

The Tea Party Movement:
Grassroots Advocacy at its Finest, or Highly-Disguised Astroturfing?

by

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ABSTRACT

Using models identified by communications scholars Herbert W. Simons and Charles J. Stewart, a rhetorical analysis was conducted on contemporary Tea Party Movement (TPM) artifacts in an attempt to gauge the movement's authenticity as it relates to grassroots advocacy versus astroturfing. The models provided a theoretical framework in which the functions of social movement leaders were analyzed, as well as the rhetorical phases of a movement. Additionally, the notions of advocacy and astroturfing were defined and the concepts compared and contrasted. Used in conjunction with one another the models provided a framework in which TPM artifacts could be analyzed. Analysis was conducted on the websites for the Tea Party Patriots and Tea Party Express, a one-month sample of Sarah Palin FaceBook posts, two speeches delivered by Michelle Bachmann, and finally one speech given by Palin. Examples for each of the necessary rhetorical components identified were found within TPM sources, thus leading to the conclusion that the TPM operates primarily as a grassroots advocacy movement.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Tea Party movement “has spawned countless articles, essays, and op-eds that attempt to explain it, define it, and gauge its power” (Weigel, 2010, p. 14). The movement, which was originally dismissed by the liberal left as being nothing more than “astroturfing,” has begun to shape the course of American politics throughout the last two-and-a-half years. Drawing on a network of millions of voters, mostly from the conservative or libertarian camps, the Tea Party movement (TPM) has emerged as the populist movement of the moment within the United States.

While many consider the movement to be an example of “a genuine grassroots phenomenon” there are those who have had their doubts (Weigel, 2010). Former Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, for example, has labeled the movement as being nothing more than astroturfing (KTVU, 2009). Borrowing the definition from Campaigns & Elections Magazine, contemporary American authors John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton indicated that astroturfing is “a grassroots program that involves the instant manufacturing of public support for a point of view in which either uninformed activists are recruited or means of deception are used to recruit them” (1995, p. 79). Considering the rising contentions between the left and right, the Congressional changes that occurred last year as a result

of the 2010 midterm elections, and the upcoming 2012 presidential election, now is the perfect time to analyze such a political phenomenon.

Though the growth of the movement itself is quite fascinating, especially when one considers that it virtually exploded into the public sphere overnight, and has only continued to grow, what makes the TPM worth examining is that it taps into a populist undercurrent of discontent that has been emanating throughout the country. Simply put, Americans are angry, with the federal government generally, and with President Barack Obama specifically. This anger results from issues such as the swelling national deficit and double-digit unemployment rates. The TPM provides an avenue for the millions of angry Americans to not only express their anger, but to also participate in transforming their present reality. After all, that's what a populist movement does. Supporters rise up to challenge the establishment in hopes of erecting a genuine change.

Populist movements, as have been found throughout American history, are an intrinsic component of representative democracy. Thus, it is important to examine the TPM through the lens of a populist movement. Populism, in its earliest form, dates back to the late 1820s when President Andrew Jackson successfully contrived a fear amongst the people that a financial elite threatened to take control over national institutions (Katel, 2010). There have been numerous populist movements since throughout America's history. Though overall the people participating in these movements have intentions of bettering America, there have been

occasions of such movements bringing about damaging results as well, such as during the era of McCarthyism in the 1950s.

In short, the goal of a populist movement is to bring about some sort of political, social, or economic change. However, in attempting to erect said change, there have been instances where members outside the movement have questioned its authenticity. One of the greatest modern examples of this is the current Tea Party phenomenon. As such, the purpose of this thesis is to determine whether the TPM presents an example of genuine, grassroots advocacy at its finest, or is rather highly-disguised, well-funded astroturfing. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to first analyze the historical role and requirements of social movement leaders, the components of group, or movement, ideology, and the functions social movements undergo. Second, it is essential to distinguish the differences between grassroots advocacy and astroturfing. Finally, it is necessary to examine the TPM in light of the framework established by reviewing the aforementioned components.

It is also necessary to possess an understanding of the political, and socioeconomic conditions that are generally manifested prior to populist uprisings, as well as have a familiar understanding of the current context giving way to the emergence of populist movements. Though the discussion of this thesis is focused on the Tea Party movement, there have been recent manifestations of other movements, such as the pro-

immigration efforts in the Southwest, and the Occupy Wall Street protests occurring across the country, and throughout the world.

Method

In order to analyze thoroughly the authenticity of the TPM, it is necessary to utilize a multi-method approach. First, I am using rhetorical typologies of, and frameworks for, analyzing social movement rhetorics. Second, using these models, along with content analysis, I will be evaluating whether the TPM represents an authentic social movement or whether it represents astroturfing. Third, when analyzing the content of the social movement rhetoric, I use grounded theory to identify and interpret the themes that emerge in the discourse. These themes will be examined in relation to the question of the TPM's authenticity as grassroots. These theoretical frameworks, as well as the criteria used for identifying astroturfing, are outlined in Chapter Two.

As I was unable to identify a previous study wherein the researchers set out to differentiate a grassroots advocacy movement from an astroturfing movement, I set out to establish a framework for identifying different components of social movements. As such, the first model that I utilized was established by Herbert W. Simons, wherein he identified three rhetorical requirements, or functions, social movement leaders must complete in order to maintain their movement. Searching within the artifacts identified below, I sought to identify the rhetorical themes in

order to determine if TPM leaders engaged in the functions outlined by Simons.

The second component of the requirements identified by Simons referred to a movement's ideology. However, Simons did not define, nor attempt to explain movement ideology on his own. Rather, he deferred to an explanation previously provided by American sociologist Herbert Blumer. Blumer identified five components of movement ideology. These components, as explained by Blumer, comprise the second model for which analysis was conducted. In essence, I reviewed TPM sources to determine if examples existed of leaders or supporters espousing these ideological elements.

The next framework utilized in this analysis was provided by communications professor Charles J. Stewart. He previously identified a model for analyzing the five phases of social movement rhetoric. According to Stewart, these rhetorical functions are manifested in most social movements. As such, I again analyzed the chosen artifacts to identify what themes emerged and to determine whether these themes aligned with the rhetoric of social movements identified by Stewart.

Considering the strong political positions advocated on both sides of the TPM, it was imperative to approach the research question without any preconceived hypothesis or conclusions. Instead, my intention was to let the evidence frame the answer. The purpose of conducting rhetorical analysis was to allow the categories of issues to emerge within the data.

Additionally, in reviewing the TPM discourse as discourse, I engaged grounded theory (GT) as my method of analysis. This analysis was conducted using the theoretical frameworks identified by Simons, Blumer, and Stewart.

The concept of letting the themes emerge is not original, rather this type of research dates back to the mid-1960s when Glaser and Strauss developed grounded theory (GT) as a qualitative research method (Licqurish & Seibold, 2011). GT, in part, was deemed an appropriate research method for this project for two reasons. First, the intent of the research was not to confirm nor deny any specific hypothesis. Second, the goal of the project was to arrive at a conclusion after studying TPM-related artifacts. Both components match the conditions identified by Hunter, Murphy, Grealish, Casey, and Keady (2011) as being ideal for this method of research.

In addition to utilizing a multiple-method approach, it is also important to indicate that I used purposive sampling, “a kind of nonprobability sampling common in qualitative research” (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 427). As such, I selected specific artifacts for this analysis because I was attempting to utilize a variety of resources within the movement that would provide an adequate picture of movement rhetoric.

The artifacts chosen for this research are as follows. First, the websites for two popular TPM groups were selected. The first is the website for the Tea Party Patriots, the second is that of the Tea Party

Express. Both websites provide a great deal of insight into the goals and desires of their respective supporters.

Additionally, because the TPM originated, in large part, through the use of social media, and considering that social media is often used as a way for social movement leaders to express their opinions which guide the movement, I included one month's worth of FaceBook posts by Sarah Palin. The month, September 2011, was chosen randomly, simply because the posts were current, yet an entire month could be analyzed at one time. Palin was specifically chosen because of her vast influence over and popularity within the movement.

Finally, because the movement is not purely one of the online domain, I found it was necessary to include three speeches from movement leaders. Two of these speeches were delivered by Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, the founder of the congressional Tea Party Caucus. The first speech, which was given January 25, 2011, was chosen because Bachmann was asked to speak on behalf of the Tea Party, rather than the Republican party for which she is a member, in response to President Obama's January 2011 State of the Union address. Bachmann's second speech, delivered February 11, 2011, was chosen because Bachmann was asked to address the Conservative Political Action Conference, which contained a crowd of 11,000 plus mostly-conservative Americans. Though she was not addressing her remarks specifically to TPM followers, and was rather speaking to conservatives as a whole, this

speech provided an additional resource from which to analyze rhetorical themes.

The final speech was delivered by Sarah Palin on Labor Day 2011 at a Tea Party rally. This speech was chosen for a few reasons. First, the speech was given by Palin prior to her acknowledging that she wouldn't run for the Republican presidential nomination. As such, the speech is directed at Tea Party supporters. Second, Palin is considered a leader of the movement, thus the rhetoric she espouses need also be reviewed. Finally, the speech was delivered in early September, thus it provides a current example for analysis.

Additional detail regarding these artifacts is contained in Chapter Four. However, before moving any further it is helpful to the reader for the content in this thesis to be outlined. As such, the following provides a brief sketch of what is contained in this thesis.

Overview of the Chapters

In Chapter Two, the phenomenon of populism is thoroughly examined. Beginning with a brief historical overview of American populism, the reader is introduced to the notion that populist, or social, movements have long been an ingrained part of representative democracy. Such movements have occurred on both sides of the political spectrum, from the left to the right. After reviewing the historical context, populism will then be defined. Furthermore, historians have agreed that certain conditions tend to occur which encourage the emergence of a populist

movement. These conditions include crises, generally social, economic, or cultural, the democratic paradox, the natural tension occurring between those governing and those being governed, and finally the manifestation of charismatic leaders that exercise influence over the people.

Communications scholar Herbert W. Simons provided a framework outlining the rhetorical requirements placed on social movement leaders. Social movement rhetoric is then defined and contextualized. Next, the phases of social movements are outlined by communications professor Charles J. Stewart. The framework established by Simons and Stewart lay the foundation for the analysis that is completed in chapter four. Finally, the chapter concludes with an explanation of both advocacy and astroturfing. The concepts are defined and then compared and contrasted at the grassroots level.

The intent of Chapter Three is to provide the reader with a contextualization of the contemporary Tea Party movement. This is completed first by distinguishing whom the movement represents, and second by providing a historical overview of the TPM, beginning with its creation. However, in order for the reader to draw a clear picture of the goals of the movement, its agenda and ideology are discussed. From there, a brief discussion of middle-class entitlements occurs, which then leads to a discussion on the poor economic conditions emanating across the country. Finally, it is important to examine the structure of the TPM,

which includes identifying and analyzing both the movement's leaders and financiers.

Moving into Chapter Four, the focus turns to the analysis of the TPM in comparison to the frameworks outlined by Simons and Stewart. First, an examination of the social movement leader functions is conducted. Second, the scheme of rhetorical functions, often associated with social movements, was also analyzed. A number of artifacts were examined, including the websites for the Tea Party Patriots and the Tea Party Express, two Michele Bachmann speeches, a speech by Sarah Palin, and FaceBook posts by Palin.

Finally, Chapter Five provides conclusions of the analysis conducted. Results of said research led to the conclusion that although there may be some components, or instances, of astroturf present, the larger part of the movement appears to be the manifestation of grassroots advocacy. The broader significance of this research is that it provides a perspective on how social movements emerge, and further how issues get defined. It further outlines a framework for analyzing the rhetoric and authenticity of such movements.

Chapter 2

HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT

LITERATURE

In order to examine the authenticity of the TPM, it is first necessary to lay a theoretical groundwork for identifying and examining authentic social movements. This can be accomplished by analyzing the rhetorical role of social movement leaders, as well as the functions, or phases that social movements traverse. However, before such work can be completed, the roots of populism in the United States must be reviewed. As such, the purpose of this chapter is two-fold.

First, the discussion in this chapter begins with a brief historical overview of social movement literature. It is important to review the history of populism in the United States, to define the concept, and to identify the conditions necessary for a movement to emanate. Each of these components have been included in order to frame the concept of populism.

Second, once the historical aspects of populism have been reviewed, the discussion moves to explicating the theoretical models that will be applied in Chapter Four. In identifying these models a brief history of the evolution of these frameworks has been included. Specifically, the models used in this analysis provide an opportunity to study the rhetoric of social movements, particularly that of movement leaders, the phases of social

movements, and finally a framework outlining the authenticity of advocacy versus astroturfing.

History of Social Movement Literature

This chapter begins with an examination of populism, from its origins in the United States to the conditions necessary for a movement to originate. This examination is important because the TPM has been considered by many to be a “populist” movement (Harris-Perry, 2010; Mead, 2011), “directed against the liberal elite” (Ashbee, 2011, p. 158). However, before one can claim that the TPM is a representation of populism, one need understand what a populist movement is, as well as possess at least a brief familiarity with the history of populism in America.

A brief historical overview of American populism.

Populism is far from being a novel concept. American populism is often traced back to the 1820s, with the election of President Andrew Jackson (Katel, 2009). Considered America’s “defender” (Meyers, 1957), Jackson was the first “populist” president (Thomson, 2007). According to contemporary journalist and researcher Peter Katel (2009), Jackson has been credited with reviving the two party system, as he is considered to have established the modern Democratic Party.

Jacksonian Democracy, in part, was directed against the “Monster Bank” – the Second Bank, which Jackson promoted a deep fear and hatred of (Meyers, 1957). According to professor Michael Kazin, for Jackson and his followers, “partisanship was a necessary and permanent device to

mobilize the forces of Democracy against the aristocratic ‘money power’ of his day,” (1995, p.19). It was the elite whom Jackson and his followers distrusted. Jacksonian “rhetoric championed the cause of equal access to property and wealth” (Kazin, 1995, p. 19). Led by President Jackson, Jacksonians fought to prevent the financial elite from taking control of the country.

Jacksonians represent only one of the populist movements that occurred throughout the 19th century. During the 1890s popular discontent led to the formation of the U.S. People’s Party, also referred to as the People’s Party of America, in St. Louis, in 1892 (Katel, 2009). An economic depression had hit the West and South, primarily affecting agricultural communities, resulting in tenant farmers falling deeply into debt, which “exacerbated long-held grievances against railroads, lenders, grain-elevator owners, and others with whom the farmers did business” (“The Populist Party,” n.d.). The depression was so bad that farmers and their families were literally starving (McMath, 1993). These conditions led to the melding of the Knights of Labor and the Farmers’ Alliance into the People’s Party.

Millions of men and women across America united together as one under the banner of the People’s Party hoping for “the preservation of individual liberty, the establishment of a just polity, and the creation of a new cooperative commonwealth” (McMath, Jr., 1993, p. 8). They viewed the current system as being unfair. Their platform advocated for the

curtailing of corporate abuse, measures to decrease poverty among the working-class, and they wanted more federal aid to offset the impacts of the economic depression (“The Populist Party,” n.d.). The rhetoric of the People’s Party originated primarily from two sources: the Protestant Reformation, which propagated the idea that it was “every Christian’s duty to attack sinful behavior,” and the Enlightenment, which cultivated a “belief that ordinary people could think and act rationally, more rationally, in fact, than their ancestral overlords” (Kazin, 1995, p. 10-11).

The People’s Party is remembered as “one of the defining populist movements” in democratic history, according to political scholar Cas Mudde (2004, p. 548). The Party was committed to advocating for social reform. Supporters were often referred to as “populists.” Though the People’s Party disbanded in 1908, the spirit of populism lived on.

