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Reading the Tea Leaves: An Exploration of the Origins, Composition, and Influence of the Tea Party

Bryce Don Summary
University of Missouri-St. Louis, brycesumm@hotmail.com

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Reading the Tea Leaves: An Exploration of the Origins, Composition, and Influence of the Tea Party

by

Bryce Don Summary
M.A., Political Science, University of Missouri - St. Louis, 2010
B.A., Political Science, Eastern Illinois University, 2004

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Advisory Committee

David Kimball, Ph.D.
Chair

E. Terrence Jones, Ph.D.

David Robertson, Ph.D.

Nancy Kinney, Ph.D.

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Abstract

The Tea Party has become a powerful force in American politics. Emerging in early 2009, the Tea Party has elicited mass support among the public with important implications for public policy and electoral politics. However, there remains significant debate over the political characteristics and motivations of Tea Party supporters. The emergence of the Tea Party has also led to speculation that supporters will form a third party. Using survey data collected in 2010 and 2011, this dissertation examines the relationship between Tea Party and third party supporters. Evidence is found that although Tea Party and third party supporters disapprove of President Obama and hold negative views of the economy, the two groups are fundamentally different in terms of their partisanship and political attitudes. Tea Party supporters are found to be ideologically conservative Republicans, while third party supporters are shown to be political independents holding negative opinions of both parties. Using American National Election Studies data, this dissertation also explains the motivations behind Tea Party support. Evidence is found that Tea Party support is motivated by traditional moral values, racial resentment, negative views of President Obama, negative opinions of immigrants, and libertarianism. This dissertation also examines the emotional component of Tea Party support finding that strong feelings of anger and fear, related to perceptions of the state of the country, motivates support. Finally, this dissertation analyzes an aggregation of public opinion data measuring opinions of the Tea Party from 2010 to 2011. Support for the Tea Party is found to have declined from 2010 through the end of 2011, with the most precipitous decline occurring among its most ardent supporters. Ultimately, the findings of this dissertation suggest that the emergence of the Tea Party has created a rift within the Republican Party between the moderate and ideologically extreme elements, constituting a barrier to legislative compromise.

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Chapter 1: Reading the Tea Leaves

Who supports the Tea Party? Since the emergence of the Tea Party in late 2008, early 2009, there has been a high degree of speculation about the motives and political beliefs of Tea Party supporters. Tea Party supporters have been described as moderates, political independents, and right-wing extremists. Common explanations often contend that Tea Party supporters are primarily motivated by beliefs in limited government and fiscal conservatism, or by issues of race, economics, moral values, as well as animosity towards President Obama. These competing claims highlight the necessity for a more definitive explanation of Tea Party support.

While questions remain about the motives of supporters, the Tea Party has consistently demonstrated a mass appeal among the American public. The Tea Party mantra has served as an important organizational rallying cry for a large constituency of Americans. Since 2009, support for the Tea Party has sparked the formation of 800 to 1,400 local Tea Party groups with an estimated 160,000[1] active members (Gardner, 2010; Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). Tea Party supporters have staged countless rallies and protests across the county often drawing large crowds and substantial media attention. Among the American public, as many as 1 in 3 American adults have expressed support for the Tea Party.[2]

Given this considerable level of support, it is not surprising that Tea Party supporters have also become a powerful force in American politics. For instance, the United States House of Representatives and Senate now have an official Tea Party

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[1] Skocpol and Williamson (2012) estimates as of the summer of 2011 (p.22).
[2] For instance, an August 2010 *USA Today*/Gallup poll indicated that 30 percent of the American public supported the Tea Party (Jones, 2010). A similar poll, conducted by the same organizations in April of 2011, also found that around 30 percent of the public supported the Tea Party (O'Brien, 2011). This number is also consistent with the findings of Chapter 4 which shows that the average level of support for the Tea Party from 2010 to 2011 was around 30 percent.

Caucus to represent the Tea Party constituency (Gervais & Morris, 2012; Roll Call, 2011). In 2010, the mobilization of Tea Party supporters helped the Republican Party regain a majority in the United State House of Representatives (Jacobson, 2011a, 2011b). The 63 seats gained by the Republicans in the 2010 midterm elections was the largest victory for either party since the 1940s (Barone & McCutcheon, 2011). Highlighting the appeal of the Tea Party, *The New York Times* estimated that 129 House candidates and 9 Senate candidates had some association with the Tea Party going into the midterm elections (Zernike, 2010e).[3] Moreover, polling data suggests that Tea Party supporters represented 41 percent of the voters in the 2010 midterm elections (Clement & Green, 2011).

Beyond general elections, Tea Party supporters have been credited with influencing the outcomes of numerous Republican primary contests leading up to the 2010 and the 2012 elections (Zelizer, 2012). In many cases, Tea Party supporters helped to defeat moderate candidates, supported by the Republican Party establishment, in favor of more ideologically conservative candidates (Zernike, 2010d). For instance, in 2010, Tea Party supporters helped to defeat moderate candidates in U.S. Senate Republican primary contests in Delaware, Alaska, Kentucky, and Colorado (Peoples, 2011).

In 2012, similar results occurred in such states as Indiana where six-term incumbent Richard Luger was defeated by Tea Party candidate Richard Mourdock (Jonsson, 2012). The 2010 and 2012 defeats of moderate candidates in Republican primaries have led to fears among some Republican incumbents of a similar occurrence leading up to the 2014 elections. News reports suggest that Republican office holders fear

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[3] *The New York Times* defined association largely by support from local Tea Party groups (Zernike, 2010e).

a primary challenge by a more conservative candidate, if they are seen as compromising on their conservative principles (Silva, 2012).

Aside from electoral impacts, the Tea Party has also influenced the policies pursued and votes cast by lawmakers. For instance, recent research has found that Tea Party activism significantly influenced the votes of Republican legislators on such issues as the 2011 vote to raise the national debt ceiling (Bailey, Mummolo, & Noel, 2012, p. 788). This issue was deemed to be important among Tea Party supporters, due to its implications for federal spending, leading many Republican legislators to vote against the August 1, 2011 measure (Bailey, Mummolo, & Noel, 2012, p. 786). These findings further accent the political impact of Tea Party supporters.

To briefly summarize, the many competing explanations of support, the public appeal, as well as the electoral and policy implications frame the importance of this dissertation examining Tea Party support. As such, this dissertation will address the following questions:

1. *What are the socio-economic, demographic, and political characteristics of Tea Party supporters?*

2. *What are the factors that motivate Tea Party support? Are Tea Party supporters motivated by traditional moral values, libertarianism, animosity towards President Obama, or racial resentment?*

3. *How has support for the Tea Party, represented by responses to public opinion surveys, changed over time? Has support increased or decreased? How has support changed among the Tea Party's strongest supporters?*

4. *What does mass support for the Tea Party mean for American politics?*

To address these questions, several public opinion data sources were examined. For instance, in Chapter 2 I analyze *USA Today*/Gallup polls collected in August 2010 and

April 2011. In addition, Chapter 3 examined public opinion data from the 2010 and 2012 waves of the American National Election Studies 2010-2012 Evaluations of Government and Society Study (EGSS). Finally, in Chapter 4 an aggregation of public opinion polls from numerous data sources is analyzed to provide a unique illustration of changes in Tea Party support over time.

This chapter will proceed as follows. It begins with a recounting of the history of the Tea Party focusing on its early emergence as well as a discussion of the motivational factors that may account for Tea Party support. As the motivational factors of Tea Party are discussed, several hypotheses related to support will be proposed. The chapter closes with a preview of the proceeding chapters.

The Tea Party Emerges

The widely held catalyst triggering the emergence of the Tea Party as a political force came from CNBC commentator Rick Santelli on February 19, 2009 when he criticized President Obama's plan to deal with mortgage debt live on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (Bedard, 2010; Lepore, 2010). [4] Santelli remarked

> The government is promoting bad behavior....How many of you people want to pay for your neighbor's mortgage that has an extra bathroom and can't pay their bills? Raise their hand. President Obama, are you listening?....We're thinking of having a Chicago Tea Party in July. All you capitalists that want to show up at Lake Michigan, I'm going to start organizing (CNBC.com, 2009).

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[4] It is important to note that there are a variety of explanations accounting for the emergence of the Tea Party. For instance, a report by the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights points to several factors that led to the emergence of the Tea Party (Bughart & Zeskind, 2010). Dick Armey and Mike Kibbe, in their 2010 book *Give Us Liberty A Tea Party Manifesto*, contend the Tea Party began after the 2008 House vote on the Troubled House Relief Program (TARP). This legislation was defeated on the first vote on September 29, 2008, which Armey and Kibbe (2010) argue "in retrospect, September 29 is clearly the day the Tea Party movement was reborn in America" (p.60).

Santelli's remarks received substantial media attention and sporadic Tea Party protests began to be reported across the country, with several events taking place on February 29, 2009 (Berger, 2009; Bughart & Zeskind, 2010). Following these smaller protests across the country, support for the Tea Party took on a much larger form with the April 15, 2009 protests that coincided with the date federal income taxes were due. On this date, numerous Tea Party protest rallies were reported across the country with some estimates suggesting that that as many as 311,000 people attended events in 346 cities across the country (Silver, 2009). Journalist accounts described the themes of these rallies as anti-tax and opposition to excessive government spending (Fox News, 2009a) as well as opposition to health care reform proposals and the economic stimulus (Barone & McCutcheon, 2011, p.3-4). Furthermore, around spring of 2009, reports suggest that national Tea Party groups began to take form with the Tea Party Patriots emerging on March 10, 2009 and the Tea Party Nation on April 6, 2009 (Bughart & Zeskind, 2010, p. 17). Local Tea Party groups also began to form around this time as groups continued to emerge across the country through the beginning of 2010 (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p.8).

Following the Tax Day rallies in the spring of 2009, Tea Party supporters began attending town hall meeting across the country voicing their opposition to health care reform (Barone & McCutcheon, 2011, p. 4). Many of these events drew significant media attention because of the heated exchanges that took place between lawmakers and constituents. Some media outlets ran headlines such as "Town Halls Gone Wild" to describe the events (Isenstadt, 2009). Rounding out the year was a September 12, 2009 rally in Washington, D.C., organized by the advocacy group FreedomWorks, which

featured thousands of protestors voicing concerns over the growth in the size of

government (Fox News, 2009b). *The New York Times* described the event as a

"culmination of a summer-long season of protests that began with opposition to a health

care overhaul and grew into a broader dissatisfaction with government" (Zeleny, 2009).

By the beginning of 2010, the Tea Party had begun to receive more media attention as

newspaper and television reports discussing the Tea Party rose substantially from the

coverage received in 2009 (Boykoff & Laschever, 2011, p.348). According to one

analysis, coverage of the Tea Party went from 13 stories referencing the Tea Party in

March of 2009 to 237 in February of 2010 (Boykoff & Laschever, 2011, p.348).[5] By the

early months of 2010, the Tea Party had emerged as an important component of the

national political dialogue.

Tea Party Support as a "Movement"

It is important to note that some may study the Tea Party as a social movement

focusing on common characteristics. However, this dissertation takes the view that the

Tea Party is better understood as an element of the Republican Party rather than a

standalone social movement.[6] Moreover, the history of the Tea Party is still being written

making a preliminary assessment regarding its correct classification difficult.

Additionally, problems arise when attempting to classify social movements as nearly

every group attempting to gain recognition uses the term (Tilly, 2004, p.6). In the same

sense that calling a close election a landslide lends the election credibility, instilling the

title "movement" to a group of like-minded individuals lends it legitimacy (Tilly, 2004,

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[5] Coverage was measured by mentions among the top newspapers in the country according to circulation and five of the largest news networks defined as CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, CBS news, and ABC news (Boykoff & Laschever, 2011, p.347).

[6] Skocpol and Williamson (2012) conclude in their 2012 book on the Tea Party that "despite endless commentary comparing it to assorted movements ranging from Civil Rights to the Ross Perot campaign, the Tea Party is fundamentally the latest iteration of long-standing, hard-core conservatism in American politics" (p.82).

p.6). As such, this dissertation will refrain from entering into a debate concerning whether the Tea Party constitutes a social movement, and will leave decisions on the correct classification to future research.[7]

Popular Accounts of Tea Party Support

As mentioned earlier, there are numerous explanations accounting for Tea Party support. One of the first attempts to explain Tea Party supporters came from pollsters Scott Rasmussen and Doug Schoen in a 2010 book. In the book, Rasmussen and Schoen (2010) explain that the Tea Party is "avowedly nonpartisan" with a membership consisting of political independents, disenfranchised Democrats, Republicans, and political newcomers (p. 8-11).[8] This theme was also echoed by *The Wall Street Journal* which described the Tea Party as "remarkably broad-based and nonideological" (Taranto, 2010). Similarly, narratives concerning the bipartisan nature of the Tea Party were reflected in headlines from news organizations such as CNN, which ran the headline "Disgruntled Democrats Join the Tea Party" in April of 2010 (Travis, 2010).

Furthermore, some have defined support for the Tea Party by adherence to libertarian small government beliefs (Armey & Kibbe, 2010, p.123). This narrative suggests that Tea Party supporters are dissatisfied with the major parties and angry over the growth in the size and scope of government (Armey & Kibbe, 2010). This line of argument was also frequently stated by Tea Party activists such as Amy Kremer, leader of the advocacy group Tea Party Express, who described Tea Party supporters as "focused completely on the fiscal aspect of the economy. We're not focused on the social

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[7] As Tilly (2004) notes "no one owns the term "social movements"; analysts, activists, and critics remain free to use the phrase as they want" (p.7).
[8] A similar argument is found in other books on the Tea Party such as O'Hara (2010).

issues" (CNN.com, 2010).[9] Similarly, constitutional law professor Elizabeth Price Foley notes in her 2012 book on the Tea Party that supporters are defined by three principles: U.S. sovereignty, constitutional originalism, and limited government (Foley, 2012). She notes that "the emphasis of Tea Party conservatism is economic and constitutional, not social" (p.224).

In contrast to these claims, others connect Tea Party support with support for traditional moral values. For instance, some have suggested that a large portion of Tea Party supporters are social conservatives or "Teavangelicals" as described by the Chief Political Correspondent for the Christian Broadcast Network, David Brody. In his 2012 book on the Tea Party, Brody argued that a large portion of Tea Party supporters hold socially conservative views and that these views did not necessarily contradict views related to the size of government (2012, p.42).

Some accounts of Tea Party support suggest that it is motivated by race, as well as animosity towards President Obama, made evident by controversial posters held up at Tea Party rallies and questions concerning President Obama's birthplace (Burghart & Zeskind, 2010). Tea Party supporters dispute claims of racial animosity arguing that those who attend rallies with racist signs are shunned and that many leaders within the Tea Party are African-American such as former Florida Congressmen Allen West and former Republican presidential candidate Herman Cain (Brody, 2012, p.97).

These accounts highlight the diverse nature in which Tea Party supporters have come to be popularly understood. Specifically, they provide a glimpse into how Tea Party leaders, activists as well as journalists explain Tea Party support. Although instructive,

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[9] Amy Kremer was also a founding member of the Tea Party Patriots and in 2010 was described by *The Telegraph* newspaper as the most influential member of the Tea Party (The Telegraph, 2010). The group Kremer heads, the Tea Party Express, claims to be the "the nation's largest Tea Party political action committee" (Tea Party Express, 2013).

these accounts often rely on anecdotes or personal opinion rather than social science evidence. Thus, a more rigorous examination of Tea Party supporters and their possible motivations is warranted.

Third Party and Tea Party Support

As it stands currently, the Tea Party does not represent a third party in itself as the American two-party system makes it difficult for such parties to succeed.[10] However, it is useful to consult the literature on third parties as it details why voters sometimes abandon the major parties and exercise alternate political options. It could be that the same factors that lead voters to support a third party also account for Tea Party support. Chapter 2 of this dissertation will provide a detailed discussion of the predictors of third party support, which will not be repeated here. Instead, the focus will remain on the factors most relevant to the hypotheses to be tested regarding support for the Tea Party.

Previous research suggests that support for a third party occurs most often when voters are dissatisfied with the two major parties (Gold, 1995; Rapoport & Stone, 2008; Rosenstone, Behhr, & Lazarus, 1996).) In others words, third party support is often the product of voter perceptions that the major parties do not represent their interests (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996). Early on in the tenure of the Tea Party, there were claims that supporters were dissatisfied with both the Republican and Democratic parties.

For instance, in April of 2009 Republican Party Chairman Michael Steele was denied a request to speak at a Tea Party event in Chicago (Bedard, 2009). The organizers of the event sent out a press release stating "RNC officials are welcome to participate in the rally itself, but we prefer to limit stage time to those who are not elected officials, both in Government as well as political parties" (DontGo Movement, 2009).

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[10] See Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1996) for a discussion of the barriers to third parties.

Furthermore, given that early Tea Party protests were centered on opposition to healthcare reform and the economic stimulus (Barone & McCutcheon, 2011), it is apparent that supporters were also unhappy with the Democratic Party and its legislative priorities. In addition, many Tea Party leaders have stated that supporters are angry at both political parties (Armey & Kibbe, 2010).

However, if Tea Party supporters represented a constituency outside the two parties, like traditional third party supporters, then the expectation would be that both parties would either be ignoring Tea Party supporters or simultaneously attempting to gain their support. Examining the actions of the elites of both parties it is clear that the Republican Party embraced Tea Party supporters early on, while the Democratic Party largely criticized Tea Party supporters.

For instance, Democratic U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi criticized the tax protests held on April 15, 2009 remarking "we call it AstroTurf, it's not really a grass-roots movement. It's AstroTurf by some of the wealthiest people in America to keep the focus on tax cuts for the rich instead of for the great middle class" (Bendery, 2009). In contrast, news reports described how Republicans such as House Minority leader John Boehner were "embracing the concept" and attending Tea Party events (Klein, 2009). Thus, the activity of party elites provides evidence that Tea Party supporters are more akin to Republican partisans than third party supporters.

With the goal of determining the relationship between Tea Party supporters and third party supporters, the following hypotheses are tested:

Hypothesis 1: Tea Party support is predicted by Republican Party identification and conservative ideology.

Hypothesis 2: Tea Party support is not predicted by dissatisfaction with both parties.

Attitudes Shaping Partisan Identities

Rather than a third party effort, some consider Tea Party supporters to be the staunchest, most conservative members of the Republican Party (Abramowitz, 2012). The Tea Party may have simply been an outlet for conservatives angry about the GOP losing control of Congress and the White House in the 2008 elections. As such, the literature on partisanship could be helpful in explaining Tea Party support. Chapter 3 of this dissertation will provide an examination of this literature, but for now the discussion will center on the factors relevant to the hypothesis to be specifically tested.

Research on partisan identification suggests that issues of race and moral values have become increasingly related to partisanship over the past several decades. One of the first scholarly examinations of the linkages between race and partisanship comes from Carmines and Stimson (1989). In their book *Issue Evolution*, these scholars examined the movement of white voters into the GOP, explaining it as a response to civil rights policies designed to assist African Americans (Carmines & Stimson, 1989). More recent research has supported some of these early contentions. For instance, Knuckey (2006) found that racial resentment[11] has become increasingly associated with conservative ideology across the country and Republican Party identification among white southerners. Specifically, he finds that racial resentment was a significant predictor of conservative ideology from 1986 through 1990 as well as 1992 through 2000 (Knuckey, 2006).[12] Moreover, the work

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[11] Racial resentment refers to a new conceptualization of racism (similar to symbolic racism) centered on beliefs that the problems arising from racial discrimination are over, that the plight of African-Americans are a product of their own making, and that government aid to African Americans, as well as complaints from African-Americans concerning their disadvantaged status, are without merit (Henry & Sears, 2002, p.254).
[12] Knuckey (2006) was unable to examine the effect of racial resentment in 1996 and 1998 because the questions were not asked on the American National Election Studies survey data.

of Valentino and Sears (2005) found similar linkages between issues of race and Republican Party identification among southern whites from the 1970s through 2000.

Starting in the late 1970s and 1980s the Republican Party began to openly appeal to Christian conservatives. Some early signs included President Reagan's appeals to the Moral Majority as well as Reverend Pat Robertson's campaign for the GOP nomination for president in 1988 (Brewer, 2005; Cohen, 2012). The link between social conservatism and partisanship has also been a subject of extensive scholarly examination (e.g. Layman, 2001).This research suggests that social conservatism has become increasingly related to high levels of partisanship (Layman & Carsey, 2002). For instance, Knuckey (2006) found that support for moral traditionalism was a significant predictor of Republican Party identification and conservative ideology among whites from 1992 through 2000.

An alternate strain of research suggests that economic issues play an important role in explaining partisanship. For instance, Abramowitz (1994) found that changes in Republican and Democratic Party identification among whites in the 1980s was related to views on the role of government and the size of the welfare state. Debates over economic philosophy (free-market versus government intervention) have been the main sources of party divisions in the U.S. since the New Deal (Brewer, 2005; Layman & Carsey, 2002). For instance, Brewer (2005) found that party identification was significantly related to economic attitudes from 1956 through 2000. Specifically, economic attitudes such as support for a decreasing role of government in society were related to Republican Party identification. Other scholars have noted that income has become an increasingly strong predictor of Republican Party identification over the past several decades (Brewer & Stonecash, 2001; Nadeau, Niemi, Stanley, & Godbout, 2004).

To briefly summarize, previous research suggests that issues of race, economics, and moral traditionalism work together to explain partisan identification and ideology. In previous periods of American politics, issues of race or religion acted as cross-cutting conflicts that may have divided partisans united on economic issues (Brewer, 2005; Layman & Carsey, 2002). However, as time has passed, now economic, moral, and racial conservatism work in unison to separate the two parties in the United States (Layman, Carsey, & Horowitz, 2006; Layman, Carsey, Green, Herrera, & Cooperman, 2010). The two parties are now distinctly separated along issues of race, economics, and moral traditionalism. Given that all three of these factors have been shown to predict Republican Party identification, they are expected to predict Tea Party support as well. However, what does recent research on the Tea Party suggest?

Tea Party Scholarship

Recent scholarship on the Tea Party points to several factors accounting for support. This research will be revisited in greater detail in Chapters 2 and 3 and a brief summary of the main findings will be provided here. Skocpol and Williamson (2012) use survey data and field work to explain the emergence and composition of the Tea Party. Tea Party supporters are described as very conservative in their ideology, loyal voting Republicans, and politically engaged. The authors make a point to note that Tea Party supporters are "best understood as first and foremost *conservatives*, rather than merely as exemplars of demographic or economic categories" (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p.32).

The authors describe the emergence of the Tea Party as a response to perceptions of a changing America both politically and demographically manifesting in the emotions of both fear and anger among supporters. They also contend that Tea Party supporters are

primarily white, middle class, older Americans with at least half of the membership holding socially conservative views. Supporters are united by their hatred of President Obama and aided organizationally by various free market groups, and conservative media outlets that have amplified as well as shaped the Tea Party message. Overall, they describe the Tea Party as "fundamentally the latest iteration of long-standing, hard-core conservatism in American politics" (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p.82).

One of the most extensive quantitative examinations of Tea Party support comes from Abramowitz (2012) through an analysis of American National Election Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey (EGSS) data collected in October 2010. Abramowitz (2012) frames the emergence of the Tea Party as a product of a decade's long trend in ideological polarization among the Republican Party's base. In other words, GOP officials and their mass supporters have become increasingly conservative over the past few decades. Analyzing American National Election Study data, dating back to 1968, Abramowitz (2012) shows that Republican identifiers have increasingly viewed Democratic presidential candidates in an unfavorable light. In 2010, that trend continued with Tea Party supporters giving negative evaluations of President Obama at high levels.

Abramowitz (2012) also found that ideological conservatism was the strongest predictor of Tea Party support. Furthermore, he also found that higher levels of racial resentment, negative feelings toward President Obama, and Republican Party identification were all significant, and among the strongest, predictors of Tea Party support. Many of the findings of Abramowitz (2012) are echoed in the research of Deckman (2012) who found that Tea Party support was predicted by Republican Party identification, conservative ideology, and opposition to President Obama.

Furthermore, Ulbig and Macha (2011) examined data from a June 2010 survey and found additional support for conservative ideology and Republican Party identification as predictors of Tea Party support among the U.S. electorate, along with evidence that anti-government views also predicted support. Moreover, in contrast to the work of Abramowitz (2012), the authors found little evidence that views related to race predicted Tea Party support (Ulbig & Macha, 2011). Similar to the findings of Ulbig and Macha (2011), related to anti-government opinions, Perrin, Tepper, Caren, and Morris (2011) found that libertarian worldviews were significantly related to Tea Party support. Finally, examining original survey data from 2010, Baretto, Cooper, Gonzalez, Parker, and Towler (2011) found that Tea Party support among whites is significantly related to negative opinions of minorities, homosexuals, and immigrants.

Overall, previous research on the Tea Party offers several explanations of Tea Party support. These explanations include conservative ideology, Republican Party identification, racial resentment, dislike for President Obama, negative views of immigrants and minorities, as well as libertarian worldviews. Moreover, research also suggests that many who support the Tea Party are also social conservatives (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). The research undertaken in this dissertation will add to previous research on the Tea Party in a variety of ways.

First, a large portion of the scholarly research on the Tea Party uses support as a predictor of specific outcomes such as votes on legislation or opinions on issues. As such, a majority of research into Tea Party support focuses on support as an independent variable rather than a dependent variable. This dissertation will differ from a large segment of previous research by treating Tea Party support as a dependent variable to

determine the predictors of support (Chapters 2 and 3). Second, other explanations of Tea Party support rely on conclusions largely drawn from interviews and field work (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). As such, these findings lend themselves to further testing quantitatively using public opinion data.

Finally, prominent explanations of Tea Party support have yet to be tested simultaneously (or in some instances quantitatively). This provides a unique opportunity to determine the attitudinal predictors of support after controlling for each competing explanation. Along with controlling for a variety of explanations, a determination can also be made about the relative effect of each factor on support for the Tea Party. Thus, this dissertation will improve upon previous research predicting Tea Party support by controlling for various explanations of support found in the literature. The following hypotheses will be examined in the proceeding chapters:

> *Hypothesis 3:   Tea Party support is predicted by racial resentment.*
>
> *Hypothesis 4: Tea Party support is predicted by traditional moral values.*
>
> *Hypothesis 5: Tea Party support is predicted by libertarian traditional free-market conservative viewpoints.*

One of the most unique contributions of this dissertation will be to examine the emotional component of Tea Party support. In general, losing in politics can make people angry and fearful, and motivate them to political activism. The work of Skocpol and Williamson (2012) suggests that this may have indeed been the case with Tea Party supporters. As such, these feelings of fear and anger were likely activated among the staunchest GOP supporters due to the big losses the party suffered in 2006 and 2008. Tea Party groups then used this emotional energy to organize support. Thus, the following hypothesis was constructed to test this assumption:

Hypothesis 6: Tea Party support is predicted by feelings of fear and anger concerning the state of the country.

