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COMMUNICATING A CENTRALIZED MESSAGE WITHIN
A DECENTRALIZED POLITICAL MOVEMENT:
THE TEA PARTY

by
Michael J. Walsh

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts in Public Relations Degree
of
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at
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Thesis Chair: Joseph Basso, JD, Ph.D., APR

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I dedicate this body of work to:

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Abstract

COMMUNICATING A CENTRALIZED MESSAGE WITHIN A DECENTRALIZED POLITICAL MOVEMENT:

THE TEA PARTY

2010/2011

Joseph Basso, Ph.D.

Master of Arts in Public Relations

This study examines the effectiveness of how well the Tea Party movement has communicated its message to both members and non-members. This research indicates that the present day populist political movement has done an exceptional job informing the public of its goals.

While many non-members of the Tea Party movement disagree with its goals, they were, nonetheless, well versed in both the primary and secondary goals of the movement. Additionally, the research showed that the message has been consistent over various channels including broadcast and cable television, social media, websites, radio, and face-to-face.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The 2008 presidential campaign saw the election of Democrat Barack Obama riding a massive groundswell of grassroots and Internet-based support from liberals and moderates. Today, a similar movement has begun to form among conservatives.

By the 2010 general election, the conservative Tea Party had become a powerful participant in several elections across the country.

The significance of this new political organization is not only surprising in its influence, but also its apparent lack of a central political infrastructure and communication system. By comparison, the Democratic and Republican parties have governing national committees that help to set the platform for national and regional campaigns for public office. Both of these entities consult with the media, governmental agencies, corporate and private donors, public relations agencies, and interested leaders, all for the benefit of candidates across the country. Each national committee has a clearly defined system and campaign plan that embraces a cross section of employees.

However, the Tea Party features none of these formal structures. The organization more closely resembles a loose confederation of interested local membership bodies who follow a few basic tenants of conservative political thought - lower taxes, smaller government, and reduced government interference in business and personal lives and representation of the interests of the electorate.

Alexander Chen (2010), explains:

The Tea Party Movement...took shape at the very beginning of the Obama presidency. It arose out of a widespread libertarian and populist outrage over the federal government's intervention in the economy. While opposing the Obama administration, the Tea Party has remained independent from the Republican Party, sometimes openly confronting the GOP establishment. Yet the two organizations are united in their opposition to the Democratic agenda (p. 20).

The Tea Party movement's quick growth and notoriety may be largely attributed to the reach of the Internet.

Despite the pros and cons of new technology and communication systems, there is ample evidence that the Internet has resulted in a significant shift in communication capacity and potential for political organizing. The proliferation of mass-media and ICT communications have dramatically changed the way information is sent, received and accessed and this has at least compromised the ability of the media, cultural and political institutions to ensure hegemony (Carty, 2010).

The Tea Party drapes itself, literally and figuratively, in patriotic colors. Its websites are infused with a sense of pro-America and government for the common people. These techniques envelop one of the two persuasive message techniques, peripheral vs. central. Individuals who do not attend reflectively or critically to the persuasive arguments presented, but who are captivated by the emotions of the situation or the character of the speaker, travel the peripheral route. In contrast, individuals who weigh the arguments thoughtfully and logically are personally motivated and cognitively able to attend to the message and follow the central route. Although attitudinal change is expected from both paths, those who travel the central route are apt to experience deeper and more permanent effects than those who follow the more peripheral path to persuasion (Alexander, 2004).

The Tea Party's negative effect on the Republican agenda occurred most notably in the 2010 Delaware U.S. Senate election where the anticipated Republican nominee, and

presumed election winner, Congressman Mike Castle, was upset in the Republican primary by Tea Party backed candidate Christine O'Donnell. While Castle was expected to win the general election rather handily, O'Donnell lost in a landslide to the Democratic candidate, Chris Coons.

In other areas of the country, the conservative Tea Party candidates won in surprising fashion. Rand Paul won a U.S. Senate seat in Kentucky; Marco Rubio won a U.S. Senate seat in Florida; and Mike Lee won a U.S. Senate seat in Utah. In each case, the Tea Party backed a candidate considered to be a Washington *outsider*. A reoccurring theme in most Tea Party literature and speeches is the need for new blood in government office.

This is where the Tea Party seems to be most effective, rallying support for a general change in Washington. As Lee Harris (2010) explains:

“... shortly after the Tea Party's Nashville convention, Arianna Huffington warned that too much emphasis on the “ugly” aspect of the Tea Party movement should not blind us to “the fact that some of what’s fueling the movement is based on completely legitimate anger directed at Washington and the political establishment of both parties. Think of the Tea Party as a boil alerting us to the infection lurking under the skin of the body of politic” (p. 2).

Various surveys and polls give fairly similar demographic perspectives of the typical Tea Party member: white, male, married, conservative, educated, over the age of 45, and Christian (Kate Zernike, 2010).

An October 8, 2010 Rasmussen Report poll found that:

Voters are now almost evenly divided in their views of the movement: 41% have a favorable opinion of the Tea Party; 40% view it unfavorably; and 19% are undecided. This is a slightly more critical assessment than was found in August. Still, 47% believe the Tea Party movement is good for the country, a finding that hasn't changed since May. Thirty-two percent (32%) say the movement is bad for America, while 14% say it's

neither.

(http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/general_politics/october_2010/tea_party_participation_up_as_election_nears)

Need for Study

The 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama is often credited to the support he garnered through new grassroots and Web-based fundraising and campaign techniques.

These techniques were developed and formally adopted by the Democratic Party leadership and then rigorously followed to great success.

Costas Panagopoulos (2009) explains:

“...The Obama campaign saw value in reaching out to independent voters. As David Plouffe, Obama’s chief campaign manager, commented, “Obama has real appeal out here, particularly with independent voters.” The campaign also claimed to target what it referred to as “casual voters,” as well as young voters, women, and minority voters in both the Latino and African American communities. Other accounts added that the Democratic Party efforts particularly targeted individuals who it determined were “persuadable” and those who were “sporadic” voters (i.e., those who may vote or sometimes vote, as opposed to those who always vote or those who never vote). Plouffe borrowed from Dowd’s 2004 strategy of using community volunteers. He remarked, “[w]e really have tried to build localized campaigns... [W]e’ve got people from [local] communities who are out making the case to the remaining undecideds and reminding their neighbors who are supporting Senator Obama to vote.” (p. 321)

The Tea Party is often credited with helping to swing the House of Representatives back to the Republican Party, as well as, reducing the Democratic Party majority in the Senate during the 2010-midterm elections. Far more than any standard campaigning directed by the Republican National Committee, the populist pressure of the electorate is regularly noted as the main influencer of the 2010 election. How this might translate to the presidential campaign in 2012 is unknown.

Problem Statement

The researcher undertook this study in an effort to better understand the communication implications of grassroots, populist movements like the Tea Party. In particular, the researcher hoped to ascertain how the growing populism in the United States helps Tea Party leaders effectively communicate their message to supporters and potential supporters, without a centralized political machine or highly organized structure.

Hypothesis 1: The majority of respondents will report that information about the main tenants of the Tea Party - free markets, fiscal responsibility, and constitutionally limited government - are generally well-known among all segments of the political population: liberals, moderates and conservatives.

Hypothesis 2: The majority of respondents will report that most Americans perceive the membership of the Tea Party primarily consists of conservative whites over the age of 40.

Hypothesis 3: The majority of respondents will report that, while the principle beliefs of the Tea Party are well-publicized, secondary beliefs are just as widespread.

The Tea Party appears to have significant influence on some elections but it is difficult to determine where this influence derives. Increased media recognition and replay may account for the increased influence. The increase in available broadband Internet access allows for published, independent thought and readership/viewership outside the constraints of mainstream media and formal political parties. No longer do interested voters receive their information from media outlets like large newspapers and

broadcast news only, but now bloggers and independent media can shape the voting public's perspective.

It is important to understand what messages Tea Party members received, as well as the channel in which they received it.

Procedure

The researcher used three techniques to measure the effectiveness and consistency of the Tea Party message.

1) The researcher conducted a content analysis of Tea Party websites from across the country to determine if the general Tea Party tenants are maintained from site-to-site.

2) The researcher conducted a structured observation to determine the demographic makeup of Tea Party members who attended local events and meetings.

3) The researcher conducted a quantitative survey to determine the effectiveness of Tea Party communication efforts among members and non-members to determine if the general public is aware of the core tenants of the Tea Party as compared to Tea Party members.

Delimitations

This study did not focus on the role or effectiveness of communication techniques by the Democratic, Republican or any third-party political entity. Research respondents were of voting age. This study did not attempt to validate the messages communicated by Tea Party members.

The study was limited in time to October 2010 to June 2011. The initial study began earlier than anticipated, October 2010, due to an early Tea Party rally.

For the structured observation, the study was limited to Tea Party events taking place in the greater Philadelphia metro area.

Summary

The political process in the United States is regular entertainment fodder for basic cable, prime time and late-night television programs. However, the entertainment value of politics belies the importance of the political process to people across the country. The voting populous appears to have become more enraged at the *politics as usual* perspective that many claim permeates Washington, D.C. This anger has become more evident through the rise of strong political anti-parties - entities that express the belief that the only answer to the government's perceived ineptitude is to replace elected officials in an attempt to *clean house*.

How the Tea Party will influence upcoming elections is uncertain. The Tea Party appears to have enough localized nationwide appeal to maintain its influence, and thus its communication techniques are worthy of study.

Operational Definitions

Loose confederation - As opposed to a highly structured, procedural entity, loosely confederated groups share common principles, but can remain quite different in terms of governance. (Lee, 1781)

Grassroots - Of or involving the common people as constituting a fundamental political and economic group (Princeton University, 2006)

Bloggers - A **blog**, a blend of the term *web log*, is a type of website or part of a website.