During the mid-1960s, conservatives directed their animosity at President John F. Kennedy. Blaming him for the problems in America, they believed that “capitalism would take care of everything if the overgrown state would just go away” (Zernike, 2010, p. 56). Conservative groups, composed of both young and old, rallied behind Republican Presidential nominee, and Arizona Senator, Barry Goldwater, who believed in a smaller American government. In the book, The Conscience of a Conservative, he wrote that the platform for the ideal presidential candidate would include the position stating that, “I have little interest in

streamlining government or in making it more efficient, for I mean to reduce its size” (1960, p. 17).

Goldwater had the support of young conservative activists during the 1960s, who eventually formed the group Young Americans for Freedom (Zinsmeister, 1997). Reflecting back on the 1960s, Republican congressman Dana Rohrabacher, recalled that during the fall of 1964, “the largest, best organized, most active and creative organization on college campuses coast to coast” were the Youth for Goldwater (1997, p. 37). These students organized on behalf of their conservative viewpoints. Though Goldwater lost the presidential election, this is yet another example of contemporary American populism.

Up to this point, this historical overview of populist movements in the United States has contained mostly positive examples, meaning said movements primarily challenged the elite on behalf of the betterment of the people. However, there have been examples of populist movements in which a specific group, other than the political or financial elite, were targeted. One of the most glaring examples of this occurred during the 1950s, in the era of McCarthyism.

At first glance, the reader may question the populist nature of McCarthyism. However, numerous scholars have considered McCarthyism to be an example of populism, albeit a negative representation. Tom Hayden, former California Senator and current social and political activist, has stated that McCarthyism was a manifestation of American populism,

“similar to the contemporary Tea Party” (2011, p. 12). Additionally, Kazin indicated that McCarthyism flourished in part because it added to the anti-Communist sentiment reticent of the time. Further, Kazin acknowledged McCarthy’s skill as a “rhetorical populist” (1995, p. 184). He noted that though McCarthyism never evolved into a “mass movement” containing followers, McCarthy himself “cultivated the image of a relentless red hunter who didn’t mind making enemies in high places because his only true support came from ‘the people’” (p. 187).

According to Hayden, McCarthyism “was a nationalist, xenophobic response to the perceived threats of the Soviet Union and the Chinese communist-led revolution” (2011, p. 12). Though the United States and Soviet Union had been allies during World War Two, they quickly became adversaries upon its conclusion. As such, the threat of growing communism loomed, especially throughout America. Capitalizing on these fears, Senator Joseph McCarthy publicly claimed that “more than two hundred ‘card-carrying’ communists had infiltrated the United States government” (Miller, 2006). His accusations led to a witch-hunt of sorts. Fueled by information from J. Edgar Hoover, McCarthy and the Government Committee on Operations of the Senate launched investigations into the political past of countless government employees, as well as numerous Hollywood actors and writers (“Arthur Miller,” 2006; “McCarthyism,” n.d.).

The ardor of McCarthyism began to abate in 1954; however, the “proceedings remain one of the most shameful moments in modern U.S. history” (“Arthur Miller,” 2006). Though the intent – ridding communist insurgents from American government – may have been noble, the result was less than honorable. Supporters of McCarthyism directed their attention to the government officials, popular writers, and entertainment stars McCarthy identified as the ‘other,’ or the ‘elite.’ Though McCarthy’s allegations were eventually proven false, countless careers had been destroyed in the process (“Arthur Miller,” 2006). Despite this outcome, populism in America did not die.

The review of McCarthyism was included in this synopsis in order to illustrate by example that populist movements can be swayed or directed by the charismatic expression of a person, or group. Further, the review of McCarthyism provided an example of populism in which the end result did not lead to some sort of political or economic betterment of the people. McCarthyism is often included in chronologies of American populism, generally highlighting the negative attributes such movements can produce.

As has been demonstrated by this very brief look through history, populism has been a component of American representative democracy for more than 200 years. Though populist movements can occur on the right or the left, their intent is always the same: to free the people from those viewed as an oppressive elite. How then is this goal accomplished?

In order to appreciate the inner workings of a populist movement, it is prudent to first understand the term. Though a number of researchers have made attempts to define, or explain, what it means to be a populist movement, the debate stretches down to the core of what populism is and how it operates. Is populism a political psychology, a phenomenon, or even anti-phenomenon (Deiwiks, 2009)?

Defining populism. There have been those that argue that populism is “a highly emotional and simplistic discourse that is directed at the ‘gut feelings’ of the people,” while others contend that populism is “used to describe opportunistic policies with the aim of (quickly) pleasing the people/voters – and so ‘buying’ their support – rather than looking (rationally) for the ‘best option’” (Mudde, 2004, p. 542). In the first definition, populism is about an emotional experience, whereas, in the second, populism is limited to explaining actions politicians, for example, may take to increase support from their constituents. Both notions of populism are far too limited in scope.

There have been numerous other attempts to explain, if not define, populism. Political analyst Chip Berlet has defined populism as “a rhetorical style that seeks to mobilize ‘the people’ as a social or political force to counter entrenched elites” (2011, p. 17). In Berlet’s interpretation, populism represents a force that prods people to action in challenging those in power. Such populist movements can occur on either the right or the left. However, he indicated that “the central populist motif of many

historic right-wing dissident movements in the United States is the claim that the current government regime is indifferent, corrupt, or traitorous” (p. 17). Simply put, these movements have often been motivated by those who no longer trust the current government to look out for the common good of the people.

According to professors Yves Mény and Yves Surel (2002), there are three distinct facets to the rhetoric of every populist movement. First, the movement must “emphasize the role of the people and its fundamental position, not only within society, but also in the structure and functioning of the political system as a whole” (p. 11-12). This step highlights the importance of the people. Second, “populist movements usually claim that the people have been betrayed by those in charge” (p. 12). According to Mény and Surel, claims are made that the people have been abused by the elites in power. Third, “the primacy of the people has to be restored” (p. 13). This is accomplished by ousting the current regime, and replacing said leaders with those concerned about the best interest of the people (Mény & Surel, 2002).

Professor of politics and contemporary European studies, Paul Taggart, also indicated that it is difficult to define populism; however, he identified a number of commonalities mentioned by Mény and Surel. In his study of the subject, he too, agreed that there is an emphasis on the ‘people,’ who “are nothing more than the populace of the heartland,” with the heartland representing the people’s idealized milieu (2002, p. 67). The

people are thus posited against the elite, which is key to populism (Taggart, 2002). Additionally, Taggart identifies the role crisis plays within populism. He states, “What is perhaps most important is that populism tends to emerge when there is a strong sense of crisis and populists use this to inject a sense of urgency and importance into their message” (p. 69).

Political Scholar Cas Mudde, defines populism as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argue that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (2004, p. 543). According to Mudde, populism is an ideology in its own right, with the central focus on ‘the people’ and ‘the elite.’ Populism thus emerges when dissension occurs between the two groups.

Finally, there is one additional element that needs to be discussed when considering populism as it occurs in the United States. Building from the research of others, this concept has been explained by Berlet. He has stated that, in America, “populism often involves the use of a ‘producerist’ narrative that portrays a noble middle class of hard-working productive citizens being squeezed by a conspiracy involving secret elites above the lazy, sinful, and subversive parasites below” (p. 17). As such, the people are once again being abused by those in power.

In review, Berlet defined populism as being a force that is used to mobilize people to action. He also noted the oppression of the virtuous, hard-working middle class who are exploited by the powerful elites. Mény and Surel identified three distinct components of populism: the significance of the people, identifying a betrayal by those in power, and replacing the current political regime with leaders concerned about the interests of the people. Taggart agreed with Mény and Surel's point that a central focus is placed on the people; however, he also indicated that crisis is critical to the emergence of populism. Finally, though Mudde indicated that populism is an ideology, he too viewed populism as having a focus on the people and the elite.

Clearly, Berlet, Mény and Surel, Taggart, and Mudde all have identified the tension existing between the people and the other, which is most often identified as the elite, as a primary component of populism. It is this friction between the common people, whomever they may represent, and the elite, which need also be identified in given situations individually, that give rise to populist movements within democratic societies. The question then is, what tensions lead to the formation of a populist movement?

Conditions from which populism emerges. Though many factors may promote populism, there are primarily three conditions given to encouraging its emergence (Deiwiks, 2009). International Conflict Research student Christa Deiwiks (2009) has outlined these three facets in

some detail. The first condition linked to the development of a populist movement is “poor socioeconomic conditions or other crises” (p. 3). As previously stated by Taggart, crisis is central to the emergence of a populist movement. “Populists are reluctantly political insofar as they only mobilise when overcome by a sense of crisis” (Taggart, 2002, p. 69).

Additionally, political theorist Margaret Canovan indicated that such crises are often social or economic. She wrote that, “populist movements are usually sparked off by specific social and economic problems” (2002, p. 25). Berlet has indicated that in addition to social or economic stressors, cultural stress has also aided in the emergence of right-leaning populist movements throughout the U.S. (2009). Not only is crisis or stress central, it appears to be critically necessary for a movement to take place. It is important to also note that though crisis may lead to an uprising by the people, or the birth of a populist movement, the movement is generally short-lived, as once the crisis or stressor has ended, typically the movement dies shortly thereafter (Deiwiks, 2009; Taggart, 2002). In fact, rarely have populist movements lasted even ten years; most have fizzled out long before then (Abbott, 2007).

Though crisis may be linked to populism, there is also a strong argument that populism is “rooted in the very way democracy works” (Deiwiks, 2009, p. 3). Democracy, after all, is government by the people and for the people. However, “the paradox is that democratic politics does

not and cannot make sense to most of the people it aims to empower”
(Canovan, 2002, p. 25).

In an earlier essay, Canovan (1999) explained in detail the paradox existing within representative democracy. This paradox, she explained, occurs between the redemptive and the pragmatic sides of democracy. For, on the one hand, democracy is essential to maintaining peace amongst conflicting interests and ideologies. On the other, democracy promises the people power and encourages them to do as they please. Another component of the tension discussed by Canovan relates to democratic institutions, such as Congress, for example. Such institutions are a necessary element of representative democracy, yet they distinctly cause an alienation amongst the people, as not everyone within the populace has access to their inner workings. This alienation leaves a gap, which often encourages occurrences of populism.

In short, Deiwiki explained that the democratic paradox, a concept coined by Canovan, occurs because “the more power is distributed among an increasing number of people, the less localizable it becomes, which means that policies are the result not of a clear act of will, but of interactions and adjustments between many actors” (p. 4). The people become further removed from those making the decisions. As such, it is argued that populism is probably unavoidable for representative democracies.

The third commonality linked to the emergence of populism is that such movements generally have “charismatic leaders” that adopt a specific style of rhetoric (Deiwiks, 2009, p. 3). This rhetoric is examined more closely later in the chapter. However, in many cases, movement leaders will describe their platform as being one of common sense (Betz, 2002). This is simply one way in which they attempt to appeal to those sympathetic of their cause.

According to German sociologist and economist Max Weber, a “charismatic leader is always in some sense a revolutionary, setting himself in conscious opposition to some established aspects of the society in which he works” (1947, p. 64). In the case of populist movements, the established aspects often represent the political or economic elite. As such, the charismatic leader stands against the abusive elite on behalf of the people.

The purpose of the first half of the chapter was to provide the reader with a historical reading of social movement literature. Specifically, examples of populist movements occurring in the United States within the past 200 years were provided and summarized. Populism was then defined and its components deciphered. Finally, the conditions necessary for the emergence of such a movement were reviewed. However, it is now important to review the models available for analyzing social movements.

Models Used for Studying Social Movements

In the following sections, models for studying social movements will be discussed. The discussion begins with an explanation of social movement rhetoric, specifically that of social movement leaders. Communications scholar Herbert W. Simons' framework outlining the rhetorical requirements of social movement leaders is reviewed as it is used in the first step of analyzing the authenticity of the TPM. Then, the rhetorical model identified by communication professor Charles J. Stewart for identifying the phases of social movements is examined. The structure indicated by Stewart is utilized in the second step of analyzing the TPM's authenticity. Finally, advocacy and astroturfing are compared and contrasted, in order to establish the final piece of the framework for the analysis of TPM authenticity.

A historical overview of social movement rhetoric.

Communication scholars have been studying social movement rhetoric since the 1940s (Jensen, 2006). Rhetoric is, after all, a central prop in democracy (Kane & Haig, 2010). Bearing in mind that social movements have also been a prevalent component within democracies, consider the Civil Rights Movement, for example, it is important to know how rhetoric is formed and used within these movements.

Rhetoric, according to The Oxford English Dictionary, is defined as “the art of using language so as to persuade or influence others; the body of rules to be observed by a speaker or writer in order that he may express

himself with eloquence” (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 857). More specifically, Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the power to see, in each case, the possible ways to persuade” (as cited in Shields, 2011). In short, rhetoric is a tool that can be used to influence, and ultimately convince a subject or group to one’s way of thinking. Used within social movements, rhetoric is a form of discourse that can be used to achieve a political goal. However, before one can examine social movement rhetoric, it seems prudent to define, or at least outline the parameters needing to exist in order for a social movement to take place.

For the sake of this thesis, social movement is defined as the “uninstitutionalized collectivity that mobilizes for action to implement a program for the reconstitution of social norms or values” (Turner & Killian, 1957, p. 129-130). In essence, those participating in a social movement seek to erect change. This change can be done through different forms of protest, including “marches, music, slogans, chants, and other forms of nonverbal communication” (Jensen, 2006).

It is also important to note that “movements should be distinguished, as such, from panics, crazes, booms, fads, and hostile outbursts, as well as from the actions of recognized labor unions, government agencies, business organizations, and other institutionalized decision-making bodies” (Simons, 1970, p. 3). In making this distinction, it is clear that social movements are a unique body. As movements are separate from political or corporate entities, they also have distinctive

attributes. As such, it is important to examine how leaders within the TPM have instituted such rhetoric. Such examination will occur in Chapter Four, using the framework identified below.

Rhetoric of social movement leaders examined. In 1970, communications scholar Herbert W. Simons outlined three rhetorical requirements social leaders must follow in order for their movement to remain functional. First, “they must attract, maintain, and mold workers (i.e., followers) into an efficiently organized unit” (p. 3). Simons explained that the health of a movement is dependent on followers adhering to the group’s agenda.

Second, leaders “must secure adoption of their product by the larger structure (i.e., the external system, the established order)” (p. 3-4). Simons relied on American sociologist Herbert Blumer’s concept that a movement’s product is its ideology. According to Blumer, the ideology provides the movement with “a set of values, a set of convictions, a set of criticisms, a set of arguments, and a set of defenses” (Blumer, 1969, p. 111). Further, Blumer went on to identify five core aspects of group, or movement, ideology.

First, he indicated that a movement’s ideology generally consists of a mission statement, which identifies the objective or goals of the movement. Second, the ideology includes a criticism of the establishment, or entity the movement is seeking to change. Third, the movement must provide both a defense and justification of its existence. The fourth

component of a movement's ideology is a sort of operating guidelines, which outline policies and procedures of how the movement will proceed. Finally, the fifth component contained within the movement's ideology is an acknowledgement of myths, or lies, regarding or related to the movement.

According to Blumer, having a solid ideology is key to a movement's success. As such, it is of utmost importance that the movement's doctrine and ideals be espoused to others. However, in order to maintain support across the masses, leaders often find that they must speak in generalized terms, often oversimplifying their position on the problems (Simons, 1970).

Finally, the third component of social movement leader rhetoric identified by Simons is that leaders must also "react to resistance generated by the larger structure" (p.4). Simons indicated that the movement's opposition may react in many ways, from trying to outsmart leaders of the movement, to responding to forms of counter attack, such as harassment, or social exclusion. The leader, or leaders, in essence, must always be cognizant of, and ready to counter, the constant attack or backlash he or she will receive.

