization (such as an election), activists are called on to forget their differences and unite under the master frame. However, during periods of decreased mobilizations, discord between micro-frames is allowed to manifest.

During my research I found increased attention to the collective action frame and efforts to promote collective identity in the months leading up to the 2012 primary and general elections. However, prior to election season, the various sentiment pools were more likely to hold meetings featuring their specific concerns. For example, the Conspiracy Theorists held a full day workshop on Agenda 21 and the Conservative Christians held a meeting discussing their perceived fallacy of separation of church and state.

Thus, it appears that the organization seeks to increase members' affinity to the organization during periods of intense mobilization. However, alternative periods are met with opportunities for sentiment pools to discuss and promote their ideas. These events, which are not typically held at the general monthly meetings, are attended primarily by those who already are members of a given sentiment pool. However, there is some overlap. For example, the day-long workshop on Agenda 21 held by Conspiracy Theorists was attended by a number of Constitutionlists and Libertarians as well. It is possible that these opportunities assuage members who feel that they may be sacrificing too many of their values by participating in the social movement organization. However, more research in this area needs to be conducted.

## **FRAMING AND COMMITMENT**

One remaining question regarding framing and commitment is the degree to which it is successful in the TEA Party Patriots. Through the process of frame amplification, key ideas are highlighted or emphasized in order to unite the movement and foster activist commitment. One clear method of accomplishing this is through the use of catchphrases, such as the three pillars (Snow et al 1986; Noakes and Johnston 2005). This is also done through emphasizing ideas related to the agreed upon narrative pitting Fatherly TEA Party activists against Childlike Citizens and the Villainous Left. Frame amplification serves as a method of increasing the commitment of the sentiment pools to the movement organization. This reflects the findings of McAdam (1986) who suggests that activists are more committed to movement organizations if they deeply identify with the goals and ideas of the movement. As frames are ways of packaging movement ideas, it is logical that frame amplification, and other frame alignment strategies would foster movement commitment for the distinct sentiment pools.

While, on the one hand it seems clear that the strategy has worked to unify activists, as the TEA Party continues to operate on the national level, evidence of success can also be found in the statements of activists. As discussed in Chapters II and III, activists have constructed a frame positing themselves as fathers who need to protect Childlike Citizens from the Villainous Left. Through this process members further construct a narrative that they are “good” citizens. The superiority of “we” is evidenced in the argument made by Victoria that TEA Party activists are better than those in Occupy Wall Street: that they are not as “vulgar” or “crude”, that they are not “destroying things” nor “swearing.” Rather, the TEA Party is “way more reputable.” This strength of character, she claims, allows activists to “agree to disagree” on a variety of issues and

unite together to focus on the things that are of shared importance. Further evidence of this success is in Chapter III.

While activist claims of willingness to agree to disagree provides some evidence that activists are committed to the collective identity and movement organization, the greatest evidence is the time members have dedicated to the group. Of my sample, all but three activists had been in the organization since it was founded in 2010. Exceptions included Victoria, Tom, and Alison, who are all substantially younger than other activists. Victoria joined after being increasingly frustrated with the progressive and combative atmosphere she found herself in living in an urban environment. When I interviewed Tom, he has been in the group for about a year, but had difficulty attending meetings because he was enrolled in a college where there was not a chapter. Finally, Alison joined after an ah-ha moment at church shifted her thinking on social issues such as welfare. The forty-one other people in my sample had been involved with the TEA Party for nearly three years and intended to remain involved, despite the time commitment and frustration they face. As discussed in Chapter III, TEA Party members see themselves as sacrificing for the benefit of misguided citizens. TEA Party members speak at length about the time, money, and energy they dedicate and have dedicated to the organization despite the negative feedback they get from family, friends, and strangers.

It is difficult to measure commitment and it is possible that those who were willing to be interviewed are also those that are most committed to the movement organization. However, during the years I was attending TEA Party meetings, attendance at these events remained constant: between 250 and 300 people. Nonetheless, further

research needs to be done on frame alignment within movement organizations, collective identity, and commitment.

### **POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY**

Further research also needs to be done on the role of political opportunity in the case of the TEA Party. Political opportunity theory examines the impact of political structures on the decisions made by social movement organizations and to provide the context shaping movement actors (Meyer 2004). Some scholars have demonstrated that political opportunities, such as amenable shifts in public policy and “the political environment”, are necessary for a movement organization to take root (McAdam 1982). Others have used the theory to explain why and how movement organizations develop and operate as they do (Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak and Giugni 1995).