Blogs are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. (Wikipedia, 2010)

Outsider - someone who does not belong to a particular company or organization or who is not involved in a particular activity. (Longman)

Chapter II

Literature Review

The Tea Party is the populist movement for of the second decade of the 21st century. As Gary Gerstle explains in a New Labor Forum article, populism is the recurring tendency in American history, usually appearing at times of economic stress and cultural dislocation. It almost always features groups who portray themselves as ordinary Americans or true Americans who have suffered at the hands of powerful elites who control the economy and/or government. Populists take it upon themselves to oust the elites from power and reclaim America for its people. Populism tends to supply the language for articulating and protesting disparities in wealth and power in American life (Gerstle, 2010).

Perhaps what has made the Tea Party so difficult to nail down is that it exists without a quantifiable leadership. Gerstle (2010) writes that no single person or group of people dictate party platforms, espouse guiding principles, or act as a visible target for opposing groups. Tea Party groups are highly localized, bearing a similar resemblance to other grass roots organizations across the country. However, the most notable of these tend to be environmental fringe groups like the Earth Liberation Front and the Animal Liberation Front, social fringe groups like neo-Nazis, and religious fringe groups like The Army of God. By contrast, Tea Party groups have eschewed the violent nature of these groups but use the same techniques to rally support and impact local, state and national political races and discourse (Gerstle, 2010).

Alexander Chen of the Harvard Law Review credits the birth of the Tea Party to CNBC commentator Rick Santelli who, during a February 2009 protest at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, declared he wanted to create a Chicago Tea Party to rally against the Obama administration's proposed *homeowner bailout*. Santelli was recalling the iconic 1773 Boston *Tea Party* where locals tossed tea from the ships in Boston's harbor to protest the British Parliament's Tea Act and was the most notable protests against taxation without representation. Soon after Santelli's rant, anti-tax movements and events sprang up across the country, with many taking the Tea Party moniker. Chen notes that while the Republican Party and the Tea Party are aligned in their dissatisfaction with the Democrat Party, the Tea Party has often stood at odds with the GOP on several policy issues and candidates. Tea Party groups also seem to relish their independent status and have rebuffed several attempts by the Republican Party to co-opt the group (Chen, 2010).

The Tea Party has proven time and again that while it remains a fairly small and non-organized group, it is a powerful media darling. Extra! writer Julie Hollar compared grass roots events at the July 2010 U.S. Social Forum held in Detroit, which drew an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 progressive activists from around the country holding meetings and discussions on improving several elements in U.S. society versus the February 2010 Tea Party Convention held in Nashville that hosted a gathering of 600. Across 10 national outlets, in the two weeks surrounding each event, the Tea Party convention received 177 mentions while the U.S. Social Forum received three (Hollar, 2010).

Extra! writers Peter Hart and Steve Rendall point out that citizen movements are hardly ever front-page news, even with clearly identifiable political agendas; however,

the Tea Party is getting the fervent support of conservative media, and wide, often uncritical, coverage in the corporate media. The Tea Party may outrank other events simply on star power alone; however, it might also be because the Tea Party is simply a more relatable and interesting tale (Hart and Rendall, 2010).

The Tea Party's first victory occurred in early 2010 with the election of Republican Scott Brown to fill the seat of the late Senator Ted Kennedy. A Christian Science Monitor headline declared Brown *The Tea Party's First Electoral Victory* (Powell, 2010). The New York Times reported that Brown's win was "the coming of age of the Tea Party movement, which won its first major electoral success with a new pragmatism" (Adam Nagourney, 2010). Though it is not entirely clear what role Tea Party voters played in the election, journalists routinely label the Tea Party movement as *populist*, but researchers point out that, at least at the grassroots level, the movement harbors activists of a variety of stripes, from Ron Paul supporters to Republican Party officials, from longtime militia movement organizers to newly minted political activists troubled by the economic downturn (Hart and Rendall, 2010).

Polls show that publics are unsure of the Tea Party movement. The December 17, 2009 headline on MSNBC's website reads, "Tea Party More Popular Than Dems, GOP" (Montanaro, 2009). The poll found that 48 percent of respondents knew *very little* or *nothing at all* about the populist uprising. The Washington Post reported in February 2010 that its own poll found that "nearly two-thirds of those polled say they know just some, very little or nothing about what the Tea Party movement stands for (Hart and Rendall, p. 7, 2010)." The Post added that "the lack of information does not erase the appeal: About 45 percent of all Americans say they agree at least somewhat with tea

partiers on issues, including majorities of Republicans and independents” (Hart and Rendall, p. 7, 2010).

According to Peter Katel, writing in CQ Researcher, aside from disappointment with the Obama administration, many Tea Party supporters also note general dissatisfaction with spendthrift Bush-era Republicans, who paved the way for the 2008 Democrat election landslide (Katel, 2010).

The populist movement of the Tea Party is not new in American politics. Populism essentially began during the administration of Andrew Jackson when he vetoed a national bank charter extension with the words “it is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes (Katel, p.250, 2010).” His words gave rise to the Peoples Party, the Women’s Temperance Union, the Knights of Labor and American Federation of Labor. Each of these groups would most likely be aligned with the Democrat Party today, yet the strongest current populist movement currently is the conservative Tea Party (Katel, 2010).

Author Lee Harris, writing in Policy Review, suggests that the Tea Party is not so much a group dedicated to ideals but more an attitude codified into an organization. Intellectual critics of the tea party most often attack the group for its lack of ideas. The Tea Party’s depth is often best seen in its use of the famous *Don’t Tread On Me* flag from America’s birth. Harris writes that the flag is a warning, not an idea, and therefore difficult to debate on its merits. For most intellectuals, the Tea Party lacks a consistent ideology or coherent policies, and the few definitive administrative suggestions that come out of Tea Party events - like abolishing Social Security or returning to the gold standard - tend to come off as naively grasping at straws (Harris, 2010).

Dennis (2011) writes that while Democrats can rather easily, and with positive effect among their own minions, deride the Tea Party, Republicans are having a more difficult time straddling the line between conservative and institutional politician. The most notable error in judgment can be attributed to the 2010 Mike Castle campaign for Senate in Delaware. Republicans grossly misjudged the power of Delaware's Tea Party. Many political pundits believe that mistake paved the way for a primary upset by political neophyte, Tea Party supported Christine O'Donnell. In the general election, Democrat Chris Coons easily defeated O'Donnell, but the power of the Tea Party to upset the Republic Party was prominently displayed (Grier, 2010).

Prior to the Delaware Republican upset, some intellectuals, both Democrat and GOP, warned that the Tea Party might wield considerable influence in spite of its lack of seasoned political savvy (Harris, 2010). Liberal columnist Arianna Huffington warned soon after the Nashville Tea Party convention that too much emphasis on the *ugly* aspect of the group should not blind politicians to "the fact that some of what's fueling the movement is based on a completely legitimate anger directed at Washington and the political establishment of both parties. Think of the Tea Party movement as a boil alerting us to the infection lurking under the skin of the body politic" (Harris, 2010). This might not be a serious problem for liberal intellectuals, who, by and large, have long since ceased to have any interest in influencing the many Americans who have expressed sympathy with the Tea Party movement (according to various polls, as much as 40 percent of the population). But it poses a very grave problem for conservative intellectuals loyal to the Republican Party (Harris, 2010).

For years Republicans were able to rely on the undivided support of the silent majority - conservative leaning, suburban, Middle Americans who made up the heart of the Republican Party (Perlstein, 2008). However, the aftermath of September 11, 2011, the protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the debacle following hurricane Katrina, the inability to control illegal immigration, the financial crisis, the massive bailout, the election of Barack Obama, catastrophically undermined the implicit trust that the silent majority once placed in the competency of Republican national leadership (Harris, 2010). With no one left to blame, Middle America targeted the Republican Party. Overnight, the apolitical have been transformed into the politically committed. Zeal has replaced apathy. Harris writes that those who a generation earlier might have expected their leaders to do the right thing, have now become convinced that their leaders will inevitably do the wrong thing.

Researcher Diana Mitlin, writing in the journal *Environment and Urbanization*, notes that political entities that engage and co-create with grassroots organizations tend to show a greater inclusive nature and positively tie themselves to the organization, which will garner positive results (Mitlin, 2008).

Mitlin (2008) writes that this thought process is in many ways at the core of the Tea Party, government functions toward a more decentralized form of operation with greater citizen control over state resources. In many ways it recreates the federal rights vs. states rights argument of the 1800s. The Tea Party wants to see more financial restraint on the part of government and at the same time protect the resources of American industry and households - protect our borders, keep jobs local, rein in spending. Mitlin (2008) also contends that partnering with grassroots groups like the Tea

Party has the benefit of helping to build a consciousness of self-worth among residents who become aware of their own central contribution to progressive social change. Essentially, by listening to the people, by engaging the people, the people have a greater understanding of politics, which will translate into a happy populace (Mitlin, 2008).

Belying the natural need to coexist with the state, the Tea Party appears to be quite comfortable to remain as an anti-political party, remaining on the fringes beholden to no one. Gerstle (2010) remarks that the populist insurgency, with the Tea Party as the standard bearer, has no single political figure as its master or commander. Through its effectiveness and the rabid support of non-politically connected influential conservatives, the Tea Party has forced right-wing populists in office to be true to the first principles of conservatism, small government, low taxes, fiscal solvency.