Chapter 4 of this dissertation will examine Tea Party support over time. As the Tea Party has grown, both in its numbers and in awareness among the American public, its overall support is expected to decline. This is attributed to the fact that over time the enigmatic appeal of the Tea Party disappeared as it became associated with Republican Party elites such as Sarah Palin. It can be inferred that the initial broad ranging support for the Tea Party was tied to its ambiguity in terms of its platforms and leaders. Thus, as the Tea Party gained more traction in the media, as well as in America's consciousness, it became more easily tied to concrete individuals that may have eroded some of its initial wide-ranging support. This leads to the final hypothesis to be tested in this analysis.

Hypothesis 7: Support for the Tea Party will decline from 2010 to 2011.

Chapter Overview

The following chapters will extend the knowledge base concerning Tea Party support. Specifically, they will add to our understanding of the characteristics of Tea Party supporters, what motivates their support, as well as their past, present, and future political impacts.

Chapter 2: Examining the relationship between Tea Party and third party support

Are supporters of the Tea Party comparable to supporters of third parties? Do traditional predictors of third party support also predict Tea Party support? Using survey data from 2010 and 2011, this chapter examines whether predictors of Tea Party support also predict third party support. Comparisons are also made between the socioeconomic, demographic, and political characteristics of self-identified Tea Party and third party supporters. The findings demonstrate that although Tea Party and third party supporters

disapprove of President Obama and hold negative views of the economy, the groups are fundamentally different in terms of their partisanship and political attitudes. Tea Party supporters are best described as ideologically conservative Republicans; third party supporters identify as ideologically moderate political independents that hold negative opinions of both parties.

Chapter 3: Exploring the attitudinal predictors of Tea Party support

What are the attitudinal predictors of Tea Party support? Using American National Elections Studies data from October 2010 and February 2012, this chapter explores the main determinants of Tea Party support. After controlling for party identification and ideology, evidence is found that Tea Party support is predicted by measures of traditional moral values, racial resentment, views of President Obama, opinions toward immigrants, and libertarianism. The findings also suggest that Tea Party support can be explained by strong feelings of anger and fear related to perceptions of the state of the country. Conclusions are also drawn concerning the opinions of Tea Party supporters and the degree to which support for the Tea Party constitutes a dividing line between the moderate and extreme elements of the Republican Party base.

Chapter 4: Declining public support for the Tea Party

How have opinions regarding the Tea Party changed over time? This chapter examines the extent to which public support for the Tea Party has changed since polls regarding support have been conducted. Two types of questions are used to plot Tea Party opinions over time; those gauging the favorability and the support for the Tea Party. Results indicate that support or favorability of the Tea Party, judged by four distinct measures, has declined over time, reaching a peak in support around November

of 2010. Specific attention is also given to the influence that question wording, or question response options, can have on public opinions of the Tea Party. Depending on the options given to respondents, support or favorability towards the Tea Party can vary significantly. The implications of these results for the Tea Party, and the measurement of public opinion given, are also explored.

Chapter 5: Implications of the Tea Party for American politics.

This chapter will review the findings from each of the preceding chapters and explore their implications for American politics. This chapter will also discuss the future influence of the Tea Party in terms of partisan polarization, partisan gridlock, and legislative compromise. Overall, the findings of the dissertation suggest that the emergence of the Tea Party has created a rift within the Republican Party with important implications for the ability of legislators to forge meaningful compromise.

Chapter 2: Examining the relationship between Tea Party and third party support

How similar, or dissimilar, are supporters of the Tea Party to those who have supported third parties in the past? Do traditional predictors of third party support also predict Tea Party support? Examining Tea Party support in relation to support for third parties permits a more in-depth understanding of the motivations behind supporters of both groups. Specifically, it speaks to our understanding of who Tea Party supporters are, what motivates their support, and their impact on the American two-party system.

Previous scholarly research on the Tea Party has largely neglected to study supporters in the context of a third party. Instead, the focus has remained predominately on connections between Tea Party supporters and the Republican Party[13] (Abramowitz, 2012; Williamson, Skocpol, & Coggin, 2011). In doing so, an important opportunity to compare the contributing factors of past third party movements to the Tea Party has so far been missed. Building on this neglect, the following chapter will offer an examination of the Tea Party through the eyes of third party supporters of the past.

This chapter will proceed as follows. First, a case is made for a comparison between Tea Party supporters and third party supporters. An argument is made that while supporters of the Tea Party have yet to coalesce into an official third party, the specter of a third party driven by its supporters remains a definite possibility. Second, the chapter moves to a discussion of past American third parties focusing on their influence on the major parties. Third, the chapter discusses relevant literature focusing on past predictors of third party support. Fourth, the chapter provides a comparison of Tea Party and third party supporters using survey data from 2010 and 2011 followed by an analysis of Tea

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[13] For a small exception see Hugick and Starace (2012) who compare Tea Party supporters and Ross Perot supporters.

Party and third party support incorporating measures previously shown to predict support for both groups. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the main findings and their ramifications for our understanding of the Tea Party.

The Specter of the Tea Party as a Third Party

Early on in the tenure of the Tea Party as a political force, questions were raised about the relationship between its supporters and supporters of third parties. These questions were not surprising given the extent to which members of the media, as well as political elites, predicted the emergence of a third party inspired by the Tea Party. As early as April of 2009, an opinion piece featured in *The Wall Street Journal* authored by Glenn Reynolds, noted that the Tea Party "may lead to a new third party that may replace the GOP, just as the GOP replaced the fractured and hapless Whigs" (Reynolds, 2009). In May of that same year, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich in an opinion piece featured in *The Washington Post* echoed a similar theme. Gingrich opined that "elites ridiculed or ignored the first harbinger of rebellion, the recent tea parties" going on to note that "In the great tradition of political movements rising against arrogant, corrupt elites, there will soon be a party of people rooting out the party of government" suggesting that the party could come in the form of a third party (Gingrich, 2009).

Soon these third party prophecies began to take the form of direct threats to the two-party establishment. Former governor of Alaska Sarah Palin, a favorite among Tea Party supporters, as well the keynote speaker at the 2010 Tea Party national convention (Zernike, 2010a, 2010b), suggested that the formation of a third party, inspired by the Tea Party, was a definite possibility. In a direct warning to the Republican Party, Governor Palin is quoted as stating that "If they start straying, then why not a third party" (O'Brien,

2010a). A similar theme was also echoed by South Dakota Republican Senator Jon Thune in 2010. Thune warned the Republican Party that "If we don't govern accordingly, I think you're going to see a third party in this country." Senator Thune theorized that the third party could be driven by Tea Party supporters (O'Brien, 2010b). More recently, Tea Party favorite and former CEO of Godfather's Pizza Herman Cain called for the formation of a third party following the election loss of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney in 2012. Herman Cain remarked that "We need a third party to save this country" and that "This country is in trouble and it is clear that neither party — is going to fix the problems we face" (Starnes, 2012).[14]

Beyond the words spoken by Tea Party elites, supporters also took concrete steps toward the establishment of a third party. For instance, in 2010 Scott Ashjian ran as a third party candidate for the U.S. Senate in Nevada representing the Tea Party of Nevada ("General Election Results," 2010). In 2011, Jack Davis ran for Congress representing a Tea Party inspired third party in the race for New York's 26th congressional district (Hernandez, 2011a, 2011b). As early as November of 2009, the Tea Party was registered as an official party in Florida (Smith, 2009). In November of 2010, Randy Wilkinson represented the Florida Tea Party in a race for Florida's 12th congressional district (Brower, 2010).

The Tea Party also exhibited characteristics of a third party by holding its own national convention and offering its own response to the president's State of the Union address. In February of 2010, a national Tea Party convention was held in Nashville,

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[14] It should be noted that Herman Cain was not explicitly stating that the third party would be driven solely by the Tea Party and he also stated that the third party could be comprised of disgruntled Democrats. However given Mr. Cain's prominence among Tea Party supporters, and the context from which the statements were made during a discussion of how the Republican Party's presidential candidate had not been conservative enough, it can be inferred that his sentiments spoke largely to disagreements between the Tea Party and the Republican Party.

Tennessee. It was estimated that the conference was attended by 600 Tea Party activists (Zernike, 2010c). In 2011 the first Tea Party rebuttal was offered by Republican House member Michele Bachmann, the founder of the House Tea Party Caucus. Representative Bachmann's rebuttal was broadcast on a major cable news channel, CNN, following the president's address and the GOP response (Sonmez, 2011). The trend continued in the following years with former Republican presidential candidate Herman Cain delivering the response in 2012 and Kentucky Senator Rand Paul delivering the response in 2013. It is important to note that these responses were delivered in light of the fact that the Republican Party also offered its own spokespersons to respond to the president's address.

The divide between the major parties and supporters of the Tea Party has also been institutionalized within the federal government. For instance, in the summer of 2010 Representative Michele Bachmann, a Republican from Minnesota, officially formed the Tea Party Caucus in the United States House of Representatives (Gervais & Morris, 2012, p. 245). Upon its formation, the House Tea Party Caucus boasted some 52 Republican House members (Gervais & Morris, 2012, p. 245). [15] [16] In terms of the Tea Party, the House Tea Party Caucus represents the "only true institutional representation of the Tea Party movement in the federal government" (Gervais & Morris, 2012, p.249). Although the Tea Party House Caucus does not represent a third party caucus in itself, the perceived necessity for forming such a caucus may suggest a growing divide between the Republican Party and the Tea Party.

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[15] The idea of forming a Tea Party legislative caucus, to represent the values of Tea Party supporters, also filtered down to the state level. In 2010, Texas state legislators formed their own Tea Party Caucus boasting an initial membership of 48 state legislators (Grissom, 2010; As cited in Gervais & Morris, 2012, p. 245).

[16] As of February 21, 2013, the House Tea Party Caucus website listed 47 current members (House Tea Party Caucus Website, 2013).

The Tea Party as a Response to Major Party Failures

Some prominent supporters of the Tea Party claim that both of the major parties have let government spending and debt get out of control. This line of argument suggests that the Tea Party is a product of the failure of the major parties to adequately address policies deemed relevant to the public. In their 2010 book *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto*, Dick Armey, former chairman of Freedom Works (a libertarian group that helped to organize the Tea Party early on) and the group's current CEO Matt Kibbe argue that the Tea Party was born out of public anger directed at Republicans and Democrats alike.

Specifically, the authors argue that the Tea Party came about as a response to the public's opposition to the passage of the Wall Street bailout which occurred under Republican President George W. Bush and the Democrat Party controlled Congress (Armey & Kibbe, 2010, p.37-38). They argue that excessive spending by the "Bush administration, aided and abetted by many Republicans in the House and Senate, virtually erased any practical or philosophical distraction between the two parties" (p.49). They also criticize the Obama administration over government spending in relation to the stimulus package and health care reform (p.49). To Armey and Kibbe (2010), the "Tea Party does not buy into the traditional Left vs. Right debate. It is better framed as "big vs. small." They go on to state that "It is a fundamental debate about the size and scope of government" (p.89). In short, Armey and Kibbe (2010) contend that the Tea Party is a response to the failures of both parties to hold true to the principals that they argue are central to the foundation of the United States: "individual freedom, free markets, and constitutionally constrained government" (p.166).

Still yet, Armey and Kibbe (2010) contend that their goal, and by proxy the Tea Party's goal, is not to form a third party (p.126-132). Instead, they argue that their goal is a "hostile takeover" of the Republican Party (p.135-136). However, the argument for a "hostile takeover" of the Republican Party is prefaced by their assertion that they do not seek to "join the Republican Party" (p. 136). Armey and Kibbe (2010) make it clear that the decision to take over the Republican Party is based largely on practicality, noting that by taking over the Republican Party the Tea Party can spend it's time "focused on ideas and use the party infrastructure that has been built over the past 156 years" noting that between the major parties the "Republicans have at least been on the side of fiscal restraint and already have some of us in their ranks" (p.135). In other words, they contend that the ideology of the Tea Party is at odds with much of the Republican establishment, as well as the Democratic Party, but realize that the Tea Party is much more likely to achieve its policy goals if it pursues change within the Republican Party.

While the work of Armey and Kibbe (2010) offers a more philosophical and anecdotal take on the motivations and emergence of the Tea Party, one of the first in-depth, and more empirically grounded, examinations of the Tea Party comes from pollster Scott Rasmussen and his co-author Doug Schoen in their 2010 book *Mad as Hell: How the Tea Party Movement is Fundamentally Remaking our Two-Party System*. Rasmussen and Schoen (2010) contend that the Tea Party is a product of voter dissatisfaction with the two-party system and they reject claims that it is simply an "adjunct of the Republican Party" (p.6) describing it as "avowedly nonpartisan" (p.8). The authors contend that the Tea Party is built on the ideals of limited government, opposition to health care reform, decreasing the deficit, and a "return to constitutional

principles" arguing that the Tea Party is a response to "dissatisfaction in the electorate with the established political order" (p.7).

As mentioned previously, the work of Armey and Kibbe (2010) suggests that the Tea Party is centered on arguments about the size of the government. Rasmussen and Schoen (2010) frame the debate differently, arguing that the Tea Party is not about "Democrat versus Republican" but rather "insiders in Washington versus outsiders in Middle America" (p.33). In other words, the Tea Party is a product of resentment among ordinary Americans who perceive that elites in government believe that they know better than them. Simply put, they argue that the Tea Party is driven by "strong anti-Washington, anti-incumbent" views (p.297). Overall, Rasmussen and Schoen (2010) define the Tea Party as a response to the failures of the two major parties, speculating that that in the 2012 presidential race "the meeting of a charismatic leader with the Tea Party movement could prove to be a very powerful force in the Republican primaries or in an Independent candidacy movement" (p.279).

This theme that the Tea Party represents voter dissatisfaction with the major parties, specifically as it pertains to government spending and debt, was put forth most recently and publically in the Tea Party's response to the February 2013 State of the Union address. Senator Rand Paul was selected to give the Tea Party's response, using the opportunity to criticize both Republicans and Democrats for excessive government spending. In his remarks, Senator Paul stated

> It is often said that there is not enough bipartisanship up here. That is not true. In
> fact, there is plenty. Both parties have been guilty of spending too much, of

protecting their sacred cows, of backroom deals in which everyone up here wins,

but every taxpayer loses[17] (Rosenthal, 2013).

These statements exemplify the fact that the Tea Party may speak to a constituency

outside of the Republican and Democratic parties.

Criticisms of the Republican and Democratic parties have also emerged from Tea

Party elites that operate outside of political office. For instance, the Tea Party Express has

been described as a powerful political force credited with driving the early momentum of

the Tea Party.[18] This same group has also sponsored all of the Tea Party responses to the

Presidential State of the Union addresses. In 2013, when asked about Senator Rand

Paul's Tea Party response, as well as the state of the Tea Party overall, the chairwoman of

the Tea Party Express stated "The Republican Party doesn't represent everybody in the

Tea Party movement, and they certainly don't speak for us" (Conroy, 2013).

Some legal scholars have also offered explanations for the rise of the Tea Party,

framing it in constitutional and philosophical terms. For instance, Florida International

University College of Law Professor Elizabeth Foley, in her 2012 book *The Tea Party*

Three Principles explains that the Tea Party is not "motivated by politics, hatred of

President Obama, or racism" (p.xii), but rather is "primarily" motivated and unified by

three constitutional principles: "(1) limited government, (2) unapologetic U.S.

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[17] It is important to note, that Senator Paul did not run away from the Republican Party in his speech, noting "Our party is the party of growth, jobs and prosperity, and we will boldly lead on these issues." Still yet, his views echo a popular sentiment that the Republican and Democratic parties are both to blame for failing to address issues deemed important to the Tea Party (For a transcript of Senator Paul's entire response, see Rayfield, 2013).
[18] The Tea Party Express has been described as an influential political organization contributing to some of the early successes of the Tea Party, supporting candidates such as Christine O'Donnell who upset the Republican Party favorite in the Delaware primary for U.S. Senator as well as Sharron Angle in Nevada, among others (Lorber & Lipton, 2010). In 2011, the Tea Party Express joined with the cable news channel CNN, or the Cable News Network, to host a Tea Party themed debate during the Republican presidential primary season (Cable News Network, 2011).

sovereignty, and (3) constitutional originalism" and their desire to see them preserved (Foley, 2012, p. xiv).[19]

Framing support for the Tea Party around these unified beliefs concerning the U.S. Constitution, Foley (2012) contends that supporters of the Tea Party "ardently believe" that "if Congress doesn't have the power to pass a law – no matter how important or well intentioned the law may be – the law should be ruled unconstitutional" (p.24). Thus, she argues that the Tea Party's opposition to health care reform is based on constitutional questions related to how the law infringes on the principle of limited government and has little to do with other common explanations such as a pure partisanship, racism or hatred of the president, or allegiances to the Republican Party. In short, Tea Party opposition to health care reform is not politically motivated, but rather is a response to the perceived threat the law posses to their shared constitutional beliefs and principles (Foley, 2012, p.75).

According to Foley (2012), Tea Party supporters are also united in their support of an "unapologetic defense of U.S. sovereignty" which is based on opposition to globalization, as well many of the goals of the United Nations (e.g. treaties), and support for strict efforts to curb illegal immigration (e.g. support for Arizona's Immigration law, and opposition to birthright citizenship), among other issues (p.76-166). Finally, Tea Party supporters are also argued to be in agreement on how the constitution needs to be interpreted, chiefly "when faced with constitutional language subject to varying interpretations- such as "due process" or "equal protection" – the best interpretation is

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[19] Foley (2012) elaborates on these principles in the following manner: "(1) limited government-protecting and defending the idea that the federal government possesses only those powers enumerated in the Constitution; (2) unapologetic U.S. sovereignty- protecting and defending America's borders and independent position in the world; and (3) constitutional originalism- interpreting the Constitution in a manner consistent with the meaning ascribed by those who wrote and ratified the text" (p.19).

that which most closely matches the meaning ascribed by those Americans who originally ratified the relevant language" (Foley, 2012, p.169).

Overall, Foley (2012) describes the Tea Party as an "anti-party" or "a loose conglomeration of individuals coalescing around certain principles, challenging existing political parties to embrace them" (p.218). In this light, Tea Party support is described as a product of common agreement on three core principles (limited government, U.S. sovereignty, and constitutional originalism) derived from the U.S. Constitution and an elevation of these principles above partisanship and party labels (p.222-223). Taken as a whole, the work of Foley (2012) offers a characterization of a distinct worldview of Tea Party supporters which implies that the Tea Party represents something separate from the two parties.

In summary, a case can be made that, at least at the elite-level, supporters of the Tea Party have exhibited behaviors reminiscent of past third parties. Political leaders at the forefront of the Tea Party have voiced the necessity of a third party option and criticized both parties for their failure to adequately address issues deemed important to the Tea Party. Moreover, political candidates have seized the Tea Party mantle running as third party candidates representing its ideals. Structurally, the Tea Party has behaved like a third party by organizing its own national convention and offering its own rebuttal to the President's annual State of the Union address despite a long held monopoly on the trajectory of public policy offered by the Republican and Democratic parties stemming from the event.

Finally, the Tea Party has institutionalized itself within the federal government by forming a congressional caucus outside the purview of the major parties. Furthermore, a

case can be made that supporters of the Tea Party hold philosophical beliefs which separate them from the two parties. At the elite-level of the Tea Party, support for a third party seems present. However, what about the views of those at the grassroots level?

Do Tea Party Supporters Desire a Third Party Option?

Do Tea Party supporters desire a third party option? According to recent public opinion polls, the majority of Tea Party supporters do express interest in a third party option. For instance, an August 2010 *USA Today*/Gallup poll asked respondents "In your view, do the Republican and Democratic parties do an adequate job of representing the American people, or do they do such a poor job that a third major party is needed" (Jones, 2010). Among Tea Party supporters, 62 percent indicated that a third major party was needed. Furthermore, 58 percent of the American electorate in the same poll agreed that a third party was needed (Jones, 2010). According to Gallup, the 58 percent support for a third party, among the American public, was as high as support had been in the seven years since the organization began asking the question (Jones, 2010).[20]

More recently, an April 2011 *USA Today*/Gallup poll asked the same question about the necessity of a third party, finding that 60 percent of Tea Party supporters believed that a third party was needed (O'Brien, 2011). Interestingly, the same poll also showed high levels of support for a third party among Republican identifiers. Among Republicans identifiers, 52 percent expressed a need for a third party option. The 52 percent support represented an all time high for Gallup, and the first time that a majority of Republicans had expressed the need for a third party, dating back to 2003 when the

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[20] The 58 percent support for a third party tied the previous high of 58 percent that was found in 2007. More recently, a September 2012 Gallup poll showed that 46 percent of the public stated that a third major party was needed (Newport, 2012).

issue first began to be examined. The poll also found wide support among the American public with 52 percent agreeing that a third party was needed (O'Brien, 2011).

Given the behavior exhibited by Tea Party elites, who often suggest that the formation of a Tea Party inspired third party is a possibility, in conjunction with polling data among Tea Party supporters showing support for a third party, a case has been made that Tea Party supporters and supporters of third parties share similarities. With these surface similarities in mind, the discussion will now focus on the influence that third parties have had in recent American history.

Brief History of the Influence of Third Parties in America

Since the early days of the United States, the American public has occasionally expressed some support for an alternative to the two major parties. As Gilbert, Peterson, Johnson, and Djupe (1999) point out, third parties are not a rare occurrence in American political history, noting that "in a system dominated by two major political parties, scholars agree that minor candidates are a logical consequence of the system" (p.4). V.O. Key described minor parties, or third parties, as "safety valves" permitting an outlet for voter grievances against the major parties (1948, 235-246 as cited in Gilbert, Peterson, Johnson, & Djupe, 1999, p.12). Thus, it is not surprising that over the past 100 years American third party candidates have enjoyed a reasonable amount of success.

For instance, Theodore Roosevelt received 27.4 percent of the popular vote as a representative of the Progressive Party, or Bull Moose, during his run for the presidency in 1912 (Gilbert, Peterson, Johnson, & Djupe, 1999, p.54). Additionally, George Wallace's 1968 run for president, as an independent candidate, garnered 10 million popular votes or 13.5 percent of the voting electorate (Gilbert, Peterson, Johnson, &

Djupe, 1999, p.63). More recently, Ross Perot received 19 percent of the popular vote in 1992 running as a third party candidate for president (Gilbert, Peterson, Johnson, & Djupe, 1999, p.66-67). In 1996, Ross Perot represented the Reform Party garnering 8.4 percent of the popular vote (Rapoport & Stone, 2005, p. 4). Although this brief historical recount does not provide a complete historical breakdown of third parties in American history, it does show that third parties have often garnered substantial support among the electorate. This support is often driven by third party platforms and candidacies that stress new or neglected policy ideas, which often force the major parties to take note.

The Impact of Third Parties on the Major Parties

Third parties have often paved the way for the institution of new public policies. For instance, polices such as "Women's suffrage, the graduated income tax, and the direct election of senators" (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996, p. 8) began as early reforms pushed by third parties. Furthermore, concerns over economic issues and the role of government prompted Ross Perot, a billionaire Texan, to mount a third party candidacy for president in 1992 and 1996. Although Perot was not successful in winning the office, he did garner significant political support solidifying a third party movement focused on deficit reduction and balanced budgets. More importantly, the success of the Perot third party candidacies influenced the campaigns of Republican candidates for office, leading them to alter their rhetoric and platforms to appeal to this third party constituency (Rapoport & Stone, 2008, chap.11).

In the context of the Tea Party, the successful third party candidacies of Ross Perot are noteworthy because many parallels can be found between his espoused policy reforms and those of the modern day Tea Party (i.e. balanced budgets and deficit

reduction). Thus, the transformative nature of the Ross Perot candidacies on the Republican Party could foreshadow a similar transformation initiated by the Tea Party. However, such change does not occur over night. And, if such an important change is occurring, what are the signs?

The Dynamic of Third Parties

Building on the 1992 and 1996 presidential candidacies of Ross Perot, Rapoport and Stone (2008) provide a theory of the impact of third party movements known as the dynamic of third parties.[21] Rapoport and Stone (2008) explain the dynamic of third parties as a three step process. The first component is that the third party must first have a large and identifiable issue constituency. In other words, it must have specific issues that resonate with a large minority or majority of voters (Rapoport & Stone, 2008, p.11). Secondly, the two major parties, after an election that saw the emergence of the third party, must make an effort to appeal to this third party issue constituency. Lastly, third party voters must respond to the appeal by the major party(s) and vote for the party that is appealing for their support (Rapoport & Stone, 2008, p. 12-13).

Rapoport and Stone (2008) demonstrate that following Ross Perot's failed 1992 presidential run, Republican leaders made a concerted effort to appeal to his supporters. This appeal came in a variety of different forms, most notably the Contract with America. The Contract with America was a Republican platform of reforms similar to the key issues outlined in Ross Perot's book *United We Stand* (Rapoport & Stone, 2008, p. 151). Accenting the Republican Party's efforts to appeal to Perot supports was the scant focus on moral and social issues as compared to the Republican platform of the 1992

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[21] Although third party changes to the two-party system have been detailed by many scholars over the years, Rapoport and Stone (2008) are the first scholars to formally give this process a title, which they call "the dynamic of third parties" (p.6).

presidential election (Rapoport & Stone, 2008, p.151-152). Instead, the contract focused

extensively on reform issues believed to be important to Perot supporters, such as term

limits and a balanced budget amendment (Rapoport & Stone, 2008, p. 153). Overall,

Rapoport and Stone (2008) contend that the 1994 Republican take-over of the House was

largely a product of the Republican Party's push to gain and achieve the support of Perot

supporters (p.185). The work of Rapoport and Stone (2008) provides a unique lens from

which to understand the policy implications of the emergence of the Tea Party and its

possible influence on the major parties.

In summary, the previous paragraphs have argued that third parties are not unique

to American politics. Moreover, the public is often attracted to the prospect of a third

party option and third party movements can play an important role in shaping the policies

pursued by the major parties. As was briefly argued earlier, linking the Tea Party to past

third party movements allows us to better understand the motivations behind Tea Party

supporters. This point is explored in greater detail in the following sections.

Examining the Tea Party in the Context of a Third Party

History has taught us that the emergence of third parties can have important

ramifications for the future of the two major parties. As Rapoport and Stone (2008) note

"enduring shifts in the coalitional makeup of the two parties are among the most

important events in U.S. politics and that the appearance of a popular third party often

signals notable change in the two-party system" (p.5). Thus, the extent to which the Tea

Party resembles past third party movements has important ramifications for the future

shape of the two major parties and the extent to which policy change among the parties is

on the horizon.