As has been previously discussed, rhetoric is not an instrument solely limited to the use of movement leaders. However, the rhetorical role of movement leaders identified by Simons provides a component of analysis for examining the authenticity of the TPM. Specifically, the

requirements outlined by Simons, that is the attraction and maintenance of movement supporters, the mainstream espousing of movement ideology, and the reaction to movement opposition, along with the components of ideology outlined by Blumer, will be used as a framework when analyzing the rhetoric of the TPM.

Social movement rhetoric. Though the rhetoric of social movements has not always been rational, the goal is to challenge the establishment (Jensen, 2006). In challenging the establishment, movements seem to historically traverse a series of phases. These phases have been analyzed by numerous researchers, beginning with Griffin in the early 1950s. Griffin's structure was a fairly simplistic structure, containing only three phases. Building from Griffin, rhetorical studies professor Bruce Gronbeck identified a somewhat more complex outline of identifying six rhetorical phases social movements undergo. Utilizing the structures outlined by Griffin and Gronbeck, communication professor Charles J. Stewart identified a more complex scheme for social movement rhetoric analysis in the early 1980s. Stewart's outline provides the second model from which to analyze the authenticity of the TPM.

Using Griffin and Gronbeck as a foundation, Stewart outlined what he identified as a "functional scheme for analyzing the rhetoric of social movements," a model consisting of five broad conditions (1980, p. 302). However, before examining this model, it would be helpful to acknowledge Stewart's definition of the term rhetoric. He indicated that rhetoric

“denote[s] the process by which a social movement seeks through the manipulation of verbal and nonverbal symbols to affect the perceptions of target audiences and thus to bring about changes in their ways of thinking, feeling, and/or acting” (p. 301). Simply put, rhetoric is a tool used by the movement to seek change. Stewart viewed rhetoric as the crucial medium movements have to achieve their desired goal.

Though there are five phases identified by Stewart, he indicated that they do not necessarily occur in any specific order, nor that one phase must occur apart from another. Rather, Stewart specified that “social movements are unlikely to perform any function once and then proceed to another task. Some functions may dominate the rhetoric of a movement at a given time, yet most demand attention on a continual basis” (p. 301). As such, these phases may occur simultaneously, or a phase may manifest itself at one point and then be repeated at a later time.

The first stage identified by Stewart is transforming perceptions of history. This includes perceptions of the past, present, and future. Stewart argued that people are often unaware, or are in denial, of the existence of a problem, or in some cases simply need to be made aware of an insufferable situation. Thus, “social movements must alter the ways audiences perceive the past, the present, and the future to convince them that an intolerable situation exists and that it warrants urgent action” (p. 302). In essence, this rereading of historic events is done to garner support for the present day movement. Additionally, Stewart advised that it is not uncommon for

movements to alter their narrative of the past in order to contend with the changes and pressures the movement faces.

Transforming perceptions of society is the second function in the model identified by Stewart. This occurs in two parts. First, Stewart indicated the necessity of reconstructing public opinion of the opposition. This has been done in many ways, including demonizing foes, exposing them as being conspiratorial, or too powerful, with the intention of “strip[ping] such opponents of their legitimacy” (p. 302). Second, Stewart explained that “social movements must attempt to alter the self-perceptions of target audiences so that supporters and potential supporters come to believe in their self-worth and ability to bring about urgent change” (p. 302-303). Stewart indicated that changing perceptions heaped on them by the establishment allows movement followers the opportunity for self-discovery, which may result in a we/they distinction, with “we” representing the good people of the movement, and “they” being the evil oppressors (p. 303).

The next function discussed by Stewart is prescribing courses of action. Stewart indicated that social movements must “explain what should be done,” “prescribe who ought to do the job,” and “propose and defend how the job is to be done” (p. 303). In essence, this aspect not only justifies the purpose of the movement, but explains the action plan of the movement. In doing so, Stewart indicated that this phase manufactures legitimacy for the movement.

The fourth component of Stewart's model includes mobilizing for action. In this phase, Stewart explained that the movement puts to action its plans for change, or reform, often by spurring followers into completing prescribed functions. Movements have taken many courses in their attempts to erect change. They may target the sympathies of key public figures, may launch campaigns to elect officials sympathetic to their cause, or they may try to pressure their opponents into capitulation, for example (Stewart, p. 304). No matter what their method, Stewart indicated that they must be committed for the long haul, as it often takes years to successfully erect the desired outcome.

The final phase identified is that of sustaining the movement. According to Stewart, it is important for a movement to account for any delays in accomplishing its desired goal. Movements must also "wage a continual battle to remain viable," which may include continuing to acquire members, and funding, for example (p. 304). Finally, Stewart indicated that movements must remain visible to the public in order to remain viable.

Stewart's model for analyzing social movement rhetoric is key to the discussion in this thesis, specifically in providing a framework in which to identify the attributes of a social movement. This model will act as a useful guide, along with Simons' analysis of social movement leader rhetoric, in determining whether the TPM functions as grassroots advocacy. Discussion of this analysis occurs in chapter four.

Up to this point, populism has been examined, both by providing a historical context of its occurrences, as well as by defining the issue. Additionally, the conditions that lead to the uprising of populist movements have been reviewed, and social movement rhetoric has been discussed. Before continuing on to the next chapter, where a contextualization of the Tea Party is provided, it is necessary to first spend some time reviewing the meaning of advocacy and astroturfing.

Astroturf and the American Dream

The notion of advocacy has been a key component of the TPMt. It has also been one of the core subjects of debate between Tea Partiers and their opponents. Though Tea Partiers have viewed themselves as fighting for a cause – that of fixing the “broken” American government – there are those who view the movement as nothing more than astroturfing (Judis, 2010). Borrowing the definition from Campaigns & Elections Magazine, contemporary American authors John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton indicated that astroturfing is “a grassroots program that involves the instant manufacturing of public support for a point of view in which either uninformed activists are recruited or means of deception are used to recruit them” (1995, p. 79).

At the most basic level, grassroots simply means “a local approach to politics” (“Washington Speak,” 2005, p. 20). Thus, astroturfing occurs when corporate interests manufacture, produce, or are behind what looks like a ground-level movement. Perhaps, a more accessible explanation of

the concept, SourceWatch has defined astroturf as “apparently grassroots-based citizen groups or coalitions that are primarily conceived, created and/or funded by corporations, industry trade associations, political interests or public relations firms” (“Astroturf,” n.d.). In other words, astroturf is not an authentic form of grassroots advocacy by the people.

Representative democracies, however, present ample opportunities for astroturfing. Stauber and Rampton explain that at the foundation of democracy is based the notion of “one person, one vote” (1995, p. 82), thus contributing to a dissemination of power. The people each have one vote, and in essence corporations have only one vote. However, corporations have a vested interest in making money. Thus, it is to their benefit to influence legislation that is most conducive to them achieving said goal. As such, “the grassroots democracy that inspired our revolutionary forebears has given way to political elitism, corruption and influence peddling” (Stuber & Rampton, 1995, p. 78).

Professors John McNutt and Katherine Boland have both studied, taught on, and published extensively on the subject of advocacy. They have found that a key difference between astroturf and grassroots advocacy is that the goal of an astroturf movement “is not driven by the will of the local people, it is driven by the vested interests of an organization” (2007, p. 168). Using different types of media outlets, astroturf campaigns seek “to gain entry into popular culture under the guise of appearing to be a spontaneous movement” (Quinn, n.d.). Though these organizations depict

what looks like an unplanned, impetuous movement, astroturfing is really just well-camouflaged marketing or campaigning, often by a corporate or political entity that has a clear agenda.

Additionally, another difference between astroturf and advocacy was identified by SourceWarch. That is, “unlike grassroots activism which tends to be money-poor, astroturf campaigns are typically people-poor but cash-rich” (n.d.). Thus, astroturf movements tend to have fewer people involved than advocacy movements.

The issue of perception is crucial to any astroturf movement. In order to be successful in attaining the change, or result, desired by the corporation, etc., the astroturf group must institute the “manipulative use of media and other political techniques to create the perception of a grassroots community organization where none exists for the purposes of political gain” (McNutt & Boland, 2007, p.169). The goal of this manipulation is to prevent the populace from realizing that the movement is promoting the goals of a corporation, rather than that of a concerned public. McNutt and Boland further indicated that in order to manipulate the public’s perception of the movement, astroturfers must rely heavily on the use of deception. “People who engaged in astroturf programming are knowingly deceiving the public and public officials” (p. 169-170). Deception is key because movements no longer remain successful once they are exposed for being an astroturf organization (McNutt & Boland, 2007).

Astroturfing movements often look very similar to grassroots advocacy movements. Though they may look and act alike, at the core astroturfing and grassroots advocacy stand for something very different. Whereas astroturfing is, in essence, an inauthentic representation of grassroots advocacy, grassroots advocacy occurs when concerned citizens get involved with, or support, causes they believe in. The Alliance for Justice, a nonprofit organization committed to advocacy law, has defined advocacy as “any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others” (“What is Advocacy?,” n.d.). In other words, advocacy is about acting on behalf of the interest of a group of people, often by lending a voice to, or by bringing attention to, their cause.

Engagement in advocacy can take place in many forms, including “speaking out, letter writing, protesting, voting, and even wearing a t-shirt that makes a statement” (“Advocacy,” n.d.). There really is no limit to the ways concerned individuals can get involved in advocating on behalf of a cause. The key to advocacy is that the engagement is on behalf of something or someone, other than that of a corporate interest.

Take, for example, the Women’s Suffrage movement which began in the early 19th century and persevered for nearly 100 years until women obtained the right to vote in 1920, with the ratification of the 19th Amendment (“The Fight,” 2011). Women who participated in the movement were “harassed, threatened, jailed, and abused, yet they

endured, persisted, and continued to organize because of their sense of social responsibility for the health, welfare, and safety of others” (Dumpel, 2010). These women were pioneers, willing to sacrifice their personal health and well-being in order to obtain a right long-granted to their male counterparts. They did so on the behalf of all women, not for corporate interests.

Although advocacy and astroturfing are fundamentally at odds with each other, they can occur simultaneously within a movement. For example, a grassroots movement may originate. As it builds support and enthusiasm amongst the people, corporate interests may decide to get involved by providing financial assistance to the people or organizations leading the movement. As such, a genuine grassroots advocacy movement can be tainted by astroturfing.

In summary, though advocacy and astroturfing make look similar, they are fundamentally different at the core. Whereas advocacy embodies speaking on behalf of a marginalized group, astroturfing is propelled by corporate interests seeking their own goals. Additionally, while advocacy movements may remain cash poor, they tend to attract large numbers of people, whereas, astroturf movements may have heavy financial support but tend to have few supporters. Finally, once a movement has been exposed as astroturfing, it usually dies, as people have become aware that it was not genuine. These elements comprise the final component of analysis for examining the authenticity of the TPM.

The discussion of this chapter served two intentions. First, this chapter opened with a brief historical overview of populism throughout American history. The intention was to illustrate that populist movements have long been a component of representative democracy and to also demonstrate that such movements occur on both the right and the left sides of the political spectrum. Upon briefly reviewing such history, populism was then defined and contextualized. Further, the conditions from which populism emerges were identified. These included social, economic, or cultural crises, the democratic paradox, and the emergence of charismatic leaders. This historical context provided a foundation on which models for social movement analysis could be explicated.

Second, a framework for analyzing multiple components of social movements was explicated in order to provide a theoretical structure for analyzing the authenticity of the TPM. The reader was introduced first to Simons, who identified three rhetorical requirements placed on social movement leaders. In order for a social movement to function, Simons indicated that the leader(s) must engage at some level in each of the following functions. The first function includes attracting and maintaining movement supporters. The second function requires that the leader(s) promotes the movement's ideology within the larger society. Ideology as defined by Blumer has having five primary components. In short, the movement's ideology contains a mission statement, a criticism of the establishment, justification of its existence, operating guidelines, and

acknowledgement of myths about the movement. Finally, the leader(s) must react to movement opposition.

Next, the rhetoric of social movements was reviewed. This led to a discussion on the phases social movements traverse. Stewart identified a model for examining these functions which outlined five specific phases of social movements. The first of these phases included the necessity to transform notions of the past, present, and future. Second, societal perceptions need to be altered. Third, the movement must advocate a specific course of action. Fourth, upon prescribing a direction for the movement, it must also spur supporters to action. Finally, the movement must be prepared to justify any setbacks or defeats it encounters. Though a movement will traverse each of these phases, Stewart indicated that there is no specific order in which they may occur. Additionally, he explained that these phases can occur simultaneously.

Finally, the third component reviewed was an examination of the concepts of advocacy and astroturfing. In comparing these notions, three predominant differences were acknowledged. First, advocacy movements personify the interests of the people, rather than corporate interests. Second, while advocacy movements tend to have lots of people, they usually have limited funding. Conversely, whereas astroturfing movements often have lots of financial support they generally contain limited participants. Finally, movements exposed as astroturfing quickly die out,

thus requiring those participating in astroturfing to utilize deception and manipulation.

Used in conjunction with one another, these models provide the necessary framework in which to analyze the authenticity of the TPM. The artifacts chosen for examination will be analyzed in relation to these models. As stated previously, this analysis occurs in Chapter Four. However, before turning to the analysis of the TPM, it is necessary to construct a contemporary context within which the movement operates. This will occur in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE TEA PARTY MOVEMENT

The purpose of this chapter is to ascertain an accurate image of who and what the Tea Party movement is. Accomplishing such a task involves far more than analyzing statistical data from surveys, though such information is useful and has been included. Rather, in order to provide a satisfactory profile of the TPM, one must answer the following questions. Who is the TPM? What do its supporters want to accomplish? When did the movement originate? Where is the movement mobilizing? Why organize? How have TPM supporters striven to achieve their goals?

These questions are answered in the following pages. This chapter begins with a demographical overview of movement supporters. The origin of the movement is then discussed, followed by a concise evaluation of movement supporters' reasons for mobilizing. Next, there is a succinct examination into the movement's ideology. This discussion segues into a brief look at entitlements of white middle class Americans. Following that section, the economic crisis, which is one of the conditions spurring the movement, is reviewed. It is then necessary to review the structure of the movement. Finally, funding for the TPM is analyzed.

Who is the Tea Party?

According to a mid-2010 CBS News/*New York Times* poll, 18% of Americans identified themselves as Tea Party supporters (CBS News,

2010). The movement appears to be comprised mostly of older, white, male Americans, as nearly 89% of supporters are white, 75% are 45-years-old or older, and 59% are male. Proponents of the movement tend to be from the South (36%) and West (25%), and are primarily Republican (54%) or Independent (41%). Furthermore, of those participating in this poll, approximately 38% have indicated that they attend weekly religious services, and 58% stated that they keep a gun in their household. In total, 1,580 adults participated in the telephone survey.

Though the data in this poll have been cited in numerous articles, both in support of and in opposition to the movement, it is necessary to review additional surveys before drawing any conclusions on the demographical makeup of the TPM. MyType, an opinion research firm, conducted an online survey on 17,654 American adults ages 18-60 years old. Surveys were completed between August 5 and October 18, 2010. In their published report, MyType also found supporters to be primarily white, but also noted they tend to possess slightly higher education and income levels than the national average and are often parents (“Religious Right,” 2010). In order to better understand movement supporters, respondents supporting the movement were split into two groups: religious conservative supporters, which comprise 22.5% of the TPM, and libertarian supporters, which make up approximately 17% of the movement.

Again, religious conservatives tend to be primarily white (89.7%), older, with 33.7% between the ages of 50-60, and male (54.4%). Approximately 39.7% of these respondents have an annual household income between \$75,000 and \$200,000. Just over 25% have a Bachelor's degree and 22.2% have post-Bachelor degrees. When it comes to children, 62.4% have two or more children. The survey results did not publish median or average income levels for either group.