Nina Eliasoph, in her paper published in *Voluntas*, describes that unlike many *civic organizations* that are typically offshoots of other funded projects or institutions, true grassroots organizations have a benefit that offers them the freedom to work contrary to the prevailing opinions of a top-down entity. Unlike an *empowerment project* often created by the state, civic organizations that develop organically tend to have real staying power and a significant influence on their memberships and on their projects. Classic voluntary associations tend to attract people from relatively privileged classes, because such people tend to feel more confident in their abilities to participate—to chair a meeting, for example—than their less educated or economically advantaged counterparts. Classic volunteer groups do not have to account to anyone beyond their own members. Classic voluntary associations do not need to be inclusive. They can be based on a shared religion, ethnicity, or cultural tradition. Empirically, they tend to be socially

homogeneous, because people join organizations through their social networks, acquaintances bringing acquaintances. Classic volunteer groups do not always spiral outwards to a virtuous circle of concern. Members may try to narrow their concern to issues that they consider *do-able* (Eliasoph, 2009).

Stephen Marmura, writing in the journal *New Media & Society*, notes that a great deal has been written concerning the way in which the Internet may be used to enhance the networking and mobilization strategies of political activists. Case studies of Internet-based activism continue to appear on behalf of a broad range of citizens' lobbies, social movements, religious groups and other expressions of grassroots organization. Lower costs of organizing collective action offered by the Internet will be particularly beneficial for one type of group: those outside the boundaries of traditional private and public institutions, those not rooted in business, professional or occupational memberships or the constituencies of existing government agencies and programs (Marmura, 2008).

Marmura believes that it is in these areas that the Internet has made the Tea Party a fairly united entity, despite the nearly total lack of formal communication between Tea Party groups. The argument that the Internet may play an equalizing role with respect to relatively powerful versus traditionally powerless elements in society perhaps has been made the most forcefully with respect to the World Wide Web's capacity to serve as an alternative mass medium (Marmura, 2008).

Most grassroots efforts have been the result of highly structured, well-designed *get out the vote* campaigns. Costas Panagopoulos and Peter L. Francia describe this in the journal *Political Marketing* where they present their research concerning the 2008 presidential election. The authors noted the Obama campaign's voter mobilization,

money spent on increasing voter turnout, Internet leverage, use of 527 groups, and decisions on whether to *expand the base* by targeting independent voters or *rallying the troops* by targeting only party affiliated voters. The election of Barack Obama in 2008 has routinely been viewed as the result of a winning strategy by the Democrat party to engage its own base and bring in independents and some Republicans tired of the Bush-era politics (Panagopoulos & Francia, 2009).

However, that view of grassroots politics has almost no basis for how the Tea Party has managed to become a primetime player in American politics. Also, Curry (2011) discusses how the Tea Party may have had a palpable influence on the 2010 mid-term elections and if it remains viable, a significant influence on the 2012 presidential election (Curry, 2011).

Harris (2010) discusses how the lesson of history is stark and simple. People who are easy to govern lose their freedom. People who are difficult to govern retain theirs. What makes the difference is not an ideology, but an attitude. Those people who embody the "Don't tread on me!" attitude have kept their liberties simply because they are prepared to stand up against those who threaten to tread on them. If the Tea Party can succeed in this all-important mission, then the pragmatist can forgive the movement for a host of silly ideas and absurd policy suggestions, because he knows what is really at stake. Once the "Don't tread on me!" attitude has vanished from a people, it never returns. It is lost and gone forever — along with the liberty and freedom for which, ultimately, it is the only effective defense (Harris 2010).

As with most populist movements, the birth of the Tea Party is directly related to evolving perspectives, attitudes and options, regarding government and the citizenry.

Katz describes how attitude and public opinion are related but not identical. Attitude is defined as the individual level, namely, the specific organization of feelings and beliefs according to which a given person evaluates an object or symbol positively or negatively. Public opinion, or more appropriately the public opinion-process, is a description at the collective level and refers to the mobilization and channeling of individual responses to affect group or national decision making (Katz, 1966).

There are four stages in the process of public opinion formation: (1) the salience of some problem for a number of people, even a small minority; (2) the discussion of the problem resulting in increased salience; (3) the formulation of alternative solutions and the narrowing of alternatives; and (4) the final mobilization of opinion to affect the collective decision either through a majority vote, as in an election or referendum, or through the assessment by leaders of the strength of mobilized opinion in coming to a decision (Katz, 1966).

Attitude formation is relevant to the public-opinion process, both for the background attitudes, which limit the alternatives formulated, and the understanding of how these attitudes are aligned to give support or rejection to the alternatives for action. Knowledge of existing attitudinal structure of the public can indicate the general directions in which people can move. For instance, the right wing of the Republican Party in 1964 incorrectly assessed the basic values and attitudes of the American public in assuming that a strong, clear enunciation of conservative doctrines would win supporters to their candidate and secure and unrivaled turnout of millions of previously apathetic conservatives (Katz, 1966).

According to Petty and Cacioppo when people are heavily involved in an issue, arguments will be processed centrally, and persuasion will depend on their relevance and quality. On the other hand, when personal involvement is low, people do not pay full attention to messages, and persuasion is determined by such peripheral cues as the source's expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and similarity to the self (Cacioppo & Petty, 1986). This aligns squarely with the apparent power of the Tea Party to transfer its message via grassroots channels to a dedicated follower base versus a centralized mouthpiece.

The findings of Peterson, Slothuus and Togby suggest that the political parties help citizens take sides on political issues in ways consistent with their deeper values and that that low levels of value-opinion consistency are driven not only by citizens' lack of interest in politics but also by parties failing in providing clear signals (Peterson, Slothuus, & Togeby, 2010). A factor not typically associated with the Tea Party who are quite clear in their communications with party followers.

Chapter III

The Tea Party has garnered a great deal of support and notoriety with an obvious lack of centralized support structure and top-down messaging. It is likely this has occurred due to the homogenous nature of those who consider themselves Tea Party members, the nature of populist movements generating from grassroots swells and the ease of mass communication in the 21st century.

Assuming this is true, the following hypothesis may describe the beliefs, demographics and nationwide understanding of the Tea Party.

Hypothesis 1: The majority of respondents will report that information about the main tenants of the Tea Party - free markets, fiscal responsibility, and constitutionally limited government - are generally well-known among all segments of the political population: liberals, moderates and conservatives.

Hypothesis 2: The majority of respondents will report that most Americans perceive the membership of the Tea Party primarily consists of conservative whites over the age of 40.

Hypothesis 3: The majority of respondents will report while the principle beliefs of the Tea Party are well-publicized, secondary beliefs are just as widespread.

If these hypotheses were true, we would find evidence at the national, local and individual levels.

National Level Research

The researcher surveyed 50 regional Tea Party websites to conduct a content analysis regarding how they compared to each other, national websites and generally held

Tea Party tenets. A content analysis allows for a systemic, objective and quantitative survey to be conducted regarding the intricacies of each Tea Party website. Utilizing a standardized set of questions, the researcher compared each website looking for similarities and differences in message, technique, construction and operability. These similarities and differences were then compared to determine the level of which each website compares to another. One Tea Party website from each state was chosen based on the size of its membership as determined by the TeaPartyPatriots.org national information repository. The website with the largest membership and current activity was chosen from each state. The researcher expected that the largest and most active website would also grant the researcher the best perspective on what is important to the largest groups of local Tea Party members. It was not feasible to analyze the hundreds of sites listed on TeaPartyPatriots.org and a random sampling could result in dead websites being analyzed; therefore the researcher chose to purposefully sample local Tea Party websites. If the largest membership group did not have a functioning website, the next largest group was chosen, and so on, until an active website was found. If a state did not offer an active website than a secondary website would was from a large population state. No more than two regional websites from any state were chosen.

To conduct the website content analysis, the researcher scanned the websites of various Tea Party organizations to determine if each website utilized the same emotional call outs, calls to action, buzzwords, imagery, and general references to the basic tenants of the party. The survey took place after the 2010 election cycle was completed. The researcher noted, where possible, if the websites have been updated with any regularity post-election.

The researcher first codified the website analysis, then used quantitative and qualitative data analysis tools within the SurveyMonkey.com website to identify the level of message similarity between the sites.

With regard to Hypothesis 1, this research tool provided evidence to support that from region to region the overall message of the Tea Party remains consistent and that this consistency leads to a fairly accurate portrayal of Tea Party tenants among liberals, moderates and conservatives.

With regard to Hypothesis 2, this research tool provided evidence to support anecdotal results as to the make-up of the Tea Party membership.

With regard to Hypothesis 3, this research tool provided evidence to support that from region to region the overall message of the Tea Party remains consistent, but with secondary localized concerns.

Local Level Research

The researcher attended three Tea Party meetings/rallies to conduct a structured observation. This descriptive observational technique allowed the researcher to view Tea Party members comfortable in their own groups. The researcher was able to view interaction among the members as well as their reactions to the public discussions. Additionally, the researcher was able to view the demographic make-up of Tea Party members in person. Most importantly, this technique allowed the Tea Party to be studied from the participants' frame of reference. The results of this structured observation were limited to the geographical region of the researcher the southern counties of New Jersey. Two of the events were highly local and one was considered a regional event that spread into the Philadelphia metro area including southern New Jersey, southeastern

Pennsylvania and northern Delaware. Unfortunately a random sampling of Tea Party gatherings nationwide was not feasible due to cost and timeframe therefore convenience sampling was utilized.

To conduct the structured observation, the researcher attended Tea Party sponsored events and meetings to determine the demographics of the attendees and their political savvy, based upon a pre-determined list of survey questions. This research was observational in nature; the researcher did not interact formally with the attendees.

The researcher codified the event/meeting structured observation using quantitative and qualitative data to determine if membership demographics and political interest remained consistent from meeting to meeting.

The structured observation results were grouped into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis.