Tarrow (1996) distinguishes political opportunity structures based on their scope (national level or smaller scale) and specification (cross-sectional or dynamic). The first type is policy-specific political opportunities, which includes specific policies or laws that shape the ability of social movement organizations to organize. For instance, was a state law that overturned restrictions on the right to fundraise may be a political opportunity for an organization. The second type, group-specific opportunity, expands or limits the rights of a particular group to organize. For example Goldfried (1982) examined the relationship between judges and the interpretation of laws regarding the rights of the labor movement to organize. Third, operating at a larger level, is that of cross-sectional statism. This type of opportunity structure is related to the very nature of the state. Kitschelt (1986) argues, for instance, that Sweden has an open political system that makes collective action more possible than other nations, such as France. Finally,

Tarrow (1996) explores the opportunity structure of dynamic statism. Dynamic statism is reflected in events that shape the nature of the state such as the end of a war.

With respect to the TEA Party, it seems clear that a variety of events opened the political arena for the group's emergence. Regarding the TEA Party, as a national organization, the political opportunities operating on the state level have had a profound influence. As mentioned in Chapter III, Santelli's "rant" – and example of a dynamic statism – is a perceived catalyst for the movement organization's development. Chapter III also explored public opinion at the time regarding entitlement and the use of public goods and services. Further, DiMaggio (2011) argues that there was an increase "in a general conservative mood throughout the United States in 2009 and 2010" and that the number of Republican candidates elected in the 2010 election is evidence of this shift in mood (126). The TEA Party was not only formed out of this shifting political climate, but they were able to capitalize and leverage public frustration regarding the economic crisis (DiMaggio 2011). Specifically, the TEA Party helped frame the national conversation by arguing that there is an overreaching state (diagnostic) and an overly entitled populous (diagnostic), hurting average Americans and that the only way to prevent economic collapse (prognosis) is to for hardworking citizens to fight (us vs. them). However, more research needs to be done to examine the role of political opportunities in the movement organization.

#### **A CONCLUDING NOTE ON TEA PARTY INFLUENCE**

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) monitors hate group and extremist activity throughout the United States. Among the groups they study are Patriot and militia movements, which share many of the concerns as TEA Party activists. According to the

SPLC, Patriot organizations first formed in the 1990s but grew by 755% between 2008 and 2011, the first three years of the Obama administration (SPLC.org 2013). Similarly, membership in the John Birch Society, a conservative movement organization deeply concerned with the presence of communists in the government, has increased during this time. Some argue their strength is due to the TEA Party. The groups share a goal of restricted government powers and rejection of the Federal Reserve system, among other policies (Boyle 2010).

The TEA Party Patriots were a major force in this most recent movement cycle and, as a result, strongly shape the master frames employed by broader right-wing organizations (Snow and Benford 1992). This influence can be seen in the shifting political climate among the right since the movement's formation in 2010. As mentioned above, some argue that the TEA Party has become the Republican base (Foley in Arrillaga 2012) or that it has pulled the party to the right (Bischoff and Malloy 2012). What may be evidence of this is the perceived influence the TEA Party had on Romney's campaign, leading him to lobby for "some tea party-friendly positions" and pepper his speeches "with lines that play to the tea party crowd" (Arrillaga 2012) or the success of Governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin, and conservative legislatures elsewhere, in curbing the strength of unions in their respective states (Greenhouse 2011)<sup>24</sup>.

The process of influencing master frames can have particular influence on broader society as it is the spread of this knowledge that truly indicates the power of right-wing movements to influence society through changing culture (Rochon 1998), shaping public policy (Burnstein 1999), and reconstructing social categories while policing their content (Berlet 2000). A powerful measure of movement success is the production of new ways

of thinking and behaving in broader society (McAdam 1994, Rochon 1998). To that end, right-wing movements have had major victories, leading to the war on drugs, repressive immigration laws, U.S. military intervention abroad, gun rights, and neo-liberal economic policies (Berlet 2000, Diamond 1995). There is no doubt that right-wing movements have been, and continue to be, successful, powerful factors in shaping mainstream and centrist politics (Berlet 2000, McIntosh 2004).