Comparing Tea Party supporters to third party supporters will also provide answers to popular assertions about the Tea Party. For instance, rather than a third party effort, Abramowitz (2012) contends that the Tea Party is a representation of the polarized component of the Republican Party (p. 196). Backed up with survey data from the first wave of the American National Election Survey's American National Election Study Evaluation of Government and Society Survey (EGSS), it is his contention that the Tea Party embodies the most conservative elements of the Republican Party base (p.205). This narrative frames the Tea Party as an insurgent movement within the Republican Party.

However, the work of Abramowitz (2012) does not examine the relationship between Tea Party supporters and third party supporters. As such, if a comparison between Tea Party supporters and third party supporters shows that the two cohorts are fundamentally different, a stronger case can be made that the Tea Party is a representation of the most Republican of Republicans.

If Tea Party supporters and third party supporters are shown to share many commonalities, then it would suggest that the Tea Party represents a constituency outside of the purview of the two parties. It would also support a narrative of the Tea Party as a unique political phenomenon that has grown out of voter dissatisfaction with the two major parties. Thus, understanding the extent to which supporters of the Tea Party are comparable to third party supporters will provide a clearer picture of whether supporters are driven by dissatisfaction with the major parties, by more politically independent-minded voters, or by Republican partisans exhibiting the latest trend in partisan polarization.

To determine the extent to which Tea Party supporters are similar to third party supporters, it is imperative that we consult the third party literature. The literature on third parties provides many explanations for why voters sometimes abandon the major parties and exercise alternate political options. We now turn to a discussion of the predictors of third party support.

Predictors of Third Party Support

A relative consensus exists in the literature regarding the determinants of third party support. It is widely held that dissatisfaction with both of the major parties remains the primary motivation for third party support (see Gilbert, Peterson, Johnson, & Djupe, 1999; Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996). For instance, following the work of Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1984), Chressanthis and Shaffer (1993) examined the influence of voter perceptions of party performance on vote for third party candidates. These scholars found that Democratic and Republican Party neglect of issues deemed important to voters greatly contributed to support for third parties (p.273).

Furthermore, political independence and faith in government are also factors that have been shown to influence third party support. For instance, Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1996) provide significant evidence that distrust in the government plays a role in support for third parties; although they maintain that a loss of faith in the major parties is still central to third party support (p.181). In a study of third party support of the presidential candidacies of George Wallace in 1968, John Anderson in 1980, and Ross Perot in 1992, Peterson and Wrighton (1998) found that independent voters, and those voters who show limited loyalties to the parties, were also significantly more likely to support third party candidates. In addition, voters highly interested in the election results

were also most likely to support a third party candidate in all three elections (Peterson &

Wrighton, 1998).

Gold (1995), also drawing on the third party presidential candidacies of Ross

Perot, John Anderson, and George Wallace, provides a detailed account of the conditions

that best explain third party success. He points to "low levels of partisanship,

dissatisfaction with the major party candidates, issue alienation, economic discontent, and

distrust towards government" as the significant predictors of third party success (p. 751).

Another powerful predictor of third party support is associations with religious

institutions. No more is this point driven home than in the work of Gilbert, Peterson,

Johnson, and Djupe (1999). These scholars provide extensive evidence that a major factor

explaining third party failures over the 20th century has been their detachment and,

perhaps more importantly, the two major parties' attachment to religious institutions

(Gilbert, Peterson, Johnson, & Djupe, 1999). Religious institutions, through their

organizations and networks, can provide valuable resources to political parties providing

a gateway to well-organized interests and access to a large number of voters (Gilbert,

Peterson, Johnson, & Djupe, 1999). Thus, it is not surprising that the two major political

parties and religious institutions are often intertwined, creating a significant disadvantage

to minor party candidates (p.119).

Gilbert et al. (1999), through an extensive analysis of seven presidential elections

starting in 1912 through 1996, as well as other state election results, provide significant

evidence that third party support can be traced to issues of religiosity. Specifically,

Gilbert et al. (1999) found that third party candidates receive less electoral support in

counties with high numbers of religious individuals (in terms of adherence, strength of

belief, etc.) (p.139). The authors also find that, at the state-level, individuals who are most likely to support third party candidates are independents and individuals with low trust in the Democratic and Republican parties (Gilbert, Peterson, Johnson, & Djupe, 1999). Overall, the work of Gilbert et al. (1999) suggests that religious adherence among voters is an important factor to consider when attempting to explain third party support.

A General Theory of Third Party Voting

Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1996) provide a theory of third party voting that outlines the distinct conditions in which such voting is likely to occur. These conditions include the breakdown of confidence in the major parties, the presence of an appealing third party candidate, or established loyalty towards a particular third party (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996). Of particular importance to this analysis, and a chief indicator of third party support outlined by Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1996), is confidence in the major parties.

Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1996) explain that third party support is a response to a perceived weakness in the two major parties. They contend that third party support is not as much support for the third party, as it is a lack of support for both of the major parties. More specifically, it is a response generated from a lack of faith in the major parties to represent the voter's interests. A major component of a voter's loss of confidence is a sense that the parties do not represent, or have failed to pay proper attention, to the issues salient to voters (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996).

Based on the work of Downs (1957), Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1996) suggest that as the gulf between voter preferences and party preferences increases, so does the propensity for third party support. Moreover, this incongruence between the

major parties' policy preferences and the voter's preferences often leads to the emergence of third party candidates who will capitalize on these issues. Overall, the authors theorize that "the greater the distance between the positions of the voters and major party candidates, and the greater salience of the issue, the higher the probability of third party voting" (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996, p.129).

Aside from issue incongruence between the major parties and voters, Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1996) also argue that support for third parties often results when issues important to voters are ignored by the major parties. When the major parties do not address an issue that is deemed important to the American public, then support for third parties as a remedy for this neglect is expected (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996, p.132-133). Moreover, as the salience of this ignored issue increases so does the propensity for third party support (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996).

Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1996) also provide evidence (although somewhat mixed) suggesting that economic performance is a determinant of third party support with a decline in the economy prompting more voters to reduce their support for the major parties. Furthermore, they also suggest that a perception among voters that the two parties are unable to address the ailing economy also prompts voters to turn to third parties. This suggests that support for third parties may increase during times of economic distress (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996, p.134). Since the Tea Party emerged as a political force during the economic recession of 2008 and 2009, this evidence suggests that the Tea Party may resemble a typical third party movement.

Taken as a whole, the work of Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1996) provides an interesting framework to help understand third party support, which can be applied to

understanding support for other political entities such as the Tea Party. Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1996) explain that third parties are "a weapon citizens can use to force the major parties to be more accountable" (p.222). It may well be that the Tea Party is serving as similar role.

Comparing Tea Party and Third Party Support

Are Tea Party supporters similar to third party supporters? To answer this question, data are examined from two *USA Today*/Gallup polls conducted in August of 2010 and April of 2011 during a period when the Tea Party was prominent (USA Today/Gallup Poll, 2010, 2011).[22] Both of these polls included questions related to support for the Tea Party, which asked "Do you consider yourself to be, A supporter of the Tea Party movement, An opponent of the Tea Party movement, or neither?" Moreover, both surveys included questions about third party support that asked "In your view, do the Republican and Democratic parties do an adequate job of representing the American people, or do they do such a poor job that a third major party is needed?" Because both of these surveys asked about support for a third party and support for the Tea Party, it is possible to make comparisons between the two groups.

Among the American public, 30 percent identified themselves as Tea Party supporters in both the 2010 and 2011 surveys. Support for a third party was also high in both surveys with 58 percent of the American public stating the need for a third party in 2010 and 52 percent echoing the same sentiments in 2011. According to the Gallup organization, the 58 percent support for a third party in 2010 tied the highest value recorded for this question since the organization began asking the question starting in

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[22] The August 2010 data (USAIPOUSA2010-12) and the April 2011 data (USAIPOUSA2011-07) were obtained from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research data archive.

2003 (Jones, 2010). Among Tea Party supporters, support for a third party was also high with 62 percent supporting a third party in 2010 and 60 percent supporting a third party in 2011.

Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics

In the 2010 and 2011 surveys, a large majority of Tea Party supporters responded that a third party was needed. These findings could be interpreted as verification that third party supporters and Tea Party supporters are one in the same. However, a closer examination of the two groups highlights key differences. For instance, Gallup survey data from August of 2010 and April 2011 indicates that Tea Party supporters and third party supporters differ slightly in terms of socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Although the differences are not huge, Table 2.1 and Table 2.2 indicate that Tea Party supporters were more likely to be married, white, male, over the age of 50, earning more than $75,000 a year, and weekly church goers.

Compared to third party supporters, Tea Party supporters were less likely to be female, identify with a race other than white, currently married, earning over $75,000 a year, and attending church weekly. The largest and most consistent demographic differences between the two groups are related to church attendance and marital status as Tea Party supporters reported being currently married and attending church weekly at higher rates than their third party counterparts.

Political Attitudes

While Tea Party and third party supporters differ slightly in terms of their socio-economic and demographic characteristics, larger differences were found when political attitudes were considered. For instance, Table 2.1 and Table 2.2 show that Tea Party supporters are more partisan and ideologically conservative than third party supporters. Compared to third party supporters, Tea Party supporters were more likely to identify as a Republican and ideologically conservative and less likely to identify as an ideological moderate or as a political independent. In 2010, 51 percent of Tea Party supporters identified themselves as Republican and 74 percent identified as conservatives. Among third party identifiers, only 23 percent identified themselves as Republicans and only 40 percent said they were conservative. The same patterns were also found in the 2011 data.

Tea Party supporters were also more likely to believe that the Republican Party represented their values and their attitudes about the role of government and less likely to believe that the Democratic Party represented their values and their attitudes about the role of government. Highlighting the connection between the Tea Party and the Republican Party were the high levels of support for possible Republican Party presidential candidates. Tea Party supporters were more likely, than third party supporters, to state that they would definitely vote for Sarah Palin, Mike Huckabee, Donald Trump, and Mitt Romney for president as well as to believe that Ron Paul and Michelle Bachmann would make great or good presidents (Table 2.2).

Differences between the two groups were also apparent when it came to views of the economy and opinions related to President Obama with Tea Party supporters taking a more pessimistic view of the economy and a more negative view of President Obama and

his policies. For instance, Tea Party supporters were more likely than their third party counterparts to disapprove of the way President Obama is handling his job and less likely to view the economy as improving. Tea Party supporters also placed more of the blame on the current state of the economy on President Obama, while third party supporters were more likely to blame former President Bush for the current state of the economy.

Furthermore, compared to third party supporters, Tea Party supporters were more likely to vote for a candidate for Congress who opposes President Obama and to disapprove of legislation that was passed by the Democratic Party controlled Congress, and supported by President Obama, such as the stimulus package, health care reform, increased government regulation of the banks and major financial institutions, government aid to the banks and major financial institutions, and government aid to the U.S. auto industry (see Table 2.1). Tea Party supporters were also more likely to believe that President Obama was definitely or probably born in another country with almost half (47 percent) expressing that view. In contrast, only 28 percent of third party supporters responded that President Obama was definitely or probably born in another country (see Table 2.2).

In terms of federal spending, Tea Party supporters placed more importance on the issue as it pertained to their vote for Congress in 2010. For instance, 95 percent of Tea Party supporters said that federal spending would be extremely or very important to their vote for Congress in 2010, while only 81 percent of third party supporters responded in a similar manner (see Table 2.1). Tea Party supporters were also more likely to support reducing the federal budget deficit through spending cuts alone, while third party

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supporters were more likely to state that the federal budget deficit should be reduced

equally with tax increases and spending cuts (see Table 2.2).

Taken as a whole, the data from August 2010 and April 2011 provide evidence

that Tea Party supporters and third party supporters differ substantially. Third party

supporters were more likely to identify as politically moderate and as independents.

Moreover, third party supporters were more likely to take a balanced approach to

reducing the federal budget deficit and less likely to view President Obama and his

policies in a negative light. In contrast, Tea Party supporters were more likely to identify

as Republican conservatives, to believe that the Republican Party represents their values,

to view the economy and President Obama unfavorably, and to believe that the President

was not born in the United States. Although the evidence suggests that supporters of the

Tea Party differ greatly from third party supporters on a whole host of factors, further

analysis is needed to determine the extent to which these differences contribute to support

for the Tea Party or for the foundation of a third party.

[Insert Table 2.1]
[Insert Table 2.2]

Method

To examine the extent to which Tea Party supporters and third party supporters

are related, six regression models were estimated to predict both Tea Party and third party

support. Models 1 through 4 are based on data from a *USA Today*/Gallup Poll conducted

in August of 2010, while Model 5 and 6 incorporate data collected from the same

organizations in April of 2011.[23] Tables 2.8 and 2.9 at the end of the chapter provide

details related to the coding of each variable.

Both surveys included questions concerning support for the Tea Party as well as

questions about support for a third party.[24] The third party and Tea Party support

questions served as the dependent variables for the models. Measures of third party

support and Tea Party support were not included as independent variables in Table 2.3

given that the variables were not substantively or statistically correlated (r = .05).[25]

These findings provide early evidence that Tea Party and third party supporters represent

different constituencies.

The six models were estimated using logistical regression permitting a greater

understanding of the extent to which predictors of third party support could also predict

Tea Party support and vice versa. If Tea Party supporters and third party supporters share

many common predictors then a case can be made that the groups represent similar

popular sentiments. If the groups are shown to be significantly different, then a case can

be made that third party supporters are fundamentally different from Tea Party supporters

and that the two groups likely seek fundamentally different policy goals.

Third party supporters are typically understood to be political independents that

are dissatisfied with the two major parties. Thus, if supporters of the Tea Party are at the

right edge of the GOP, as some have suggested, then predictors of support for the two

groups should be very different.

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[23] The August 2010 data (USAIPOUSA2010-12) and the April 2011 data (USAIPOUSA2011-07) were obtained, and can be downloaded, from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research data archive.

[24] Both of these polls included questions related to support for the Tea Party, which asked "Do you consider yourself to be, A supporter of the Tea Party movement, An opponent of the Tea Party movement, or neither?" Moreover, both surveys included questions about third party support that asked "In your view, do the Republican and Democratic parties do an adequate job of representing the American people, or do they do such a poor job that a third major party is needed?" Also, both surveys were conducted via landline and cellular telephone.

[25] Also, neither third party support nor Tea Party support were found to be significant when used as independent variables in all of the models examined in this analysis.

Third Party Predictors

Previous literature suggests that third party support is a product of voter

dissatisfaction with the two major parties (Gilbert, Peterson, Johnson, & Djupe, 1999;

Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996). Thus, Models 1-4 utilize a dummy variable

indicating whether the respondent disapproves of the manner in which both congressional

Republicans and congressional Democrats are handing their jobs. A similar dummy

variable, based on unfavorable ratings of both the Democratic and Republican parties in

general, were used for Models 5 and 6. Dissatisfaction with the two parties is expected to

predict support for a third party. Due to the manner in which the variable was coded,

dissatisfaction with the two parties should be negatively correlated with third party

support.

As was mentioned previously, the emergence of a third party can often be

explained by the failure of the two major parties to address an issue deemed important by

the American public (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996). A case can be made that the

issue of federal spending has been neglected by the major parties, specifically given its

resonance among the Tea Party. The issue of federal spending has been a major issue

championed by the Tea Party since its inception and has often been a source of criticism

of both the Republican and Democratic parties (Rosenthal, 2013). Thus, the issue of

federal spending is expected to predict both third party and Tea Party support.

To account for voter preferences related to federal spending, Models 1-4 use a

measure of federal spending based on responses to a question asking respondents to rank

the importance of federal spending on their vote for Congress in 2010.[26] The variable

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[26] The question asks "How important will each of the following issues be to your vote for Congress this year."
Respondents could respond extremely important, very important, moderately important, or not that important. Along

ranged from 1 to 5 with higher values indicating greater importance placed on the issue. For Models 5 and 6, concern for federal spending is measured by asking respondents their preference for reducing the federal budget deficit.[27] Respondents were asked for their preference for reducing the federal budget deficit and were given five options which ranged from reducing the budget only with spending cuts, to equally with spending cuts and tax increases, and only with tax increases. The variable was coded from 0 to 1 with higher values indicating more support for spending cuts.

Another predictor of third party support is identification as a political independent. Independent voters, and those with limited loyalties to the major parties, have been shown to be likely supporters of a third party candidate (Peterson & Wrighton, 1998, p.21). Thus, Models 1-6 all incorporate a dummy variable measuring whether a respondent identified as a political independent or not. Identification as a political independent is expected to predict support for a third party.[28]

Economic discontent has also been shown to predict third party support (Gold, 1995, p.751) with economic declines resulting in increased support for third party candidates for the presidency (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996, p. 134). Thus, a measure of voter economic perceptions is incorporated into Models 1-6. Models 1-4 utilize a measure of economic discontent based on opinions of the current state of the economy. In August of 2010, respondents were asked about their opinions of the current state of the economy and given five response options ranging from the economy is

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with federal spending respondents were also asked about eight other issues. The questions are taken from the August 2010 survey.

[27] "As you may know, Congress can reduce the federal budget deficit by cutting spending, raising taxes, or a combination of the two. Ideally, how would you prefer to see Congress attempt to reduce the federal budget deficit -- Only with spending cuts, Mostly with spending cuts, (or) Equally with spending cuts and tax increases, Mostly with tax increases, (or) Only with tax increases." This question is taken from the April 2011 survey.

[28] Political independents were coded to also include respondents who responded "other party." See Table 2.8 and Table 2.9 for more details on the coding of variables.

getting a lot better to the economy is getting a lot worse.[29] For Models 5 and 6 a slightly

different measure of economic discontent was incorporated. This measure is based on

opinions of the current state of the economy giving respondents the option to evaluate the

economy as growing, slowing down, in a recession, or in an economic depression.[30] Both

economic discontent measures used in the models were recoded into a range of 0-1 where

higher values indicate more optimism about the growth of the economy. Thus, the

measure should be negatively correlated with third party support.

Tea Party Predictors

Previous research on the Tea Party suggests that, compared to non-supporters

among the general public, supporters are more likely to be older, male, educated, married,

white, and wealthier (Abramowitz, 2012). Moreover, previous research also suggests that

Tea Party members are more ideologically conservative than the general public, more

likely to identify as a Republican, and more likely to identify as religious (Abramowitz,

2012). Thus, age, race, sex, education, marital status, income, Republican Party

identification, and church attendance were included as predictors in all of the models and

are expected to predict Tea Party support in a manner consistent with previous findings

(Abramowitz, 2012). This set of predictors also would set Tea Party supporters apart

from typical third party supporters.

Tea Party supporters have also been shown to hold more negative views of the

president than the general public and to hold more ideologically conservative views on

public policy (Abramowitz, 2012). Measures of presidential job approval were included

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[29] "Regardless of whether you think the economy is currently in a recession, do you think the U.S. economy is—Getting a lot better, Getting a little better, (or) Staying the same, Getting a little worse, (or) Getting a lot worse." This question is taken from the August 2010 survey.
[30] "Right now, do you think the U.S. economy is growing, slowing down, in a recession, or in an economic depression." This variable was coded into a range of 0 to 1. Zero included the responses of "Thinks the U.S. Economy is slowing down, in a recession, or an economic depression." This question is taken from the April 2011 survey.

in all models with the expectation that negative views of the president's job performance would predict Tea Party support. The data collected in August of 2010 (included in Models 1, 2, 3, and 4) asked questions about whether respondents approved or disapproved of five pieces of legislation that had been passed by President Obama and the Democratic Party controlled Congress in the previous two years. The legislation that was inquired about included the economic stimulus, health care reform, increased government regulation of the banks and financial institutions, government aid to the banks and major financial institutions, and government aid to the U.S. automakers.[31] A scale was created that combined the responses to all five of these pieces of legislation. Since all of these pieces of legislation were supported by President Obama the scale is treated as a measure of support for the president's agenda. The agenda scale ranged from 0 to 1 with higher values indicating higher support for the pieces of legislation. The agenda scale is expected to be negatively related to Tea Party support.

Finally, as was reported in Table 2.2, supporters of the Tea Party are more likely than the general public to believe that the president was born in another country (see also Abramowitz, 2012, p. 203). The availability of such a question in the April 2011 survey allows for the inclusion of this measure in Models 5 and 6.[32] The variable was coded from 0 to 1 with higher values representing more support for the view that President Obama was not born in the U.S.

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[31] "Now, thinking back on some of the major pieces of legislation Congress has passed in the last two years, would you say you approve or disapprove of The economic stimulus package, The healthcare overhaul, Increased government regulation of banks and major financial institutions, Government aid to banks and major financial institutions that were in danger of failing, and Government aid to U.S. automakers that were in danger of going bankrupt." This question is taken from the August 2010 survey.

[32] "Do you think Barack Obama was definitely born in the United States, probably born in the United States, probably born in another country, definitely born in another country, or don't you know enough to say?" This question is taken from the April 2011 survey.

Results

Model 1

Table 2.3 reports the results from four logistical regression models, where support for the Tea Party and support for a third party are predicted by taking into account the impact of several socio-economic and demographical characteristics along with relevant measures of political attitudes thought to predict both Tea Party and third party support. The results in Table 2.3 generally indicate that the predictors of Tea Party support are different from predictors of third party support.

In terms of Model 1, the results show that education, marital status, ideology, Republican identification, view of the economy, importance of the issues of federal spending to congressional vote, and opinions related to President Obama's agenda were all significant predictors of Tea Party support. The strongest predictors of Tea Party support were ideology, Republican identification, and opinions of Present Obama's legislative agenda.

The change in probabilities column represents the percent change in support for the Tea Party or third party when going from the minimum to the maximum value of the measure. For instance, the strongest predictor of support for the Tea Party in Model 1 was ideology, where going from very liberal ideology to very conservative ideology results in a 38 percentage point increase in the probability of support for the Tea Party. Moreover, Tea Party support was also significantly related to views on the five pieces of legislation passed by Congress in the past two years (stimulus, health care reform, regulation of banks, bank bailout, and auto bailout). Negative views of the five pieces of legislation were significantly related to support for the Tea Party. Also, Republican identification

was significantly related to Tea Party support with a change in partisan identification from a Democrat to a Republican resulting in a 23 percentage point increase in Tea Party support.

Overall, Model 1 predicts that Tea Party support is significantly related to being currently married, lower levels of education, higher levels of conservative ideology, Republican Party identification, a pessimistic view of the current state of the economy, placing a higher importance on the issue of federal spending, and opposition to President Obama's legislative agenda.

Model 2

Model 2 predicts third party support utilizing the same variables used to predict Tea Party support in Model 1. The results of Model 2 show that gender, age, race, church attendance, ideology, identification as an independent, identification as a Republican, disapproval of both parties, view of the economy, and the measure of President Obama's agenda were all statistically significant predictors of third party support. The strongest predictors of third party support, in order of their strength, were opposition to President Obama's legislative agenda, negative view of the economy, disapproval of both parties, and liberal ideology.

In substantive terms, going from approval of at least one congressional party to disapproval of both congressional parties results in a 26 percentage point increase in the probability of support for a third party. Overall, third party support is significantly related to being white, male, under the age of 50, attending church less frequently, liberal ideology, identification as a political independent, not identifying as Republican, disapproving of the job that both congressional Democrats and Republicans are doing,

viewing the economy negatively, and disapproving of President Obama's legislative
agenda.

The results of Model 1 and Model 2 highlight important differences between Tea
Party and third party supporters. Among the strongest predictors of Tea Party support are
conservative ideology and Republican Party identification. In contrast, some of the
strongest predictors of third party support are identification as a political independent and
disapproval of both parties. Thus, this evidence suggests that these two groups represent
constituencies with two dramatically different political points of view.

Model 3

Models 3 and 4 estimate support incorporating the same measures used in the
previous models, but replace the measure of support for President Obama's agenda with a
measure of presidential approval.[33] The results of Model 3, presented in Table 2.3, show
that education, marital status, ideology, Republican Party identification, view of the
economy, and importance of federal spending are all significant predictors of Tea Party
support. The strongest predictors of Tea Party support were conservative ideology,
Republican identification, negative views of the economy, and the importance of federal
spending.

Speaking to the partisan nature of Tea Party support, moving from a non-
Republican Party identifier to a Republican Party identifier increases the probability of
supporting the Tea Party by 25 percentage points. Overall, Model 3 predicts that Tea
Party membership is significantly related to lower levels of education, being married,
conservative ideology, identifying as a Republican, viewing the current state of the

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[33] Presidential approval was used in place of the agenda variable as it provides a more direct measure of attitudes
toward President Obama. In theory, the measure of support for President Obama's agenda could reflect policy
preferences unrelated to the President.

economy in a negative light, and placing greater importance on the issue of federal spending.

Model 4

Model 4 estimates support for a third party taking in account the same variables incorporated in Model 3. The results of Model 4 show that third party support is statistically related to sex, age, church attendance, identification as a political independent, disapproval of both parties, view of the economy, and presidential job approval. The strongest predictors of third party support include views of the economy, disapproval of both parties, identification as a political independent, and presidential job approval. Substantively speaking, going from a Democrat to a political independent is estimated to increase the probability of support for a third party by 18 percentage points. Overall, the results of Model 4 show that third party support is best predicted by identification as a male, being under the age of 50, not attending church weekly, identification as a political independent, having a negative view of both parties, viewing the economy negatively, and disapproval of the manner in which the president is handling his job.

Similar to the findings of Models 1 and 2, Models 3 and 4 provide evidence that Tea Party and third party supporters differ significantly in terms of their political attitudes. Specifically, the two groups diverge on core measures of partisanship such as ideology and party identification. Tea Party support is shown to be largely a product of conservative ideology and Republican Party identification, while third party support is driven by disapproval of both parties and political independence.

[Insert Table 2.3]

Model 5 and Model 6

Model 5 and Model 6 predict Tea Party and third party support by taking into account many of the same measures included in Models 1, 2, 3, and 4. These include measures of sex, age, race, income, education, marital status, church attendance, ideology, Republican identification, identification as a political independent, and presidential job approval. However, Models 5 and 6 include slightly different measures of disapproval of the Democratic and Republican parties, views on the economy, and position on federal spending.[34] In addition, Models 5 and 6 include a measure of beliefs about the president's birthplace.

The results of Model 5, presented in Table 2.4, use a logistical regression model to estimate Tea Party support based on the above mentioned measures utilizing data collected in April of 2011. The data from 2011, presented in Table 2.4, provides further evidence that Tea Party supporters differs from third party supporters. In terms of Model 5, Tea Party support is shown to be statistically related to sex, income, ideology, identification as a political independent, identification as a Republican, unfavorable views of the parties, presidential job approval, views of the economy, and beliefs about President Obama's birthplace.