With regard to Hypothesis 1, this research tool provided evidence to support that discussions during person-to-person remain consistently reinforce the main tenants of the Tea Party.

With regard to Hypothesis 2, this research tool provided evidence that the Tea Party is in fact primarily a party of conservative whites over the age of 40.

With regard to Hypothesis 3, this research tool provided evidence to support that while the Tea Party is primarily focused on their main three tenants, that secondary localized concerns can affect the how the priorities of the regional groups and therefore create errors in how the Tea Party is perceived globally.

Individual Level Research

An on-line analytical questionnaire was utilized to understand how members and non-members view the Tea Party, the media and several other political and sociological elements. This tool was chosen to examine the interrelationships among the many variables that help to define the Tea Party from various perspectives. To conduct the on-line analytical survey, the researcher emailed a link to the survey to a list of 75 personal contacts and 75 known Tea Party members. The link was also posted to the researcher's Facebook page, Twitter account and personal blog. No effort was made to limit the number of survey takers; however 125 takers was the goal. The survey was eventually completed by 158 individuals. A snowballing effect is likely the cause of the larger than expected number as no limit was placed on respondents and the link was distributed with the request that it be passed along to others. While a simple random sample of possible respondents would have been preferred, it was not feasible and beyond the scope of the research; therefore a convenience sample was chosen. The social media dissemination method provided information in a convenient, cost effective manner.

To conduct the analytical survey, the researcher developed a comprehensive questionnaire to determine if a) the survey taker is a member of the tea party or not and b) whether or not non-members are aware of the general message of the Tea Party and the manner in which they become aware of the Tea Party issues.

The researcher codified the survey analysis using quantitative and qualitative analysis tools within the SurveyMonkey.com website to determine the level of Tea Party knowledge of non-members. The researcher also utilized this data to determine how each survey responder came to acquire their level of Tea Party knowledge.

With regard to Hypothesis 1, this research tool provided evidence to support that the general view of the Tea Party is accurate amongst and liberals, moderates and conservatives, while determining from where these perspectives are formed.

With regard to Hypothesis 2, this research tool provided evidence regarding how Tea Party members view the demographics of their own groups, how non-members view the Tea Party in general and what the actual demographics of Tea Party members are.

With regard to Hypothesis 3, this research tool provided evidence to support that some secondary tenants of the Tea Party are sometimes confused with primary tenants of the Tea Party by moderates and liberals.

Summary

The author attempted to determine the effectiveness of the Tea Party's unified message to members and non-members, a message delivered without the use of a formal infrastructure or national communications vehicle.

As opposed to the formal organization of the Democratic Party, the Republican Party and several third parties, the Tea Party lacks a leadership structure and public relations system that allows a unified message to be released to all its members. The Tea Party is essentially a loose confederation of local organizations. However, as has been seen in the 2010-midterm elections, the Tea Party wielded powerful influence in several elections.

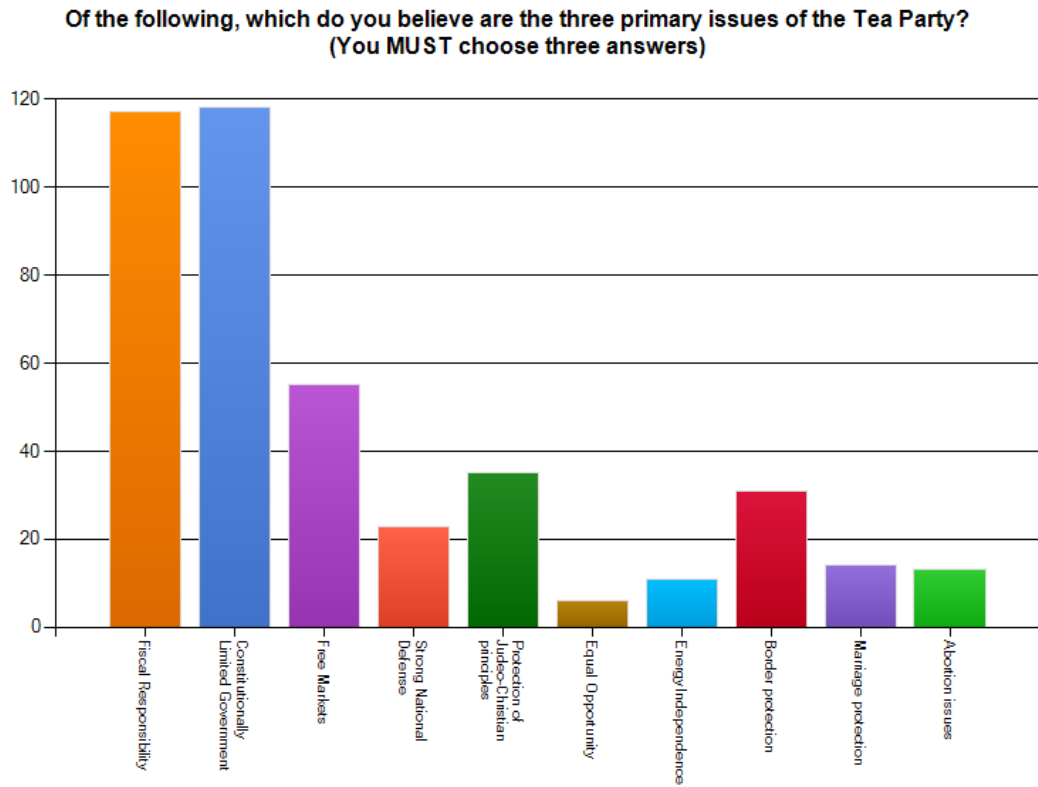
What is not yet quite certain is how this influence translates to a national audience or whether the power lay in local organizations and their leadership and audience.

Chapter IV

Findings

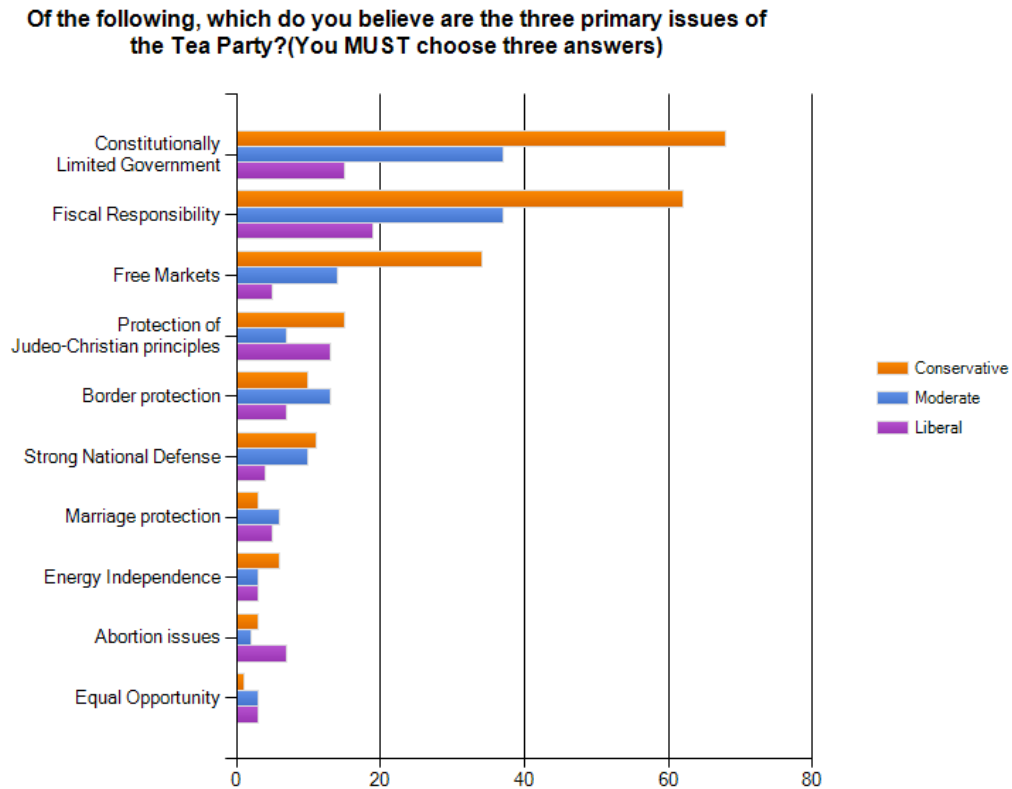
Hypothesis 1: The majority of respondents will report that information about the main tenants of the Tea Party - free markets, fiscal responsibility, and constitutionally limited government - are generally well-known among all segments of the political population: liberals, moderates and conservatives.

Figure 1 - All respondents



In the chart above, the results of the questionnaire show that most respondents believe that fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government and free markets are the primary issues of the Tea Party. When broken down by political affiliation, these responses remained mostly consistent.