Thus, as research on the TEA Party Patriots continue, it is important to examine how it is that movement frames shift, how the master frame is modified, and the impact it has on broader social discourse. The TEA Party has already changed the Republican Party and popular opinion on a variety of issues and will likely continue to have an influence, particularly if news outlets persist in giving the organization a voice. For example, DiMaggio (2011) examines news reporting of the TEA Party and its impact on public opinion and finds that media stories regarding the TEA Party promoted conservative narratives regarding the national health care debate and may have led to the decreasing public support for the health care program, including the public option. While the lasting impact of the TEA Party on popular discourse and public policy is not yet clear, it is my hope that this dissertation, through providing analysis of the frames employed by activists and the use of the frame at the organizational level, has provided a starting point for this analysis.

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## APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF SAMPLE

Code	Name	Age	Race	State of Residence	Occupation	Estimated Annual Salary	Sentiment Pool
001MN	Timothy	70s	White	Minnesota	Retired – Auto Industry	25K	Constitutionalist
002MN	Samuel	70s	White	Minnesota	Unemployed	15K	Libertarian
003MN	Wayne	40s	Black	Minnesota	Airport Grounds Crew	30K	Libertarian
004MN	Samantha	50s	White	Minnesota	Business Consultant/ Author	50K	Constitutionalist
005VA	Alison	30s	White	Virginia	Stay at home mom	40K (Husband)	Reformed Liberal
006MN	Victoria	30s	White	Minnesota	Real Estate Agent	40K	Constitutionalist
007MN	Tom	20s	White	Minnesota	College Student	10K	Reformed Liberal
008MN	Aaron	60s	White	Minnesota	University Staff	30K	Conspiracy Theorist
009NY	Leonard	30s	White (Jewish)	New York	Self Employed – Advertising	50K	Libertarian
010IL	Donna	40s	White	Illinois	Unemployed	Unknown	Reformed Liberal
011OH	Ralph	60s	White	Ohio	Contacted Capital Improvement	60K	Constitutionalist
012TN	James	60s	White	Tennessee	Unknown	Unknown	Christian Conservative
013NH	Stephen	50s	White	New Hampshire	Banking	35K	Constitutionalist
014WA	Kyle	70s	White	Washington	Truck Driver	60K	Constitutionalist
015CA	Anthony	50s	White	California	Self Employed	70-80K	Libertarian
016NC	Jason	30s	White	North Carolina	Political Consultant	25K	Libertarian
017IL	Evan	50s	White	Illinois	College Professor	70K	Constitutionalist
018IL	Becky	50s	White	Illinois	Software Developer	35K	Constitutionalist
019NC	Sharon	60s	White	North Carolina	Teacher	35K	Constitutionalist
020NY	Henry	50s	White	New York	Self-Employed	100K	Conspiracy Theorist
021MA	Jaimee	20s	White	Massachusetts	Nurse	35K	Conspiracy Theorist
022IL	Joel	30s	White	Illinois	IT Systems Administrator	45K	Conspiracy Theorist
023IL	Duster	30s	White	Illinois	Independent Contractor	15K	Libertarian
024VA	Eric	30s	White	Virginia	Unknown	20K	Libertarian
025IL	Richard	50s	White	Illinois	Retired Army Nurse	40K	Constitutionalist
026IL	Mary	60s	White	Illinois	Unemployed	Unknown	Conspiracy Theorist
027TX	Harold	60s	White	Texas	Legal Services	50K	Conspiracy Theorist
028VA	Gus	40s	White	Virginia	Purchasing Manager	100K	Constitutionalist
029IA	Jane	30s	White	Iowa	Gas Station Attendant	15K	Libertarian
030IL	Holly	50s	White	Illinois	Unemployed	Unknown	Libertarian
031VA	Shawn	30s	White	Virginia	Custodian	15K	Conspiracy Theorist
032MN	Zach	60s	White	Minnesota	Unknown	50K	Constitutionalist
033MN	Robert	40s	White	Minnesota	Minister	50K	Christian Conservative
034MN	Maxine	50s	White	Minnesota	Lawyer	50K	Christian Conservative
035MN	Sarah	50s	White	Minnesota	Lawyer	50K	Conspiracy Theorist
036MN	Keith	60s	White	Minnesota	Unknown	Unknown	Constitutionalist
037MN	Luke	50s	White	Minnesota	Unknown	Unknown	Constitutionalist
038MN	Sigmund	60s	White	Minnesota	Unknown	Unknown	Reformed Liberal
039MN	Kevin	40s	White	Minnesota	Unknown	Unknown	Conspiracy Theorist
040MN	Mariah	50s	White	Minnesota	Business Consultant	50K	Conspiracy Theorist
041MN	Matthew	50s	White	Minnesota	Unknown	Unknown	Conspiracy Theorist
042MN	Charles	70s	White	Minnesota	Unknown	Unknown	Conspiracy Theorist