The strongest predictors of Tea Party support are conservative ideology, Republican Party identification, and views concerning the president's birthplace. Changing a respondent's view on whether the president was born in the United States from probably or definitely born in the U.S. to probably or definitely not born in the U.S. raises the probability of support for the Tea Party by 17 percentage points. This effect is present despite controlling for GOP identity and conservative ideology, suggesting that

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[34] See variables descriptions in Table 2.9 for more details.

Tea Party support is partially driven by personal animosity towards President Obama.

Overall, Model 5 estimates that Tea Party support is predicted by identification as a male,

earning over $75,000 a year, conservative ideology, identifying as a Republican, viewing

both parties as unfavorable (although the variable has a positive sign), identifying as a

political independent, and having a negative view of the economy as well as the job

President Obama's is doing in office.

Model 6 estimates third party support, incorporating the same variables included

in Model 5, finding that race, income, church attendance, identification as a political

independent, unfavorable views of both parties, and presidential job approval are all

significant predictors of third party support. The strongest predictor of third party support

is identification as a political independent. Overall, Model 6 estimates that third party

support is predicted by identification as white, earning $75,000 or more a year, not

attending church weekly, identifying as a political independent, viewing both parties

unfavorably, and disapproving of President Obama's handling of his job..

<div align="center">[Insert Table 2.4]</div>

Discussion

The results presented in Table 2.3 and 2.4 provide strong evidence that Tea Party

supporters and third party supporters are different. These findings support the hypotheses

proposed in Chapter 1:

Hypothesis 1:   *Tea Party support is predicted by Republican Party identification and conservative ideology.*

Hypothesis 2:   *Tea Party support is not predicted by dissatisfaction with both parties.*

The findings from this chapter support the contentions made in each hypotheses as Tea Party support is predicted by Republican Party identification and conservative ideology. In addition, Tea Party support is not predicted by dissatisfaction with both parties. The findings related to Tea Party support are consistent with previous research findings related to the strong relationship between conservative ideology and Tea Party support (Abramowitz, 2012, p. 207). Results from all six models provide strong and consistent evidence that Tea Party support is best explained by Republican Party identification and conservative ideology.

The results from the models estimating third party support are also consistent with the third party literature, which links third party support with dissatisfaction with the major parties (Gilbert, Peterson, Johnson, & Djupe, 1999; Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996) and political independence (Peterson & Wrighton, 1998). In other words, Tea Party supporters are best explained as ideologically conservative Republicans where third party supporters are best explained as political independents who are dissatisfied with both parties and the current state of the economy. Aside from unhappiness with the economy, and views of President Obama's agenda, there is little overlap in predictors of Tea Party and third party support.[35]

Table 2.5 presents a breakdown of the ideological makeup among Tea Party supporters, third party supporters, Republican Party identifiers, and the American electorate. The data presented in the table shows that supporters of the Tea Party identify

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[35] In Table 2.4, Tea Party and third party support were both significantly related to unfavorable views of both parties and identification as a political independent. However, the measure of unfavorable views toward both parties had a positive coefficient in the model predicting Tea Party support and a negative coefficient in the model predicting third party support. In other words, having a favorable view of at least one of the two parties increased the probability of Tea Party support and decreased the probability of third party support. Moreover, the effect of political independence on Tea Party support was much weaker than the effect of independence on third party support. In Model 5, conservative ideology and Republican Party identification had substantially larger effects on Tea Party support than political independence (independence had the weakest effect on support among all of the significant variables in the model).

as ideologically conservative at a much higher rate than third party supporters, the

American electorate, and even Republican identifiers. Moreover, data from Table 2.6 also

indicates that Tea Party supporters expressed much higher levels of motivation to vote in

2010 when compared to those same groups. Taken as a whole, these ideological and

motivational differences speak to the notion that Tea Party represents the most

conservative elements of the Republican Party (Abramowitz, 2012).

[Insert Table 2.5]
[Insert Table 2.6]

The results of this analysis also show that Tea Party and third party supporters

share some commonalities. For instance, the evidence presented in Table 2.3 indicates

that Tea Party support and third party support are both predicted by negative views of the

economy. Moreover, Tables 2.3 and 2.4 indicate that support for both groups is

significantly related to disapproval of President Obama's legislative agenda and the job

that he has done as president.[36] However, the two groups diverge regarding who they

blame for the state of the economy. Tea Party supporters are more likely to blame

President Obama a great deal for the current state of the economy, while third party

supporters are more likely to blame former President Bush a great deal for the current

state of the economy (see Table 2.1 and Table 2.2).[37]

While these findings suggest that support for the two groups can be partly

explained by negative views of the economy and negative views of the president, the data

also suggests that the two groups support very different solutions to remedy their

negative opinions. For instance, a large majority of Tea Party supporters opposed the

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[36] One exception is presidential approval which did not significantly predict Tea Party support in Model 3.
[37] Blaming Obama a great deal for the current state of the economy is a significant predictor of Tea Party support when used in place of President's Obama's agenda in Model 1.

stimulus, health care reform, government regulation and aid to the banks and financial institutions, and aid to the U.S. auto industry. While third party supporters disapprove of these policies as well, they do so in much smaller percentages, comparatively speaking (see Table 2.1). Moreover, a majority of Tea Party supporters favored keeping all of the Bush tax cuts, while only a minority of third party supporters supported this proposition (Table 2.1).

Still yet, going into the 2012 presidential elections Tea Party supporters polled very similar to Republican identifiers when asked about possible Republican presidential candidates. Table 2.7 shows that Tea Party supporters were more likely, albeit only slightly, to state that they would definitely vote for Sarah Palin and Mitt Romney for president in 2012. In contrast, third party supporters polled considerably lower in terms of their support for each of these candidates. This data suggests, that compared to third party supporters, Tea Party supporters were more supportive of a conservative administration in the White House following the 2012 elections.

[Insert Table 2.7]

Overall, these findings suggest that the Tea Party supporters do not fit the traditional model of third party supporters. Third party support appears to be a product of genuine support for an alternative to the major parties, while Tea Party supporters are Republican identifiers who hold ideological views more conservative than the Republican Party and the American electorate at large.

Conclusions and Ramifications

The goal of this chapter has been to determine the degree to which Tea Party and third party supporters are comparable. An analysis of survey data from 2010 and 2011,

during a time period when the Tea Party was prominent, which also explicitly asked questions about Tea Party and third party support, reveals that the groups diverge greatly when it comes to issues of partisanship and ideology. Several multivariate analyses reveal that the largest and most consistent factors contributing to Tea Party support are conservative ideology and Republican Party identification. In contrast, views of the economy, identification as a political independent, disapproval of both parties, and assessments of President Obama's handling of his job, along with opinions concerning his legislative agenda, were the largest contributors to third party support. Overall, these findings provide important evidence that Tea Party supporters and third party supporters, at their cores, remain distinctly different.

The onset of this chapter also raised the question of whether traditional predictors of third party support could also predict Tea Party support. The results of this analysis provide a mixed bag, but most evidence answers in the negative. For instance, the evidence suggests that common predictors of third party support such as dissatisfaction with major parties and identification as a political independent have little to no effect on Tea Party support. Furthermore, traditional predictors of third party support such as economic discontent showed mixed results predicting support for the Tea Party in 2010, but not in 2011. Moreover, this chapter provided conflicting evidence that the Tea Party is drawing support from an issue that has been perceived to be neglected by the major parties, namely the issue of federal spending. The issue of federal spending had a significant effect on Tea Party support in 2010, but not in 2011(although that could be due to the change in question wording). Although the issue of federal spending was not one of the top three issues predicting Tea Party support in any of the models, its presence

as a significant predictor in 2010 suggests that the issue does resonate with a segment of supporters.

The findings of this chapter suggest that Tea Party supporters and third party supporters differ significantly and substantially in the factors that predict their support. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the groups do share some common predictors. For instance, the data shows that Tea Party support and third party support are both motivated by assessments of the economy (2010 data found in Table 2.3) as well as measures of President Obama's job approval (2011 data found in Table 2.4). This suggests that both groups serve as outlets for voters who are upset with the current state of the economy and the job the president is doing. In other words, voters may be using the Tea Party and the possibility of a third party as conduits from which to express their dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Still yet, these findings do not suggest that support for a third party is akin to support for the Tea Party. The fact remains that third party and Tea Party supporters have very different political attitudes and beliefs. Although the data shows that both groups share similar concerns related to the economy and the president's job performance, they diverge greatly in terms of ideology and partisanship. Tea Party supporter's voice support for a more conservative track in public policy achieved presumably within the Republican Party. For instance, Table 2.5 shows that Tea Party supporters identify as very conservative at higher rates than Republican identifiers and the American public at large. In contrast, third party supporters are very similar to the overall American electorate in terms of their ideology. Furthermore, support for a third party is predicted by dissatisfaction with the major parties and political independence suggesting that third

party supporters desire a more ideologically balanced road to change that is fundamentally different than supporters of the Tea Party.

Overall, this analysis has shown that supporters of both groups are upset with the status quo, but remain deeply divided on the path to remedy their discontent. Third Party supporter express opinions consistent with a middle of the road ideology which lies between the two major parties. In contrast, supporters of the Tea Party appear to have turned to the Republican Party in great force to remedy their concerns. These findings provide further evidence that the Tea Party is more aptly characterized as a rebellion within the Republican Party than as a legitimate third party alternative to the two major parties.

Table 2.1: Tea Party Supporters vs. Third Party Supporters (August 2010)

Social Characteristics and Attitudes	Tea Party Supporters	Third Party Supporters
Race: White	93 %	86 %
Gender: Male	56 %	54 %
Age: 50 and Over	52 %	45 %
Married	64 %	48 %
Education: College graduate	30 %	33 %
Income: $75,000K and above	38 %	35 %
Church attendance: Attend weekly	35 %	24 %
Political Attitudes		
Political party: Republican	51%	23%
Political party: Independent*	41%	52%
Political party: Democrat	7%	24%
Ideology: Conservative	74%	40%
Ideology: Moderate**	21%	37%
Currently view the U.S. economy as getting a lot or little better	20%	30%
Economy: Extremely/very important to vote for Congress	97%	92%
Federal Spending: Extremely/very important to vote for Congress	95%	81%
Jobs: Extremely/very important to vote for Congress	95%	91%
Disapprove stimulus	82%	59%
Disapprove healthcare reform	88%	62%
Disapprove of increased government regulation of banks and major financial institutions	60%	38%
Disapprove of government aid to banks and major financial institutions that were in danger of failing	79%	66%
Disapprove government aid to auto industry that were in danger of going bankrupt	75%	60%
Disapprove of job the president is doing	87%	61%
Support keeping all of Bush tax cuts	62%	37%
Extremely or very motivated to vote	86%	67%
Better if most members of congress replaced with new members	94%	79%
Blame Obama a great deal for current U.S. economic problems	50%	24%
Blame George W. Bush a great deal for current U.S. economic problems	14%	39%
More likely to vote for a candidate for Congress who opposes Obama	67%	36%
Better for country to have a divided government	42%	32%
Republican Party: Represents values very well	22%	9%
Republican Party: Represents attitude about the role of government very well	23%	10%
Democratic Party: Represents values very well	4%	11%
Democratic Party: Represents attitude about the role of government very well	3%	8%
Support a third party	62%	
Support the Tea Party		32%

Source: USA Today/Gallup Poll: August Wave 1, August 27-30, 2010, National adult
The cell number indicates the percentage of the Tea Party or third party supporters who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column. *Other party responses included as independents. **Don't know responses coded as moderates

Table 2.2: Tea Party Supporters vs. Third Party Supporters (April 2011)

Social Characteristics and Attitudes	Tea Party Supporters	Third Party Supporters
Race: White	89%	84%
Gender: Male	61%	53%
Age: 50 and over	46%	41%
Married	66%	55%
Education: College graduate	28%	32%
Income: $75,000K and above	41%	37%
Church attendance: Attend weekly	35%	25%
Political Attitudes		
Political Party: Republican	56%	31%
Political Party: Independent*	35%	47%
Political Party: Democrat	9%	20%
Ideology: Conservative	73%	40%
Ideology: Moderate**	19%	38%
Currently view the U.S. economy as growing	13%	21%
Disapprove of job the president is doing	81%	60%
View the Democratic Party favorably	15%	33%
View the Republican Party favorably	74%	45%
View President Obama unfavorably	82%	57%
Blame Obama a great deal for current U.S. economic problems	41%	22%
Blame George W. Bush a great deal for current U.S. economic problems	18%	36%
Preference for reducing federal budget deficit: Only spending cuts	36%	27%
Preference for reducing federal budget deficit: Only/mostly with spending cuts	73%	54%
Preference for reducing federal budget deficit: Equally with spending cuts and tax increases***	23%	36%
President Obama definitely or probably not born in USA	47%	28%
Definitely vote for Barack Obama for president in 2012	7%	19%
Definitely vote for Mitt Romney for president in 2012	14%	7%
Definitely vote for Sarah Palin for president in 2012	19%	8%
Definitely vote for Mike Huckabee for president in 2012	15%	6%
Definitely vote for Donald Trump for president in 2012	13%	8%
Believes Ron Paul would make a great or good president	36%	26%
Believes Michelle Bachmann would make a great or good president	28%	15%
Favorable Opinion of the Tea Party	83%	39%
Support a Third Party	60%	
Support the Tea Party	-	34%

Source: USA Today/Gallup Poll: April Wave, April 20-23, 2011, National adult
Note: The cell number indicates the percentage of the Tea Party or third party supporters who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column.
*Other party responses included as independents. **Don't know responses coded as moderates. ***Don't know and other responses were coded into this category (Excluding them from the category only changes Tea Party support by around 1 percentage point and third party support by around 3 percentage points).

Table 2.3: Predictors of Tea Party and Third Party Support (August 2010)

Independent Variables	Model 1: DV=Tea Party	Change in[1] Probability	Model:2 DV=Third Party	Change in Probability	Model 3: DV=Tea Party	Change in Probability	Model 4: DV=Third Party	Change in Probability
Gender: Male	0.01 (.24)	.00	0.45* (.19)	.11	0.02 (.24)	.00	0.37* (.19)	.09
Age: Over 50	-0.18 (.23)	-.03	-0.49** (.18)	-.12	-0.11 (.22)	-.02	-0.48** (.18)	-.11
Race: White	0.71 (.41)	.09	0.54* (.25)	.13	0.62 (.41)	.09	0.36 (.27)	.09
Income: Over 75,000	0.19 (.26)	.03	0.34 (.21)	.08	0.09 (.25)	.01	0.26 (.21)	.06
Education: College Graduate	-0.47* (.22)	-.07	0.02 (.18)	.00	-0.44* (.21)	-.07	0.02 (.18)	.003
Married	0.71** (.25)	.11	-0.10 (.20)	-.02	0.70** (.25)	.11	-0.02 (.20)	-.00
Church Attendance: Attend Weekly	-0.06 (.27)	-.00	-0.52* (.22)	-.13	-0.10 (.28)	-.02	-0.55* (.22)	-.13
Ideology	2.70*** (.63)	.38	-0.90* (.45)	-.21	2.95*** (.64)	.43	-0.75 (.46)	-.18
Independent	0.31 (.23)	.05	0.76*** (.19)	.18	0.25 (.22)	.04	0.75*** (.19)	.18
Republican	1.46*** (.28)	.23	-0.49* (.24)	-.12	1.54*** (.30)	.25	-0.55 (.28)	-.13
Disapprove of Both Parties	0.12 (.22)	.02	-1.15*** (.20)	-.26	0.16 (.22)	.03	-1.09*** (.20)	-.25
View of Economy	-0.93* (.43)	-.14	-1.24*** (.37)	-.29	-1.38*** (.40)	-.22	-1.47*** (.36)	-.34
Importance of Federal Spending	-0.39* (.16)	-.18	0.08 (.11)	.07	-0.45** (.17)	-.21	0.07 (.11)	.07
Obama Agenda	-1.82*** (.44)	-.28	-1.37*** (.35)	-.32	-	-	-	-
Obama Job Approval	-	-	-	-	-0.40 (.31)	-.07	-0.75* (.30)	-.18
Constant	-2.68*** (.70)	-	2.36*** (.52)	-	-3.07*** (.69)	-	2.26*** (.55)	-
Number of Cases	881	-	881	-	873	-	873	-
Pseudo R^2	.37	-	.18	-	.35	-	.18	-

Source: USA Today/Gallup Poll: August Wave 1, August 27-30, 2010, Sample: National adult
Dependent variables (DV) are Tea Party support and third party support.
1: The change in probabilities column represents the percent change in support for the Tea Party or third party when going from the minimum to the maximum value of the independent variable and holding all other predictors constant at their means.
 Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 2.4: Predictors of Tea Party and Third Party Support (April 2011)

Independent Variables	Model 5: DV=Tea Party	Change in Probability[1]	Model 6: DV=Third Party	Change in Probability
Gender: Male	0.81*** (.24)	.13	0.30 (.18)	.08
Age: Over 50	0.09 (.22)	.01	-0.15 (.18)	-.04
Race: White	-0.01 (.40)	-.00	0.60* (.26)	.15
Income: Over 75,000	0.53* (.25)	.09	0.42* (.20)	.10
Education: College Graduate	-0.23 (.25)	-.04	0.13 (.20)	.03
Married	-0.26 (.17)	-.19	.03 (.15)	.06
Church Attendance: Attend Weekly	0.39 (.26)	.07	-0.46* (.22)	-.12
Ideology	2.61*** (.59)	.40	-0.46 (.43)	-.11
Independent	0.48* (.24)	.08	0.95*** (.20)	.23
Republican	1.30*** (.31)	.22	-0.06 (.27)	-.02
Unfavorable view of Both Parties	0.62* (.28)	.09	-0.52* (.23)	-.13
View of Economy	-0.60* (.31)	-.09	-0.36 (.21)	-.09
Position on Reducing Budget Deficit	0.24 (.63)	.04	0.11 (.45)	.03
Obama Job Approval	-0.78* (.39)	-.13	-0.86** (.30)	-.21
Believe that President Obama Born in U.S.	0.95** (.30)	.17	0.07 (.25)	.02
Constant	-4.40*** (.99)	-	0.38 (.63)	-
Number of Cases	856	-	856	-
Pseudo R^2	.35	-	.12	-

Source: USA Today/Gallup Poll: April Wave, April 20-23, 2011, Sample: National adult
Dependent variables (DV) are Tea Party support and third party support.
1: The change in probabilities column represents the percent change in support for the Tea Party or third party when going from the minimum to the maximum value of the independent variable and holding all other predictors constant at their means.
Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 2.5: Ideology among Tea Party, Third Party, Republicans and Electorate

How would you describe your political views?	Tea Party Supporter	Republican Identifiers	Third Party Supporter	American Electorate
Very conservative	23%	18%	9%	10%
Conservative	52%	51%	32%	32%
Moderate*	21%	25%	37%	35%
Liberal	3%	5%	16%	15%
Very liberal	1%	>1%	6%	5%
Refused	>1%	>1%	2%	2%

Source: USA Today/Gallup Poll: August Wave 1, August 27-30, 2010, Sample: National adult
Note: The cell number indicates the percentage within each group (column) who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column. Cell percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.
*Includes don't know responses

Table 2.6: Motivation to Vote among Tea Party, Third Party, Republicans and Electorate

How motivated do you feel to get out and vote this year?	Tea Party Supporter	Republican Identifiers	Third Party Supporter	American Electorate
Extremely motivated	75%	62%	50%	50%
Very motivated	11%	17%	17%	19%
Somewhat motivated	9%	12%	16%	18%
Not too motivated	3%	3%	7%	5%
Not at all motivated	1%	6%	10%	8%
Don't know or refused	>1%	>1%	1%	1%

Source: USA Today/Gallup Poll: August Wave 1, August 27-30, 2010, Sample: National adult
Note: The cell number indicates the percentage within each group who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column. Cell percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Table 2.7: Support for Political Figures among Tea Party, Third Party, Republicans and Electorate

"For each one, please tell me whether you will definitely vote for that person, whether you might consider voting for that person, or whether you will definitely not vote for that person."	Tea Party Supporter	Republican Identifiers	Third Party Supporter	American Electorate
Sarah Palin				
Will definitely vote for Sarah Palin	19%	16%	8%	8%
Might consider voting for Sarah Palin	46%	45%	30%	28%
Will definitely not vote for Sarah Palin	35%	37%	61%	62%
Don't know or refused Sarah Palin	>1%	2%	2%	2%
Donald Trump				
Will definitely vote for Donald Trump	13%	10%	8%	6%
Might consider voting for Donald Trump	44%	41%	32%	27%
Will definitely not vote for Donald Trump	41%	47%	57%	63%
Don't know or refused Donald Trump	3%	3%	3%	3%
Mitt Romney				
Will definitely vote for Mitt Romney	14%	13%	7%	7%
Might consider voting for Mitt Romney	55%	55%	45%	41%
Will definitely not vote for Mitt Romney	25%	25%	42%	45%
Don't know or refused Mitt Romney	7%	7%	6%	8%
Barack Obama				
Will definitely vote for Barack Obama	8%	4%	19%	30%
Might consider voting for Barack Obama	11%	15%	24%	24%
Will definitely not vote for Barack Obama	81%	82%	56%	46%
Don't know or refused Barack Obama	>1%	>1%	1%	1%

Source: USA Today/Gallup Poll: April Wave, April 20-23, 2011, National adult
Note: The cell number indicates the percentage within each group who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column. Cell percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Table 2.8: Variable Coding August 2010 Data

Dependent Variable: Tea Party Support	Support for Tea Party 0= Not a Tea Party supporter (Indicated that they were not a Tea Party supporter; Includes neither, don't know, and refused responses) 1= Tea Party supporter (Indicated that they were a Tea Party Supporter) Gallup variable: teaparty
Third Party Support	Support for a third party 0= Not a third party supporter (Indicated that the Republican and Democratic parties do an adequate job of representing the American people; Includes neither, don't know, and refused responses) 1= Third party supporter (Indicated that a Third Party is Needed) Gallup variable: Q12
Gender	Sex of respondent 0= Female 1= Male Gallup variable: D1
Age	Age of respondent 0= Age 18 to 49 1=Age 50 to 65+ *Don't know responses and refused responses coded as missing Gallup variable: ager
Race	Race of respondent 0= Did not identify as white (Includes don't know and refused responses) 1= Identified as white Gallup variable: D5A
Income	Income of respondent 0= Income less than $75,000 1= Income of $75,000 or more *Don't know and refused responses coded as missing

	Gallup variable: INC3
Education: College Graduate	Education of respondent 0= Did not graduate from a college/university (Includes don't know and refused responses) 1= College/university graduate Gallup variable: collgrad
Marital Status	Marital Status of respondent 0= Respondent is not currently married (Includes living with a partner, widowed, divorced, separated, never married, don't know, and refused) 1= Respondent is currently married Gallup variable: D15
Church Attendance	Church attendance of respondent 0= Does not attend weekly (Includes those who seldom attend church and those who never attend church) .5= Nearly weekly/Monthly (Includes those who attend church almost every week or once a month) 1= Weekly (Attends church once a week) *Don't know and refused responses coded as missing Gallup variable: churchat
Ideology	Political ideology of respondent 0=Very liberal .25=Liberal .5=Moderate (Includes don't know responses) .75=Conservative 1=Very Conservative *Refused responses coded as missing Gallup variable: D10
Independent	Whether respondent considers themselves to be an independent or not 0= Not an independent (Includes those who indicated Republican, Democrat, don't know, and refused) 1=Independent (Includes those who indicated independent and other party) Gallup variable: D9

Republican	Whether respondent considers themselves to be a Republican or not

0= Not a Republican (Includes those who indicated independent, lean Democrat, Democrat, refused, and don't know)
1= Republican (Includes lean Republican identifiers)

Gallup variable: party |
| Disapprove of Both Congressional Parties | Whether the respondent disapproves of the job both congressional Republicans and congressional Democrats are handing their job

0= Disapprove of the way both congressional Republicans and congressional Democrats are handing their job
1= Approve of either congressional Republicans or congressional Democrats handing of their job (Includes don't know or refused responses)

Gallup variables: Q2A, Q2B |
| View of Economy | Respondents opinion of current state of the U.S. economy

1= Economy getting a lot better
.75= Economy getting a little better
.5= Economy staying the same (Includes don't know responses)
.25= Economy getting a little worse
0= Economy getting a lot worse

*Refused responses coded as missing

Gallup variable: Q18 |
| Federal Spending | Respondents view on the importance of federal spending on their vote for Congress this year (2010); Lower values indicate greater levels of importance on the issue of federal spending

Importance of Federal Spending on Congress Vote

1=Extremely important
2=Very important
3=Moderately important
4=Not that important
5=Don't know

*Refused responses coded as missing

Gallup variable: Q10I |
| Obama Agenda | Respondents approval or disapproval of five major pieces of legislation passed by Congress

Scale of approval or disapproval of Obama's agenda. Higher values on the |

	scale indicate greater support for the five pieces of legislation included in the scale. The scale is based on five questions related to legislation passed in Congress. The legislation included in the scale were respondent opinions on the economic stimulus package, healthcare overhaul, increased government regulation of the banks and major financial institutions, government aid to banks and major financial institutions that were in danger of failing, and government aid to U.S. automakers that were in favor of going bankrupt. The questions related to each piece of legislation were recoded to a 0-1 range and then averaged together. The measure was reliable (α=.78). Don't know responses were coded into a middle category between approve and disapprove. Refused responses were coded as missing. Gallup variables: Q21A, Q21B, Q21C, Q21D, Q21E
Presidential Approval	Respondents approval or disapproval of the job the president is doing 0= Disapproval of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president .5= Don't know responses 1= Approval of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president *Refused responses were recoded as missing Gallup variable: Q1

Table 2.9: Variable Coding April 2011 Data

Tea Party Support	Support for Tea Party 0= Not a Tea Party supporter (Indicated that they were not a Tea Party supporter; Includes neither, don't know, and refused responses) 1= Tea Party supporter (Indicated that they were a Tea Party Supporter) Gallup variable: Q29
Third Party Support	Support for a third party 0= Not a third party supporter (Indicated that the Republican and Democratic parties do an adequate job of representing the American people; Includes neither, don't know, and refused responses) 1= Third party supporter (Indicated that a Third Party is Needed) Gallup variable: Q12
Gender	Sex of respondent 0= Female 1= Male Gallup variable: D1
Age	Age of respondent 0= Age 18 to 49 1=Age 50 to 65+ *Don't know responses and refused responses coded as missing Gallup variable: ager
Race	Race of respondent 0= Did not identify as white (Includes don't know and refused responses) 1= Identified as white Gallup variable: D5A
Income	Income of respondent 0= Income less than $75,000 1= Income of $75,000 or more *Don't know and refused responses coded as missing

	Gallup variable: INC3
Education: College Graduate	Education of respondent 0= Did not graduate from a college/university (Includes don't know and refused responses) 1= College/university graduate Gallup variable: collgrad
Marital Status	Marital Status of respondent 0= Respondent is not currently married (Includes living with a partner, widowed, divorced, separated, never married, don't know, and refused) 1= Respondent is currently married Gallup variable: D15
Church Attendance	Church attendance of respondent 0= Does not attend weekly (Includes those who seldom attend church and those who never attend church) .5= Nearly weekly/Monthly (Includes those who attend church almost every week or once a month) 1= Weekly (Attends church once a week) *Don't know and refused responses coded as missing Gallup variable: churchat
Ideology	Political ideology of respondent 0=Very liberal .25=Liberal .5=Moderate (Includes don't know responses) .75=Conservative 1=Very Conservative *Refused responses coded as missing Gallup variable: D10
Independent	Whether respondent considers themselves to be an independent or not 0= Not an independent (Includes those who indicated Republican, Democrat, don't know, and refused) 1=Independent (Includes those who indicated independent and other party) Gallup variable: D9

Republican	Whether respondent considers themselves to be a Republican or not 0= Not a Republican (Includes those who indicated independent, lean Democrat, Democrat, refused, and don't know) 1= Republican (Includes lean Republican identifiers) Gallup variable: party
Unfavorable View of Both Parties	Whether the respondent has unfavorable view of the Democratic and Republican parties or not 0= Unfavorable view of both the Democratic and Republican parties 1= Favorable opinion of either the Republican or Democratic parties (Includes don't know or refused responses) Gallup variables: Q4D, Q4E
View of Economy	Respondents opinion of current state of the U.S. economy 0= Thinks the U.S. Economy is slowing down, in a recession, or an economic depression .5= Don't know responses 1= Thinks the Economy is growing *Refused responses were coded as missing Gallup variable: Q13
Budget Deficit	Respondents preference for reducing federal budget deficit 0=Only with tax increase .25=Mostly with tax increases .5= Equally with spending cuts and tax increases (Includes the responses of don't know and other) .75=Mostly with spending cuts 1= Only with spending cuts *Refused response were coded as missing Gallup variable: Q20
Presidential Approval	Respondents approval or disapproval of the job the president is doing 0= Disapproval of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president .5= Don't know responses 1= Approval of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president *Refused responses were recoded as missing Gallup variable: Q1

President Birthplace	Respondents view of whether President Obama was born in the U.S.
	0= President Obama Probably/ Definitely born in U.S. .5= Don't know enough to say 1= President Obama Probably/ Definitely NOT born in U.S *Refused values coded as missing Gallup variable: Q28A

Chapter 3: Exploring the attitudinal predictors of Tea Party support

Support for the Tea Party has often been framed by political pundits and Tea Party leaders as a group focused primarily on limited government and libertarian principles. For instance, Michael Barone, writing in the 2012 edition of the *Almanac of American Politics*, noted that the Tea Party resulted in the "inrush into political activity of a multitude of previously uninvolved citizens" motivated "to enter into political activity because of their strong beliefs, not on the peripheral issues, but on the most serious public policy questions of the day…the size and scope of government" (Barone & McCutcheon, 2011, p.4). Moreover, leaders of the Tea Party such as Dick Armey and Mike Kibbe, in their 2010 book *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto*, noted that the "principles of individual freedom, fiscal responsibility, and constitutionally limited government are what define the Tea Party ethos" (p.123).