As for the Libertarian TPM supporters, they too are predominantly white (92.4%), but are somewhat younger than their religious conservative counterparts. Almost one-third are aged 18-29, and just over another third are 40-49 years of age. They are overwhelmingly male (70.2%). Household income range is similar to their religious conservative counterparts, as 37.4% have a household income between \$75,000 and \$200,000. Libertarian supporters are educated, with 26% having a Bachelor's degree and 14.3% attaining graduate or PhD degrees. Further, Libertarian supporters tend to have fewer children than the religious conservatives, as 47.4% have two or more children.

In comparison to 2010 US Census data, Tea Party supporters, whether classed as religious conservatives or Libertarians, tend to have higher household incomes and education levels than the national average. Only 27.8% of American households have an annual income between \$75,000 and \$200,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Additionally, the 2010 Census found that approximately 17.7% of Americans, male and female,

have a Bachelor's degree, while just over 10% have a graduate or professional degree (2011).

Considering the rapidly-changing environment of American politics, and the fact that the aforementioned surveys were completed nearly a year or more ago, one has to wonder whether these demographical statistics hold true today. More recently, *USA Today*/Gallup randomly polled 1,319 American adults and found that of those surveyed 25% identify as supporters of the movement (Saad, 2011). Though proponents still tend to be white there has been a slight shift in their age and gender. While 29% of survey respondents – who claimed to be supporters of the TPM – were male, approximately 22% were female. Further, survey respondents aged 55 and older comprised 28% of those supportive of the TPM, while those aged 35 to 54 equated to approximately 26%.

Taking into account the collective results of the above polls, it can be said that Tea Party supporters are primarily white, male, middle to upper-middle class, slightly higher educated Americans. However, as is evidenced in the chronology of these three polls, there has been a slight shift in which there are now more female supporters and young followers participating in the movement. What is equally as pronounced in the data is that those of ethnic minorities are almost non-existent within the TPM.

Though movement supporters claim to be “average hardworking American[s]” (Cunningham, 2010), census data show they are not

representative of the majority. Benjamin Cunningham, Editor-in-Chief of The Prague Post, an English-language weekly newspaper published in the Czech Republic, summarized that “Tea Partiers consider themselves to be representative of the average person, when all indications are that they are not” (2010, p. 21). Though they are not necessarily representative of the majority, they compose a sizable force of angry Americans that cannot simply be dismissed as only “a fringe faction that ultimately will lose steam” (Katel, 2009).

Having a clear picture of Tea Party supporters is important when evaluating the authenticity of the movement. Though proponents of the movement are not completely reflective of the American majority, they have raised their collective voices in attempt to erect change. Before reviewing the beliefs and ideologies behind the movement, it is important to understand how the Tea Party got its start.

The Origination of the Tea Party Movement

The Tea Party movement was born out of dissent over President Obama’s economic stimulus and health-care plans (Katel, 2009). Americans from across the country were frustrated with government spending and decided to take action. Though no one specific act officially kicked off the movement, there are at least three key events that lit the spark for this modern-day revolution of civil society.

On February 16, 2009, just one day before President Obama signed the stimulus package into law, a young Seattle activist and blogger, Keli

Carender, hosted a rally to protest the stimulus bill supported by President Obama, The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Katel, 2009). Carender, who blogs online as “Liberty Belle,” used the internet to organize a protest against the bill she dubbed “porkulus,” in Seattle’s Westlake Park. Carender’s agenda encouraged “individual freedom, individual liberty and the government getting out of our lives” (KIRO TV, 2009). According to reporter Essex Porter, the consensus of those at the rally was that the bill “cost too much, was passed too quickly, and wont really save jobs” (KIRO TV, 2009). This protest has been considered by many to be the first demonstration of the new TPM (Berger, 2009; Katel, 2009).

Though some credit Carender as having organized the first rally, more often CNBC’s Rick Santelli is regarded as being the engineer behind the TPM (Judis, 2010; Weigel, 2010). On February 19, 2009, Santelli ranted against the new stimulus package signed by President Obama, from the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, challenging the president to establish a website where Americans could vote on whether they wanted to subsidize failed mortgages. Santelli then invited all interested capitalists to join him for a Chicago Tea Party that he would organize for July (CNBC, 2009). Santelli’s tirade struck a nerve across the nation and within four days over 1.7 million people had viewed the outburst on CNBC’s website (Katel, 2009).

Spring-boarding off Santelli's public diatribe, a number of activists immediately began organizing local rallies of their own. In all, 48 individual tea parties were held across the country on February 27, 2009, just eight days after the Santelli rant (Berger, 2009). Using social media sites, such as FaceBook and Twitter, to coordinate efforts, activists including John O'Hara, the former Bush administration Labor Department staffer, Brendan Steinhauser, of the lobbying group FreedomWorks, and blogger Michael Patrick Leahy successfully organized events in more than 30 cities (Berger, 2009; Judis, 2010; Katel, 2009). Additional protests organized for April 15, 2009 – tax day – drew more than 1.2 million people across the country (Katel, 2009). The quick organizing and overwhelming response showed that there was already a vast amount of dissatisfaction raging throughout America. What Santelli did, in essence, is “give the discontent a name, and a bit of imagery” (Zernike, 2010). The movement has only continued to grow since then.

The TPM, which has no central leadership, took its name from American colonial history. The name originated from the Boston Tea Party and the revolt in 1773 protesting British taxation. The Boston Tea Party has been labeled “the quintessential act of rebellion,” thus borrowing its name lends a great amount of imagery to the movement (Zernike, 2010, p. 53). Just as the Boston Tea Party protestors sparked the American Revolution, current Tea Partiers have sparked an American political revolution. According to Walter Russell Mead, professor and noted

American foreign policy expert, “The rise of the Tea Party movement has been the most controversial and dramatic development in U.S. politics in many years” (2011, p. 29).

A Modern-Day Political Revolution

The Oxford English Dictionary has defined revolt as “an instance, on the part of subjects or subordinates, of casting off allegiance or obedience to their rulers or superiors; an insurrection, rising, or rebellion” (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 839). In order for a group to revolt, then, there must be a perceived threat or extreme outrage by its members against the established authority. In this case, members within the movement have identified the threat as the federal government, specifically President Obama. There is no one cohesive, all-encompassing agenda for the movement. It has been put many different ways, but overall protestors at the national level have rallied around at least three primary concerns: “fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government, and free markets” (“Mission Statement,” n.d.). At the national level, the TPM does not advocate on behalf of or against any social issues, though supporters are encouraged to get involved with causes they care about at a personal level (“Mission Statement,” n.d.). Additionally, some Tea Party groups, generally at the local level, have included the issue of immigration as a primary concern (“About the Movement,” n.d.; “Non-negotiable,” n.d.).

According to Tea Partiers, fiscal responsibility has been neglected by the federal government, as is evidenced by the vast federal deficit (Katel, 2009). Amy Kremer, chairwoman of the Tea Party Express, has identified the “common thread” between the million plus movement supporters as “fiscal responsibility with our tax dollars” (“About the movement,” n.d.). Kremer’s opinion is shared across the country. “People are getting killed – they’re getting hammered with taxes and it’s not the way this country is supposed to be run,” said Tea Party supporter Kristina Mancini (Berger, 2009).

The Tea Party Patriots, one of the largest groups within the movement, has also identified fiscal responsibility as a core issue in order to protect American citizens from over-taxation. They have argued that “such runaway deficit spending as we now see in Washington, D.C. compels us to take action as the increasing national debt is a grave threat to our national sovereignty and the personal and economic liberty of future generations” (“Mission statement,” n.d.). By their account it has become necessary to check the government’s spending in order to protect the future of American freedom.

Outraged over President Obama’s health care plan, conservative-minded, yet often outrageously outspoken, political commentator Glenn Beck argued that Obama is trying to bankrupt the government through health care reform, which he believes would destroy capitalism (Judis, 2010). Beck hasn’t been alone in his position. There is a consensus within

the movement that “the administration’s health-care proposal is unnecessary and fiscally risky” (Katel, 2009, p. 246).

President Obama’s health care reform, however, is only one example of the federal government exercising its increased power. The government’s role in the marketplace, think AIG, for example, has grown over recent years which has caused great concern among Tea Partiers. Most supporters have agreed that the government’s role should be limited to “the protection of our liberties by administering justice and ensuring our safety from threats arising inside or outside our country’s sovereign borders” (“The contract,” n.d.). According to Tea Partiers, this does not mean that the government should control private business or continue to pass legislation that increases social programs, and thus leads to additional government spending.

Further, Tea Party members have indicated that they not only want constitutionally limited power for the federal government, they want smaller government. John Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, previously said that the Tea Party’s goal is “to make government smaller” (Grunwald & Crowley, 2010). In order to achieve this goal, voters within the movement have begun electing officials who have promised to do just that.

In the Contract from America, a document between pro-TPM elected officials and Tea Party supporters, constitutionally limited government is a key concern. Tenet number five promotes the

establishment of a task force that audits and assesses every federal agency and program in order to identify “duplication, waste, ineffectiveness, and agencies and programs better left for the states or local authorities” (“The contract,” n.d.). The purpose is to constrain what is perceived as the federal government’s over-reaching control across the land and to quit wasting valuable resources.

Third, America was founded on the principles of a free market. As such, Tea Party supporters have protested the government’s control over private business. They view President Obama and a number of his predecessors as having undermined free enterprise (Barstow, 2010). The Tea Party Patriots have declared that the “current government’s interference distorts the free market and inhibits the pursuit of individual and economic liberty” (“Mission statement,” n.d.). As such, Tea Partiers have protested for a smaller, limited federal government, one that doesn’t have its hands in financial markets or private industry.

To summarize, Tea Party supporters are primarily focused on issues related to the federal government – including its size and effectiveness, which can be influenced by their view of President Obama – as well as the condition of the American economy. In some circles, immigration is also an item topping the agenda; however, that tends to vary depending on one’s geography. Over all, most Tea Party groups will avoid taking official stances on social issues. Their concern over these political and economic issues is what has led them to take action.

What Tea Party Supporters Believe

Despite whether one finds herself on the right, left, or smack dab in the middle, the same questions remain: What is the TPM really about? What are the goals of the movement? What do its supporters hope to accomplish? And, how do they expect to get there? Movement, after all, “implies a destination” (O’Rourke, 2010). In the case of the Tea Party, opponents have declared that the movement lacks both ideology and clear direction.

Journalist Lee Harris (2010) has criticized the movement as being about attitude, rather than any political ideology. He pointed to the popular slogan often used by members of the movement, “Don’t tread on me!” The slogan, which is prominently portrayed on a yellow flag containing a black coiled rattlesnake ready to strike, and is often visible at Tea Party rallies, is, he has argued, a warning. It “is not the deliberate articulation of a well-thought-out political ideology, but rather the expression of an attitude – the attitude of pugnacious and even truculent defiance” (p. 4). Remove the attitude, argued Harris, and there isn’t much left to the Tea Party.

Harris isn’t alone in his critique of the TPM. Political satirist and author P.J. O’Rourke holds a similar position. Though he has declared that there really isn’t one Tea Party – he indicated that there are numerous

individual Tea Party groups across America which are often lumped together and considered one movement – O’Rourke has agreed that the movement is about attitude, not ideology (2010). He has stated that political movements have a goal in mind, and that is where they try to direct or push the government. As for the Tea Party, O’Rourke indicated that the “Tea Party movement has a place it wants government to go – and rot” (p. 6). Thus, according to O’Rourke the TPM doesn’t have a clear political objective for the federal government, other than to take it out.

Conversely, proponents of the movement see themselves as supporters of a great cause, and that is “restoring America” (Scherer, Altman, Crowley, Newton-Small, & Von Drehle, 2010). American journalist John Judis has identified the TPM as being an authentic, “genuine popular movement” (2010, p. 19). In a short critique of the movement, Judis outlined how the collective focus has moved from hosting individual demonstrations to supporting candidates in political elections. As of mid-2010, candidates from Florida, Kentucky, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Utah, just to name a few, were being supported by Tea Party groups, in an effort to fill those up-for-grab seats with Tea Party friendly politicians (Judis, 2010).

In fact, the 2010 mid-term election saw an overwhelming amount of Tea Party supporters turn out to vote. According to exit polls, Tea Party supporters comprised 41% of those casting votes on November 2 (Clement & Green, 2011; “Exit Poll,” 2010). As for those Tea Party-supported

candidates in Florida, Kentucky, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Utah, all but Sharron Angle, the Republican challenger in Nevada, were elected during the 2010 mid-term elections.

Examine, for a moment, Kentucky's 2010 mid-term Senatorial race. Considered to be one of the "key races to watch" by *Huffington Post* reporter Elyse Siegel, the race was close. Though registered Democrats outnumber registered Republicans in Kentucky by about two to one, and the state has a Democrat for governor, the populace hasn't voted for a Democrat senatorial candidate since 1992 (De Pinto & Dietz, 2010).

Throughout his campaign, the Republican, and Tea Party endorsed, candidate Rand Paul came under attack for his stances on the Civil Rights movement (he said he didn't fully support the 1964 Civil Rights Act), his accusations that Obama is "anti-American," and that he supports deregulation of the mining industry (Corn, 2010). Though he made a number of foolish statements, "If you don't live here, it's none of your business," and "The bottom line is I'm not an expert, so don't give me the power in Washington to be making rules," (Corn, 2010) for example, he ended up winning the Junior Senatorial seat with 55.8% of the vote, over Democrat Jack Conway, who received only 44.2% ("Kentucky," 2010). His success, in large part, can be attributed to the support he received from Tea Partiers. After all, he had the endorsement of Sarah Palin (Zernike, 2010).

Kentucky, as noted above, has repeatedly voted for a Republican Senator over the last two decades, so Paul's win may have been anticipated by some. However, what about the surprising win of Republican Scott Brown over Democrat Martha Coakley for the 2010 Massachusetts Senate seat, left open by the death of Edward M. Kennedy? It was the Tea Party's ideas that led to Brown's win in a state that hasn't voted red since the early 1970s (Ferguson, 2010). "Brown's promises to bolster U.S. defenses against terrorists and block Obama's health care reforms gave him a blinding Tea Party aura, the glow of which sent fear through the Administration and fried the circuits of Congress" (Von Drehle et al., 2010).

These election campaigns are just a few of the many examples of Tea Party mobilization efforts. Tea Party supporters have mobilized because they are angry with the current state of government, in large part due to the poor condition of the economy. "We're fed up and we're not gonna take it anymore," goes their rallying cry (Berger, 2009). Many agree that there is good reason to be angry, and that anger has spurred otherwise non-politically active people both to action and to the polls.

In returning to the issue of ideology, it is important to identify what the TPM's ideology is, if it has one. Opponents of the movement, such as Harris and O'Rourke have clearly advocated that the movement is without any ideology or direction, aside from possessing an attitude of anger.

However, in order to determine what ideology the TPM might possess, it is necessary to understand what is meant when using the term ideology.

Harris indicated that “a political movement should provide new ideas” (p. 3). O’Rourke has seemingly identified ideology as “specific, concrete political policy goals” (p. 6). Thus far, new ideas and political goals comprise the definition of ideology. However, recall an earlier discussion regarding Simons and Blumer. Simons, leaning on Blumer, indicated that leaders of a movement needed to promote their ideology to the masses. This ideology, as defined by Blumer incorporates “a body of doctrine, beliefs, and myths” (p. 110). Blumer’s explanation of ideology will be further explored in the next chapter. Additionally, a detailed analysis on the TPM’s espoused ideology is also included. However, in the interim, it is sufficient to state that ideology incorporates the movement’s doctrine, or principles, and the goals it is striving to achieve, or the change it is attempting to make.