Figure 2 – Issues by Party Affiliation

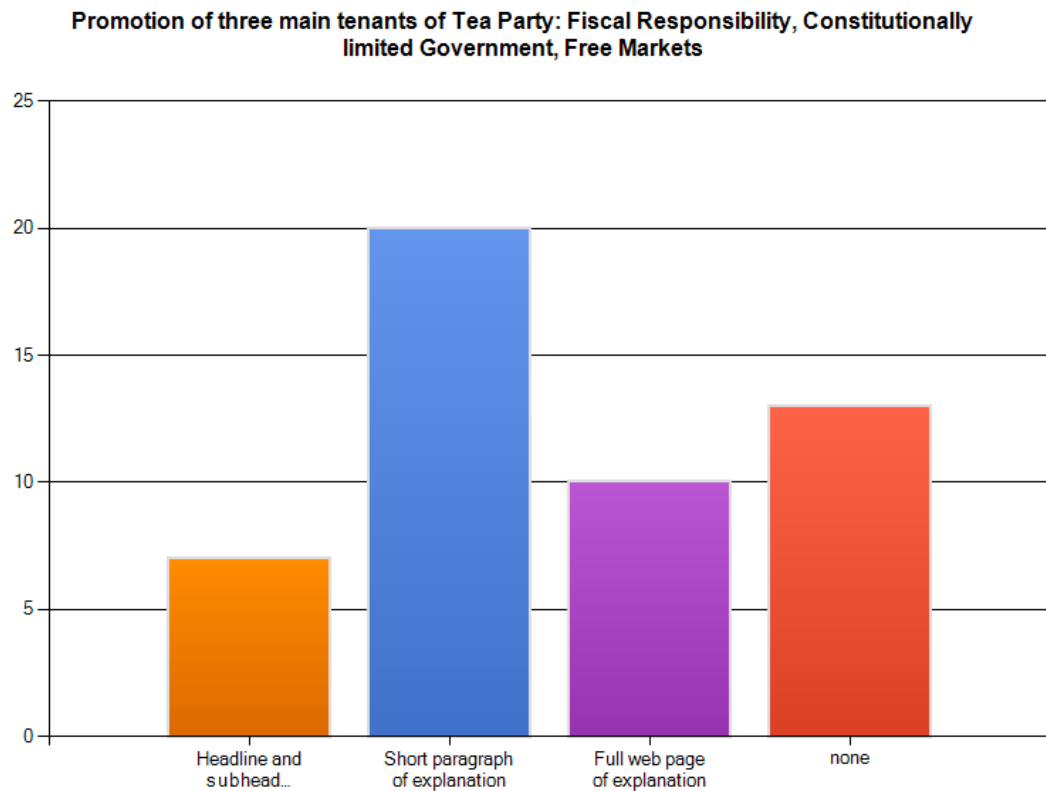


As expected, conservative respondents considered fiscal responsibility, Constitutionally limited government and free markets to be the main tenants of the Tea Party.

Moderates considered fiscal responsibility and Constitutionally limited government to be the primary issues of the Tea Party; however, in the third issue they were essentially split between free markets and border protection.

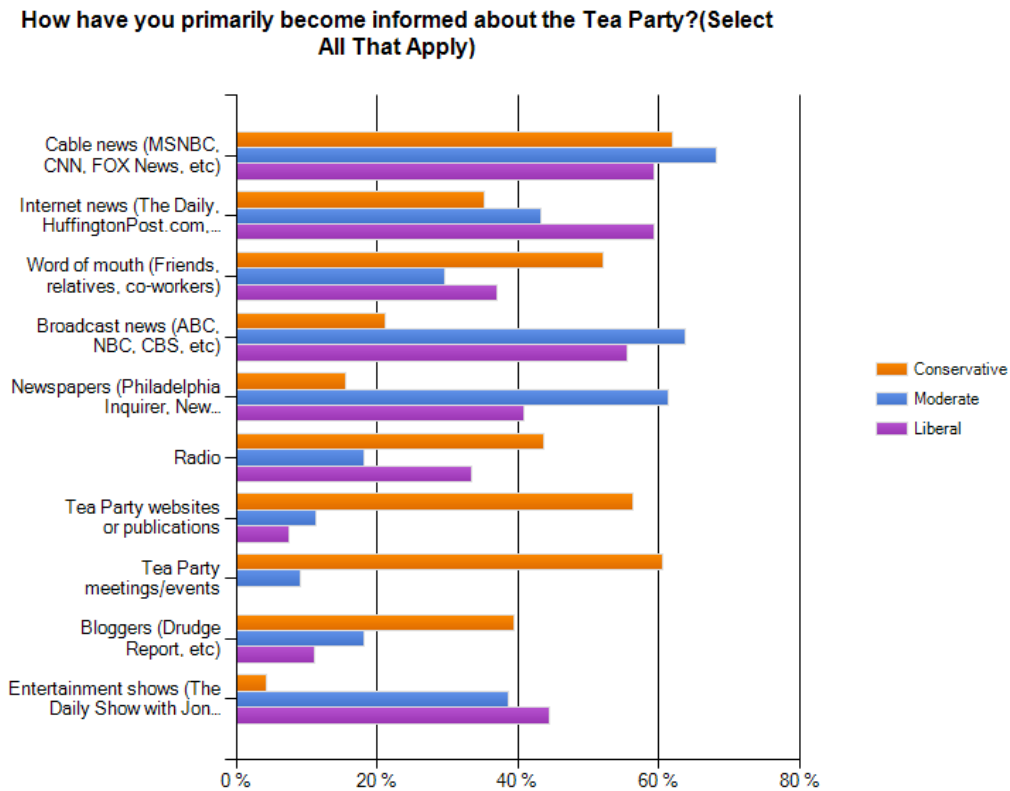
Only respondents identified as liberals believed that the protection of Judeo-Christian principles was more important the Tea Party members that the protection of free markets.

Figure 3 - Tea Party Websites



Based on a survey of 50 Tea Party Web sites, the research found that 75 percent of sites promote the widely held Tea Party beliefs of fiscal responsibility, Constitutionally limited government and free markets. Use of the content analysis technique allowed the researcher to determine how prominent each website featured the tenants on the site. In most cases, these central tenants of the Tea Party were always prominently displayed.

Figure 4 - Message delivery by political affiliation



Most respondents who identified themselves as conservatives said they receive most Tea Party information from cable news, Tea Party meetings and Tea Party websites. This response is likely skewed slightly by the number of Tea Party members who answered the survey, but chose not to affiliate themselves with the Tea Party directly. Interestingly, conservatives were also the largest group to suggest they get their information from radio as well. The *word of mouth* answer was slightly redundant as many in this group also attend Tea Party meetings. Additionally, more than half the conservative respondents noted *bloggers* as a news source.

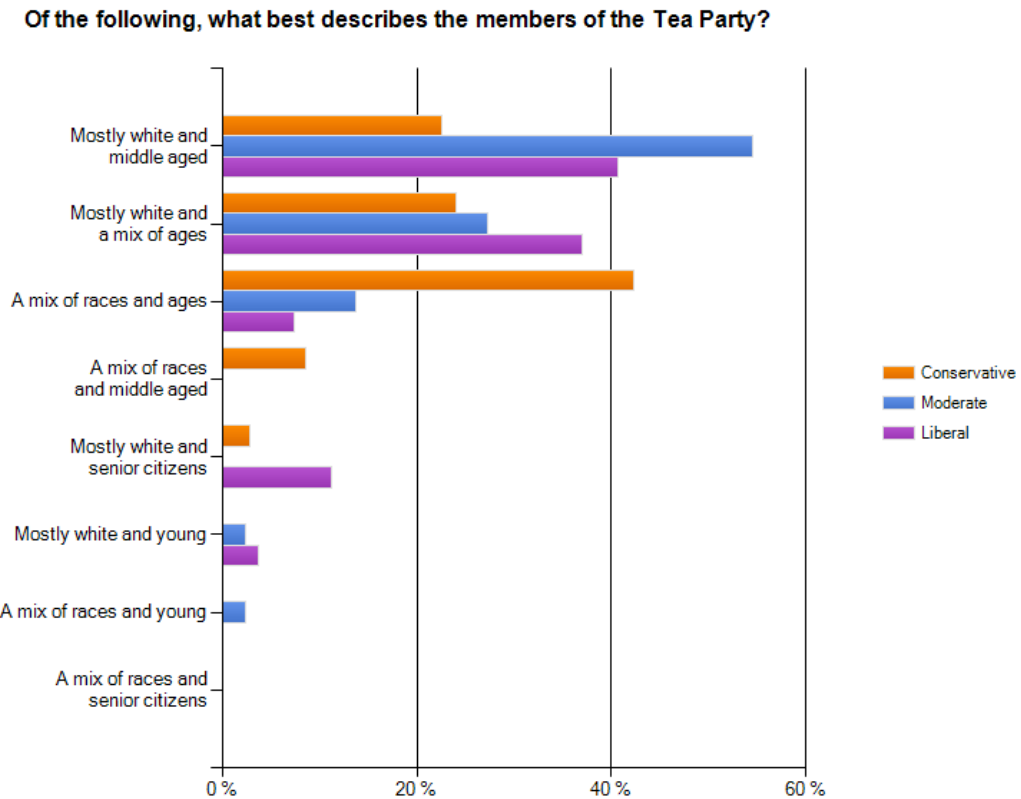
Respondents who identified themselves as moderates were found to get most of their Tea Party information from cable news, broadcast news and newspapers. This suggests that in general, traditional media (i.e.: TV, radio, newspapers) has been correctly attributing fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government and free markets to

the Tea Party. A significant number of moderates also credited Internet sites and entertainment shows as a source of Tea Party information.

Respondents who identified themselves as liberals were the only group to indicate they get their Tea Party information from new tech sources like Internet only news sites. More than half the respondents also credit entertainment shows like The Daily Show with Jon Stewart as a source of Tea Party news.

Hypothesis 2: The majority of respondents will report that most Americans perceive the membership of the Tea Party primarily consists of conservative whites over the age of 40.