These common characterizations of the Tea Party are not limited to these individuals and symbolize the conventional wisdom held by many about the Tea Party. While the conventional wisdom suggests that support for the Tea Party is primarily motivated by support for limited government, and adherence to libertarian philosophies concerning the role of government, to what extent do these common characterizations hold merit? To put it more specifically, what are the attitudinal predictors of Tea Party support?

This question is raised in an environment where an extensive amount of polling data has been collected concerning supporters of the Tea Party.[38] This data has produced a relatively consistent image of the basic demographic, socio-economic, and political

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[38] For instance, for 2010 alone, it has been estimated that polls asked around 300 questions about the Tea Party (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p. 143).

characteristics of Tea Party supporters.[39] Although this information is instructive, it offers little in the way of explaining the motivations behind support for the Tea Party. In addition, the scholarly research that has examined the attitudinal predictors of Tea Party support has not adequately controlled for the many divergent components that motivate support.

Examining data collected from the first and fourth wave of the American National Election Studies 2010-2012 Evaluations of Government and Society Study (EGSS), this chapter explains support for the Tea Party at two different points in its brief history.[40] The benefits of this approach are two-fold. First, it will shed light on the attitudinal and motivational predictors of Tea Party support. In addition, this data allows us to observe whether some predictors of Tea Party support have changed over time. The data from the first wave of the survey were collected in October of 2010 at a point when the Tea Party was prominent (see Chapter 4), while the data from the fourth wave were collected in February of 2012 at a time when support for the Tea Party had faded. In other words, these two data points permit an examination of attitudinal predictors of Tea Party support at arguably the peak of its popularity as well as at a time when its support among the American public had faded considerably.

After controlling for party identification and ideology, evidence is found that Tea Party support is predicted by measures of traditional moral values, racial resentment, views of President Obama, views of immigrants, and libertarianism. Moreover, Tea Party support can also be explained by strong feelings of anger and fear related to perceptions

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[39] For instance, the data suggests that the typical Tea Party supporter is Caucasian, age 50 or above, a Republican identifier, educated (attended at least some college), religiously observant, and financially stable (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p. 23).

[40] I submitted questions concerning the Tea Party to the ANES and succeeded in having a form of one of my questions placed on the survey (see DeBell, Wilson, Segura, Jackman, & Hutchings, 2011, p. 6).

of the state of the country. These findings suggest that popular characterizations of Tea Party supporters as concerned primarily with small government and libertarian free-market philosophies (e.g. Armey and Kibbe, 2010), fail to tell the whole story of Tea Party support.

Furthermore, public opinion data reveals that Tea Party supporters represent the most conservative and active elements of the Republican Party. Tea Party supporters are found to embody full-throttled support for all of the GOP's major policy platform and grievances. Support or opposition to the Tea Party serves as an important distinction representing the dividing line between the more moderate and ideologically extreme elements of the Republican Party.

This chapter will proceed as follows. To provide greater context for our understanding of the attitudinal predictors of Tea Party support, this analysis begins with a brief examination of some common explanations of partisanship. This discussion is followed by a survey of recent literature on the Tea Party with a focus on the attitudinal predictors of support. Next, Tea Party supporters are examined in greater detail concentrating on their socio-economic and demographic characteristics as well as their political attitudes and beliefs. This chapter closes with an analysis of the attitudinal predictors of Tea Party support and a discussion of the implications of these findings on our understanding of Tea Party support.

Shaping Partisan Attitudes

As the previous chapter demonstrated, a major predictor of Tea Party support is Republican Party identification. Some consider the Tea Party to be the staunchest, most conservative segment of the Republican Party. As such, it makes sense to lay the

foundation for an examination of the attitudinal predictors of Tea Party support by first

reviewing some of the factors that commonly account for political partisanship. While

there is certainly no shortage of explanations concerning this subject, this analysis will

begin with a discussion of partisan change in the South. The literature explaining

southern realignment serves as a particularly useful starting point because it speaks to

some of the common theoretical components of partisanship and will lead to a broader

discussion of the possible determinants of Tea Party support.

Previous research suggests that issues of race, economics, and moral values can

be used to explain the dramatic and steady increase, over the past several decades, in

Republican Party identification among southern whites (Kimball, Owings, & Artime,

2010; Knuckey, 2006). For instance, Valentino and Sears (2005), examined National

Election Studies data between 1972 to 2000 (1972, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, and

2000), providing evidence that attitudes related to race increasingly shaped partisan

identification among southern whites over these time periods (p. 675). Specifically,

Valentino and Sears (2005) used the concept of racial resentment[41], or symbolic racism,

to show that race is a key component to understanding Republican Party identification

among white southerners (p. 681). Moreover, using American National Election Studies

data from 1992, 1994, and 2000, Knuckey (2006) also found that racial resentment is a

significant predictor of party identification among white southerners (p.63).

Given the linkages between racial resentment and Republican Party identification,

it seems logical that the concept could also serve as a potential predictor of Tea Party

support. Racial resentment measures a form of racism which is more covert. Specifically,

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[41] Valentino and Sears (2005) define racial resentment (similar to modern racism or symbolic racism) as "blending racial animus with perceptions that blacks violate traditional American values, such as individualism (Sears and Henry, 2003)" (p.674).

it measures a form of racism that is based on beliefs that "blacks violate such traditional American values as individualism and self-reliance" (Kinder & Sears, 1981, p.416). Given that Tea Party supporters often use the rhetoric of limited government and individualism as well as opposition to government spending to rally support to their cause, it could be that racial undertones, measured through the concept of racial resentment, serve as an important attitudinal predictor of Tea Party support.[42]

Aside from race, economic issues have also been used to explain changes in partisan identity. For instance, Nadeau, Niemi, Stanley, and Godbout (2004) examined fifty years of American National Election Studies data, from 1950 to 2000, to show that Republican Party identification, especially among white southerners, has been increasingly related (positively) to income. Brewer and Stonecash (2001) found similar results suggesting that income, especially high income, has been increasingly correlated with Republican Party support among white southerners from the 1970s through the 1990s.

Abramowitz (1994) suggests that changes in partisan identification among whites, from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party, in the 1980s can be partially explained by views on the role of government and the size of the welfare state. Finally, Brewer (2005) examined National Elections Studies data from 1956 through 2000 demonstrating that party identification is significantly related to economic attitudes. Brewer (2005) measured economic attitudes through views related to the government's role in providing health insurance and guaranteeing jobs and a standard of living. Overall,

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[42] Also, the Tea Party has been accused by some, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, of containing racially insensitive elements within its ranks (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, n.d.).

he found that these economic views are significant predictors of party identification for a majority of the years examined.

This research suggests that economic views related to income (and tangentially one's social class) as well as libertarian views of the role of government have been important predictors of party identification, particularly Republican Party identification. Given that the Tea Party has stressed a libertarian approach to government, and draws its support from income earners who tend to be middle to high income, it could be that economic factors also motivate Tea Party support.

Race and economics are not the only factors shown to influence partisan identity, as religious and cultural factors have also played an increasingly important role. For instance, issues of abortion and views related to moral traditionalism have been shown to impact partisan identification in the South (Knuckey, 2006). For instance, Knuckey (2006) examined the influence of race, economics, cultural and moral issues, and ideology on partisan identification among southern and non-southern whites during the late 1980s and early 1990s using American National Election Studies data (p.61).

Knuckey (2006) found that opposition to abortion and support for traditional moral values predicted Republican Party identification among southern whites from 1992 through 2000 (p.63). Among non-southern whites, Knuckey (2006) found that moral traditionalism also predicted partisan identification (p. 64). Although Knuckey (2006) concluded that ideology remained the strongest predictor of party identification among southern whites for these time periods, his research suggests that the role of moral values cannot be discounted when attempting to explain partisan identities (p.62).

Even though the Tea Party, to a large extent, has argued that moral issues are not central to their cause, recent scholarship suggests a substantial portion of Tea Party supporters hold conservative views on social and cultural issues (Ekins, 2011). These findings, in light of previous research related to the role of moral values in explaining recent changes in partisanship, suggest that moral issues must be accounted for when explaining Tea Party support.

In summary, issues of race, economics, and moral values have been commonly associated with partisanship. While not the only determinants, these factors provide some of the major explanations of partisanship and will help frame our understanding of support for the Tea Party. With these connections in mind, the focus will now shift to recent scholarship on the Tea Party paying close attention to specific predictors of Tea Party support.

Examining the Tea Party: The Big Picture

Although there is no shortage of explanations related to support for the Tea Party, this analysis starts with the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of Tea Party support offered by the Harvard scholars Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson. Skocpol and Williamson (2012) offer the most wide-ranging examination of support for the Tea Party, using survey data and field work consisting of interviews and observations. While a common narrative of the history of the Tea Party is that it was born out of anger towards the greed on Wall Street, Skocpol and Williamson (2012) contend that the opposite is true as Tea Party supporters blame government for the economic downturn in late 2008.

Moreover, their explanation of the Tea Party's emergence is couched mainly in terms of fear. This fear emerged from the election of a president that supporters of the

Tea Party could not identify with. Contributing to this fear was the large share of support President Obama received from young and minority voters in 2008. To the Tea Party's activist base, the president's priorities were dramatically different from their own and focused on redistributing wealth and benefits from hard working and deserving Americans, through programs such as Social Security and Medicare, and giving it to "undeserving" young people and minorities in the form of welfare, Pell grants, and health care (p.59). These views were only confirmed and compounded with the passage of healthcare reform. Thus, all of these circumstances produced a fearful worldview among Tea Party supporters that the America they used to know was quickly changing (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012).

Skocpol and Williamson (2012) describe Tea Party supporters, and more specifically activists, as primarily white Americans over the age of 45 who hold views that have always been conservative. Specifically, supporters are typically "Republican, white, male, married, and older than 45" (CBS/New York Times poll, April 5-12, 2010 as cited in Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p. 23). Compared to the general public, Tea Party supporters are more likely to have higher incomes, more education, and to identify as evangelical Protestants (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p. 23). Tea Party supporters are described as very conservative in their ideology and loyal voting Republicans who harbor great distain for President Obama (p.26.-28). For these scholars, Tea Party supporters are "best understood as first and foremost *conservatives*, rather than merely as exemplars of demographic or economic categories" (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p.32).

At its core, supporters of the Tea Party are well-informed citizens well versed in the procedures related to the legislative process.[43] Moreover, Tea Party supporters are also characterized as regular voters. Although civically engaged, the authors argue that many supporters of the Tea Party hold factually incorrect views, relying to a large degree on Fox News for their sources of news, and are dramatically opposed to differing viewpoints. Moreover, Tea Party supporters have reservations about foreigners and are deeply suspicious of immigrants, perceiving many of them as illegal (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p.11).

Overall, the work of Skocpol and Williamson (2012) offers a persuasive profile and explanation of support for the Tea Party drawn primarily through participant observation, interviews, and the citation of poll numbers. As such, many of the findings of Skocpol and Williamson (2012) lend themselves to a more in-depth quantitative approach. Thus, using recently available American National Elections Studies (ANES) survey data, and regression analysis, this chapter will examine some common conclusions concerning Tea Party support.[44] Still yet, the work of Skocpol and Williamson (2012) is not the only scholarly examination of the Tea Party, as the discussion will turn to other research with a focus on the attitudinal predictors of support.

Predictors of Tea Party Support

The altitudinal predictors of support are vital to understanding the Tea Party given that many of the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of its supporters also mirror Republican Party supporters and conservatives more generally (Skocpol &

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[43] The authors note that at many Tea Party meetings legislation was often referred to by its corresponding numbers (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p.53).
[44] As King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) note good scientific research "can be quantitative or qualitative in style" (p.7).

Williamson, 2012, p.26). Recent scholarship has demonstrated that Tea Party supporters overlap largely with the Republican Party and its base in terms of their demographics. But, what does the literature tell us about the attitudinal predictors of Tea Party support?

Previous research on the Tea Party finds that several factors lend themselves to predicting support. For example, Abramowitz (2012), used data from the October 2010 wave of the American National Election Studies 2010-2012 Evaluations of Government and Society Study (EGSS), and found that age, sex, education, income, party identification, ideology, dislike of President Obama, and measures of racial resentment all significantly[45] predicted support for the Tea Party (p.207). Among these predictors, ideology was shown to be the strongest with greater levels of ideological conservatism predicting higher support for the Tea Party.[46] Furthermore, racial resentment and dislike for Obama were also shown to be strong predictors of Tea Party support. More specifically, higher levels of racial resentment as well as negative views of President Obama both contributed to higher levels of support for the Tea Party (Abramowitz, 2012, p. 206-208).

Other research has found that Tea Party support is predicted by economic concerns, anti-government views, concerns related to illegal immigration, male gender, income, marital status, conservative ideology, and Republican Party identification (Ulbig & Macha, 2011, p. 26). Contrary to previous research, Ulbig and Macha (2011) found little evidence that traditional moral values or issues of race predicted Tea Party support

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[45] If not otherwise mentioned, predictors mentioned in the "predictors of tea party support" section are statistically significant at .10 level or lower.
[46] The ideology scale used by Abramowitz (2012) consisted of a nine items measuring respondent opinions on eight pieces of legislation (Don't ask don't tell, the stimulus, health care reform, State Children's Health Insurance Program, the American Clean Energy and Security Act, the Restoring American Financial Stability Act, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, increasing taxes on incomes of $250,000 or more, as well as ideological identification (p.207).

(p.26). Interestingly, the authors found that support for traditional values was negatively related to support for the Tea Party (p.9).

Recent examinations of the Tea Party by sociologists have focused on a more basic understanding of Tea Party support centered on the cultural dimensions of support. Perrin, Tepper, Caren, and Morris (2011) analyzed original survey data and classified Tea Party supporters in terms of four cultural dispositions. Specifically, the authors found that support for the Tea Party is associated with cultural worldviews centered on authoritarianism (children should be obedient rather than creative), fear of change (concerns over rapid changes in society), libertarianism (beliefs concerning government regulation of society), and nativism (unfavorable views of immigrants) (p.3-4). The authors also examined the cultural components of Republican Party support, concluding that Tea Party supporters differ from Republican Party supporters in terms of their libertarian and authoritarian worldviews. Overall, these findings speak to the unique nature of Tea Party support and the role that cultural worldviews may play in explaining support.

In line with explanations of Tea Party support centered on fears of change and nativism, support has also been explained as a response to demographic and sociological changes that have occurred in the United States over the past several years. Baretto, Cooper, Gonzalez, Parker, and Towler (2011), used content analysis of group websites, interviews with supporters, and an analysis of survey data, to make an argument that the Tea Party can be best understood as a right-wing extremist movement whose support is related to negative views of African-Americans, immigrants, and homosexuals (p.2). As such, the authors present an argument that the Tea Party is not simply the most

conservative portion of the Republican Party, driven primarily by conservative ideology. Instead, the Tea Party represents something separate from the traditional Republican Party in the sense that its supporters are not motivated primarily by ideology but rather by fears of a changing America ushered in by minority groups and an African-American president (p.24-25).

Analyzing survey data collected in early 2010, the authors found that support for the Tea Party among whites is a significant predictor of negative attitudes toward African-Americans, immigrants, and homosexuals, even after controlling for several demographic and socio-economic characteristics, partisanship, and ideology, among others.[47] Moreover, incorporating the same controls, the authors also found that Tea Party support among whites predicted support for the government's ability to detain individuals without a trial (Baretto, Cooper, Gonzalez, Parker, & Towler, 2011, p.26). Thus, these findings suggest that support for the Tea Party may not be easily explained away by pointing to conservative ideology and that issues related to race and views of minority groups should also be considered as motivators of support.

Recent research on the Tea Party has also examined support based on gender. This research finds common predictors of Tea Party support among men and women, specifically Republican Party identification, conservative ideology, and opposition to President Obama (Deckman, 2012, p.184). Among men, these measures were the only predictors of Tea Party support.[48] Among women, age, education, income, church attendance, and views on scriptural interpretation also predicted Tea Party support.

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[47] Baretto, Cooper, Gonzalez, Parker, and Towler (2011) estimate ordered logit regression models controlling for "Tea Party approval, age, education, income, gender, partisanship, ideology, federal government thermometer, religiosity, authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and state and region controls" (p.29). The Tea Party support measure was significant at the .10 level or lower in all of the models estimated (p.26).

[48] The model also included controls for age, education, income, church attendance, beliefs on scriptural interpretation, and whether a respondent was a born-again Christian (p.184).

Deckman (2012) concludes that "men support the Tea Party movement for largely political reasons whereas women's support is also conditioned by their socioeconomic status and their religious behavior and beliefs" (p.184). Although women supporters of the Tea Party remain a minority, these findings highlight the complex nature of Tea Party support.

In summary, the most prominent and consistent explanations of Tea Party support are conservative ideology (Abramowitz, 2012; Deckman, 2012; Perrin, Tepper, Caren, & Morris, 2011), identification with the Republican Party (Abramowitz, 2012; Deckman, 2012), negative views of President Obama (Abramowitz, 2012), negative views of minority groups and immigrants (Baretto, Cooper, Gonzalez, Parker, & Towler, 2011), as well as cultural worldviews related to authoritarianism and libertarianism (Perrin, Tepper, Caren, & Morris, 2011). Interestingly, these findings contrast with some (including Tea Party leaders) who define the Tea Party exclusively in terms of a small government libertarian philosophy (e.g. Armey & Kibbe, 2010). Furthermore, while research on the Tea Party offers many determinants of Tea Party support, a comprehensive examination of Tea Party support controlling for all these factors and assessing their relative contributions has yet to be undertaken. As such, the following analysis will remedy this neglect.

Tea Party Support: A Preliminary Look

This analysis relies on data taken from the ANES 2010-2012 Evaluations of Government and Society Study (EGSS), October 2010 (American National Election Studies, 2011) and February 2012 (American National Election Studies, 2012) survey waves. These two waves were selected because of the distance in time between their

administrations. The two year time difference provided an opportunity to examine how support for the Tea Party had changed from early on in its existence until more recently.

To provide a brief background of the study, the EGSS surveys were conducted via the internet and included a sample of United States citizens over the age of 18.[49] The EGSS surveys were cross sectional in nature, employing representative samples of United States citizens to gauge public opinions on a variety of issues preceding the 2010 and 2012 elections.

The EGSS data reveals that in October of 2010 support for the Tea Party among the electorate hovered around 22 percent with around 12 percent expressing a "great deal" of support. As Chapter 4 will demonstrate, this level of support represents a high mark for the Tea Party as shortly following the November 2010 midterm elections the Tea Party would see its support slowly decline. Data from the February 2012 wave of the EGSS is consistent with these findings as the later wave found that around 17 percent of the electorate expressed support for the Tea Party. Among this 17 percent, 8 percent voiced a great deal of support, a substantial decline from the double digit marks enjoyed close to two years earlier. Although it is true that the Tea Party witnessed a decline in support between these two waves of the ANES, a substantial amount of supporters still remain. Comparing data from both of these waves, the following can be said about Tea Party supporters and their views.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 provide a detailed account of the characteristics and views of Tea Party supporters as well as their relation to non-Tea Party supporting Republicans and the American electorate as a whole. Demographically, Tea Party supporters are predominately white, over the age of 45, male, and married. Tea Party supporters,

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[49] For more details on survey design and methodology see DeBell, Wilson, Segura, Jackman, and Hutchings (2011).

compared to the two other groups, are more religious in terms of church attendance and literal interpretations of religious texts. They are also more supportive of the government promoting traditional values and basing American laws on Christian values. Tea Party supporters are more ideologically conservative than non-Tea Party supporting Republicans as well as the American electorate. Supporters also hold more negative views of the Democratic and Republican parties as well as President Obama and are more likely than the other two groups to place a large portion of the blame for the economic recession on President Obama. Alternatively, Tea Party supporters are less likely to blame President Bush for the economic downturn. Tea Party supporters are also more likely to believe that President Obama was not born in the United States. Moreover, they are also less supportive of compromise and are more likely to state that elected officials should stick to their principals no matter what.

In regards to perceptions of minority groups, Tea Party supporters are more likely to hold negative views concerning immigrants and to support stricter immigration policies. Additionally, Tea Party supporters are also more likely to believe that African-Americans would be as successful as whites if they exhibited more effort. Finally, Tea Partiers are more likely to admit that they would be less likely to vote for a presidential candidate if he or she were a Muslim or a homosexual.

In terms of policy, Tea Party supporters oppose a great deal of the legislation proposed or passed since 2008 including the stimulus, health care reform, financial reform, the State Children's Insurance Program, and cap and trade. Philosophically, Tea Party supporters are supportive of the government doing less and a large majority believes that little or no government regulation of business is good for society. Tea Party

supporters also oppose federal funding for stem cell research and allowing homosexuals to serve openly in the military. Overall, these views are shared by the Tea Party at much higher levels than is seen among non-Tea Party Republicans as well as the American public.

Finally, Tea Party supporters are more likely than non-Tea Party Republicans, or the electorate at large, to state that they are extremely or very worried, fearful, angry, or outraged about the way things are going in the country. In terms of media consumption, a majority of Tea Party supporters have watched Fox News at least once a month and almost one-fifth state that they listen to the Glenn Beck program at least once a month.

A Republican Party Divided

The information presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 paint a picture of a Republican Party that is deeply divided. On nearly all issues, such as ideology, views of the Democratic Party and President Obama, opposition to legislation supported by Democrats, views related to the economy, and views toward minority groups, Tea Party supporters differ greatly from Republican Party identifiers not supportive of the Tea Party. These findings are important given that Tea Party supporters made up nearly half of all Republican Party identifiers in the 2010 survey and one-third of identifiers in the 2012 survey. The dramatic differences between Tea Party supporters and Republican non-Tea Party supporters on nearly every issue, and the extent to which Tea Party supporters oppose Democratic policies to a much higher degree, presents a substantial problem for the GOP as it attempts to cater to the demands of a party base that is split between its moderate and more ideologically extreme elements.

[Insert Table 3.1]
[Insert Table 3.2]

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Methodology

The first and fourth waves of the American National Election Studies 2010-2012

Evaluations of Government and Society Study (EGSS) asked questions concerning the

levels of support (or opposition) for the Tea Party. This analysis will take advantage of

the unique opportunity presented by the question form estimating two ordered logit

models predicting Tea Party support. Given that the questions concerning the Tea Party

measured intensity of support, employing an ordered logit model will allow for

inferences to be made concerning support for the Tea Party at a variety of levels.

Measuring Tea Party Support

Tea Party support is measured by levels of intensity ranging from 7, which

captures the opinions of those who support the Tea Party a great deal, to 1 which captures

opinions of respondents who oppose the Tea Party a great deal. In the first and fourth

wave of the EGSS, respondents were asked the following questions "Do you support,

oppose, or neither support nor oppose the Tea Party movement?" This question was

followed up with additional questions related to the intensity of support or opposition that

asked "Do you (support/oppose) the Tea Party movement (a great deal, a moderate

amount, or a little / a little, a moderate amount, or a great deal)?" The responses to these

questions were coded into a measure of Tea Party support that ranged from 1 to 7 where

higher values represented greater levels of support.

Predicting Tea Party Support

Although both of the models presented in this analysis use identical measures of

Tea Party support, the variety of questions posed on the October 2010 and the February

2012 EGSS waves permitted an examination of Tea Party support based on a variety of

different factors. These factors included partisan affiliation, ideology, race, immigration, views on the role and scope of government powers, opinions of President Obama, views on legislative issues, traditional moral values, levels of emotional stress, as well as demographic controls. Tables 3.11 and 3.12 at the end of this chapter provide a detailed account of the numerous predictors incorporated in this analysis, with a discussion of how each measure was coded. For those interested in a more concise explanation of the variables utilized in this analysis, the following paragraphs will provide a brief thumbnail sketch beginning with the measures incorporated in Model 1 examining data collected in October of 2010.