As has already been indicated, supporters of the movement compose a sizable group – somewhere between 18% to 25% of the American populace, they are united around core issues impacting American society – primarily regarding the role of government and state of the economy, and they have put their anger into action – by supporting candidates who share similar stances on the issues. Considering this, it can be said that Tea Partiers both believe in a shared goal and have a direction they would like to see government go, albeit as a smaller entity.

It has been discussed that Americans are angry with their elected officials, in part due to the poor economic conditions prevalent throughout the country. It has been mentioned that those economic conditions are related to the national deficit and growing unemployment. However, there is another element that affects the American psyche. That is the issue of entitlements, programs middle-class Americans expect to receive from the government without fully paying for them.

The Entitlements of White Middle-Class Americans

Returning for a moment to contemporary American history, there has long been an innate belief that white, middle-class Americans are entitled to certain benefits, or advantages. These entitlements, as seen in America, have included federal student loans, school lunch programs, veteran pensions, and Medicare (Kangas, n.d.). According to The Path to Prosperity, the 2012 budget resolution proposal, “the three largest entitlement programs are Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid” (House Committee, 2011, p. 12). Further, Social Security comprised the largest portion of the federal budget in 2010, at \$701 billion, followed by Medicare at \$519 billion (House Committee, 2011).

Middle-class entitlements come in other forms as well. For example, tax write-offs for homeowners and farm subsidies are additional examples of entitlement programs, according to journalist Froma Harrop (2011). Additionally, the subsidizing of college education, or providing health care for the elderly, generally are not viewed as welfare programs by

the middle class. Though, what differentiates these programs from those that are, such as that of providing food stamps, for example?

The answer depends on one's perception. According to Harrop, "the reluctance to properly label entitlements as such has created the widespread illusion that what government spends on others is 'welfare' and what's spent on us is our due." As such, middle-class Americans have come to rely on these programs and benefits, without giving the issue much thought. However, there is nothing natural about the employment of such programs.

According to public policy and entitlement program expert James Capretta (2009), the federal government came to realize the necessity of having a large, healthy workforce, in the post-war environment. As such, a number of entitlement programs were introduced, "aimed especially at providing for retirement income and health-care expenses" (p. 7). However, Capretta explained that these programs were not created to endure forever, nor can the federal government sustain them for much longer. Capretta explained, "that although [our entitlement system] is designed to mitigate risk at the individual level, it is now creating a massive economy-wide risk" (p. 8). The only way to alleviate this risk is through entitlement program reform (Capretta, 2009; Harrop, 2011). However, most Americans who receive these benefits probably don't associate them as being entitlements.

As mentioned, one of the goals of the TPM is to reduce the size of the federal government. In doing so, government-funded, or supported programs would have to be cut. This would include, to some degree, a loss of middle-class entitlement programs. Though TPM supporters have advocated for reduced government, it does not appear that they wish to give up entitlements, such as social security. Returning for a moment to Cunningham, he cited a 2010 *New York Times* interview in which a TPM supporter was asked about giving up her social security. California resident Jodine White, 62, was asked whether she would continue supporting the platform for smaller government if it meant she would lose her social security benefits. Her response was filled with ambiguity.

I don't know what to say. Maybe I don't want smaller government. I guess I want smaller government and my Social Security. I didn't look at it from the perspective of losing the things I need. I think I've changed my mind. (cited in Cunningham, 2010, p. 25)

Though TPM supporters, who are primarily of the middle class, want smaller government, they also want to retain the benefits afforded them based on their class. Unfortunately, this presents a conundrum, as TPM supporters cannot achieve their goal of significantly reducing the size of federal government, without cutting programs that benefit them directly. Additionally, it is important to note that though TPM supporters are angered at the high amount of government spending, a great amount of this funding is allocated to supporting programs that benefit them. This issue, however, seems to be ignored within movement discourse.

The Failing American Economy

The current financial crisis is linked back to December 2007, when, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research, the American economy officially fell into recession (Isidore, 2008). Though the Bureau did not cite specific conditions that brought on this recession, journalists have. Chris Isidore (2008), from CNN Money, acknowledged the crashing housing market, which began in 2006, as a predominant root of the problem. He further indicated that, “the current recession is one of the longest downturns since the Great Depression of the 1930’s.” Isidore’s assessment is from 2008, and economic conditions have yet to improve.

Take, for example, unemployment. The media has continued to report unemployment rates of approximately 10%, a number some consider to be much lower than the actual amount of unemployed workers (Etzioni, 2011). German Israeli American sociologist Amitai Etzioni explains that this number is skewed, partially because it accounts for only those actively pursuing employment, and partly because it does not account for those who are underemployed and/or discouraged (2011). When one includes the underemployed and discouraged, financial journalist Mary Engel (2010) estimated that a more accurate unemployment rate is about 16.6%.

In addition to staggering unemployment rates, household incomes have dropped in the past year. According to the Census Bureau, household income dropped 2.2 percent, from \$51,190 in 2009, to \$50,046 in 2010

("New US," 2011). Additionally, home values have continued to fall. Recent Census Bureau data also suggests that the average home value dropped to \$179,900 in 2010 from \$185,200 the year before ("New US," 2011). This combination of increasing unemployment, stagnant or falling household incomes, and diminishing home values has led to an upset and highly concerned populace, one that has been motivated to action.

Etzioni argues that coupled with the un/underemployment rates and loss or reduction of employer benefits, and in many cases the loss of their home and/or retirement savings, it is no wonder Americans are angry! As salt added to the wound burns, so too does the government-backed stimulus package which Tea Party supporters have viewed as offering little reprieve to average Americans. This anger has led to an extreme dissatisfaction with the federal government. Recall the CBS *News/New York Times* poll mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Results indicated that nearly 92% of Tea Partiers surveyed believe that America "is on the wrong track," 94% are "angry or dissatisfied" with the federal government, and 96% "disapprove of how Congress is handling its job."

These numbers provide evidence of how the aforementioned economic concerns have manifested into popular discontent. That discontent has found a voice within the TPM. As Etzioni explained, "Given the depth and nature of the resulting anger...the Tea Party provides a very surprising outlet and one that attests to the very resilient nature of the

American polity” (2011, p. 198). Thus, it can be said that the TPM has provided an avenue for angry Americans to express their concerns.

However, Tea Party supporters are not the only ones that have found an avenue to express their outrage. Public figures, both popular and political, have also united with TPM groups in order to express their outrage over the American economy and spending of the federal government. Though the TPM has not officially identified any one key leader, these public figures have emerged, in one sense, as representatives for the movement.

A Leaderless Movement?

The Tea Party movement has no central leadership and no official top-down hierarchical structure, after all, it “prides itself on being a leader-less amalgam of grassroots groups” (Dwyer, 2010). As of yet, supporters aren’t united under the mantra of one single banner, there is no main office, there is “no chairman, no written platform and no chosen candidate – although the scramble for that mantle by the likes of Sarah Palin and Representative Ron Paul is as furious as the charge for the inside track at Talladega” (Von Drehle et al., 2010). In short, the movement appears to have taken its shape from the people participating in it.

As fluid as the movement may be, there have been a cohort of politicians and television personalities who have leaped into the spotlight, espousing their political views, while stirring up Tea Partiers, and increasing public support, across the country. From recently defeated

Senate contender Christine O'Donnell, to Republican primary Presidential hopefuls Ron Paul and Michele Bachmann, there has been no lack of conservative politicians vying for recognition as the voice of the movement.

Despite their attempts, the response pails in comparison to the support and attention lavished upon Glenn Beck and Sarah Palin by TPM supporters. In a mid-2010 survey, Sarah Palin and Glenn Beck were viewed most favorable amongst other notable figures, with 66% of Tea Party supporters holding a favorable position of Palin, and 59% viewing Beck favorably (CBS News, 2010). Ron Paul, for example, was viewed favorably by only 28% of respondents, and another 56% either had never heard of him, or didn't have an opinion of him.

Though none can don the hat of official spokesperson of the movement, Glenn Beck has used network broadcast waves to bolster his message, often promoting Tea Partyism, while denouncing liberals, especially President Obama. According to American journalist Sean Wilentz (2010), Beck "has emerged as both a unifying figure and an intellectual guide" to supporters of the movement. To some, Beck may seem an odd choice of favorite within the movement; however, his ratings speak for themselves. His 5 p.m. FOX cable show averages about two million nightly viewers (Gillis, 2010). Though his television show will be coming to an end this year, he has other ventures that will keep him connected to his fans – namely, his radio show, which is rated third

highest across the country, and his website and online subscription services, such as 'Insider Extreme' (Mirkinson, 2011).

What has viewers enraptured with Beck? Simply put, trust – his viewers believe him to be a trustworthy guy (Gillis, 2010). Jean Richardson, a Connecticut woman in her mid-80s told *Maclean's* reporter Charlie Gillis that she trusts Beck, "I know he's a good person, I know he's honest and sincere" (2010, p. 34). Her son, Scott, 57, also supports Beck. "Glenn researches his topics and can back up what he says with historical fact" (Gillis, 2010, p.34). It is this sort of loyalty that has grown support of Beck amongst Tea Partiers.

Though Beck is popular amongst his viewers, and could be considered the "most visible spokes-person for the Tea Party movement" (Mead, 2011, p. 29), it is former Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin who holds the coveted spot of being their "favorite politician" (Judis, 2010). She has well over three million Facebook fans ("Sarah Palin," 2011), compared to Beck's two million ("Glenn Beck," 2011). She has written two best-selling books, in as many years, recently starred in a short television series, endorsed more than 90 candidates in 2010, and has raised millions of dollars for her PAC (Newton-Small, 2010).

Journalist Mark Halperin has considered Palin to be the "most powerful person in the Republican party" and acknowledged that she is constantly in high demand (2010, p.32). Other journalists have considered her to be one of the "new authorities in Republican politics" (Scherer et al.,

2010). Even her opponents have taken note of the power she has attained. Former American Vice President Al Gore has warned against underestimating the multi-talented Palin (Halperin, 2010, p.33). Political science professor Melissa Harris-Perry has warned that “underestimating Sarah Palin is a mistake of epic proportions” (2010, p. 10).

Considering the amount of attention placed on Palin, one has to wonder whether she considers herself a leader within the movement. Palin has promoted the TPM as being leaderless. She has encouraged people to “put [their] faith in ideas,” and cautioned supporters “against allowing this movement to be defined by one leader or operation” (Hennesey, 2010). Palin has, however, used her power and fame to grow support for the movement.

Public figures such as Beck and Palin continue to be viewed as leaders within the movement. However, a number of other figures, such as Tea Party Express chairwoman Amy Kremer, and Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, have also emerged as powerful voices within the movement. Though each of these leaders receives a great deal of respect from supporters, none of them can claim command of the movement.

It could be argued, in part, that there is no one official leader of the movement because the movement isn't operating as simply one cohesive group. The diversity of supporters, and the variety of groups involved, from the local up to the national level, has created a unique arrangement wherein a number of different people, united by a common goal, have

come together with the intention of changing the America in which they live. However, there is still one important question that remains to be addressed. Considering that the movement doesn't have an established director, or corporate offices, etc., how is it being funded?

Funding the Tea Party Movement

Funding of the TPM has come under thorough scrutiny, especially since mid to late 2010. Articles began cropping up in magazines such as *Forbes*, *The New York Times*, *National Review*, and *The Guardian*, for example. However, the most comprehensive article appeared in *The New Yorker* on August 30, 2010. The intention of each of these articles has been to expose, or in some instances refute, whom the true funders of the TPM are. The authors have provided differing arguments depending on their individual and/or political bias. However, the key issues discussed in these articles center on whether or not the TPM is being funded by big business. The left claims that the answer is yes, and that this proves the movement is purely astroturf, or as journalist George Monbiot exclaimed, "the biggest Astroturf operation in history" (2010). The right's argument is less cohesive. For example, journalist Brian Wingfield provided evidence that big business has shied away from supporting TPM candidates. As funding has become one of the most controversial elements under examination within the TPM, it is important to take some time to review the evidence.

The argument has been made that Tea Party funding comes primarily from big business and corporate sponsors. SourceWatch, an arm of the Center for Media Democracy, a liberal, non-profit media group, previously indicated that the TPM “benefits from millions of dollars from conservative foundations that are derived from wealthy U.S. families and their business interests” (“Tea Party,” n.d.). More specifically, SourceWatch indicated that the money used to support the movement is funneled primarily through the groups Americans for Prosperity and FreedomWorks, which they cited are, according to Lee Fang, of the blog ThinkProgress, “lobbyist-run think tanks.”

According to its website, Americans for Prosperity is “an organization of grassroots leaders who engage citizens in the name of limited government and free markets on the local, state, and federal levels” (“About Americans,” n.d.). However, the organization has been criticized by SourceWatch as being a “group fronting special interests” (“Americans for Prosperity,” n.d.). FreedomWorks, on the other hand, which claims to have been founded in 1984, stated that it “recruits, educates, trains and mobilizes millions of volunteer activists to fight for less government, lower taxes, and more freedom” (“About FreedomWorks,” n.d.). Both groups claim to be composed of citizen advocates concerned with the size of government, amongst other issues; however, both groups have also been heavily tied to the Koch brothers.

Brothers Charles and David Koch, along with Rupert Murdoch, have been labeled “the sugar daddies who are bankrolling [the movement],” by *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich (2010). According to Rich, the Koch brothers have financed the TPM, while Murdoch has provided equal “in-kind donations” of free publicity from FOX News. Karl Frisch, a columnist and Democratic radio personality, stated in mid-2009 that “FOX news has frequently aired segments imploring its audience to get involved with tea-party protests across the country – protests the ‘news’ network has described as mainly a response to President Obama’s economic policies.” Though Murdoch may be providing free promotion for the movement, critics have primarily zeroed in on the funding provided by the Koch brothers.

It has been cited by numerous reporters that Charles and David Koch are worth a combined total of \$35 billion dollars, or more, making them two of the richest men in America, behind the likes of Bill Gates and Warren Buffett (see Mayer, 2010; Rich, 2010). They own 84% of Koch Industries, which is America’s second-largest privately held company (Rich, 2010). Amongst owning a number of oil refineries and thousands of miles of pipeline in the U.S., Koch Industries also owns products including Brawny paper towels, Georgia-Pacific lumber, and Lycra, for example (Mayer, 2010). The brothers, who have been dubbed “Kochtopus,” due to their allegedly secretive Libertarian agenda, have dumped lots of money

into the causes they support, namely the arts and sciences, as well as those aligning with their political interests (Goldberg, 2011).

The Koch brothers' financial support of TPM groups. In a 10,000-plus word, well-researched article, journalist Jane Mayer (2010) offered an exposing look into the allegedly hidden world of Charles and David Koch. Using tax records, Mayer was able to show that three primary charitable foundations established by Koch family members contributed \$196 million dollars to political causes, organizations and campaigns in which they supported, from 1998 to 2008. Mayer indicated that this does not include the \$50 million Koch Industries has spent on lobbying, the \$8 million KochPAC has contributed to different campaigns, or the two million dollars Koch family members have spent in political contributions.

Further, Mayer noted that the Koch family provided the funding to establish the Cato Institute, the “nation’s first libertarian think tank,” in 1977, and contributed nearly \$11 million to the Institute from 1986 to 1993. Additionally, Mayer noted that the Kochs contributed some \$30 million to the Arlington, Virginia think tank Mercatus Center, a derivative of George Mason University. Another \$7.9 million was donated to the Citizens for a Sound Economy. In all, the data collected by Mayer demonstrated that the Kochs, whether personally, or through their various foundations and charities, have donated at least \$305.9 million to the political causes, candidates and campaigns they support, since the late 1970s.