Figure 6 - Tea Party Membership makeup by affiliation

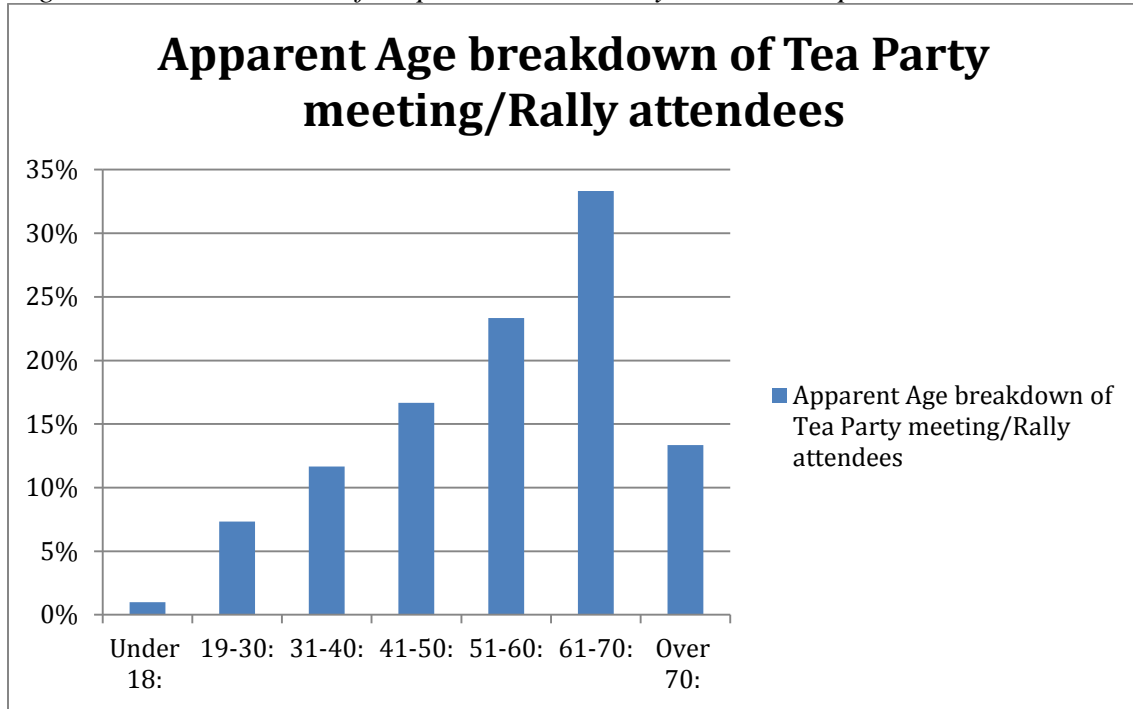


The researcher found that conservatives, and more likely, those affiliated with the Tea Party, consider the membership of the Tea Party to be a mix of ages and races.

Respondents that identified as moderates responded that Tea Party members are mostly white and middle aged.

Respondents identified as liberals, appeared to have the most accurate understanding of the Tea Party membership, based on the chart on the following page. These respondents overwhelmingly believe that the Tea Party is made up of whites, middle aged and older.

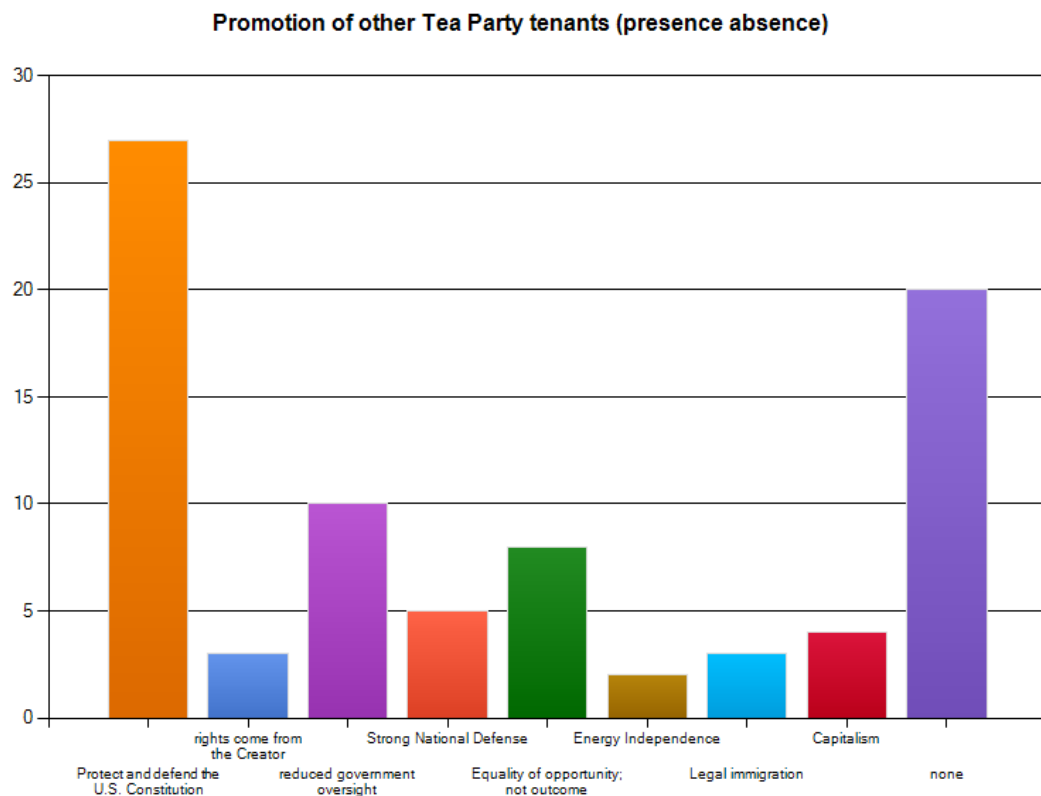
Figure 7 - Breakdown of in person Tea Party membership



While attending three Tea Party events as part of the structured observation, the researcher noted the apparent age of the attendees. These averages remained fairly consistent over all three gatherings. Each meeting and event showed overwhelmingly that most attendees appeared to be over the age of 50. Each of these events were held either in the evening or on the weekend and would be accessible to a majority of demographics over the age of 18. Additionally, the attendance at these events was almost exclusively white.

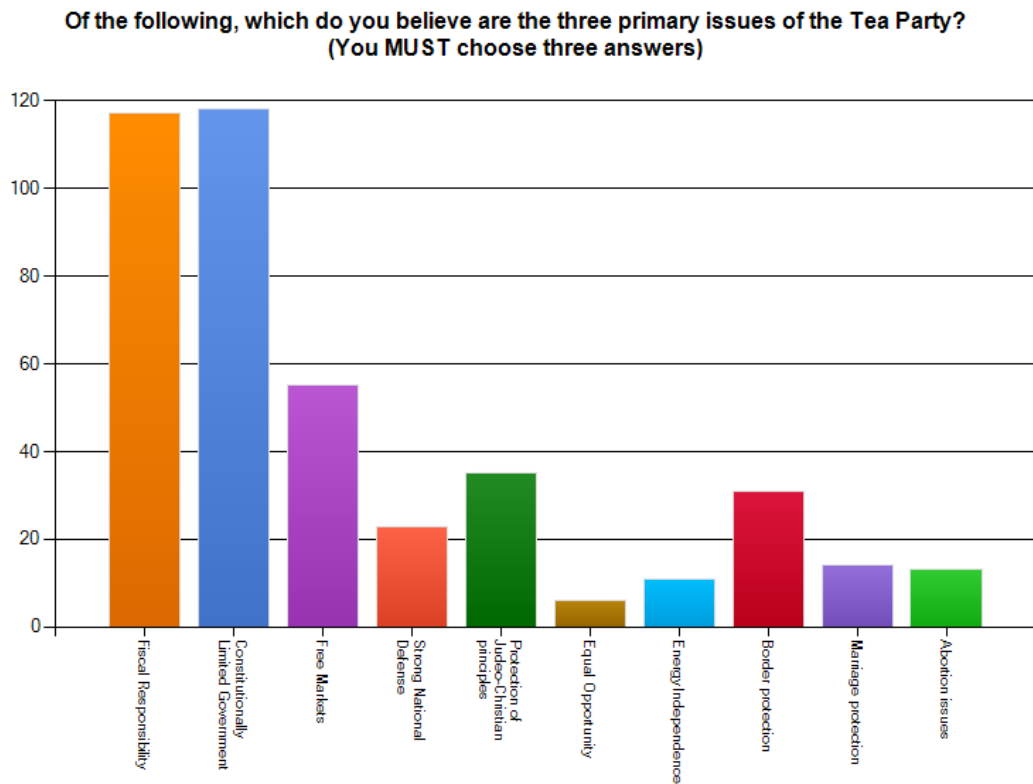
Hypothesis 3: The majority of respondents will report while the principle beliefs of the Tea Party are well-publicized, secondary beliefs are just as widespread.

Figure 8 – Other Tea Party Tenants



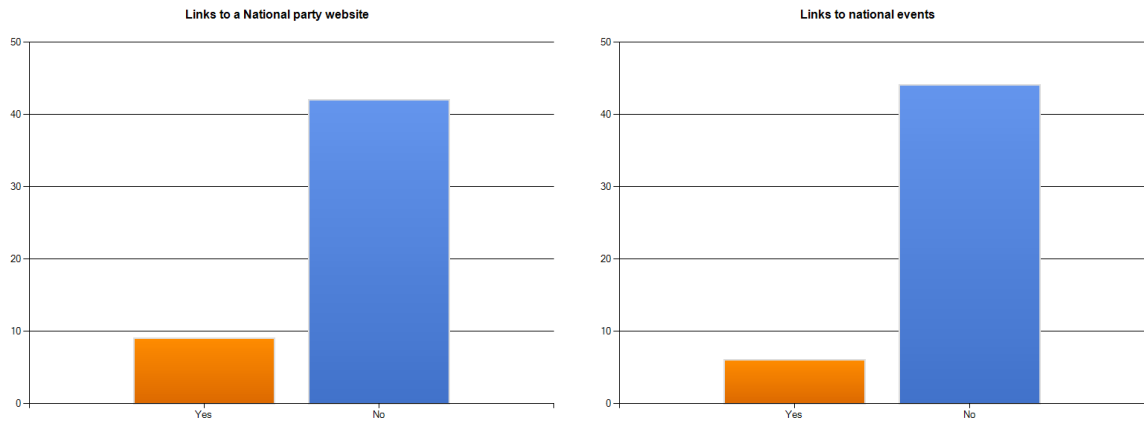
A content analysis of 50 Tea Party Websites found that, while fiscal responsibility, Constitutionally limited government and free markets are the primary Tea Party tenants, many Tea Party groups also espouse a variety of other, secondary beliefs. These beliefs echo the main tenants, but show the nuance that can be found with grass roots organizations. The category of none either refers to sites that showed interest only in the main tenants or made no such direct proclamations.