<b>043MN</b>	Ann	50s	White	Minnesota	Self-employed	40K	Conspiracy Theorist
<b>044MN</b>	Mark	60s	White	Minnesota	Unknown	Unknown	Christian Conservative
<b>045MN</b>	David	50s	White	Minnesota	Attorney	80K	Constitutionalist

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### **Introduction:**

Set up my project. Talk about the movement organization to which the participant belongs to illustrate that I've done my homework. Let them ask any important questions to establish a bit of comfort.

### **Joining Movement**

*Tell me the story about how you came to join the movement/organization [by name].*

[from here conversation could go a variety of ways – ask probing questions depending on answers]

What are the main reasons you think that others in [x state] have joined?

*Did you know others in the organization before joining?*

Were you involved in any other political groups or church groups before you joined?

### **Reasons for Continued Participation**

*I know that membership in the organization involves a lot of work. What motivates you to continue your participation? [again, follow up questions dependent on answers].*

### **Methods of Recruitment**

*From an outside observer it seems that one of the successes the organization has had is in terms of membership recruitment and growth of the organization. What are some of the ways you recruit members?*

Can you walk me through the process of how the organization grew in size so rapidly?

### **Goals**

What would you say are the main goals of the organization nationally?

What are your personal goals with membership in the movement?

What have been your main sources of information on these issues?

### **Tactics/Structure**

What do you do to try to attain these goals?

What strategies you think you are the most useful? The least?

How are the activities organized by the state groups different than the national movement?  
Does it differ between border states and states in the center of the nation?

### **Continued Hope for Change**

*Do you think that the goals of the organization will be realized?*

*What do you think will be the hardest to attain? Why do you think that is?*

*What have you had the greatest success with? Why do you think that is?*

### **Thoughts on Government**

*What do you see as some of the shortcomings of the U.S. government?*

*How do you think they could be changed?*

*What would an ideal government look like?*

*What are your feelings on Obama? Democrats? Republicans?*

### **Thoughts on Race and Migration**

*The news has accused your movement of being racist, if you could respond to this accusation, what would you say?*

*Do you talk about race as a group?*

*What do you think will happen to our country if illegal immigration isn't stopped?*

*How do you think it will affect you personally?*

*What is the worst case scenario?*

*If you had to design the perfect immigration policy or program, what would it be like?*

### **Thoughts on Gender and Sexuality**

*What do you think of Sarah Palin? Michelle Bachman? Hillary Clinton? Nancy Pelosi?*

*What are your beliefs on current political discussions regarding feminism and women's rights?*

*Do men and women in the X organization do the same activities? Examples?*

*Did you/your wife work outside of the home? Do you think women should work outside of the home? How does this affect our country?*

*What do you think about the state of marriage in the US today? (Follow up questions as needed).*

*Do you have any thoughts regarding the recent media focus on same-sex marriage?*

*How do you think most people in X movement feel about same-sex marriage?*

**Thoughts on Economics/Social Security**

*What do you see as the most significant effects of the current economic crisis? (follow-up as needed)*

*What do you see as the key causes? (follow-up as needed)*

*Do you have any solutions to offer to the economic crisis?*

*How do you feel about social security? Medicare? Medicaid? Military spending? Education spending? Foreign aid? - or – What do you see as the most wasteful areas of government spending? The most important?*

*What is the function of government?*

**What it Means to be American**

*What would an ideal America look like to you?*

What is a patriot?

How do you react to the criticisms you receive?

What would you like to say to the general American people who don't know about who you are except from the news reports?

**Final Thoughts?**

*What is the best/most rewarding part of being in the organization? Most challenging?*

What have I not asked you that you think is important?