Predicting Tea Party Support: October 2010

Previous research has found that Tea Party support is a product of conservative ideology, Republican Party identification, dislike of President Obama, and racial resentment (Abramowitz, 2012). As such, each factor was included in the analyses presented in Model 1 and were coded as follows. Conservative ideology was measured by combining a respondent's ideology with opinions on six policy issues. These issues included support or opposition to the stimulus, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, cap and trade, health care reform, financial reform, and raising taxes on those earning over $250,000 a year. [50] The variables were recoded and combined into a scale variable with a Cronbach's Alpha of .84 indicating a high level of internal consistency. The variable was recoded so that higher values indicated more conservative ideology. Thus, Tea Party support is expected to be positively correlated with conservative ideology. Party identification was measured on a seven point scale with higher values

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[50] Again, see Tables 3.11 and 3.12 for a detailed description of the variable coding procedures.

indicating more support for the Republican Party and is expected to be positively

correlated with Tea Party support.

Opinions concerning President Obama were measured through responses to a

question asking respondents about the degree to which they liked or disliked President

Obama.[51] Respondents could provide an answer that ranged from 1 to 7 where the

endpoints indicated dislike or like "a great deal." The variable was coded so that higher

values indicated the presence of more negative feelings towards the president. The

variable is expected to be positively correlated with Tea Party support.

To measure opinions related to race, a racial resentment scale was created

combing four questions related to opinions of African-Americans. Racial resentment is a

concept that differs from traditional forms of racism such as "Jim Crow" racism, which

refers to "beliefs in biological inferiority of blacks, and support for formal discrimination

and segregation" (Henry & Sears, 2002, p.254). First defined by Kinder and Sanders

(1996), racial resentment refers to a new conceptualization of racism (similar to symbolic

racism[52]) centered on beliefs that the problems arising from racial discrimination are

over, that the plight of African-Americans are a product of their own making, and that

government aid to African Americans, as well as complaints from African-Americans

concerning their disadvantaged status, are without merit (Henry & Sears, 2002, p.254).

As Kinder and Sanders (1996) put it, racial resentment is the belief that "blacks do not try

hard enough to overcome the difficulties they face and that they take what they have not

earned" noting that prejudice "is expressed in the language of American individualism"

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[51] "How much do you like or dislike each group or person?" This question was taken from the EGSS October 2010 wave.
[52] Symbolic racism, modern racism, and racial resentment are often used interchangeably and essential refer to the same form of racism with only marginal differences (Sears & Henry, 2003, p.259).

(p.106). [53] For the purpose of clarity, higher levels of racial resentment are indicative of more animosity towards African-Americans.

The questions included in the racial resentment scale used in this analysis are similar to the questions used by Kinder and Sanders (1996) in their original racial resentment measure and mirror exactly the use by other scholars (Knuckey, 2006; Valentino & Sears, 2005). The questions used for the racial resentment scale were recoded and averaged so that higher values were indicative of higher levels of racial resentment (α=.83). Higher levels of racial resentment are expected to be positively correlated with Tea Party support.

In a recent book by the Chief Political Correspondent of the Christian Broadcast Network, a network founded by former conservative presidential candidate Pat Robertson, an argument is made that many within the Tea Party are best described as "Teavangelicals." This term is used as shorthand for describing Tea Party supporters who are religiously devout and concerned about moral issues. To examine the extent that the Tea Party is inhabited by Teavangelicals, Model 1 incorporates a measure related to moral and religious values. This measure included questions related to church attendance, interpretation of scripture, opposition to gays serving openly in the military, as well as opposition to federal funding of stem cell research. Each variable was recoded and combined so that higher values indicated more support for religiously conservative positions (α=.70). The morality measure is expected to be positively correlated with support for the Tea Party.

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[53] Henry and Sears (2002) find that measures of symbolic racism, or racial resentment, relate specifically to "anti-black prejudice" and that the presence of racial resentment cannot be explained as simply a product of adherence to a politically conservative point of view (p.272; See also Tarman & Sears, 2005, p.754).

Previous research has also suggested that Tea Party support is related to opposition to minority groups such as immigrants (Baretto, Cooper, Gonzalez, Parker, & Towler, 2011). To account for this factor, a measure of opinions concerning immigrants was included in Model 1. In Model 1, the measure was created from responses to a question asking whether immigrants strengthened the country or if they acted as a burden on housing, healthcare, and jobs. The variable ranged from 0 to 1 and was coded so that higher values indicate the presence of negative feelings toward immigrants. The variable is expected to be positively correlated with Tea Party support.

Recent scholarly accounts of the Tea Party have suggested that supporters are motivated by fear and uncertainty towards the future and anger concerning the current state of affairs in the country (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p.13). To account for this important factor, a measure of emotional stress was included in Model 1. The measure is the average of four questions asking respondents how they feel "about the way things are going in the country these days" inquiring about levels of fear, worry, anger, and outrage. Respondents could answer from 1 to 5, with 5 indicating extreme feelings and 1 representing the absence of the feeling. The questions were recoded and averaged together, so that higher values indicate higher levels of fear or worry (α=.89). The variable is expected to be positively correlated with Tea Party support.

The Tea Party has often proclaimed to support limited government and a libertarian approach to government. Moreover, recent research finds that libertarianism is related to Tea Party support (Perrin, Tepper, Caren, & Morris, 2011, p.13). To account for libertarian attitudes, a question was included asking respondents whether they support the Federal Intelligence and Security Act, which permits government wiretapping without

a warrant. Although not an ideal measure of libertarianism, given that the survey explanation neglected to explain the program in detail, the work of Skocpol and Williamson (2012) found that Tea Party supporters possess a high level of political knowledge concerning legislation which may correct for these shortcomings. Tea Party supporters are expected to be opposed to this piece of legislation and the variable was coded in a manner that opposition to the legislation and support for the Tea Party should be positively correlated. The variable is referred to as civil liberties in Table 3.1. Model 1 also controls for the demographic characteristics of age and gender.

Predicting Tea Party Support: February 2012

Model 2 predicts Tea Party support using data collected in February of 2012. This model controls for ideology which is also measured on a seven-point scale where higher values indicate more conservative ideology. Along with ideology, Model 2 also controls for partisan identification using a measure nearly identical to the one used in Model 1. The variable ranges from 1 to 7 with higher values indicating more identification with the Republican Party. The February 2012 survey also included the same series of questions related to racial resentment which permitted an examination of the predictability of this measure at two points in time. All of these factors are expected to be positively correlated with Tea Party support.

To account for opinions concerning President Obama, Model 2 includes a measure of opinions based on responses to a feeling thermometer question.[54] The feeling thermometer question asks respondents to rate their views of President Obama ranging from 0, indicating a very unfavorable feeling, to 100, indicating a very favorable rating.

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[54] The fourth wave of the EGSS did not include the same question used to measure opinions of President Obama in Model 1.

The variable is expected to be negatively correlated with support for the Tea Party with lower values corresponding with higher levels of support for the Tea Party. Additionally, like Model 1, Model 2 also controls for both age and gender.

Model 2 also incorporates a measure of moral values which includes four questions related to a traditional moral worldview. These questions asked about church attendance, whether the government should promote traditional values, or whether U.S. law should be based on Christian values. The measure also includes opinions concerning whether religious institutions should be required to cover birth control in their insurance plans. These questions were combined and averaged into a measure of traditional moral values ($\alpha=.70$). The variable was coded so that higher values were indicative of a traditional moral worldview and is expected to be positively correlated with Tea Party support.

While Models 1 and 2 share several common predictors, such as party affiliation, ideology, views of President Obama, racial resentment, traditional moral values, as well as the demographic characteristics of gender and age[55], Model 2 provides a more in-depth examination of the relationship between attitudes towards immigration and Tea Party support. The responses to four questions concerning immigration were recoded so that higher values were indicative of opposition or negative views concerning immigrants or immigration. These questions measure opinions of legal immigration inquiring whether immigration is good for the country and whether the number of people allowed in the country should increase or decrease. Additional questions included in the measure inquire about approaches to dealing with the presence of unauthorized immigrants in the United

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[55] It should be noted, that the questions used to measure emotional stress in Model 1 were not included in the fourth wave of the EGSS. As such, a measure of emotional stress could not be included in Model 2.

States and whether the government should grant citizenship to the children of

unauthorized immigrants. These questions were added together and averaged to provide a

measure of opinions concerning immigration and is expected to be positively correlated

with Tea Party support (α=.70).

Finally, Model 2 also includes a measure of libertarian views concerning the role

of government in society. Two questions were included in this measure which asked

respondents' about their opinions concerning the adequate level of government regulation

of business as well as views concerning whether government should be doing more or

less functions. These two questions were added together and averaged to provide a

measure of libertarian and limited government views of respondents (α=.52). The

variable was coded so that higher values indicate more support for limited government

and more libertarian approaches to government. The measure is expected to be positively

correlated with Tea Party support.

Results

The results from Model 1 examining the predictors of Tea Party support using

data collected in October of 2010 are presented in Table 3.3. The results highlight the

complexity of Tea Party support as all of the predictors included in the model, outside of

the demographic controls, significantly predict Tea Party support[56]. Even after controlling

for Republican Party identification and a multifaceted measure of conservative ideology,

support for the Tea Party is found to be a function of traditional moral values, emotional

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[56] A measure of authoritarianism was included in the original model and was not found to be significant. The measure
is not included in the presentation of the results. In addition, the impact of race was also controlled for in both models,
but was not included in the results. A vast majority of Tea Party supporters identify as white and excluding the variable
does not change the substantive significance of any of the variables included in the models.

stress, dislike of President Obama, racial resentment, negative opinions toward immigrants, and civil liberties.

In terms of their level of influence (measured by the average change in support/opposition holding all other variables constant and at their means), the strongest contributors to support for the Tea Party, in order of influence, are conservative ideology, traditional moral values, negative views of President Obama, high levels of racial resentment, party identification, high levels of emotional stress, support for the government eavesdropping on terrorist suspects without a court order, and negative views toward immigrants. The substantive impact of each of these factors will be described as follows.

The results suggest that a portion of Tea Party support is motivated by a traditional moral worldview. For instance, moving from the lowest score on the traditional values measure to the highest value increases the odds of supporting the Tea Party by 5 percentage points on average, holding all other factors constant and at their means. Moreover, moral issues appear to be a driving force behind high to moderate levels of Tea Party support as moving from the lowest score on the measure to the highest value increases the odds of moderate support by 8 percentage points as well as the odds of voicing a great deal of support by 5 percentage points, holding all other factors constant and at their means.

Negative opinions of President Obama are also found to be significant predictors of Tea Party support. More specifically, higher levels of dislike for President Obama are associated with more support for the Tea Party. These findings suggest that one of the

main motivators of support for the Tea Party is animosity, or opposition, towards President Obama specifically.

Tea Party support also appears to have a racial component as higher levels of racial resentment are correlated with higher levels of support for the Tea Party. This suggests that dramatic differences in support for the Tea Party are seen between respondents with the highest levels of racial resentment. For instance, increasing racial resentment scores from the lowest level to the highest level increases the odds that someone will support the Tea Party a great deal by 3 percentage points and a moderate amount by 4 percentage points holding other factors constant and at their means.

The opposite can be said for opposition to the Tea Party as the same change in racial resentment levels results in a 5 percentage point increase in the odds of opposing the Tea Party a great deal. In addition, although not as profound as the impact of racial resentment, negative views of immigrants are also positively correlated with higher levels of support for the Tea Party. In other words, believing that immigrants are a burden on society significantly increases the odds of voicing support for the Tea Party.

In terms of civil liberties, support for the Federal Intelligence and Security Act (FISA) was negatively related to support for the Tea Party. In other words, support for the FISA law, or the government's use of wiretaps without a court order, was a significant predictor of Tea Party support. This finding is surprising given the extent to which the rhetoric surrounding the Tea Party has voiced support for a smaller and more limited government. One possible explanation for these counterintuitive findings could be that question on the EGSS first wave framed the use of warrantless wiretapping in terms of "overseas terrorist suspects" and not specifically in terms of their use on American

citizens. Still yet, Skocpol and Williamson (2012) argue that Tea Party supporter possess a high degree of political knowledge, especially concerning legislation, which would suggest that supporters should be aware of the controversies, and the implications for civil liberties, related to the legislation. Whatever the cause, the significant and negative relationship between Tea Party support and opposition to the Federal Intelligence and Security Act casts doubts on claims concerning the Tea Party's level of devotion to libertarian principals and limited government.

Finally, emotional stress significantly predicts support for the Tea Party as high levels of fear and anger increase the odds of Tea Party support. These results are consistent with the work of Skocpol and Williamson (2012) as well as Baretto, Cooper, Gonzalez, Parker, and Towler (2011) who suggest that fear and anger partially explain the emergence of the Tea Party as well as its base of support. These findings suggest that support for the Tea Party is partially explained by deep emotional fears and uncertainty concerning the state of the country.

The significant findings regarding emotional stress and Tea Party support provide an opportunity to explore a common argument among pundits regarding the Tea Party. Some pundits explain support for the Tea Party as a response to the economic recession and a growth in populist sentiments among the American public stemming from a decline in their personal financial status (Rasmussen & Schoen, 2010, p.25). This line of argument would suggest that high levels of emotional stress as well as support for the Tea Party are related to unemployment and low-income levels, a byproduct of a poor economy. If this is indeed the case, then we would expect the measures of Tea Party

support and emotional stress to be significantly correlated with a respondent's income level or employment status.

However, this is not found to be the case as support for the Tea Party is not significantly correlated (at least at the .05 level) with employment status (r =.03) or income (r =.02).[57] Furthermore, emotional stress is not significantly correlated (at the .05 level) with employment status (r =.04) or income (r =.01) either. Thus, personal economic factors do not account for high levels of emotional stress or Tea Party support. One possible explanation for these results is that the high levels of emotional stress expressed by Tea Party supporters is a product of the negative feelings and personal animosity they feel towards President Obama. This explanation would be consistent with the work of Skocpol and Williamson (2012) who argue that Tea Party supporters feel hatred towards President Obama (p.163).

[Insert Table 3.3]

Table 3.4 presents the results of Model 2, which like Model 1 estimates support for the Tea Party using an ordered logit model, analyzing data collected in February of 2012. The results indicate that Tea Party support is a product of a traditional moral worldview, negative views of President Obama, racial resentment, libertarian approaches to the role of government, as well as Republican Party identification, and conservative ideology. Interestingly, traditional values and racial resentment were stronger predictors of support for the Tea Party than Republican Party identification and conservative ideology.

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[57] Employment was coded so that higher values were indicative of being unemployed. Income was coded so that higher values were indicative of a higher income.

Compared to 2010, traditional moral values played a more important role in explaining Tea Party support as the average impact of the issues on support for the Tea Party almost doubled from 2010 to 2012. Moving from the lowest level, of the moral values measure, to the highest level increases support for the Tea Party, in 2012, by an average of 9 percentage points, holding all other predictors constant and at their means. Along with moral values, racial resentment continued to factor into support for the Tea Party exerting a higher effect in 2012 than was seen in 2010. This provides additional evidence that racial animosity is motivating support for the Tea Party. Moreover, consistent with the findings of Model 1, negative views toward President Obama were also significantly related to support for the Tea Party. These findings suggest that a primary motivator and unifier of Tea Party support is open hostility towards President Obama.

Support for the Tea Party can also be explained by adherence to libertarian approaches to government. Support for a reduction in the functions of government, and less government regulation of business, were significantly and positively related to support for the Tea Party. As a consequence, contentions that the Tea Party represents libertarian values do hold some merit. Although, a more apt characterization of the Tea Party would be that devotion to libertarian principles and limited government is one component, among many, which motivates Tea Party support.

Another interesting finding from Model 2 is that traditional moral values, racial resentment, negative evaluations of President Obama, and views on the role of government have a greater effect on the highest degree of opposition to the Tea Party, than they do predicting the highest degree of support for the Tea Party. While the

findings of Model 1 suggested a more even handed impact of many of these same factors on the highest level of support and opposition to the Tea Party, Model 2, which polled respondents much later in the tenure of the Tea Party, showed that predictors of Tea Party support exhibited a much larger effect on negative views of the Tea Party.

These differences could be partially explained by the decline in Tea Party support that occurred from the end of 2010 through the beginning of 2012 (explored in greater detail in Chapter 4) and the negative hit to the Tea Party image resulting from its injection into the debt ceiling debate in the summer of 2011 (Saad, 2011).[58] Whatever the cause, between 2010 and 2012 the issues that predict support for the Tea Party had become more polarized to the extent that they exerted a substantial effect on the highest level of opposition to the Tea Party.

Furthermore, the degree to which many of these factors are positively and substantially correlated to neutral opinions of the Tea Party, displayed in Model 2, suggests that many individuals who may have supported the Tea Party in October of 2010 had become disenfranchised by February of 2012 and no longer voiced support. For instance, traditional values had only slight impacts on neutral views in 2010, but by 2012 its influence had increased.

Overall, the findings of Model 1 and Model 2 support the hypotheses presented in Chapter 1. These hypotheses proposed that:

Hypothesis 3: Tea Party support is predicted by racial resentment.

Hypothesis 4: Tea Party support is predicted by traditional moral values.

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[58] In the summer of 2011, Tea Party supporters expressed opposition to increasing the federal government's borrowing limit. If the national debt ceiling had not been raised, the federal government would have been forced to default (Bailey, Mummolo, & Noel, 2012). Shortly after the August 2011 vote to raise the national debt ceiling, a Gallup poll found that support for the Tea Party had reached its lowest level since Gallup had begun asking about support for the Tea Party (Saad, 2011).

Hypothesis 5: Tea Party support is predicted by libertarian traditional free-market conservative viewpoints.

Hypothesis 6: Tea Party support is predicted by feelings of fear and anger concerning the state of the country.

Taken altogether, support for the Tea Party is best explained by support for traditional moral values, negative views of immigrants,[59] and President Obama, high levels of racial resentment, anger and fear, as well as libertarian approaches to the role of government. Most importantly, these predictors are found to have a significant impact on Tea Party support even after controlling for the impact of conservative ideology and Republican Party identification. These findings highlight the unique qualities of Tea Party supporters and the degree to which supporters hold views that separate them from the typical major party supporter. Finally, these results challenge the claims by many who define the Tea Party exclusively in terms of small government and libertarian philosophies.

[Insert Table 3.4]

Tea Party Support and Views of President Obama and the Democrats

Opposition to legislation supported by Democrats and negative views related to President Obama help to explain support for the Tea Party. Examined more closely, these findings are not surprising given the nature in which Tea Party supporters view the Democratic Party and President Obama ideologically. The first wave and fourth waves of the EGSS surveys asked respondents to place the Democratic Party as well as President Obama on a seven point ideological scale ranging from very liberal to very conservative. The results from these questions are presented in Table 3.5 and Table 3.6 revealing the

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[59] Although the findings related to immigration are only significant for Model 1, the positive sign on the coefficient for the immigration measure in Model 2 suggests that negative views related to immigrants, and opposition to immigration, are positively related to Tea Party support.

ideological placement of the Democratic Party and President Obama by Tea Party

supporters, non-Tea Party supporting Republicans, as well as the American electorate as

whole.

In 2010 and 2012, less than half of Republican non-Tea Party supporters describe

the Democratic Party and President Obama as very liberal. In contrast, a large majority of

Tea Party supporters view President Obama and the Democrats as very liberal. These

findings highlight the stark differences between ordinary Republicans and Republicans

who support the Tea Party. Tea Party supporters view the president and the Democratic

Party in ideologically extreme terms, which may explain both their dislike of the

president and their opposition to a large majority of policies pursued by the Democratic

Party.

[Insert Table 3.5]
[Insert Table 3.6]

Tea Party Support and Civic Engagement

The results of this chapter have demonstrated that support for the Tea Party can be

explained by adherence to politically extreme views. Moreover, the views expressed by

Tea Party supporters are substantially different from Republicans who do not support the

Tea party. Thus, an ideological battle appears to be occurring within the Republican Party

between the more moderate non-Tea Party supporting elements and the ideologically

extreme elements who support the Tea Party. The degree to which one side may have an

advantage in shaping the policies pursued by the Republican Party can be determined by

examining the levels of political activism undertaken by each group.

Table 3.7 displays several measures of political activism among Tea Party

supporters, Republican non-Tea Party supporters, as well as the American public at large,

collected in October of 2010. The results indicate that by all measures of political

activism, Tea Party supporters are more politically active. For instance, Tea Party

supporters are twice as likely as Republican non-Tea Party supporters to have attended a

political meeting or event, donated money to a campaign, worn a campaign button or

displayed a campaign sign, or contacted a government official in the past 12 months.

Moreover, Tea Party supporters show a higher level of voter registration, three

times the level of interest in government and politics, and are twice as likely to strongly

believe that they can have an impact on government. Thus, not only are Tea Party

supporters more active than their Republican Party counterparts, but they are also much

more likely to believe that they can make a difference. These findings also suggest that

the active elements of the Tea Party are not political novices. Around one-fifth of Tea

Party supporters state that this was the first time they were politically active. Although

higher than Republican non-Tea Party supporters, this level of first time political activism

is still smaller than the American electorate as a whole.[60]

[Insert Table 3.7]

Chapter 4 of this dissertation will demonstrate that following the 2010 midterm

elections support for the Tea Party declined among the American electorate. Reviewing

the February 2012 EGSS data (presented in Table 3.8), the impact of this decline on

political activism can be determined. Although the Tea Party saw a drop in activism from

October 2010, in terms of those who had worn a campaign sticker or gave money to a

political cause, the levels of activism displayed by Tea Party supporters were still twice

as high as those of Republican non-Tea Party supporters. Moreover, Tea Party supporters

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[60] These findings cast doubts on claims that the emergence of the Tea Party led to an "inrush into political activity" of "previously uninvolved citizens" (Barone & McCutcheon, 2011, p.4).

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still exhibited higher rates of voter registration. Furthermore, Tea Party supporters also stated with a higher degree of likelihood that they would be involved in political activities such as giving money, distributing political information, or attending a meeting. Overall, although levels of activism have dropped between 2010 and 2012, supporters of the Tea Party still exhibited higher levels of political activism than Republican non-Tea Party supporters.

[Insert Table 3.8]

Another component of political activism is the degree to which supporters can hold their public officials accountable. Accountability often hinges on correct political knowledge about government and politics. The work of Skocpol and Williamson (2012) found that Tea Party supporters exhibited high levels of political knowledge. These findings are further supported through an examination of correct answers to political knowledge questions posed in 2010 and 2012 shown in Table 3.9 and Table 3.10. By all measures of political knowledge, Tea Party supporters are more knowledgeable than the American public, as well as non-Tea Party supporting Republicans, about political subjects. These findings suggest that not only are Tea Party supporters more active than Republican non-Tea Party supporters they are also more politically knowledgeable.

Levels of Political knowledge and activism exhibit the most important differences between Tea Party supporters and ordinary Republicans because these factors speak directly to the possible electoral impacts of Tea Party supporters. Furthermore, they also suggest that Tea Party supporters will have a substantial impact on the policies pursued by the Republican Party as well as the candidates nominated in Republican primaries. Given that Tea Party supporters exhibit higher levels of activism than their Republican

Party counterparts, it appears that the Tea Party wing of the Republican Party will have a substantial advantage in influencing the direction of the policies pursued by the Republican Party.

[Insert Table 3.9]
[Insert Table 3.10]

Conclusions

Support for the Tea Party is explained by adherence to conservative traditional moral values, high levels of racial resentment, dislike of President Obama, and negative views of immigrants. Support can also be traced to feelings of emotional stress characterized by high levels of anger or fear concerning the current state of affairs in the country. Furthermore, the Tea Party also draws support from a subset of individuals with libertarian views concerning the role of government. Although that support appears to be present when discussed more broadly and abstractly, and less when couched in terms of national security. Taken as a whole, all of these factors account for Tea Party support even after controlling for Republican Party identification and conservative ideology.

An examination of public opinion data reveals that the Tea Party embodies full-throttled support for all of the GOP's major policy platform and grievances. Tea Party supporters express lower levels of support for compromise than non-Tea Party Republicans and harbor higher levels of opposition to much of the legislation that has been passed since President Obama took office. These findings are of added importance given that Tea Party supporters view the Democratic Party as well as President Obama in ideologically extreme terms and the extent to which supporters are politically knowledgeable, engaged, and active.

The Tea Party has arguably been the most important and influential political development in recent history. Although support for the Tea Party has declined in recent years, it still receives a substantial amount of support from the American public. Whether the Tea Party will continue to endure over the following years remains unclear. However, given the high level of activism among Tea Party supporters, it can be said with a fair amount of certainty that public officials will continue to be cognoscente of their demands.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of Tea Party, Non- Tea Party Republicans, and U.S Electorate

Characteristics	Tea Party Supporters	Republican* Non-Tea	American Electorate
Demographic Profile			
Age 45 and over	64%	51%	53%
Gender: Male	61%	47%	48%
Race: White	82%	85%	73%
Married	65%	69%	54%
Education: University graduate	31%	38%	31%
Income: $75,000 and above	38%	38%	31%
Church attendance: Weekly	53%	44%	40%
Holy books word of God	46%	38%	32%
Partisanship			
Ideology: Conservative	84%	67%	41%
Republican Party identification	80%	-	38%
View of Republican Party: Like a great deal or moderate amount	54%	46%	30%
View of Democratic Party: Dislike a great deal or moderate amount	70%	36%	25%
View of President Obama: Dislike a great deal or moderate amount	78%	46%	32%
President Obama probably/definitely born in another country	44%	36%	27%
Views on Legislative Issues			
Stimulus: Oppose	86%	66%	51%
Healthcare reform: Oppose	80%	60%	43%
Cap and Trade: Oppose	72%	35%	32%
Allow gays to serve openly in military: Oppose	67%	44%	39%
Federal funding for stem cell research: Oppose	64%	42%	37%
Financial Reform: Oppose	49%	25%	23%
State Children's Health Insurance Program: Oppose	48%	26%	22%
Raise taxes on incomes over 250k: Oppose	56%	28%	22%
Federal Intelligence and Security Act: Oppose	15%	20%	27%
Views Related to Economy			
Believe the economy has gotten better since previous year	3%	10%	14%
President Bush extremely/ very responsible for the economic recession	24%	27%	52%
President Obama extremely/very responsible for economic recession	68%	44%	33%
Wall street bankers extremely/very responsible for economic recession	62%	61%	69%
Views Toward Minority and Disadvantaged Groups			
Believe immigrants are a burden on U.S.	81%	72%	64%
If blacks would try harder they would be just as well of as whites: Agree	67%	43%	43%
Believe discrimination against women is no longer a problem: Agree	38%	39%	23%
Emotional Stress: Feelings About the Way Things are Going in U.S.			
Worried: Extremely or very	70%	49%	48%
Outraged: Extremely or very	66%	36%	25%
Angry: Extremely or very	65%	31%	34%
Afraid: Extremely or very	47%	31%	31%
Tea Party Supporter	-	-	22%
Percent of Republican Party identifiers who support the Tea Party	-	46%	-

Source: American National Elections Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, October 8-19, 2010, U.S. Citizens 18 and over. The cell number indicates the percentage of the Tea Party, Republican Identifiers, and overall respondents who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column.
*Republicans who do not support the Tea Party.