Figure 1 (redux)



As seen in figure 1, repeated above, the Tea Party is often associated with many topics that its websites do not necessarily promote.

Figure 9 & 10 Website National links



Figures 9 and 10 show that websites link to any national storehouse of information, allowing each grass roots group to determine its own message.

Figure 11 - Website regional links

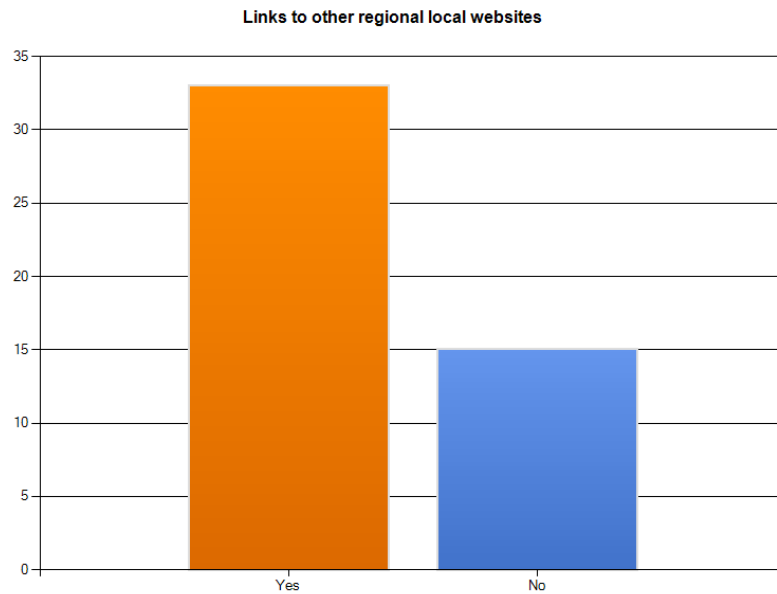


Figure 11 shows that many local Tea Party groups link to other regional groups, which often shared a common political perspective.

Chapter V

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine how effectively the Tea Party movement communicates its message to both Tea Party members and non-members, as well as to determine how well members and non-members understand the make up of the Tea Party, with respect to its goals and its membership.

A survey was created that attempted to gauge both Tea Party members and non-members as to their opinions about the Tea Party, how they get their information about the Tea Party, and who makes up the Tea Party movement. The survey was distributed via Facebook to 520 friends, on Twitter to 288 followers, via a blog resulting in 70 page views, and via e-mail to 77 contacts of the researcher and 165 self-described Tea Party members. The list of Tea Party members was compiled by visiting dozens of Tea Party websites across the country and contacting individuals listed on the websites.

Additionally, various people also shared on Facebook, retweeted on Twitter, found the survey via either the hashtags #pr or #thesis or forwarded the survey via e-mail to other potential respondents. In all 165 people began the survey and 158 completed it.

A content analysis of 50 websites across the country was conducted by the researcher looking for popular themes of the Tea Party movement to determine if the themes were consistent over all the websites. The content analysis also looked at the quality of the website and how recently the website was updated.

Finally, the researcher conducted three structured observations of two Tea Party meetings and one Tea Party rally between October 2010 and June 2011. This study was intended to determine the age and race makeup of attendees and the quality of political

discourse held at each event. The researcher found consistency along all three events in the demographics and political awareness of the attendees at each event.

Hypothesis 1: The majority of respondents will report that information about the main tenants of the Tea Party - free markets, fiscal responsibility, and constitutionally limited government - are generally well-known among all segments of the political population: liberals, moderates and conservatives.

Internet Survey

The survey found that that all three political leanings had a fairly common view of the Tea Party and what the main tenants of the movement are. The only outlier consisted of liberals answering that Judeo-Christian principles were one of the main tenants of the Tea Party. While certainly an underlying theme for many in the Tea Party, the movement has not shown that to be a tenant greater than free markets, fiscal responsibility and constitutionally limited government. This was later confirmed via the content analysis where topics linked to God were found to be the least noted element on any Tea Party website.

Content Analysis

The analysis of websites further showed that the Tea Party espouses the three main tenants of its movement far more than any other aspect. While no site was particularly similar to any other in terms of layout or design, the content of each put the primary conservative ideals of the movement first. Discussions related to ancillary or changing matters – such as the Obama administration in particular, local political issues, or general anti-liberal rhetoric - was usually secondary to the overarching themes of the movement.

Hypothesis 2: The majority of respondents will report that most Americans perceive the membership of the Tea Party primarily consists of conservative whites over the age of 40.

Internet Survey

Those identified as liberals and moderates both answered that Tea Party members are primarily white and middle aged or older. Conservatives who answered stated that the movement is made up of a mix of ages and races. However, the researcher tends to believe that this is more what the movement hopes is true as opposed to what is true.

Structured Observation

Upon attending three Tea Party meetings/rallies the researcher found overwhelming evidence that the membership of the movement is over the age of 40 with a majority over the age of 60, and nearly 100 percent white. Of the three gatherings, with a total assembly of more than 1,049 people, the researcher came across only two black attendees and no one of Hispanic, Asian, Indian or any other minority descent. While the more well-attended rally showed a greater variety of ages, the meetings were almost entirely made up of middle-aged and senior citizens. Each of these events took place during evening hours or weekends when anyone could attend, not just retirees.

Hypothesis 3: The majority of respondents will report while the principle beliefs of the Tea Party are well-publicized, secondary beliefs are just as widespread.

Internet Survey

While the majority of respondents were able to clearly determine the main tenets of the Tea Party movement, secondary beliefs were just as widespread, suggesting that the

lack of central message system allowed for other ancillary issues to be attributed to the Tea Party movement as a whole. This suggests that it is likely that for all the effectiveness of the movements grassroots, decentralized communication efforts, it is inherently flawed in such a way that the goals of one Tea Party region could influence the understanding of other interested parties and the media.

Content Analysis

A review of Tea Party websites did find greater consistency regarding the central themes of the movement. However, regional concerns were also very notable on most sites. For instance, southern border states featured immigration concerns, Wisconsin sites were notably anti-union, and many sites featured anti-Obama administration rhetoric. These regionalized or topic-centered issue areas could conceivably be a reason for the minor, but notable fragmentation of the Tea Party movement's message.

Future Research

This study assumes from its results that the major media outlets have been the most effective communication source from the Tea Party movement to the general public, based on the general public's choices of news sources and their very accurate knowledge of Tea Party movement ideology.

To prove this, the researcher suggests a future analysis of the accuracy and frequency of media outlets - broadcast news, cable news, Internet news sites, bloggers, and radio – that cover news events that touch on Tea Party areas of influence.

This survey would need to focus on how often broadcasters communicate the three main tenants of the Tea Party - fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government

and free markets - and what additional topics attributed to the Tea Party either promote or dilute the Tea Party's focus.

Summary

The researcher found that the survey instruments appear to corroborate what has long been perceived as the make-up of the grassroots Tea Party movement, that its members are primarily white, over 40 years of age, conservative and well-informed regarding the movements goals.

What was somewhat surprising was how well the rest of the population is aware of the primary tenants of the Tea Party - fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government and free markets - and other ancillary movement goals – protection of the Constitution, Judeo-Christian principles, national defense, border protection, immigration concerns, and energy independence.

These various survey tools suggest that Tea Party websites and local meetings have effectively communicated the message of the movement to other mediums and onto populations not considered Tea Party affiliated.

The effectiveness of any grassroots movement can in large part be determined by how well known its goals are to non-affiliated parties. The data compiled in this survey shows that even without a centralized message system, disparate groups of vocal, determined and conservatively minded individuals have made the rest of the population understand what their goals are.

By speaking out at meetings and rallies that are open to the public and the press, as well as clearly stating each local organization's goals and objectives on their websites, Tea Party movement members have created a valuable open database of their messages

that has been utilized by media members in news stories and passed along to the general public.

Appendices

Appendix A

Tea Party Rally Structured Observation

To assess the political and psychological make-up of a Tea Party member, the author has chosen to survey the attendees of select Tea Party rallies and meetings in New Jersey and Delaware prior to the November 2, 2010 General Election. To this end, the author has chosen to create an ethnographic observational survey. Ideally, attendees will not be aware that they are being observed, in the hope that they will act naturally in the presence of the observer.

The author expects that there will be some inherent inaccuracy due to the nature of the survey as a purely observational judgment tool. However, every effort will be made to answer all questions as accurately as possible.

Depending on the size of the rally, answers will either be noted as percentages of attendees (for large rallies) or as actual numbers (for small rallies and meetings).