Considering the amount of money the Koch conglomerate has spent on influencing politics over the last three-and-a-half decades, it is no wonder they have become a central focus of those in opposition to the TPM. However, though Mayer highlighted the amount of money the Kochs have spent politically, she also outlined donations the brothers have made to the arts and sciences, specifically to theatres, museums and cancer research. Mayer indicated that David Koch has become a major proponent and funder of cancer research. He has donated \$15 million to the New York-Presbyterian Hospital, \$20 million to John Hopkins University, \$25 million to the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, \$40 million to the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, and \$125 million for cancer research to M.I.T.

Additionally, Koch has donated millions of dollars to the preservation and support of museums and theatres. According to Mayer, Koch donated \$10 million to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to renovate exterior fountains, \$20 million to the American Museum of Natural History, \$100 million to Lincoln Center's New York State Theatre building, and has poured millions into the American Ballet Theatre. In all, Mayer identified donations of more than \$357.5 million by David Koch to benefit the arts and sciences.

What is interesting to note, is that though critics have focused on political donations by the Koch family, David Koch has personally donated far more to the arts and to cancer research, to the tune of \$51 million more. This being said, two points of contention should be mentioned.

First, the argument has not been based on whether the Kochs should donate to causes they believe in, but rather, the focus has been on how transparent their donations are. Unfortunately, there has been little consensus on that subject. Though Mayer's article implied that the Koch's activities have been done in secret, she acknowledged that the financial figures she reported were found by reviewing tax records, which are public documents. Additionally, conservative columnist Jonah Goldberg, stated, in reference to the support the Koch brothers have given to Libertarian causes, "Just because the Left hasn't been paying attention to something doesn't make it a secret" (2011, p. 8).

Second, the Koch family has not been the only wealthy family to pour millions of dollars into American politicking. Financier George Soros, who founded the non-profit Open Society Institute, in 1984, is considered the Democrats' "most prominent" donor, according to Mayer. The Institute is an organization that seeks "to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguards fundamental rights" ("About the Open," n.d.). Mayer estimated that the Institute has "spent as much as a hundred million dollars a year in America." Additionally, Soros has personally contributed to Obama's campaign, as well as the political campaigns of many other Democrats (Mayer, 2010). As such, it appears that both the left and the right have wealthy benefactors who financially support causes aligning with their personal interests.

Big business doesn't always support the TPM. Finally, in defense of the TPM, recall Wingfield, the journalist who argued that big businesses have shied away from supporting TPM candidates. In a late 2010 article, Wingfield provided examples of three prominent campaigns in which American corporations supported the opponent, rather than the Tea Party candidate. These examples included Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski who despite receiving support of approximately \$1.6 million from pro-business PACs, lost the primary to Joe Miller, a TPM-supported candidate, who had raised a mere \$283,000, but had the endorsement of Sarah Palin.

Additionally, in Delaware, Michael Castle was supported by companies such as Goldman Sachs and FedEx, and though he raised \$3.2 million, he was defeated in the Senate primary by Tea Party-endorsed Christine O'Donnell, who had "little backing from big businesses" (Wingfield, 2010). The argument made by Winfield is that "incumbents like Harry Reid have a long history of earmarking federal money for their home states." As such, big businesses tend to favor these candidates. Additionally, Wingfield argued that a number of companies have already begun planning for the new health care regulations. Thus, the TPM's goal of repealing it could cost them more money in the long run.

Though prominent figures such as the Koch brothers and Rupert Murdoch can be identified as contributing to organizations that support the movement, it may be difficult to ever reveal who truly funds the TPM.

As a number of the organizations within the TPM are filed as or have filed for 501(c)(4) status, they are not required to publicly disclose their donors, nor are donations tax-deductible (U.S. Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee Minority Staff, 2008). Additionally, as donations made to 501(c)(4) entities are not tax-deductible, there is little possibility of identifying donors via public tax records. As such, one cannot determine with any certainty where the funding is coming from.

TPM funding is significant in establishing the movement's authenticity. Reviewing the sources of funding is important in any investigation of a social movement. The significance of doing so relates to the examination of a movement's authenticity. As the reader will recall, the TPM has been accused of representing astroturfing, rather than grassroots advocacy. One of the components differentiating advocacy from astroturfing is the source of funding for the movement.

Since financial donations for 501(c)(4) organizations, such as the Tea Party Patriots, FreedomWorks, and Americans for Prosperity, do not have to be disclosed, it is difficult to state with authority the level to which corporate interests have swayed the movement. The argument by the left is that, "By giving money to 'educate,' fund, and organize Tea Party protesters, [the Koch's] have helped turn their private agenda into a mass movement" (Mayer, 2010). Thus, according to Mayer, the movement would be an expression, at least in part, of astroturfing.

Mayer indicated that as David Koch co-founded the Tea Party friendly group Americans for Prosperity, he has the ability to influence the direction of the movement. It is difficult, though, to determine the extent to which the Koch brothers have been able to exercise influence over the movement. First, the movement's origination was both spontaneous and prompted by bloggers and other activists upset with stimulus legislation in early 2009. Second, the movement is composed of many groups, advocating similar messages under the banner of the Tea Party; however, there is no one person or group directing the movement.

As such, it is important to acknowledge that there appear to be elements of astroturfing evident within the TPM. Though this component impacts the authenticity of the movement, it does not negate the other elements that are indicative of advocacy. When considering the number of Americans supporting the movement, for example, one cannot simply dismiss the TPM as astroturfing. Further, the movement contains the populist element of identifying an economic and/or political elite that are not acting in the best interest of the people.

The purpose of this chapter was to offer a contextualization of the contemporary TPM. This was done by first identifying who is represented in the movement, both the people it has claimed to stand for and whom survey data has shown to be supporters. Second, a brief historical overview of the movement was provided, which highlighted, in part, the spontaneous origination of the movement. Next, the movement's agenda

and ideology were reviewed, in order to gain a clear understanding of what the TPM is hoping to achieve. The discussion then turned to American middle-class entitlements, and the stress they have placed on the federal budget. It was then important to discuss the economic conditions emanating throughout America, as this identified the roots of the discontent emanating throughout the country. Finally, it was important to examine the structure of the movement, including both the leadership and financial backing, both real and alleged, of the TPM.

In summary, it appears that the TPM is composed of a sizable amount of American supporters, between 18 to 25% of the population. At the core of the movement is the goal to reduce the size of the federal government. Though it appears that the movement primarily represents an authentic grassroots advocacy movement, there also appears to be some level of astroturfing present, specifically in the area of funding groups within the TPM.

In the next chapter, social movement rhetoric, as discussed and outlined in Chapter Two, will be examined in further detail. Examples from TPM websites, speeches and social media posts from movement leaders, and other sources have been reviewed in detail. Considering that scholars have identified key facets of how social movements operate, it is important to determine whether or not the TPM has functioned as a social movement.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY TEA PARTY MOVEMENT DISCOURSES

As part of the investigation into whether the Tea Party Movement is grassroots advocacy at its finest, or merely highly-disguised, well-funded astroturfing, it is important to examine the movement in light of the aforementioned frameworks. In conducting this examination, the actions and rhetoric of notable, if unofficial, TPM leaders were examined and compared to the requirements outlined by Simons as being necessary to maintain the functionality of a social movement. As Simons leaned on Blumer for providing a schema to define movement ideology, the analysis includes the ideological rhetorical requirements outlined by Blumer. Second, the TPM was analyzed to determine whether the five rhetorical functions identified by Stewart are evidenced within the movement.

A variety of sources were analyzed as part of this investigation. Since the TPM has relied heavily on the use of social media, yet has also manifested a large body of on-the-ground protestors, both led by charismatic, if unofficial, leaders, it was important to include an assortment of artifacts in this analysis. Thus, a diversification of sources were included. The prominent sources are as follows. First, the websites for two well-known Tea Party groups were analyzed: www.teapartypatriots.org and www.teapartyexpress.org. In addition to these websites, two speeches from Michele Bachmann, which were given

on January 25, 2011, and February 11, 2011, respectively, and one speech from Sarah Palin, which was delivered September 5, 2011, were examined. Finally, the FaceBook posts of Sarah Palin for the month of September 2011 were also included.

A rhetorical analysis was conducted using these artifacts in order to determine whether the components described in each model were found existent within the TPM. Each component identified by Simons, Blumer, and finally Stewart were examined in detail. Examples of occurrences are provided for review. In short, the elements identified in the models of Simons, Blumer, and Stewart, were each found manifested within the TPM.

The Rhetorical Role of Social Movement Leaders

As previously discussed, communication scholar Herbert W. Simons has outlined three functions social movement leaders must undertake in order to ensure the vitality of their movement. Simons argued that the greater the ability of the leader to adhere to these requirements the greater his (or her) chance to reduce and resolve arising problems. As such, success of the movement lies in part on the role played by its leaders.

It was discussed in the previous chapter that the TPM has refused to officially recognize a national leader, or spokesperson. However, a number of unofficial leaders have emerged into the public sphere. Though these figures are not endorsed as being official leaders, they have acquired

large amounts of supporters within the movement. Thus, it can be posited that their actions and rhetoric provide sufficient examples that can be analyzed in light of the functions outlined by Simons.

Leaders must attract supporters to the movement. The first function outlined by Simons is that leaders “must attract, maintain, and mold workers (i.e., followers) into an efficiently organized unit” (p. 3). In examining the TPM, it can be said that the movement has acquired a large following. Membership across the Tea Party-friendly groups Americans for Prosperity, FreedomWorks, Tea Party Nation, and Tea Party Express exceeds three million people (Gardner, 2010). This does not include the largest group within the movement, the Tea Party Patriots (Mencimer, 2011), which claims to have approximately 2,800 local affiliated groups; however, refuses to release actual membership data (Gardner, 2010).

In breaking down Simons’ broad first requirement, the action of attracting members appears to have been accomplished within the TPM. This is evidenced above by the amount of people supporting and participating in the movement. In addition to the number of participants associated with these national Tea Party-friendly groups, recall the discussion from Chapter Three, that between 18% to 25% of American adults surveyed by three different entities considered themselves supporters of the movement (CBS News, 2010; Saad, 2011).

The second aspect of this function is maintaining support for the movement. Though it has already been asserted that populist movements

tend to only last a short period of time, generally fewer than ten years, maintaining a viable base of supporters may be a difficult task. Tea Party leaders have thus far utilized social media as one way to conjure support for the movement. The use of social media has allowed leaders to continue to espouse movement rhetoric directly to their supporters, while also creating and preserving a community for which participants can communicate with each other.

As evidence for this claim, the website for the group Tea Party Patriots (www.teapartypatriots.org) was reviewed. This website was chosen for three reasons. First, the Tea Party Patriots have been considered the largest Tea Party group within the movement (see Mencimer, 2011; Shahid, 2011). Second, upon conducting a Google search using the term “tea party” the Tea Party Patriots’ website was the first option returned in a list of over 347 million search results, excluding paid advertisements. Additionally, a similar Google search using the term “tea party movement” was conducted approximately six months ago which also resulted in the Patriots’ website being the first choice returned in a list of over 10 million results. Third, the Patriots’ website provides information about the movement, as well as an opportunity for members to participate with other members via blogs and other interactions.

Before reviewing key individual components of the Patriots’ website it is important to identify their stated purpose. The Tea Party Patriots’ mission statement is posted clearly on their website. It can be accessed by

clicking a link located under the Tea Party Patriots' website banner, titled "Read Tea Party Patriots Mission Statement." Their proclaimed mission is as follows:

The impetus for the Tea Party movement is excessive government spending and taxation. Our mission is to attract, educate, organize, and mobilize our fellow citizens to secure public policy consistent with our three core values of Fiscal Responsibility, Constitutionally Limited Government and Free Markets. ("Mission Statement," n.d.)

Including the Home page, there are at least 12 different pages viewers can access, with five of these pages providing opportunities for active participation in the Tea Party community. The first of these pages, simply titled "Groups," allows individuals to search by state for local Tea Party information, including that of events and groups within their immediate area. Selecting Arizona, one was provided information for local Tea Party coordinators, events, groups, and the names of state congressional representatives and senators. At the time the website was accessed, there was one coordinator for Arizona. Her contact information, including first and last name, email address, and phone number were listed. There were two upcoming events noted and 71 groups were listed. Events listed on the website provided the location, including address, date, time and organizing contact person for each event. Additionally, to join a group, one needed to create a free user profile.

Another notable option providing Tea Party supporters direct access to their counterparts is the "Patriot Feed" page. On this page viewers can read posts from others within the Tea Party community

regarding any topic the poster wishes to address. In order to add a comment to the feed, one has to be registered as a member of the Tea Party Patriots. Members can post new comments, or remark on the posts from other Patriots. All discussions can be viewed by anyone accessing the website. Simply put, this page provides viewers access to the thoughts, opinions, and comments of other movement supporters.

This website provides one example of movement leaders maintaining support for their campaign. They have provided an outlet for followers to voice their opinions and connect with other proponents across the country, thus allowing them to maintain support of those participating in the movement. Simons indicated that “a collective willingness and capacity to work, energy mobilization, and member satisfaction” are key to the endurance and success of any movement (p. 3). The Patriots’ website provides followers information for Tea Party sponsored events as well as an opportunity to directly engage with other supporters. Thus, this website provides one example of leaders’ attempts to maintain support for their cause.

Third, Simons’ indicated that leaders must also mold followers of the movement, in order to retain their support. After all, a key ingredient to “the survival and effectiveness of any movement” is “adherence to its program” (p. 3). One way that Patriots’ leaders at the national level have encouraged support of their goals is by limiting the focus of their cause to that of economic issues. Recall, the core values of the Tea Party Patriots’

mission statement, which included “fiscal responsibility,” “constitutionally limited government,” and “free markets” (“Mission Statement,” n.d.). As evidenced on their website, the Patriots claim that these are the core issues they believe in. As for anything outside these primary concerns, especially social issues, they have asserted that they do not take a stance. “As an organization we do not take stances on social issues. We urge members to engage fully on the social issues they consider important and aligned with their beliefs” (“Mission Statement,” n.d.). By limiting the scope of their focus to that of economic issues only, TPM leaders have been able to engage both members from the right, such as conservatives and religious conservatives, as well as those generally found in the middle, such as the libertarians.

After leaders have successfully attracted a sizable following, and secured allegiance and commitment from supporters, leaders must then begin to focus on the greater public sphere. This work is accomplished with the help of followers, who by completing the tasks assigned to them, may disseminate pro-movement literature, or contact their congressperson, etc. This leads to the next point discussed by Simons, that of promoting their product within the larger public sphere.

Leaders must secure adoption of movement ideology. The second rhetorical function social movement leaders must adhere to, according to Simons, is that they “must secure adoption of their product by the larger structure” (p. 3). This product has already been identified as

the movement's ideology. According to American sociologist Herbert Blumer, a movement cannot remain intact without a clear ideology. "Without an ideology a social movement would grope along in an uncertain fashion and could scarcely maintain itself in the face of pointed opposition from outside groups" (1969, p. 100). Thus a movement's ideology is key to the movement's sustainability, especially in the midst of pressure from the opposition.

In accepting the importance of having an ideology, it is necessary to outline what that ideology consists of, and whether or not the TPM has employed such doctrine. In breaking down the concept of ideology, Blumer identified five fundamental aspects of movement ideology that generally exist. These are explained individually in the following pages, and have been compared to the TPM to see if examples of such features are found.

First, Blumer indicated that "a statement of objective, purpose, and premises of the movement" generally exists (p. 110). In returning to the Patriots' website, one can find their mission statement and core values prominently displayed on their website. Included with their mission statement is an explanation of each of their three core values. These values are identified as "fiscal responsibility," "constitutionally limited government," and "free markets" ("Mission Statement," n.d.).