Table 3.2: Characteristics of Tea Party, Non- Tea Party Republicans, and U.S Electorate

Characteristics	Tea Party Supporters	Republican* Non-Tea	American Electorate
Demographic Profile			
Age 45 and over	68%	47%	54%
Gender: Male	57%	47%	48%
Race: White	83%	88%	72%
Married	75%	56%	56%
Education: University graduate	36%	30%	30%
Income: $75,000 and above	33%	37%	33%
Church attendance: Weekly	44%	37%	38%
Partisanship			
Ideology: Conservative	84%	52%	39%
Republican Party identification	88%	-	45%
Political Attitudes			
Libertarianism: Government should generally be doing less	72%	42%	34%
Libertarianism: Little or no government regulation of business good for society	66%	45%	38%
Favors government promoting "traditional values"	64%	49%	45%
Favors basing American laws on Christian values	77%	51%	44%
Requirement that religious institutions provide health insurance that includes free birth control: Oppose	64%	33%	26%
Compromise: Prefers a president who sticks to principles no matter what	48%	41%	35%
Compromise: Prefers a representative who sticks to principles no matter what	51%	40%	33%
Views Related to Economy			
Believe the economy has gotten better since previous year	12%	24%	37%
President Obama to blame for poor economy: A great deal or a lot	77%	40%	34%
President Bush to blame for poor economy: A great deal or a lot	30%	26%	49%
Wall Street Bankers to blame for poor economy: A great deal or a lot	60%	66%	70%
Consumers who borrowed to blame for poor economy: A great deal or a lot	69%	62%	59%
Views Toward Minority and Disadvantaged Groups			
If blacks would try harder they would be just as well of as whites: Agree	58%	43%	37%
Believe discrimination against women is no longer a problem in U.S.: Agree	34%	32%	28%
Support making all unauthorized immigrants felons and deporting them	41%	32%	30%
A lot less likely to vote for a candidate for president who was Muslim	54%	47%	37%
Would be a lot less likely to vote for a candidate for president who was gay	43%	31%	25%
Media Consumption			
TV: Watch Fox News, at least once a month	59%	37%	33%
Talk Radio: Listen to Glenn Beck program	17%	5%	4%
Used Facebook to learn about Pres. Election: Moderately to a great deal	13%	5%	8%
Tea Party Support	-	-	17%
Percent of Republican Party identifiers who support the Tea Party	-	34%	-

Source: American National Elections Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, February 18-23, 2012, U.S. Citizens 18 and over. The cell number indicates the percentage of the Tea Party, Republican Identifiers, and overall respondents who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column.
 *Republicans who do not support the Tea Party.

Table 3.3: Predictors of Tea Party Support

| Independent Variables | Coefficient (SE) | Average Change[2] | Change in Predicted Probabilities from Minimum to Maximum[1] | | | | | | |
| | | | Oppose Tea Party | | | | Support Tea Party | | |
			Great Deal	Moderate Amount	A Little	Neither	A Little	Moderate Amount	Great Deal
Conservative Ideology	1.26*** (.16)	.12	-.14	-.09	-.03	-.15	+.05	+.19	+.17
Party Identification	0.17 *** (.05)	.03	-.05	-.04	-.01	-.01	+.02	+.05	+.03
View of Obama	0.24*** (.06)	.04	-.07	-.05	-.02	-.01	+.03	+.07	+.05
Racial Resentment	0.22* (.10)	.03	-.05	-.03	-.01	+.01	+.01	+.04	+.03
Traditional Values	0.61*** (.13)	.05	-.07	-.05	-.02	-.02	+.03	+.08	+.05
View of Immigrants	0.45** (.17)	.01	-.02	-.02	-.01	+.003	+.01	+.02	+.01
Emotional Stress	0.16* (.08)	.02	-.03	-.02	-.01	+.0001	+.01	+.03	+.02
Civil Liberties	-0.50** (.16)	.01	+.03	+.02	+.01	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.01
Age	-0.05 (.10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gender	0.04 (.15)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of Cases	1141	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pseudo R[2]	.25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: American National Elections Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, October 8-19, 2010.
Dependent Variables are Tea Party support measured from 1 to 7. Higher vales indicate more support for Tea Party.
1: Change in the predicted probabilities, moving from the minimum value to the maximum value, for each level of opinion concerning the Tea Party and holding all other factors constant at their means.
2: Absolute value of the average change in the predicted probabilities, moving from the minimum value to the maximum value, across all levels of opinion and holding all other factors constant at their means.
Cell entries are ordinal logit coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).
Post stratified weight used for analysis.
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 3.4: Predictors of Tea Party Support

| Independent Variables | Coefficient (SE) | Average Change[2] | Change in Predicted Probabilities from Minimum to Maximum[1] | | | | | | |
| | | | Oppose Tea Party | | | Neither | Support Tea Party | | |
			Great Deal	Moderate Amount	A Little		A Little	Moderate Amount	Great Deal
Conservative Ideology	0.29*** (.08)	.07	-.14	-.06	-.03	+.11	+.03	+.06	+.04
Party Identification	0.20*** (.06)	.04	-.09	-.04	-.02	+.06	+.02	+.04	+.03
View of Obama	-0.02*** (.004)	.06	.13	.06	.02	-.09	-.02	-.05	-.04
Racial Resentment	0.45*** (.10)	.07	-.16	-.07	-.03	+.14	+.02	+.05	+.04
Traditional Values	0.78*** (.14)	.09	-.21	-.09	-.03	+.15	+.04	+.08	+.06
Immigration	0.11 (.12)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Role of Government	0.38*** (.11)	.05	-.11	-.05	-.02	+.08	+.02	+.05	+.03
Age	-0.07 (.06)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gender	-0.06 (.15)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of Cases	1230	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pseudo R[2]	.25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: American National Elections Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, February 18-23, 2012.
Dependent Variables are Tea Party support measured from 1 to 7. Higher vales indicate more support for Tea Party.
1: Change in the predicted probabilities, moving from the minimum value to the maximum value, for each level of opinion concerning the Tea Party and holding all other factors constant at their means.
2: Absolute value of the average change in the predicted probabilities, moving from the minimum value to the maximum value, across all levels of opinion and holding all other factors constant at their means.
Cell entries are ordinal coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).
Post stratified weight used for analysis.
* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

Table 3.5: Ideological Placement of Democrats and Obama by Group, October 2010

	Very liberal	Somewhat liberal	A little liberal	Neither	A little conservative	Somewhat conservative	Very Conservative
Tea Party supporters view of each group							
Democrats	59%	28%	6%	3%	3%	>1%	2%
Barack Obama	78%	11%	4%	5%	1%	>1%	1%
Republican non-Tea Party supporters view of each group							
Democrats	37%	28%	14%	13%	4%	3%	2%
Barack Obama	48%	20%	10%	14%	1%	5%	2%

Source: American National Elections Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, October 8-19, 2010.
Cell number indicates the percentage of the Tea Party, Republican Identifiers, and overall respondents who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column.
Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Table 3.6: Ideological Placement of Democrats and Obama by Group, February 2012

	Very liberal	Somewhat liberal	Closer to liberals	Neither	Closer to conservatives	Somewhat conservative	Very Conservative
Tea Party view of each group							
Democrats	58%	23%	10%	7%	2%	>1%	>1%
Barack Obama	82%	6%	4%	6%	2%	>1%	>1%
Republican non-Tea Party* view of each group							
Democrats	25%	26%	17%	24%	7%	1%	1%
Barack Obama	33%	15%	18%	25%	6%	2%	1%

Source: American National Elections Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, February 18-23, 2012.
Cell number indicates the percentage of the Tea Party, Republican Identifiers, and overall respondents who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
*Republicans who do not support the Tea Party.

Table 3.7: Political Activities by Group, October 2010

Political Activities	Tea Party Supporters	Republican Non-Tea Party Supporters*	American Electorate
Past 12 months: Attended a political speech, march, rally, or demonstration	25%	10%	12%
Past 12 months: Phoned, emailed, written to, or visited a government official	42%	20%	24%
Past 12 months: Wore a campaign button, put campaign sticker on car, or displayed a sign	26%	11%	15%
Past 12 months: Given money to candidate, political party, or group	22%	10%	11%
Past 12 months: Volunteered or worked for a presidential campaign	4%	1%	3%
Past 12 months: Volunteered or worked for another political candidate, issue, or cause	7%	3%	4%
Was this the first time being involved in a campaign? (If respondent indicated they had volunteered or worked for campaign or gave money in past 12 months)	26%	21%	31%
Currently registered to vote	95%	90%	86%
Extremely or very interested in information about what's going on in government and politics	73%	29%	40%
Believe a great or a lot that people like themselves can affect what government goes	36%	16%	21%

Source: American National Elections Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, October 8-19, 2010.
Note: Republicans who do not support the Tea Party accounted for 54% of the Republicans sampled.
Cell number indicates the percentage of the Tea Party, Republican Identifiers, and overall respondents who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column.
*Republicans who do not support the Tea Party.

Table 3.8: Political Activities by Group, February 2012

Political Activities	Tea Party Supporters	Republican Non-Tea Party Supporters*	American Electorate
Past 12 months: Worn a campaign button, put campaign sticker on car, or displayed a sign	17%	6%	11%
Past 12 months: Given money to candidate, political party, or group	14%	9%	12%
Currently registered to vote	95%	78%	85%
In the future, how likely are you to attend a meeting to talk about political or social concerns?(Extremely or very likely)	18%	7%	9%
In the future, how likely are you to give money to an organization concerned with a political or social issue? (Extremely or very likely)	12%	7%	8%
In the future, how likely are you to distribute information or advertisements supporting a political or social interest group? (Extremely or very likely)	13%	3%	6%

Source: American National Elections Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, February 18-23, 2012.
Note: Questions concerning attending a speech or contacting a public official were not included in the February 2012 wave.
Cell number indicates the percentage of the Tea Party, Republican Identifiers, and overall respondents who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column.
*Republicans who do not support the Tea Party.

Table 3.9: Levels of Political Knowledge by Group, October 2010

Political Knowledge Question	Tea Party Supporters	Republican Non-Tea Party Supporters*	American Electorate
Correctly identify party holding majority in U.S. House of Representatives	87%	73%	68%
Correctly identify party holding majority in U.S. Senate	88%	73%	67%
Correctly identify office held by Nancy Pelosi	90%	83%	80%

Source: American National Elections Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, October 8-19, 2010.
Cell number indicates the percentage of the Tea Party, Republican Identifiers, and overall respondents who hold answered each question. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
*Republicans who do not support the Tea Party.

Table 3.10: Levels of Political Knowledge by Group, February 2012

Political Knowledge Question	Tea Party Supporters	Republican Non-Tea Party Supporters*	American Electorate
Correctly identify Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court	80%	69%	71%
Correctly identify Prime Minister of the United Kingdom	53%	45%	46%
Correctly identify Speaker of the House of Representatives	85%	73%	75%
Correctly identify the area where the U.S. Federal government spends the least amount money (Options: foreign aid, Medicare, National Defense, Social Security)	50%	36%	38%

Source: American National Elections Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, February 18-23, 2012.
Cell number indicates the percentage of the Tea Party, Republican Identifiers, and overall respondents who correctly answered each question. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
*Republicans who do not support the Tea Party.

Table 3.11: Variable Coding EGSS Wave 1

Tea Party Support	Support for Tea Party Range 1 to 7 1= Oppose a great deal 2= Oppose a moderate amount 3= Oppose a little 4= Neither support nor oppose 5= Support a little 6= Support a moderate amount 7= Support a great deal Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Higher values indicate more support for Tea Party. EGSS1 variable name: dertea
Conservative Ideology	Conservative Ideology Scale Average of respondent ideology and opinions on six pieces of legislation (α=.84). Part 1 of Scale, Respondent self-identified ideology: "When it comes to politics, how would you describe each person or group – as (liberal, conservative, or neither liberal nor conservative / conservative, liberal, or neither conservative nor liberal)?" 1= Very liberal 2= Somewhat liberal 3= A little liberal 4= Neither liberal nor conservative 5= A little conservative 6= Somewhat conservative 7= Very Conservative Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. EGSS variable: c1_v1a Part 2 of Scale: Opinions on legislation: Average of responses to six pieces of legislation each coded with higher values indicating support. Respondents were asked "Congress considered many important bills over the past two years. For each of the following tell us whether you support or oppose the legislation in principle." 1. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: "Authorizes $787 billion in federal

spending to stimulate economic growth in the US."

2. State Children's Health Insurance Program: "Program insures children in low income households Act would renew the program through 2014 and include 4 million additional children."

3. American Clean Energy and Security Act: Imposes a cap on carbon emissions and allows companies to trade allowances for carbon emissions. Funds research on renewable energy."

4. Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act: "Requires all Americans to have health insurance. Allows people to keep current provider. Sets up health insurance exchange for those without coverage. Increases taxes on investment income for families making more than $250,000."

5. Restoring American Financial Stability Act: "Protects consumers against abusive lending. Creates a Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection. Regulates high risk investments known as derivatives.
Allows government to shut down failing financial institutions."

Above legislation coded: 0 support, 1 oppose

6. Taxes: "Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose raising federal income taxes for people who make more than $250,000 per year? Do you [favor/oppose] that (a great deal, moderately, or a little / a little, moderately, or a great deal)?"

1= Favor a great deal
2= Favor moderately
3= Favor a little
4= Neither favor nor oppose
5= Oppose a little
6= Oppose moderately
7= Oppose a great deal

Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing.

Cronbach's Alpha of Conservative Ideology Scale: (α=.84)

Direction: Coded so that higher values indicate more conservative ideology.

EGSS variable name, legislation: c1_l1, cl1_l2 c1_l3, c1_l4, c1_l6, dertaxes

Party Identification	Party identification, 7 point scale

0= Strong Democrat
1= Not very strong Democrat
2= Independent Democrat
3= Independent-Independent
4= Independent Republican

	5= Not very strong Republican 6= Strong Republican Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Higher values indicate more conservative party identification. EGSS variable name: der08c1
Racial Resentment	Racial Resentment Average of four questions measuring level of racial resentment (α=.83). "Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with this statement?" 1. "Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors." (Agree)* 2. "Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class." (Disagree)* 3. "Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve." (Disagree)* 4. "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites."(Agree)* Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Coded so that higher values indicate more racial resentment. Cronbach's Alpha of Racial Resentment Scale: (α=.83) EGSS variable names: c1_zh1, c1_zh2, c1_zh3, c1_zh4 *Answers that determine level of for racial resentment based on Valentino and Sears (2005).
Emotional Stress	Emotional Stress Scale Average of four questions related to emotional stress (α=.89). "Generally speaking, how do you feel about the way things are going in the country these days?" Extremely, Very, Moderately, A little, Not at all." 1. How angry? 2. How afraid? 3. How worried?

	4. How outraged? 1= Not at all 2= A little 3= Moderately 4= Very 5= Extremely Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Coded so that higher values indicate higher degree of emotional stress. Cronbach's Alpha of Emotional Stress Scale: (α=.89) EGSS variable name: c1_g1, c1_g2, c1_g5, c1_g6
Traditional Values	Traditional Values Scale Traditional Values Scale: Average of responses to questions concerning church attendance, interpretation of religious texts, opinions concerning federal funding for stem cell research, and opinions on gays in the military (α=.70). 1. Church attendance: "How often do you attend religious services?" 1= Never 2= Once a year or less 3= A few times a year 4= Once or twice a month 5= Once a week 6= More than once a week Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Coded so that higher values indicate more church attendance. EGSS variable name: c1_pp072 2. Religion; scriptural word of God: "Which of these statements comes closest to your feelings about the (Bible/Torah/Holy Scripture)? 2= The (Bible/Torah/Holy Scripture) is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word. 1= The (Bible/Torah/Holy Scripture) is the word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word." 0= The (Bible/Torah/Holy Scripture) is a book written by people and is not the word of God."

		Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Coded so that higher values indicate more literal interpretation of Bible/Torah/Holy Scripture. 3. Stem Cell Research: "Congress considered many important bills over the past two years. For each of the following tell us whether you support or oppose the legislation in principle. Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act: Allow federal funding of embryonic stem cell research." 0= support 1= oppose Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Coded so that high value indicates opposition to federal funding of stem cell research. EGSS variable name: c1_l9 4. Gays serving openly in the military: "Congress considered many important bills over the past two years. For each of the following tell us whether you support or oppose the legislation in principle. End Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Would allow gays to serve openly in the armed services" 0= support 1= oppose Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Coded so that high value indicates opposition to gays serving openly in the military. EGSS variable name: c1_l7 Cronbach's Alpha for Traditional Values Scale: (α=.70) Direction of scale: Coded so that higher values indicate more support for traditional moral worldview.
	Civil Liberties	Support for civil liberties Support or opposition to warrantless wiretaps. "Congress considered many important bills over the past two years. For each of the following tell us whether you support or oppose the legislation in principle.

	Federal Intelligence and Security Act" "Allow U.S. spy agencies to eavesdrop on overseas terrorist suspects without first getting a court order."
	0= support 1= oppose Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Codes so that high value indicates less support for civil liberties. EGSS variable names: c1_l8
View of Obama	Measure of opinion of President Obama Opinion of President Obama: "How much do you like or dislike each group or person? Barack Obama" 1= Like a great deal 2= Like a moderate amount 3= Like a little 4= Neither like nor dislike 5= Dislike a little 6= Dislike a moderate amount 7= Dislike a great deal Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. EGSS variable name: c1_k1c
View of Immigrants	View of immigrants in the country. View of impact of immigrants in country: "Which of these two statements comes closer to your own views?" 0= "Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents." 1= "Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing, and health care." Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Coded so that high value indicates negative opinions toward immigrants in the country. EGSS variable name: c1_zd3
Age	Age of respondent Four categories of age:

	1= 18-29 2= 30-44 3= 45-59 4= 60+ Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. EGSS variable name: c1_ppagect4
Gender	Gender of respondent 0= female 1= male Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Coded so that high value indicates male respondent. EGSS variable name: c1_ppgender

Table 3.12: Variable Coding EGSS Wave 4

Tea Party Support	Support for Tea Party Range 1 to 7 1= Oppose a great deal 2= Oppose a moderate amount 3= Oppose a little 4= Neither support nor oppose 5= Support a little 6= Support a moderate amount 7= Support a great deal Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Recoded so that higher values indicate more support for Tea Party. EGSS1 variable name: C4_Q1, C4_Q2_SU, C4_Q2_OP
Ideology	Respondent Ideology Self-reported respondent ideology: "When it comes to politics, would you describe yourself, and these groups, as liberal, conservative, or neither liberal nor conservative?" 1= Very liberal 2= Somewhat liberal 3= Closer to liberals 4= Neither liberal nor conservative 5= Closer to conservatives 6= Somewhat conservative 7= Very Conservative Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. EGSS variable name, ideology: C4_P1
Party Identification	Party identification Political party affiliation: 0= Strong Democrat 1= Strong Democrat 2= Not Strong Democrat 3= Leans Democrat 4= Undecided/Independent/Other 5= Leans Republican 6= Not strong Republican

	7= Strong Republican Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Recoded so that high values indicate more identification with the Republican Party. EGSS variable name: C4_PAR_1.
Racial Resentment	Racial Resentment Scale Average of four questions measuring level of racial resentment (α=.83). "Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with this statement?" 1. "Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors." (Agree)* 2. "Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class." (Disagree)* 3. "Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve." (Disagree)* 4. "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites."(Agree)* Direction: Coded so that higher values indicate more racial resentment. Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Cronbach's Alpha for Racial Resentment Scale: (α=.83) EGSS variable name: C4_ZA1, C4_ZA2 C4_ZA3 C4_ZA4 *Answers that determine level of for racial resentment based on Valentino and Sears (2005).
Views of President Obama	View of President Obama Views toward President Obama were assessed through answers to a feeling thermometer question. The question was posed in the following manner. "We'd like to get your feelings toward some of our political leaders and other people who are in the news these days. We'll show the name of a person and we'd like you to rate that person using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 5 0 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that

| | you don't feel favorable toward the person and that you don't care too much for that person. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person. How would you rate Barack Obama?"

Variable ranged from 0 to 100.

Direction: Coded so that lower values indicate higher unfavorable views of President Obama.

Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing.

EGSS variable name: C4_C2 |
|---|---|
| Immigration | Views on Immigration Scale

Average of four questions related to opinions on immigrants and immigration (α=.70).

Question 1: "When people from other countries legally move to the United States to live and work, is this generally good for the U.S., generally bad for the U.S., or neither good nor bad?"

1= Extremely good
2= Moderately good
3= A little good
4= Neither good nor bad
5= A little bad
6= Moderately bad
7= Extremely bad

Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing.

EGSS variable name: C4_T1

Question 2: "Should the number of people who are allowed to legally move to the United States to live and work be increased, decreased, or kept the same as it is now?"

1= Increased a lot
2= Increased a moderate amount
3= Increased a little
4= Kept the same
5= Decreased a little
6= Decreased a moderate amount
7= Decreased a lot

Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. |

EGSS variable name: C4_T2

Question 3: "Which comes closest to your view about what government policy should be toward unauthorized immigrants now living in the United States? Should the government"

1=Allow unauthorized immigrants to remain in the United States and eventually qualify for U.S. citizenship, without penalties.

2=Allow unauthorized immigrants to remain in the United States and eventually qualify for U.S. citizenship, but only if they meet certain requirements like paying back taxes and fines, learning English, and passing background checks.

3=Have a guest worker program that allows unauthorized immigrants to remain in the United States in order to work, but only for a limited amount of time.

4=Make all unauthorized immigrants felons and send them back to their home country.

Direction: Coded so that higher values indicate more opposition to immigration.

Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing.

EGSS variable name: C4_T3

Question 4: "There is a proposal to allow people who were illegally brought into the U.S. as children to become permanent U.S. residents under some circumstances. Specifically, citizens of other countries who illegally entered the U.S. before age 16, who have lived in the U.S. 5 years or longer, and who graduated high school would be allowed to stay in the U.S. as permanent residents if they attend college or serve in the military."

"Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose this proposal? Do you [favor/oppose] that (a great deal, moderately, or a little / a little, moderately, or a great deal)?"

Following variables were recoded into a variable measuring degree of support or opposition: C4_T5, C4_T6_FA, C4_T6_OP

1= Favor, A great deal
2= Favor, Moderately
3= Favor, A little
4= Neither favor nor oppose
5= Oppose, A little
6= Oppose, Moderately
7= Oppose, A great deal

Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing.

	Cronbach's Alpha for Views on Immigration Scale: (α=.70) Direction: Higher values more opposition/negative view of immigrants/immigration.
Traditional Moral Values	Traditional Moral Values Scale Average of responses to four questions related to the government promoting traditional values, basing American laws on Christian values, support religious institutions covering birth control in insurance plans, and respondent church attendance (α=.70). 1. Government promoting traditional values: "Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose the government promoting "traditional values"?" 1= Oppose a great deal 2= Oppose a moderate amount 3= Oppose a little 4= Neither favor nor oppose 5= Favor a little 6= Favor a moderate amount 7= Favor a great deal Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Coded so that higher vales indicate more support for government promoting traditional values. EGSS variable name: C4_ZL2 2. Basing American law on Christian Values: "Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose basing American laws on Christian values?" 1= Oppose strongly 2= Oppose a moderate amount 3= Oppose a little 4= Neither favor nor oppose 5= Favor a little 6= Favor a moderate amount 7= Favor strongly Direction: Coded so that higher vales indicate more support for basing American law on Christian values. Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. EGSS variable name: C4_ZM2

	3. Views on insurance covering birth control: "Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose requiring religious schools and charities to provide their employees with health insurance that includes free birth control?" 1= Favor a great deal 2= Favor a moderate amount 3= Favor a little 4= Neither favor nor oppose 5= Oppose a little 6= Oppose a moderate amount 7= Oppose a great deal Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. EGSS variable name: C4_ZQ1 4. Church attendance: "How often do you attend religious services?" 1= Never 2= Once a year or less 3= A few times a year 4= Once or twice a month 5= Once a week 6= More than once a week Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Coded so that higher values indicate more church attendance. EGSS variable name: C4_P_130 Cronbach's Alpha for Traditional Moral Values Scale: (α=.70)
Role of Government/ Libertarianism	Role of Government Scale Average of two questions asking respondents about size of government and government regulation (α=.52) Question 1: "Should the government generally be doing more, doing less, or doing the same number of things it is doing now?" 1= A lot more 2= A moderate amount more 3= A little more 4= The same number of things 5= A little less 6= A moderate amount less 7= A lot less

	Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. EGSS variable name: C4_ZL1 Question 2: "How much government regulation of business is good for society? A great deal, a lot, a moderate amount, a little, or none at all?" 1= A great deal 2= A lot 3= A moderate amount 4= A little 5= None at all Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. EGSS variable name: C4_ZL3 Cronbach's Alpha for Role of Government Scale: (α=.52) Direction: Coded so that higher values indicates more support for less government.
Age	Age of respondent Four categories of age: 1= 18-29 2= 30-44 3=45-59 4=60+ Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. EGSS variable name: C4_PPA_2
Gender	Gender of respondent 0=female 1=male Note: Responses of no answer or not asked (unit non-response, terminated) were coded as missing. Direction: Coded so that high value indicates male respondent. EGSS variable name: C4_PPGEN

Chapter 4: Declining public support for the Tea Party

How has support for the Tea Party changed over time? Understandings changes in support for the Tea Party permits inferences to be made about its future ramifications and the extent to which supporters represent an enduring force in American politics. Poll questions concerning the Tea Party have been asked periodically since early 2010, providing an opportunity to examine changes in support over the course of time. While there is no shortage of polls concerning the Tea Party, surveys often differ in their method of administration. As such, this chapter will provide a unique contribution to our understanding of support for the Tea Party by examining changes in opinion controlling for differences in survey design.

This chapter examines support for the Tea Party from early 2010, when polls concerning the Tea Party were consistency asked, through the end of 2011 when support for the Tea Party had declined substantially. Two types of questions are used to plot Tea Party opinions over time. These questions pertain to support for, and favorability of, the Tea Party. The results of this chapter will demonstrate that Tea Party support, judged by four distinct measures, has declined over time reaching a peak level of support around November of 2010.