## APPENDIX C: ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> While the exact membership rates of TEA Party groups is difficult to obtain, members assert that the TEA Party Patriots is the largest TEA Party organization, followed by the TEA Party Express. There is also a website organized by a group called TEAParty.org, which is distinct from the other two organizations.

<sup>2</sup> It is unclear how many people are considered TEA Party co-founders as the movement purports to have been organically mobilized following Santelli's rant.

<sup>3</sup> While beyond the bounds of this project, it is important to recognize that the TEA Party does not overtly operate around issues of white superiority or gender. Discussion regarding racial inequality can be found in chapter III.

<sup>4</sup> Wallace did become a born again Christian in 1983 and, in the later years of his career he did repent for earlier actions (Pressley 1998; Carter 2000). However, the degree to which this shift in opinion was truly a change of heart, as opposed to a political tactic to earn black votes, is debated (Sanders 1983).

<sup>5</sup> Abortion is only three percent of the organization's services and no federal funding can be used by the clinics to perform abortions (Klein 2012).

<sup>6</sup> The global use of the term republic is broader than that employed in the United States. Throughout the world a republic is any country that is not a monarch. However, in the United States, a republic is typically a state that does not have direct democracy, but indirect democracy whereby citizens elect representatives whom make political decisions on their behalf.

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<sup>7</sup> Conspiracy Theorists also oppose treaties orchestrated through the United Nations and free trade agreements, as they believe they are a threat to national sovereignty and the right of the United States to develop their own policies regarding international business.

<sup>8</sup> Sarah is correct, the Treaty Clause of the Constitution does place these restrictions on presidential treaties. However, Agenda 21 is not a treaty, it is a non-binding U.N. agreement to sustainable development (Lenz 2012; United Nations Environment Programme 1992).

<sup>9</sup> On this date President Obama actually signed an executive order establishing The White House Rural Council, which right-wing activists believe will take control of the lives of all Americans living in rural areas, including many of them. According to the White House, the executive order is intended to increase sustainability, economic prosperity, and quality of life in rural areas through financial investment in technology, health care, recreation, and education (Executive Order 13575 2011).

<sup>10</sup> This perspective is particularly interesting as it reflects similar beliefs held by left-wing beliefs that Africa is used by the United States and Israel as a testing ground for medicine and drugs.

<sup>11</sup> This is far from the reality faced by children in schools. Feminism continues to be feared and miscategorized (Valenti 2007), socialism remains stigmatized as does atheism (Garneau 2012; Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006; Keene, Douglass and Handrich, Rita 2010; Leibovich 2009), and gay and lesbian children continue to face bullying and abuse from their peers without institutional protection (Berlan, Corliss, Field, Goodman and Austin 2010; Brummel and Sharp 2010).

<sup>12</sup> It is true that there has been a vast increase in the number of children on medication for ADHD due in part because of changing diagnostic criteria (Centers for Disease Control and

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Prevention 2013). It is true that the Obama Administration and Department of Homeland Security offered \$500 million dollars for states as part of the Race to the Top program. This was competitive money intended to invest in early childhood education and gave money to states and community research and innovation organizations with proposals that created “comprehensive plans to transform early systems with better coordination, clearer learning standards, and meaningful workforce development” (Department of Education 2011). This program makes no mention of medicating children nor their need to “not squirm.” However, by activists and others (Kain 2011) it was coupled with a quote attributed to Sebelius by a single source, conservative news organization CNS News, in which she said “you really need to look at the range of issues, because if a five-year-old can’t sit still, it is unlikely that they can do well in a kindergarten class, and it has to be the whole range of issues that go into healthy child development” (Zilenziger 2011). This has led people to falsely conclude that this funding is to discipline kids.

<sup>13</sup> Pollution Control Agency

<sup>14</sup> Glenn Beck, a media personality strongly supported and admired by Tea Party activists, recently published a dystopic novel called *Agenda 21* (Beck 2012).

<sup>15</sup> While it is true that GM did not benefit from the Cash for Clunkers program as much as Ford and other, foreign, automakers, this was due to the low fuel efficiency of GM cars, not the program in and of itself (AP 2009). It is also true that many GM dealers attempted to withdraw from the program because the government payments were often quite delayed, but GM corporate prevented this by paying the fees to dealers in the interim (Katz 2009). Thus, Holly’s narrative and, perhaps, misplaced accusations further frame Democrats as intentionally preying on innocent citizens.