Second, there is often "a body of criticism and condemnation of the existing structure which the movement is attacking and seeking to change"

(Blumer, 1969, p. 110). There has been a significant amount of condemnation and critique of President Obama from leaders within the movement. Take, for example, Sarah Palin and her use of the social media website Facebook. During the month of September 2011, she posted a combination of nine notes and links to her page. Of these, three directly attacked President Obama, three posts were neutral, in that they recognized a Jewish holiday, an upcoming documentary, and paid tribute to the lives lost on 9/11. Finally, the last three posts were simply links to articles or stories posted on other websites. As such, one third of Palin's posts contained anti-Obama rhetoric.

As is evidenced in her posts, Palin has perpetuated anti-Obama sentiment. For example, on September 6, 2011, in response to a union-sponsored Obama rally, Palin wrote, "We should not forget that for all his lofty rhetoric, President Obama is a Chicago politician. Graft, cronyism, and quid pro quo are the well-known methods of an infamous Chicago political machine, of which Barack Obama emerged." When last reviewed, 10,640 people had liked the note, and 1,628 had commented on it (Palin, 2011b). As has been discussed, Tea Party supporters have zeroed in on President Obama as one of their chief targets. He is viewed as the primary source in which to lay their blame. Though Palin is not officially the leader of the movement, supporters often take their cues from her.

Even those who disagree with her politics, such as Princeton professor Melissa Harris-Perry, have acknowledged that "Palin has

successfully harnessed new media forms to engage and direct emotional reactions that are surprisingly effective” (2010, p. 10). Harris-Perry identified Twitter and Facebook as just two of the media platforms Palin has successfully utilized to usurp the established media. The use of social media is an example of simply one of the methods Palin has employed in criticizing President Obama and the federal government.

The third facet is generally “a body of defense doctrine which serves as a justification of the movement and of its objectives” (p. 110).

Considering the multifaceted framework of the movement, it seemed important to examine other artifacts than just that of social media, such as the Patriots’ website, or Sarah Palin’s Facebook posts, for example. Thus, a recent speech from Republican Congresswoman, and presidential primary contender, Michele Bachmann was reviewed. Bachmann, who created the Tea Party Caucus in the House of Representatives (“Tea Party Caucus,” n.d.), has emerged as a public leader within the TPM.

Bachmann spoke at the headquarters for the Tea Party Express on January 25, 2011, in response to President Obama’s State of the Union address. Her speech, though relatively short, focused on what she identified as the problem – namely President Obama and the growing national debt – as well as provided suggested solutions, which primarily centered around the reduction of taxes (Bachmann, 2011a).

Within her speech, she outlined unemployment rates ranging from 5.3% in 2001, to 6.6% in 2008. However, she indicated that “just eight

months after President Obama promised lower unemployment, that rate spiked to a staggering 10.1%.” She went on to say shortly thereafter that national deficits “exploded under President Obama’s direction, growing the national debt by an astounding \$3.1 trillion.” However, after outlining these and a few other problems (Obamacare, for example), she moved on to thank the Tea Party supporters for the work they had done, specifically during the 2010 mid-term elections. “You went to the polls, and you voted out the big-spending politicians and you put in their place great men and women with a commitment to follow our Constitution and cut the size of government.” The rhetoric employed in Bachmann’s speech is an example of movement leaders justifying the movement and its objectives.

The fourth aspect of a movement’s ideology, as identified by Blumer, is that it generally creates “a body of belief dealing with policies, tactics, and practical operation of the movement” (p. 110). This characteristic of a movement’s ideology has already been evidenced by reviewing the Patriots’ website. The Patriots’ website has clearly articulated in their mission statement that they seek to erect change through attracting people to their cause, educating these supporters, organizing and mobilizing them. One way they have sought to attract people to their movement is by not limiting membership. Supporters can become educated on the cause by spending time reading the information contained on articles contained throughout the site. They have sought to organize supporters by aligning them with local Tea Party groups, in or

near their communities. Additionally, they have mobilized followers through posting details about upcoming events, both virtual and physical, that they can get involved in.

Movement leaders have been key in encouraging supporters that they are a key part of the cause, and that the movement has made progress because of the great work supporters have done. As discussed in the prior point, Bachmann's speech contained a number of accolades for TPM supporters. After all, she gave them the credit for affecting change, for it was they who went to the polls and voted out the politicians hindering the American economy and voted in those who would help move it in the correct direction, as according to those in the TPM.

Finally, the fifth aspect contains "the myths of the movement" (p. 110). At a 2011 Labor Day Tea Party event, Sarah Palin addressed a crowd of Tea Party supporters. Toward the end of her speech, while inciting followers to continue supporting a restored America, she warned them to ignore the ridicule and mocking from the opposition. "They are going to keep making things up about the Tea Party movement and independent, conscientious Americans just concerned about protecting our Constitution...they're gonna keep mocking you" (Palin, 2011a). Though she did not identify what those "things" were, Palin was clearly encouraging supporters to ignore the myths associated with the TPM.

It was important to identify examples of TPM leaders employing each of the ideological components identified by Blumer in order to

determine whether leaders have sought large-scale adoption of their doctrine. This brief illustration provides evidence that TPM leaders have continued to espouse their ideology. They have done this, in part, because it is foundationally necessary in order to maintain and possibly grow their movement. Though this requirement is important to the vitality of the movement, Simons identified one further necessity.

Leaders must react to oppositional resistance. The final requirement movement leaders must adhere to, according to Simons, is that of reacting “to resistance generated by the larger structure” (p. 4). Simons indicated that this resistance may come in many forms, from attack, including harassment, ostracism, and threats, to the opposition responding with an abundance of kindness, or flat out ignoring the movement.

In reviewing the brief history of the TPM, it can be argued that the liberal media seemingly ignored the movement in its early stages. Journalist and blogger David Weigel examined this theory in a late 2010 article published in the *Columbia Journalism Review*. Weigel indicated that the left press, which he identified as entities including *The Huffington Post*, *Talking Points Memo*, and *The Rachel Maddow Show*, for example, “fundamentally misread the Tea Party” (p. 14). He argued that this was done intentionally in order to “destroy a perceived threat” (p.14). In essence, mainstream media ignored the movement, thinking that in doing so it would simply die out.

However, when the movement did not fade away, the opposition took to attacking it directly, as well as targeting its leaders. When asked about the “tax and tea parties” being held across the country on April 15, 2009, Nancy Pelosi, then US Speaker of the House of Representatives, told FOX KTVU TV that the movement wasn’t genuine grassroots, rather that it was an astroturf movement. She asserted that,

This initiative is funded by the high-end; we call it astroturf. It’s not really a grassroots movement. It’s astroturf by some of the wealthiest people of America, to keep the focus on tax cuts for the rich, instead of for the great middle class. (KTVU, 2009)

Days before Pelosi made her infamous assessment of the movement, *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman labeled the movement as astroturf, “manufactured by the usual suspects” (2009). Krugman identified those “usual suspects” as being the organization FreedomWorks, led by former House of Representative Majority Leader, Richard Armey, and “the usual group of right-wing billionaires.” The billionaires were not identified; however, Krugman added that FOX News had been heavily promoting the movement.

These are just two examples of the opposition attempting to dismiss the movement as being little more than astroturf. However, this is not the only strategy that movement adversaries have employed. Despite her popularity on the right, Palin has received a fair amount of scorn from the left. Contemporary American author Joe McGinniss, who recently wrote a book about Palin, calls her “an absolute and utter fraud” (Belenky, 2011). However, she hasn’t been the only movement figure that’s had to defend

either herself or the cause, or in some cases both. Amy Kremer, chairwoman of the Tea Party Express, has had to deny accusations that either the Express or the movement are racist. “This is not a racist movement. We don’t want you here. Go away if that’s what you’re about. We’re about the fiscal issues” (Barnes, 2010). These are only a few brief examples of the hostility the opposition has hoisted upon representatives of the movement.

Though the TPM has not identified any official leaders within the movement, the evidence, as reviewed above, suggests that there are a number of informal leaders that have utilized the requirements outlined by Simons. The artifacts reviewed have provided examples of all three rhetorical requirements posited by Simons. As such, it could be asserted that TPM leaders espouse rhetoric that theoretically aligns with that of social movements. Though this analysis directs the reader one step closer to answering the overarching question of whether or not the TPM is genuine grassroots advocacy, it is necessary to analyze the rhetoric of the TPM directly to determine whether or not it aligns with that of other social movements.

Analysis of Social Movement Rhetoric

Studying social movement rhetoric is important for a number of reasons; however, put in a cohesive argument, Gronbeck indicated that, “rhetorical forces function as a set of skills able to create, sustain, and terminate movements by uniting the other forces” (1973, p. 98). Thus, it

has become imperative that these functions be identified in any social movement, both by movement leaders and by the opposition. As previously discussed by Stewart, the rhetoric of social movements can be analyzed using a five-point model he outlined in 1980.

As one step in the process of examining the authenticity of the TPM, the movement has been analyzed through the lens of Stewart's configuration, to determine whether there are examples of such functions within the movement. Though Stewart identified five unique functions that are generally manifested throughout the life of a social movement, he advised that they do not occur in any specific order, nor do they necessarily transpire independently from one another. As such, the elements identified by Stewart have been individually analyzed even though individual examples often contained multiple facets within the same text.

Social movements transform perceptions of history. As the reader may recall, the first function discussed by Stewart is that of transforming popular perceptions of history (p. 302). This rereading of history includes past, present, and future events, and is done, in essence, to garner support for a particular cause. In the case of the TPM, leaders and supporters alike have participated in reconstructing both the historical and contemporary climate of American politics. There have been many examples of this form of rhetoric emanating from Tea Party leaders.

One of the most prominent references found within Tea Party prose is the reference to the federal government overstepping the amount of power that America's founding fathers initially gave it. Examples of this rhetoric are found on TPM websites, as well as in the speeches of prominent TPM speakers. The following sample provides a brief illustration of this point being manifested within the public sphere.

In returning to the Patriots' website, one can find numerous references to America's founding fathers. In an article titled, "Business as Usual or Commitment to the Constitution: The Choice is Yours," which is easily accessed from a link on the home page, the issue of the federal government acting as a ruling class is discussed. The message being declared is that America's leaders, whom are identified as elected officials and their legislative staff, government agency employees, and even lobbyists, for example, have become arrogant and believe themselves superior to those in which they govern. As such, they no longer operate in a manner befitting the best interests of the people.

The author of the article, who remains unnamed, however speaks on behalf of the Tea Party Patriots, indicates that this is contrary to the type of government the founding fathers toiled to construct. For instance,

This is not what the Founding Fathers intended when they created and adopted the United States Constitution. Our Founding Fathers literally risked their lives, and many lost their lives, and the lives of their loved ones, to give birth to our country. Once America had her independence from England, the Founders did not return to business as usual. Instead, they worked tirelessly, with much thought and debate, to develop our Constitution. They took great pains to write a rule of law so the governed would have a clear

understanding of what the governing members are explicitly allowed to do. If they failed to govern well, the Founders created a system where the governed can toss them out of office every two years without bloodshed. The Founders created a form of government with checks and balances to limit the power of government. (“Business as Usual,” n.d.)

This example highlights an attempt to reconstruct the reader’s notion of the past, basically, that America’s founding fathers intended rule by the people, with great limits to the amount of power granted to governing officials. However, in this article the author is also modeling the reader’s view of the current “ruling class” – those that hold the leadership positions. The author acknowledges borrowing the term “ruling class” from Boston University professor Angelo Codevilla, who defines members of this group as elected officials, their staff, government employees, and “the employees of other organizations that exist to influence legislation on Capital Hill.” This definition encompasses a far greater amount of people than simply the elected officials sent to Washington by American voters. However, in widening the definition of the “ruling class” the author implies that policy is being made by those who are not elected officials. As such, the power of the American populace is usurped and the governed no longer have the ability to vote out officials who do not keep the interest of the people at heart.

Another theme often found within TPM rhetoric is regarding the condition of the American economy, both in the recent past, that is, prior to the election of President Obama in 2008, the present condition, and that expected in the near future. Specifically, TPM proponents have

focused on America's national debt, taxes, and unemployment. Constant comparisons are made regarding a "before Obama" condition and an "after Obama" condition.

For instance, in Bachmann's January 25, 2011 speech, in which she responded to Obama's State of the Union address, early remarks were devoted to reflecting on the condition of the economy. Remember that she cited the increase in both the national debt as well as unemployment rates under Obama's presidency. However, she also criticized out-of-control government spending, specifically that of the health care bill endorsed by Obama. She indicated that, "unless we fully repeal Obamacare, a nation that enjoys the world's finest health care might be forced to rely on government-run coverage. That could have a devastating impact on our national debt for even generations to come" (Bachmann, 2011a). Those who do not currently have health insurance, and are thus deprived of health care would probably disagree with her statement that America has the finest health care in the world. Additionally, she is alluding to a bleak economic future, as well as subpar health coverage for this country if Obamacare is not revoked.

These are just a couple examples of movement rhetoric that attempts to transform historical perceptions in order to achieve TPM-directed goals. This is a necessary function in establishing the validity of a movement. However, in addition to redefining historical perceptions,

social movements will also attempt to alter modern-day societal perceptions.

Social movements transform perceptions of society. The next component of social movement rhetoric discussed by Stewart is that of transforming self-perceptions of movement followers as well as reshaping those of the opposition (p. 300). The goal of reshaping self-perceptions is “so that supporters and potential supporters come to believe in their self-worth and ability to bring about urgent change” (p. 303). This is a crucial component of movement rhetoric, and many examples can be found within texts and speeches of the TPM.

For example, Congresswoman Bachmann’s speeches contain numerous examples of such rhetoric. In reviewing her January 25, 2011 speech, she indicated, for example, in reference to overcoming the current economic crisis, “we can do this. That’s our hope. We will proclaim liberty throughout the land. And we will do so because we, the people, will never give up on this great nation.” In this, as well as other speeches, Bachmann has referred to the importance of the people, meaning those in support of the cause, numerous times. According to her, the people care about the condition of the country and want to rescue it, whereas the elite, those in power, seemingly do not.

In a speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), on February 10, 2011, Bachmann, who addressed a crowd of 11,000 plus conservatives, praised the people for the changes that they had made

within the last year. “It was also awesome what happened in the United States Senate, because you helped to deliver victories in the Senate like Kentucky Senator Rand Paul.” Bachmann praised conservatives, and thus by extension TPM supporters, for eliciting change within Congress. As such, Bachmann has actively participated in transforming societal perceptions of movement supporters.

However, Stewart also indicated that movement leaders must transform popular perceptions of the opposition. In doing so, Stewart discussed the importance of “strip[ping] such opponents of their legitimacy” (p. 302). By doing so, those opposing the desired change are vilified, and portrayed as “powerful, demonic, conspiratorial forces” (p. 302). Numerous examples exist of TPM leaders attacking President Obama as being the source of the problem within the United States. For example, in the September 6, 2011 FaceBook note posted by Sarah Palin, she accused the president of aiding the rich while disadvantaging the middle class:

And Obama’s vision is socialism via crony capitalism for the very rich who continue to get bailouts, debt-ridden “stimulus” funds, and special favors that allow them to waive off or help draft the burdensome regulations that act as a boot on the neck to small business owners who don’t have the same friends in high places. (Palin, 2011b)

In this example, Palin has focused on attacking the president and the alleged benefits he has afforded to the rich, aka the elite. Such prose reiterates the sentiment felt by Tea Partiers that the middle class has been disadvantaged by those in power. Thus, the movement has once again

been validated. Though those within the movement have clearly articulated the necessity and value of the movement, the next point that needs to be addressed is whether they have prescribed solutions for accomplishing their goals.