Event Title

Event Location

Event Sponsor

Event Date and Time

Event size

Approximate or total # of attendees present: _____

Gender breakdown

Male: _____

Female: _____

Apparent Age breakdown of attendees

Under 18: _____

19-30: _____

31-40: _____

41-50: _____

51-60: _____

61-70: _____

Over 70: _____

General Ethnic breakdown

White: _____

Black: _____

Hispanic: _____

Asian: _____

Native American: _____

Other: _____

Apparent income level, based on appearance, verbal articulation and non-verbal cues

Lower class: _____

Lower middle-class: _____

Upper middle-class: _____

Upper class: _____

Apparent Education level, based on appearance, verbal articulation and non-verbal cues

High school: _____

College: _____

Post-graduate: _____

Active Political Engagement during rally

Took part in political discourse with candidate: _____

Took part in political discourse with attendees: _____

Appeared more interested in social discourse with candidate: _____

Appeared more interested in social discourse with attendees: _____

Did not engage in either social or political discourse with candidate: _____

Did not engage in either social or political discourse with attendee: _____

Apparent level of political savvy

Percentage of attendees who appeared politically aware of many topics: _____

Percentage of attendees who appeared politically aware of a few topics: _____

Percentage of attendees who did not express awareness of any topic: _____

Apparent political leanings

Very Conservative (no government influence, very religious, pro-life/anti-gay marriage): _____

Conservative: _____

Moderate: _____

Liberal: _____

Very Liberal: (pro government influence in daily life, pro-choice/gay marriage) _____

Signage

Displaying signs supporting candidates: _____

Displaying signs supporting political activity or politicians: _____

Displaying signs opposing candidates: _____

Displaying signs opposing political activity or politicians: _____

Not displaying signs: _____

Signage accuracy

Incorrect spelling: _____

Correct spelling: _____

Grammatically incorrect: _____

Grammatically correct: _____

Factually inaccurate: _____

Factually accurate: _____

Appendix B

Questionnaire

Survey Explanation																																																																																										
<p>Thank you for choosing to take part in this survey about the Tea Party.</p> <p>The results of this survey will help form part of the research for my Master's degree thesis entitled: COMMUNICATING A CENTRALIZED MESSAGE WITHIN A DECENTRALIZED POLITICAL MOVEMENT: THE TEA PARTY.</p> <p>All responses will be aggregated and kept confidential.</p> <p>I am completing my Master of Arts degree in public relations at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ.</p> <p>Mike Walsh</p>																																																																																										
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Please select the response that best reflects your agreement with the following statements.</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;"></th> <th style="width: 15%;">Strongly Disagree</th> <th style="width: 15%;"></th> <th style="width: 15%;"></th> <th style="width: 15%;"></th> <th style="width: 15%;">Strongly Agree</th> <th style="width: 10%;">Unsure</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I am very knowledgeable about the Tea Party.</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Broadcast news fairly depicts the Tea Party.</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>The rise of the Tea Party is good for America.</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>* 2. 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The Tea Part is mostly Republican.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																																				
The Tea Party is a mix of Democrats and Republicans.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																																				
The Tea Party is an independent party without political leanings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																																				
The Tea Party and its members are influenced by religion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																																				
	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	Unsure																																																																																				
The Tea Party is a grass roots, populist movement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																																				
The Tea Party is a structured national movement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																																				

*** 4. Please select the response that best reflects how critical you think the Tea Party is of the following.**

	Not at all critical				Very Critical		Unsure
Government in general	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individual politicians in general	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*** 5. Please select the response that best reflects your opinion of the level of influence that the Tea Party had in the following elections.**

	No influence				Great influence		Unsure
2010 mid-term congressional elections	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2010 gubernatorial elections	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*** 6. Please select the response that best reflects your opinion of the level of influence that the Tea Party will have in the following elections.**

	No influence				Great influence		Unsure
2012 presidential election	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2012 congressional elections	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*** 7. Please select the response that best reflects your agreement with the following statements.**

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		Unsure
The Tea Party movement will gain strength in the next 5 years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Tea Party will movement will weaken in the next 5 years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*** 8. How have you primarily become informed about the Tea Party?(Select All That Apply)**

- Entertainment shows (The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, Real Time with Bill Maher)
- Tea Party meetings/events
- Tea Party websites or publications
- Internet news (The Daily, HuffingtonPost.com, The Daily Beast, etc)
- Bloggers (Drudge Report, etc)
- Word of mouth (Friends, relatives, co-workers)
- Newspapers (Philadelphia Inquirer, New York Times, etc)
- Radio
- Cable news (MSNBC, CNN, FOX News, etc)
- Broadcast news (ABC, NBC, CBS, etc)

Other (please specify)

*** 9. Of the following, which do you believe are the three primary issues of the Tea Party?
(You MUST choose three answers)**

- Marriage protection
- Equal Opportunity
- Protection of Judeo-Christian principles
- Free Markets
- Constitutionally Limited Government
- Strong National Defense
- Border protection
- Energy Independence
- Fiscal Responsibility
- Abortion issues

*** 10. Of the following, what best describes the members of the Tea Party?**

- Mostly white and young
- Mostly white and middle aged
- Mostly white and senior citizens
- Mostly white and a mix of ages
- A mix of races and young
- A mix of races and middle aged
- A mix of races and senior citizens
- A mix of races and ages

11. Of the following, which best describes members of the Tea Party?

- Jewish
- Moderate Christians
- Atheist or Agnostic
- Fundamentalist Christians

Other (please specify)

*** 12. Do you feel the Tea Party actively recruits membership into the party or prefers people to join of their own accord?**

- Actively recruits
- Join of their own accord

*** 13. On average, how often do you hear about the Tea Party, either through media (radio, television, newspaper) or websites?**

- Daily
- 2-3 days week
- once a week
- 2-3 times a month
- once a month
- every other month
- Never

*** 14. On average, how often do you hear about the Tea Party via person-to-person? (Conversations with neighbors, family, strangers, at meetings, in the business or at home)**

- Daily
- 2-3 days week
- Once a week
- 2-3 times a month
- Once a month
- Every other month
- Never

*** 15. Do you think the Tea Party will become a permanent third party?**

- Yes
- No

Why:

Biographical information

*** 16. What is your gender**

- Female
- Male
- prefer not to say

*** 17. Which of the following best describes you?**

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- prefer not to say

*** 18. What is your age?**

- 21 and younger
- 22 – 34
- 35 – 44
- 45 – 54
- 55 – 64
- 65 and older
- prefer not to say

*** 19. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- Less than high school
- High school/GED
- Some college
- 2-year college degree (Associates)
- 4-year college degree (BS, BA)
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (MD, JD)
- prefer not to say

*** 20. What is your total annual household income?**

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$89,999
- \$90,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- More than \$150,000
- prefer not to say

*** 21. Which of the following best describes your political affiliation?**

- Democratic
- Republican
- Tea Party
- Third-Party (e.g., Libertarian, Socialist, Green)
- Unaffiliated
- None of the above
- prefer not to say

*** 22. Which of the following best describes your political views?**

- Liberal
- Moderate
- Conservative
- prefer not to say

*** 23. Which of the following best describes your religious affiliation?**

- Atheist/Agnostic
- Buddhist
- Catholic
- Jewish
- Mormon
- Protestant
- None of the above
- prefer not to say

Appendix C

Website Survey

1. Website Title

2. Website URL

3. Website update date

4. Quality of website design

(worst 1 - best 5)

Worst Best

5. Use of patriotic colors: Are the primary colors used for logos, text or background, red white & blue

Banner

Headlines

Font Color

None

6. Does the website front page feature patriotic logos/art:

Bald Eagle

U.S. Flag

Logos showing similarity to U.S. Flag

Images of Washington, DC/Government

Famous U.S. Documents

Military images

"Main Street USA" images

Images of middle American families

none

7. Photos of members, through out the site (Presece/Abscens)

In meetings

At rallies

None

8. Anti-incumbent rhetoric/slogans, through out the site (Presece/Abscens)

Yes

No

9. Length of anti-incumbent rhetoric and slogans

Headline and short sentences

Several paragraphs

Entire web pages

10. Anti-Obama administration rhetoric/slogans

Yes

No

11. Length of anti-Obama administration rhetoric and slogans

Headline and short sentences

Several paragraphs

Entire web pages

12. Anti-Congressional rhetoric and slogans

Yes

No

13. Length of anti-congressional rhetoric and slogans

Headline and short sentences

Several paragraphs

Entire Web Pages

14. Promotion of three main tenants of Tea Party: Fiscal Responsibility, Constitutionally limited Government, Free Markets

Headline and subhead references only

Short paragraph of explanation

Full web page of explanation

none

15. Promotion of other Tea Party tenants (presence absence)

- Protect and defend the U.S. Constitution
- rights come from the Creator
- reduced government oversight
- Strong National Defense
- Equality of opportunity; not outcome
- Energy Independence
- Legal immigration
- Capitalism
- none

16. Links to a National party website

- Yes
- No

Which

17. Links to political events

- Yes
- No

18. Links to other regional local websites

- Yes
- No

19. Links to national events

- Yes
- No

20. Advertising from local businesses

- Yes
- No

How Many?

21. Advertising from political PACs

Yes

No

How Many?

22. Contact info

Generic email

PO Box

Generic Phone #

Personal email

Locations mailing address

Contact person phone #

Response form

None

23. Political Poll Questions

Yes

No

24. Call for action

Attend Meetings

Attend rallies

Vote

Write letters/emails

Actively engage public officials

None

25. Call for membership

Register for literature

Register for meetings

None

26. Local voter information

- Yes
- No

27. Links to political documents

- Declaration of Independence
- U.S. Constitution
- U.S. Bill of Rights
- State Constitution
- none

28. Mentions of the U.S. Revolution or Boston Tea Party

- Yes
- No

29. Mentions of "Taxed Enough Already"

- Yes
- No

30. Links to other Tea Party information

- Twitter Feeds
- Blogs
- Newsletters
- Facebook
- Children's Materials
- Store
- none

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