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<sup>16</sup> It is true that in 2007 Senate Democrats wrote a letter to Clear Channel Communication CEO Mark Mays asking him to condemn comments by Limbaugh that the government used “phony soldiers” in interviews with the press regarding the Iraq war (CNN 2007). However, the letter consisted of only 41 names (Ferraro 2007) and was not seeking to silence Limbaugh broadly, but to prevent him from presenting libelous and false statements on air as if they were facts (CNN 2007).

<sup>17</sup> The First Amendment states “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” (U.S. Constitution 1789). Neither it nor the Constitution specifically state the phrase “separation of church and state.” Rather, this phrase was coined in a letter from Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptists, assuring them that the state would not enforce a religion upon them (Jefferson 1802). However, through a series of court cases, the first amendment has been interpreted to secure a space between the church and the state (Everson vs. Board of Education 1947; Reynolds vs. United States 1879). Tea Party activists do not agree with the way in which the amendment has been interpreted in the courts and accuse Democrats who follow this interpretation as violating the founding documents.

<sup>18</sup> It is the case that Obama has fitted the motorcade vehicles with DC’s “Taxation Without Representation” license plates, as did President Clinton in 2000 (Parnass 2013). It is also the case that there have been congressional attempts to give D.C. voting representation in the House and that Democrats are the primary supporters (Phillips 2009; U.S. Senate 2009; U.S. House of Representatives 2009). However, Independent Joe Lieberman and Republican Orin Hatch, among others, have joined Democratic delegate from D.C. Eleanor Holmes Norton,

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and numerous senate democrats and representatives to jointly propose the most recent bills, SB 160 and HR 157 (Phillips 2009; U.S. Senate 2009; U.S. House of Representatives 2009). Nevertheless, Tea Party activists use issues such as these to construct Democrat leaders as manipulatively violating the law for their own benefit.

<sup>19</sup> The White House bowed to pressure on this issue and posted President Obama's long form birth certificate on their website (The White House 2011).

<sup>20</sup> This argument is false for three reasons: first, the program is found to be rather ineffective in reducing inequality (Dorn 1979) as less than three percent of selective college admissions are due to affirmative action (Fryer and Loury 2005) and only five million, less than three percent of people of color in the United States, have been helped by affirmative action in the work place (New York Times 1995). Second, the primary beneficiaries of Affirmative Action are white women (Katznelson 2006), but even then the effect is only marginal (Hartmann 1996). Third, not only does Affirmative Action not lead to unqualified people attaining employment or education (New York Times 1995), it further labels people of color with a stigma insinuating they were only admitted or hired because of the program (Heilman et al 1992).

<sup>21</sup> This divide is not new: the debate over the 1964 Civil Rights Act split the Democrats and Republicans over this very issue. In this example, Democrats supported policies aimed towards equal outcomes while Republicans supported only the rights of basic citizenship, including equal opportunity (Edsall and Edsall 1992).

<sup>22</sup> U.S. laws regarding public assistance mirrored European poor laws which were intended to separate the deserving poor from the undeserving poor (Harvey 1999). During this period, Americans worked for their entire lives to make ends meet, often for low wages and in

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unhealthy or unsafe conditions (Katz 1996). Poor people were often placed in government run poor houses, where they were housed and efforts were made towards their rehabilitation (Katz 1996). Alternatively poor people could be auctioned off alone or in groups to subcontractors (Hannon 1985; Katz 1996). Evidence exists to show that neither these methods, nor private charity, worked to resolve poverty (Katz 1996). However, following a series of long depressions, public understanding of poverty shifted allowing space for the state to assist citizens through policies such as those in the New Deal (Harvey 1999). Furthermore, studies have shown that state programs are successful in reducing poverty in developed nations (Kenworthy 1999; Katz 1996).

<sup>23</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a known supporter of John F. Kennedy for President, though his father was widely known as a conservative community leader.

<sup>24</sup> DiMaggio 2011 examined media reporting on the protests and news reporting in Wisconsin during the battle over union laws. He concluded that, despite a much smaller population of TEA Party activists, they received greater and more sympathetic news attention than did the pro-union protestors.