Social movements prescribe courses of action. The third component of social movement rhetoric identified by Stewart is that action plans must be advocated. It is essential that those within the movement identify what needs to be done, by whom, and how they are to go about completing the necessary tasks (p. 302). First, it is important for the movement to identify who needs to erect the desired change. Bachmann has repeatedly acknowledged that this role of bringing about change must be done by the concerned Americans. Further, she has advocated that supporters work to accomplish their primary goal – that is, stripping President Obama of his job – by partnering alongside other TPM supporters and by actively engaging in the upcoming election.

For instance, in her February 10, 2011 speech at the CPAC, Bachmann congratulated attendees on the accomplishments they had made, namely by voting in conservative candidates to both the House of Representatives and the Senate. She praised them, saying, “And look what you accomplished. You helped win 87 new seats in the House of Representatives. 87. It’s a record. And you helped pry that big gavel out of Speaker Pelosi’s hands” (Bachmann, 2011b).

However, shortly after praising them she entreated them to continue working toward their goal in 2012. She told them that,

We have to win a conservative Senate. The same type of Rand Pauls and Marco Rubios that came in this year, we need more of the same to come in to the Senate, so it's a conservative Senate, not just a Republican Senate. . .And the all important must have for 2012 is this – making Barack Obama a one-term President.

Though this speech was delivered at a CPAC convention, and was not specifically at a Tea Party rally, Bachmann has become a political figure of the TPM, espousing similar rhetoric despite the audience. The message she has continued to deliver is similar to that of other TPM leaders. That message has been for supporters to vote out those currently in power that have ignored the best interests of the people.

Examine, for a moment, the Tea Party Express. The Express is considered one of “the top national players in the tea party” according to *Washington Post* staff writer Amy Gardner, who has provided analysis on the Tea Party groups influencing the movement. According to their website (www.teapartyexpress.org), their goal is to accomplish six key objectives: “no more bailouts, reduce the size and intrusiveness of government, stop raising our taxes, repeal Obamacare, cease out-of-control spending, bring back American prosperity” (“Tea Party Express,” n.d.). In order to affect change, they have openly supported campaigns for a number of political candidates, and have claimed that their support was crucial in the 2010 midterm election races. They state that, “Over 200 Tea Party Express endorsed candidates went on to win their election and now

have become tireless advocates of our six core principles in Washington, D.C.” (“History,” n.d.). As evidence for this statement, the Express spent over one million dollars – \$240,000 helping Christine O’Donnell from Delaware, \$500,000 on Sharron Angle in Nevada, and \$600,000 on Joe Miller in Alaska – supporting TPM-friendly candidates during primary elections last year (Gardner, 2010).

Other calls to action have included encouraging followers to contact their congressperson and sign petitions to make their discontent known. In returning to the Patriots’ website, one has the opportunity to participate in a few different programs that incite contacting a congressperson or signing a petition, for example, all of which are sponsored by the Tea Party Patriots. For example, on one page, titled “It’s Time to Defund NPR!” supporters are encouraged to join with the Patriots in demanding the national government quit funding NPR. Two primary reasons were given for why Tea Partiers should endorse the defunding of NPR.

First, the article indicated that NPR executives view Tea Partiers as racist and uneducated. Referring to an NPR video linked to the article, the author indicated, “we see that not only do officials at NPR admit that they no longer need taxpayer funds, but that they also view us as uneducated, scary racists, because you don’t think exactly like them” (n.d.). This sort of rhetoric also leads to a clear distinguishing between the “we” and “they” as previously discussed.

The second reason given for seeking to defund NPR is that America no longer has the money to sustain such programs. According to the article, the federal deficit for February 2011 was \$223 billion (n.d.). Thus, the Tea Partiers should sign the petition at the bottom of the page in order to rid the funding of NPR.

These speeches and websites illustrate just a hand-full of examples on behalf of the movement attempting to prescribe the who, what and how of instilling tangible change in America. Once the movement has explained what needs to be done, organizers must spawn followers to action. The next few pages address how this should be accomplished.

Social movements mobilize for action. The fourth component of movement rhetoric identified by Stewart is that of employing movement action plans. In this phase, Stewart indicated that discontented peoples or groups within the movement must become united, sympathies must be gained from public opinion leaders, and the opposition should be pressured. One example discussed by Stewart is that of “voting officials in or out of office” (p. 304). This strategy has been key within the TPM. Additionally, Stewart indicated that as part of mobilizing supporters, social movements “must convince followers that victory is near, or at least inevitable” (p. 304). The high amount of congressional wins for conservatives during the 2010 mid-term elections have provided legitimacy to the claims that the movement will be successful in 2012.

In returning to the website for the Tea Party Express, it has already been discussed that the Express poured millions of dollars into supporting the 2010 campaigns of economically conservative candidates whose political values aligned with those of the movement. At the risk of becoming redundant, it is necessary to recall at least one of these campaigns. As was previously reviewed by Gardner, the Express spent approximately \$600,000 helping Joe Miller beat Senator Lisa Murkowski during the 2010 Republican Senate primary election. According to the Express their success in 2011 simply foreshadows what is to come in 2012. According to their website,

The Tea Party Express has proven to be a deciding factor in sending conservatives to the House and the Senate. As 2012 quickly approaches, we will again play a prominent role in Congressional elections, and the tea party will choose the best candidate to challenge Barack Obama and become the next President of the United States. (n.d.)

According to Stewart, mobilization of supporters is a long-term objective if change is to be truly realized. However, in order to remain a viable force, the movement must take steps to keep up with an ever-changing political and social environment. This leads the analysis to the final rhetorical function discussed by Stewart.

Social movements must be sustained. Recall that Stewart identified three components necessary to sustain a movement. These include justification of setbacks and preservation of the movement by maintaining viability as well as visibility. All three components are key in

ensuring the vitality of the movement, and thus bringing about social change.

Before looking at examples of TPM efforts of self-preservation, it is important to note that although there are examples of the movement maintaining visibility, and remaining viable, there were no examples found, within the aforementioned artifacts, that addressed setbacks to the movement. This is not to say that the movement hasn't experienced defeats, because it has. The losses to Democrats in the Delaware and Nevada Senate races provide just two examples of such setbacks. However, at this point in time the movement has primarily experienced successes. The reclaiming of the House by Republicans and the gains made in the Senate provide numerous examples to supporters that their combined efforts can lead to them achieving their desired goals. At this point, the movement's rhetoric has focused on these successes as examples of what can be accomplished by supporters working together.

However, despite achieving political successes the movement still must remain visible, according to Stewart. The TPM has maintained a public presence through a variety of means. First, as is evidenced by Bachmann and Palin's speeches, one way movement leaders have encouraged visibility is by maintaining public appearances. The speech given by Bachmann on January 25th was in response to President Obama's State of the Union address. Her speech, which was given from Tea Party Express headquarters, was a response, in essence the Tea Party's

response to the President's speech. In her opening remarks, Bachmann both acknowledges the invitation by the Express and Tea Party HD to speak and thanks them for it. She explicitly indicated, "I'm here at their request and not to compete with the official Republican remarks."

Bachmann made it clear that her remarks were on behalf of the movement, not the Republican party, to which she also belongs.

In Palin's Labor Day speech, given September 5, 2011, she thanked Tea Partiers for encouraging her. She opened, saying,

Hello New Hampshire, it's so good to be here! I am absolutely honored to get to be with you...here I was introduced as someone who inspires...no, you inspire me. You keep me going, and I thank you, I thank God for you. Thank you Tea Party Americans...

Palin went on to thank guests for supporting the movement by coming to the rally. She said,

Here you could be anywhere else, you could be out there grilling up some steak with friends and neighbors and just kicking back – and instead, what you're doing, because you are concerned about your country, you are taking a stand for what is right. You are taking a stand for needed reform in our country. (Palin, 2011a)

In these opening comments, Palin not only addressed supporters of the TPM, she also thanked them for inspiring her, for participating in the rally on a holiday, and for taking a stand against the current government. Her opening remarks alone are an example of Palin promoting visibility of the TPM. However, in thanking supporters she subtly promoted viability of the movement amongst supporters, because, she indicated that their country needs them. Additionally, it could be argued that the presence of

supporters at the rally is an example of them attempting to sustain the movement through local participation.

Palin's participation in the rally is another example of her promoting the visibility of the movement, simply by her presence. According to journalist John Heilemann, Palin's "ability to command headlines [remains] undiminished" (2011, p. 29). As evidence of this statement, Heilemann reflected on an incident earlier this year, when a Palin press stop, of no real significance, which occurred miles from where Mitt Romney officially announced his campaign for presidency, made the local paper's front page, while Romney only made the third page. The point is that Palin continues to use her presence to garner attention for the movement.

These examples provide evidence that movement leaders have expended effort to sustain the TPM. Additionally, the evidence illustrates a desire within the movement to keep it viable, both by leaders, who continue to publicly promote the movement and its agenda, and by supporters who also continue to participate in local rallies, etc. This concludes the analysis of TPM rhetoric.

The purpose of this chapter was to analyze elements of the TPM, specifically the rhetorical role of its leaders, as well as the rhetorical functions or stages the movement has traversed. This examination was completed by utilizing the framework established by Simons and Stewart. The artifacts reviewed, which included speeches by Bachmann and Palin,

as well as the Tea Party websites for the Express and the Patriots, and finally FaceBook posts by Sarah Palin, have provided numerous examples indicative of the TPM operating as grassroots advocacy.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to answer the question of whether the Tea Party movement is an example of genuine grassroots advocacy at its finest, or is rather highly-disguised, well-funded astroturfing. In order to examine the elements of this question, it was necessary to distinguish what was meant by the terms advocacy and astroturfing. Though the two activities may appear very similar on the surface, it was determined that at the core the concepts represent very different interests. For advocacy, the objective is to bring awareness to an issue, by either creating a space in which the oppressed can speak, or by speaking on behalf of those who are repressed. Astroturf movements, on-the-other-hand, appear on the exterior to be advocacy movements, yet they secretly promote the corporate, political, or economic interests of big business, or other firms.

However, before the meaning of these terms could be teased out, it was necessary to provide a historical context of populism within the United States. Such an examination was imperative because the TPM has been identified as a populist movement by both its supporters as well as by the opposition. It was determined that populist movements are an inherent component of representative democracies, such as in the U.S. However, it also appears that populism is, in one respect, a political necessity within a representative democracy. As has been demonstrated, populist, or social, movements allow the governed a voice when they

believe they have become marginalized, or ignored, by those in power, thus providing a non-violent means of dissent.

Though populist movements provide an outlet for the people to challenge authority, the emergence of populism acknowledges the friction that exists between the governed and those governing. In returning to the concept of the democratic paradox, as discussed by Canovan, the governed are both encouraged to participate actively in creating a society of their liking, yet simultaneously have been denied access to the institutions that perform an intrinsic part in policy-making. Thus, populism is a representation of the dual-edged sword occurring within democracy.

Further, it was determined that populist discourses can elicit at least two potential dangers. First, populist movements may be secretly influenced or motivated by the interests of big business, which has been identified as astroturfing. As was previously discussed, well-meaning individuals can be swept up in astroturf movements because such movements appears to be grassroots advocacy. Thus, corporate interests can pollute the populist vein.

The second danger than can occur within populist movements is that of the common people becoming engulfed in movements based on economic, political, or social fallacies. In examining the goals of the TPM, it was repeatedly articulated by movement supporters and leaders that reducing the national debt is a key concern in order to both alleviate taxes and prevent placing additional economic burdens on future generations.

The rhetoric often exclaimed is that America can no longer keep borrowing money from foreign governments. However, most Americans do not fully understand how this country's fiat currency system operates. As such, they may begin advocating for reform they do not fully understand.

Despite the potential hazards that may accompany populism, such movements can be beneficial in that they provide an opportunity for erecting change. In returning to the question of the authenticity of the TPM, it was necessary to establish a framework the movement could be examined by. As such, two models were analyzed in order to determine if the available evidence indicated advocacy or astroturf.

First, Simons outlined a structure of rhetorical requirements social movement leaders must complete in order to ensure viability of their cause. This included forming an efficient group of followers, securing adoption of the movement's ideology within the public sphere, and finally having the ability to adapt and respond to pressure from the opposition. The aspects of ideology, as defined by Blumer, were also considered. Analysis was completed primarily on the following artifacts: two popular TPM websites, two speeches delivered by Michele Bachmann, one speech given by Sarah Palin, and a month of FaceBook postings by Palin. As was indicated in the previous chapter, a number of examples of TPM leaders completing each of these requirements were found, thus providing evidence that the TPM appeared to be operating as an example of grassroots advocacy.

The second phase of the analysis was to determine whether the TPM had performed the rhetorical functions indicative of social movements as identified by Stewart. Stewart's framework provided the opportunity to analyze whether the TPM had completed any of these duties. Again, examples were obtained using primarily the same artifacts. The results indicated that the TPM had performed elements of each function identified by Stewart. As such, the TPM was found to have performed all functions identified by both Simons and Stewart as being indicative of a social movement.

However, before drawing any conclusions, it was necessary to briefly return to the discussion on astroturfing. Two specific conditions exist that tend to be representative of astroturf movements. First, as explained in the article by SourceWatch, astroturf movements tend to contain a small amount of people. In returning to the participation figures reported by Gardner, there are millions of supporters participating in the TPM. Additionally, the consensus of polling data previously reviewed revealed that between 18 to 25 percent of the population is supportive of the movement. Considering these numbers it can be asserted that the movement contains a large amount of followers, which is contrary to the amount of people generally found participating in astroturf groups.

Finally, one additional component that is key to the survival of astroturf groups is the absolute necessity of maintaining the appearance of representing grassroots advocacy. According to McNutt and Boland, once

an astroturf organization is exposed as such it no longer remains successful. In reviewing attacks on the TPM from the opposition, the reader may recall that the movement was labeled astroturf by multiple sources less than two months after its origination. *New York Times* writer Paul Krugman, and former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, both criticized the movement as being astroturf. However, despite these accusations, and those that followed, the movement only continued to grow. This, too, is contrary to the research of McNutt and Boland.

Considering the above attestations, it appears that the TPM is primarily an example of grassroots advocacy. This, however, does not mean that the TPM is completely devoid of astroturf elements. Surely, the financial backing provided by the Koch brothers, for example, is evidence of corporate attempts to infiltrate and structure direction of the movement. However, the overwhelming majority of evidence points to a vast amount of discontent emanating amongst Americans. Such anger has led to not only the TPM, but more recent movements, such as Occupy Wall Street.

Though the authenticity of the TPM will probably be contested for years to come, the purpose of this research was to explore a contemporary phenomenon that has upended America's traditional two-party democratic system. The rise of the TPM has provided the common people, albeit primarily middle-class Americans, an opportunity to challenge those in power. Considering the country's current economic conditions, which do

not appear to be improving in the near future, coupled with the growing levels of anger directed at those in power, there is great possibility that the U.S. will see the rise of far more populist movements determined to challenge the status quo. Thus, the structure utilized in this project could be applied to other movements claiming to be exemplifications of grassroots advocacy.

It is recognized that there are limitations to the examination conducted in this thesis. Considering that the TPM remains an active presence within the American establishment, the movement will most likely continue to transform throughout its existence. As such, future research will reap the benefit of having a greater period of time from which to analyze the rhetoric and functions of the movement. This will provide a larger population of artifacts from which to obtain a greater corpus of samples. Additionally, the TPM is currently an active, viable movement that is impacting and shaping the political sphere today. Thus, as the movement continues to grow, or dwindle, the amount of information and insight into the movement should continue to increase, thus providing greater opportunity to study its nature.

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