As alluded to earlier, this chapter also pays specific attention to the influence that question wording, or question response options, can have on public opinions of the Tea Party. Depending on the options given to respondents, support or favorability towards the Tea Party can vary significantly. The implications of these results for the Tea Party, and the measurement of public opinion, are also explored.

This chapter will proceed as follows. It will begin with a discussion of the debates surrounding survey administration. This is followed by an examination of the methodology utilized to examine support for the Tea Party over time. The chapter will close with a presentation of the empirical findings as well as detailed discussion of their implications.

Controversies in Survey Administration

A serious debate among public opinion scholars continues to rage regarding the appropriate manner in which to organize survey questions. Although in this analysis the reliance is on survey questions constructed by various polling organizations and many media outlets (and did not have the luxury of creating original survey questions[61]), it is worth examining some of the debates related to measuring public opinion. Public opinion scholars have long documented the many factors that can influence survey results as it is important that we do not examine these results in a vacuum (Bishop, 2011, p. 349). With this notion in mind, this analysis will briefly discuss some of the literature pertaining to survey research. Specifically, the literature related to question wording and branching, survey administration, sampling, and polling house effects. This brief discussion will set the stage for a discussion of how some of these factors were controlled in this analysis of survey data pertaining to the Tea Party.

The "Right" Way to Ask (or word) a Question

As will be made clear in the methodology section of this chapter, the aggregation and analysis of polling data is not an easy endeavor. Several questions ultimately arise pertaining to the appropriate manner in which to control for the various ways that

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[61] One small exception is the inclusion of a Tea Party question submitted to the 2010-2012 American National Election Studies EGSS discussed in the previous chapter. However, the EGSS questions were not used in the analysis conducted in this chapter.

questions are worded as well as the response options that are offered to respondents. In terms of this analysis, it is particularly problematic as these factors (of question wording and response options) can and often do vary from polling organization to polling organization. The literature on this subject is vast and a complete history of it will not be recounted here. Instead, the focus remains on literature that is of direct relevance to this analysis (For a more detailed discussion of some of the controversies related to survey design, see Bishop, 2011).

A primary dilemma faced by public opinion scholars is the decision whether to include a "don't know" or no opinion category for respondents. A common thread of scholarship suggests that questions should include this option, given the influence of nonattitudes on survey responses (Converse 1964, 1970 as cited in Bishop, 2011, p.351). The logic behind this strain of thought is that if someone does not have an opinion one way or another, it would be proper to allow them to express this lack of opinion by offering the option of don't know, or no opinion, so as to not bias the results (Converse 1964, 1970 as cited in Bishop, 2011, p.351).

However, this type of reasoning can be problematic. Some have shown that giving respondents the option of don't know, or a don't know question filter, increases the likelihood of this type of response (Schuman & Press, 1996, p. 143). This is the case when comparisons are made between questions that do not offer the "don't know" option, to questions that do (Schuman & Presser, 1996, p. 123). Still yet, some scholars have found that by omitting don't know responses, similar conclusions regarding an issue are often found, regardless of whether respondents voluntarily indicate don't know or are

given the option of don't know (Schuman & Presser, 1981, chap. 4 as cited in Bishop, 2011, p.352).

Complicating the matter more, the work of Bishop, Oldendick, and Tuchfarber (1983) found that including the don't know option, compared to not including it, produced significantly different survey responses (p.543). This finding is arrived at when comparisons were made to survey responses given when a don't know filter was used and when one was not (A "don't know filter" is the option, within the question wording, that indicates to a respondent that he or she can choose don't know as an answer to the question). Overall, the work of Bishop, Oldendick, and Tuchfarber (1983) suggests that a don't know filter can have a substantial influence on more complicated questions (such as positions on arms shipments to Turkey) as well as those questions regarding issues in which respondents are less familiar (p.538). However, they also find that including a don't know or no opinion filter has little impact on the results of questions pertaining to less complex issues such as affirmative action for blacks in education and employment (p.535).

The work of Krosnick, Holbrook, Berent, Carson, Hanemann, Kopp, Mitchel, Presser, Ruud, Smith, Moody, Green, and Conaway (2002) suggests that including the option of a no opinion category may lead to a distortion in the true opinions among respondents. Specifically, Krosnick et al. (2002) find that many individuals who indicate that they have no opinion on a subject do indeed have opinions. However, they give a no opinion response based on the notion of satisficing. The notion of satisficing in public opinion surveys was developed by Krosnick (1991) and is premised on the idea that individuals are often lazy in how they answer survey responses. Rather than expending

the necessary cognitive effort needed to answer a question, some respondents instead choose the option of "don't know" as it provides an easy escape from having to put forward the needed energy to answer the question as accurately as possible (Krosnick , 1991, as cited in Krosnick et al., 2002, p. 375). In fact, later work by Krosnick et al. (2002) advises against the use of a don't know option in survey responses, in light of more precise measures (p.399).

These scholars make this argument in large part due to the finding that people who indicated that they had no opinion on a matter, when given this option, could have given a substantive answer had they chosen to. In fact, it is argued that these individuals were able to give answers with the same reliability and validity as those who advocated a position, when not given the option of no opinion (Krosnick et al., 2002, p. 400). Thus, offering a don't know or no opinion category encouraged satisficing. Interestingly, these scholars also found that satisficing was significantly related to education. Specifically, lower levels of formal education were significantly related with higher levels of no-opinion responses (p.389)

In contrast, the work of Bishop, Tuchfarber, and Oldendick (1986) provides evidence supporting the inclusion of don't know or no opinion options in survey questions. Specifically, the authors administered surveys comprised of questions about three fictional pieces of legislation, posed in three different forms. These questions forms included one which offered respondents the opinion of stating that he or she had not thought enough about the issue, another form which did not offer a had not thought enough about the issue option, and a third form which also omitted the option of have not

thought enough about the issue while also having the interviewer probe the respondent to provide an answer if one was not given.

The authors found that the first question (which offered a no opinion or don't know option) form provided the lowest percentage of opinions on the issue as many respondents neglected to provide an opinion. Comparatively speaking, questions two and three resulted in a substantially higher number of respondents providing an opinion with question three producing the highest response rates. In terms of the factors related to response rates, the authors found that individuals with a higher educational background were more likely to indicate that they had no opinion on the fictitious issues (Bishop, Tuchfarber, & Oldendick, 1986).

Overall, the work of Bishop, Tuchfarber, and Oldendick (1986) suggests that including a response option indicating that the respondent has not heard enough about the issue (or in other words a don't know option), dramatically reduced the number of individuals expressing opinions. Thus, no opinion or don't know filters could have a vital role in providing an outlet for individuals whose actual feelings on the issue are not provided.

Whether to include a don't know or no opinion option, or allowing respondents to volunteer this response, remains a serious debate among scholars. This debate will not be settled here, but it should be noted that some arguments in the debate will be revisited in light of the findings presented later in this chapter. For now, it can be hypothesized that the decision to include a don't know option, or not, in the survey questions included in this analysis is expected to have a relatively modest impact on reliably measuring public opinions of the Tea Party for the following reasons.

First, evidence suggests that there are no significant differences between questions that offer a don't know option and those that do not (Poe, Seeman, McLaughlin, Mehl, & Dietz, 1988). Second, significant differences between questions that offer a don't know filter are more likely to occur among questions that are more obscure and complex in nature (Bishop, Oldendick, & Tuchfarber, 1983, p. 535). In the context of the Tea Party, it is not believed to be a complex issue difficult to understand by the public. Thirdly, the findings of Krosnick et al. (2002) concerning satisficing suggest that this practice is significantly related to question placement on the survey, education, motivation of the respondent, and anonymity in reporting their answers (p.396). These factors are difficult if not impossible to control for given the large number of surveys included in this analysis, negating a direct test of this theory. Even more, there still remains considerable debate regarding the conclusions of the satisficing theory that makes conclusive notions of its warranty debatable (see Bishop, 2011, p. 353 for critique of satisficing theory).

The influence of don't know, or no opinion, options should be noted, but it is not expected to be a stumbling block to a valid examination of Tea Party opinions over time. This discussion will now proceed to a related dilemma examined in the public opinion literature on survey design. This dilemma relates to the decision whether to include a middle response in survey questions.

Including a Middle Response to Survey Questions

The middle option in survey items allows a respondent to choose the middle ground between two competing responses to a question. It is best described as the "neutral position or mid-point on a scale" that gives respondents the freedom to not take a

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side on the issue at hand (Bishop, 2011, p.353). The same debates found regarding the inclusion of a no opinion or don't know option are also found in discussions related to the inclusion of a middle option in survey responses. The decision to include a middle response in survey questions can have important ramifications on respondent opinions. A case-in-point is the work of Bishop (1987) that found that including a middle option can dramatically shift public opinions towards specific issues. Specifically, when respondents were asked about their opinions regarding increasing social security benefits, without a middle option, of neither increasing nor decreasing spending, a majority of respondents favored an increase in spending on benefits. However, when respondents were given the middle option of keeping spending at their current levels, in the preface of the question, the percentage of respondents favoring an increase decreased significantly (Bishop, 1987, p.223). This suggests that offering a middle option will more reliably measure opinions of individuals whose preferred option is not available or those ambivalent towards the issue at a hand (Bishop, 1987, p.229).

Still yet, the practice of including a middle option is largely discouraged, in light of alternate measures that can sift out true ambivalence from those who may be leaning towards an issue (Converse & Presser, 1986, as cited in Bishop, 2011, p.354). Furthermore, even if included, it is argued that including a middle category draws proportionally from both sides of an issue negating its proposed influence (Schuman & Presser, 1981, chap.6 as cited in Bishop, 2011, p.354).

Given the debate concerning this issue, this analysis will control for whether questions include a middle option or not. Doing so is both practical and easily achieved.

This chapter will now move to a discussion of another dilemma faced by survey

designers, the decision to structure survey questions in a branching format.

Branching and Survey Responses

Question wording is a vital component of survey design that often requires the use

of multiple steps in measuring public opinion. The process of question branching consists

of two steps, where the first step establishes the direction of the respondent's opinion and

the second steps involves a follow up question measuring the strength of the opinion

(Krosnick & Berent, 1993, p. 943). This process has demonstrated a high degree of

reliability in measuring public opinion as the following literature demonstrates.

The work of Krosnick and Berent (1993) concludes that branching measures

provide a more reliable indication of public opinion than nonbranching measures (p.941).

Moreover, Malhotra, Krosnick, and Thomas (2009) provide evidence that branching the

endpoints of a question significantly increases the reliability and validity of that measure.

Specifically, branching the endpoint of a question into two or three alternatives increased

the validity of the opinions measured, with three options producing the most substantial

increase in validity. In light of these findings, this analysis will also control for the

influence of branching on survey responses. Based on the work of Krosnick and Berent,

(1993) questions that include branching should provide a more reliable measure of Tea

Party opinions as compared to their non-branching counterparts.

The final issue of survey design examined in this analysis will be those related to

survey housing effects. It is relatively common knowledge that polling organizations

employ different methods to measure public opinion. As a result, polling organizations

often find different levels of public support concerning the same issue because of

differences in the manner that each survey organization collects its data (Erikson &
Tedin, 2011). A discussion of problems related to survey housing effects follows.

Survey House Effects

House effects are defined by Erikson and Tedin (2011) as "variations in survey
results due to idiosyncratic ways in which survey organizations conduct their polling"
(p.47). These idiosyncratic methods can vary in terms of how polling organizations
handle call backs to respondents who may have initially declined to participate, measures
of likely voters as well as many other factors (Erikson & Tedin, 2011, p.47). Thus, this
analysis will take into account the various polling house effects to ensure a more reliable
measure of public support for the Tea Party. Now that a discussion of the traditional
obstacles to accurately measuring public opinion has been outlined, this chapter will now
turn to a direct examination of the methodology employed to examine the Tea Party.

The Many Ways to Measure Opinions of the Tea Party

The history of the Tea Party is one that stretches over four years (as of this
writing). Since its inception in late 2008, early 2009, the American public has been
consistently polled regarding its opinions of the Tea Party. However, it is important to
note that public opinion polls did not begin to mention the Tea Party until late 2009 and
early 2010. An aggregation of these polls, reflecting Tea Party support over time and
controlling for various survey effects, has yet to be compiled. Thus, surveys asking
questions related to the Tea Party were collected and aggregated to gain a complete
picture of Tea Party support over time.

A variety of Tea Party questions were asked over the years, ranging from
positivity, to knowledge of, to support, allowing for many angles from which to gauge

opinions of the Tea Party. Although it would be enlightening to consider all the variations

in the questions related to the Tea Party, for the sake of brevity, this analysis focused on

the types of questions deemed to be the clearest indicators of Tea Party support. These

questions were those concerning support or opposition, and favorable or unfavorable

opinions, towards the Tea Party. Moreover, an ideal examination of Tea Party support

over time would extend through the day of this writing. However, at some point the

collection process had to end and the analysis had to begin. As such, this analysis of Tea

Party support covers public opinion from the beginning of 2010 though the end of 2011.

These were arguably the peak years of Tea Party support and more recent polling data

indicates that support has not rebounded from the decline observed in this analysis

(Gallup, 2013).

Measuring Tea Party Support: Favorability and Support Briefly

The two types of questions used in this analysis dealt with issues of support and

favorability. For those interested in a more extensive discussion of the methodological

issues and decisions related to question wording, and surveys selected for this analysis,

skip to the methodology section below. For now, a brief thumbnail sketch of the

approaches is provided.

The Tea Party support questions were largely posed in the following format. For

instance, a September 2010 NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll asked respondents, "do

you consider yourself a supporter of the Tea Party Movement"? Some questions were

also asked about gradations of Tea Party support, probing respondents regarding the

intensity of their support. For instance, a September 2011 ABC News/*Washington Post*

poll asked, "what is your view of the Tea Party movement—would you say you support it

strongly, support it somewhat, oppose it somewhat, or oppose it strongly"? For the questions of support that gave options for intensity of support, the percentage indicating strongly support was examined as a separate variable.

Concerning the favorability questions, they were commonly asked in the following manner. For instance, a September 2010 CBS News/*New York Times* poll asked respondents, "is your opinion of the Tea Party movement favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't heard enough about the Tea Party movement yet to have an opinion?" Again, gradations of the favorability questions were also asked in some polls. As an example, an August 2010 *Associated Press*/GfK Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications poll used the branching format and asked respondents, "do you have a favorable, unfavorable, or neither favorable nor unfavorable opinion of the Tea Party movement? (If favorable, ask:) is that very favorable or somewhat favorable? (If unfavorable, ask:) Is that very unfavorable or somewhat unfavorable"?[62] Moreover, for survey items that gave respondents options for intensity of favorability towards the Tea Party, the percentage indicating very favorable or strongly favorable, were also included as a separate variable measuring the intensity of opinion.

Methodology: Creating the Four Aggregate Measures of Tea Party Opinions

The data presented in the trend lines of this chapter were compiled in the following manner. First, data were collected from nearly every available survey asking respondents about the Tea Party. The goal was to depict opinions of the Tea Party based on an aggregation of polls from a multitude of sources. This approach provides a more reliable measure of public support for the Tea Party than relying on just one survey

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[62] It should be noted that branching type questions consisted of only a minority of the questions asked. Only 19 of the 84 favorability type questions employed branching. In terms of the support questions, only 29 out of 172 employed branching.

organization. The majority of the polling data were collected from the Roper Center for

Public Policy's polling database and supplemented through other sources.[63] The Roper

database has been described by some prominent public opinion scholars as the "the most

comprehensive and up-to-date method for find finding particular opinion items" (Erikson

& Tedin, 2011, p. 16), and served as an invaluable source of Tea Party polling

information.

Overall, the data breakdown was as follows. Data were collected from 18

different polling organizations for the favorability questions dating from January 2010 to

November 2011. The total number of favorability polls collected was 84 with 43

representing simple favorability questions and 41 consisting of favorability questions

measuring the intensity of the response. For the support questions, data were collected

from 15 different polling organizations dating from February 2010 to December 2011.

The total number of support questions collected was 172. Among these 172, 89 were

simple support or oppose questions and 83 measured the intensity of support for the Tea

Party (see the appendix for a complete list of polling organizations).

For the simple support questions (those asking whether the respondent supports or

opposes the Tea Party, without measuring the intensity in support), three categories were

created. These categories included support, oppose, and no opinion. If the respondent

was given the option of neither support nor oppose, the neither category was combined

with the opposition category. It is understood that this approach may over represent the

percentage of opposition to the Tea Party. Nevertheless, given that the primary focus of

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[63]Data were also collected from the Polling the Nations polling database, along with other primary sources of polling information For instance, the *Economist* provides an extensive archive of polls pertaining to the Tea Party that was used to verify the results reported in other sources (Economist/YouGov polls, 2013).

this analysis relies on measuring support or favorability percentages, it is not believed to present a problem.

If a respondent indicated don't know, no opinion, refused, haven't heard enough, undecided, or can't say, these values were combined with the third category of no opinion. This approach, to treat these types of responses as no opinion, was the same in all four measures of Tea Party opinions. For the intensity of support questions, the responses were treated in the same way as the simple support questions. However, for these types of questions the variable that was plotted was the percentage of respondents indicating they strongly supported the Tea Party (see below for details).

The simple favorability questions (asking respondents for either a favorable or an unfavorable opinion of the Tea Party) were treated in a similar vein as the simple support questions. Three categories were created consisting of favorable, unfavorable, and no opinion. Responses to these questions that were undecided, don't know, haven't heard of, or refused were all combined into the no opinion category. This same approach to the no opinion category was also used for the intensity of favorability questions. However, like the gradations in support question, the percentage of individuals indicating strongly or very favorable was used to plot intensity in support over time (see below for details).

Control Variables

Understanding the complex nature of public opinion, and the careful steps that must be taken in analyzing it, several control variables were included in this analysis. Any standard public opinion textbook will note the importance that the survey sample, methodology or administration, question wording and branching, the option of a middle

category, and survey house effects can have on survey results (Erikson & Tedin, 2011, p. 54). Thus, this analysis controlled for these important survey characteristics.

First, a variable was constructed for each poll to indicate whether the poll used a sample of registered or likely voters, a national population, or other limited type samples. From this variable, three separate dummy variables were created. For instance, dummy variables were created to signify whether the sample consisted of registered voters or not.[64] An additional dummy variable was created to address limited samples or those surveys that included unique populations such as samples of adults over 50. This limited samples dummy variable controlled for whether each particular poll included a sample of likely and registered voters or other limited samples such as the ones mentioned above among others.[65]

These dummy variables were coded in this manner for the following reasons. First, it was assumed that Tea party support might differ depending on whether the poll included only registered voters or a national population. Higher support for the Tea Party was expected to be found among registered voters, given that registered voters are more likely to be white (as compared to Hispanic) and wealthier than the average citizen (Pew Research Center, 2006). Moreover, as Chapter 3 demonstrated, a large majority of Tea Party supporters, much larger than the public at large, indicate that they are registered to vote. Secondly, a dummy variable was used to control for limited samples such as polls pertaining to respondents who were aware of the Tea Party. Higher support for the Tea Party was expected among individuals who had indicated that they were aware of the Tea Party.

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[64] Two polls consisted of a sample of Republican voters, these were left out of the regression models.
[65] Other samples included those taken from the Economist/YouGov polls, which asked support for the Tea Party only among respondents aware of the Tea Party (2013).

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, data were also collected pertaining to how the survey was conducted, specifically whether it was administered via telephone or over the internet. There remains considerable debate regarding the accuracy and effectiveness of internet polling for a variety of reasons. For instance, a 2010 study found that a little over 1 in 5 Americans do not use the internet, raising issues of representativeness in sampling (Pew Research Center, 2010 as cited in Erikson & Tedin, 2011, p.39). Moreover, internet polling that relies on a recurring panel of respondents may produce respondents that are different from the American public (see Dillman, 2008 as cited in Erikson & Tedin, 2011, p.39). As such, a dummy variable was created to indicate whether the survey was conducted via telephone, or not, to test for possible mode effects.

Third, the manner in which the question was asked was also taken into account. As many scholars of public opinion are aware, "it should be no surprise that in survey research, as in everyday life, the answers received are often dependent on the questions asked" (Erikson & Tedin , 2011, p.40). To control for the influence of question wording, questions were either coded as being simple support or favorable (i.e. no options for intensity) or as measuring intensity in support or favorability. Furthermore, as the work of Krosnick and Berent (1993) has demonstrated, branching survey questions produces more reliable measures of public opinion. Thus, an additional dummy variable was created that indicated whether branching was used in the question wording. In total, 48 out of the 256 questions collected for this analysis incorporated some form of branching.[66]

In terms of this analysis, higher support and favorability for the Tea Party is expected when the level of intensity is measured, given that more response options

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[66] None of the simple support questions included branching and only one simple favorability question used branching.

increases the likelihood that an option closest to the actual opinion of a respondent will be present. In other words, fewer respondents will choose the middle or neutral category in expressing an opinion about the Tea Party because it is more likely that their true opinion is offered as an option.

Lastly, organizational house effects and the option of a middle category were also controlled for. House effects were controlled for by examining the individual effect each organization had on predicted support or opposition. Whether a question included a middle response was also considered though the creation of a dummy variable indicating the inclusion of a middle category in the question. Less support is expected for the Tea Party when a middle option is included as it is expected to elicit responses from tacit supporters. Overall, 72 questions, out of a total number of 256 examined in this chapter, included a specific middle category.

The Case for Four Measures of Tea Party Opinions

The two variations in question wording, along with the inclusion of intensity of favorability and support asked by some polling firms, presented a unique challenge for this analysis. Both questions asked similar, yet somewhat different, types of questions pertaining to opinions of the Tea Party. To combine all of the questions into one category, labeling it simply as support, would ignore the problems associated with how the questions were asked and how this might influence responses. To control for this possibility, each type of question was analyzed separately. In other words, four trend lines concerning views of the Tea Party were aggregated and plotted. This approach offers many benefits.

First, it enabled an analysis of four independent, and varying, measures of opinions of the Tea Party. This permitted a diverse approach to understanding opinions of the Tea Party without relying on one sole manner of asking opinion questions, while also taking into consideration the influence that the intensity of support or favorability might exhibit on overall opinion trends. Second, it permitted a direct examination of the impact of question wording on perceived opinions of the Tea Party. Third, if these four different approaches in question wording point to a similar trend in Tea Party support then additional confidence can be placed in the accuracy of the conclusions. Overall, an analysis of opinions of Tea Party support in this multipronged approach ensures that the most objective and accurate depiction of opinions concerning the Tea Party is found.

Empirical Findings

As of now, a case has been made that examining opinions of the Tea Party from four different angles is the most appropriate course of action. Still yet, some might contend that combining the questions pertaining to support or opposition and the questions of support and opposition including gradation, and vice versa for the favorability questions, into either support/opposition or favorable/unfavorable would be the best course of action to accurately gauge opinions of the Tea Party. After all, both favorability and support questions are asking the same question, just permitting more leeway in the responses.

Fortunately, this measurement decision can be tested statistically. If it is shown statistically, that question wording has a significant influence on opinion measures, or the variation in opinions regarding favorability or support, then the approach utilized in this analysis would be further supported. Table 4.1 presents the results of a two-sample t test.

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The *t* test determines whether there is a statistically significant difference in responses between the two different types of support questions. As mentioned previously, the two types of questions included were those that simply asked about support or opposition to the Tea Party and those questions that asked about intensity of support, or opposition, towards the Tea Party.

Examining Table 4.1, the results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between responses to the two different questions. Substantively, there is an 8 percent average difference in support for the Tea Party, between the two different types of questions. Moreover, the questions that gave respondents more options in indicating support for the Tea Party (e.g. strongly, somewhat strongly) resulted in higher percentages of support for the Tea Party. Thus if a pollster was interested in portraying a higher degree of support for the Tea Party, it would be to their benefit to ask a question regarding support with the many options of intensity in support (and report support for the Tea Party as a summation of all responses indicating support). Overall, the results of this test indicate that the manner in which the question was asked resulted in a significant difference in the average public support rate found for the Tea Party.

[Insert Table 4.1]

In terms of the favorability questions, similar results are found for the two different types of favorability questions. As seen in Table 4.2, there is an average difference of 5 percentage points between the two different types of questions. Again, like the support questions, the question that offers respondents more options in how to respond to the question produces higher levels of favorability towards the Tea Party (Note: all of the favorable opinions for the intensity in favorability are combined into one

category indicating favorability). Specifically, asking the favorability question that allows for opinions regarding intensity of support results in an average favorability rating that is 5 percentage points higher, than what is found by asking the public the simple favorability question. Interestingly, Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show that Tea Party support, or favorability, was fairly low at around 32 percent, on average, for 2010 and 2011.

[Insert Table 4.2]

Altogether, these findings are important given that news reports sometimes present the findings of polls, that ask intensity of opinion whether it be support or favorability, and lump together the differing categories presenting a narrative of either support or favorability. This can present a somewhat misleading indication of public opinion, given that, as the above-mentioned results suggest, question wording, or the options to questions given to respondents, can produce substantially different degrees of support or favorability.

To further accent how survey items that are seemingly asking the same question can produce substantially different results, a two-sample *t* test was also used to examine if the average responses to don't know, or opposition or unfavorable opinions, toward the Tea Party differed significantly by question type (see Table 4.3 and Table 4.4). All of the two-sample *t* tests produced statistically significant results.[67]

[Insert Table 4.3]
[Insert Table 4.4]

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[67]The only exception being the no opinions for the support questions. It is probable that the lack of statistically significant results can be traced to how responses to these questions were aggregated. For the simple support questions, most responses that could be given were support, oppose, depends, or not sure or a slightly different variation. Moreover, for the intensity questions there were a variety of different responses with one of them often being neither support nor oppose the Tea Party as well as a don't know option. These neither responses were combined with the opposition category. If the neither category for intensity support questions, was combined with the no opinion category, it would have substantially increased the mean averages for the don't know responses. Thus, it could have been reasonable to assume, that if the two categories (don't know and neither) were combined then the results to the questions would have been significantly different.

Once more, these results indicate substantial differences in the average responses to survey questions regarding the Tea Party depending on the type of question and response options given. For instance, Table 4.4 provides an indication of how substantial the differences were in the don't know responses provided depending on the question asked. Specifically, there was a 15 percentage point difference in the no opinions responses between the two favorable type questions. The results indicate that, on average, 35 percent of the public had no opinion of the Tea Party when asked the simple favorable question. However, when the favorable question was asked that measured the intensity of opinion, 20 percent of the public, on average, indicated that they had no opinion of the Tea Party.

These results are expected in light of previous literature that has found that the more options given to a respondent the more likely he or she is to reliably identify their true opinion, as it is more likely that their true opinion is represented in one of the response options (Malhotra, Krosnick, & Thomas, 2009). As mentioned previously, the work of Krosnick and Berent (1993) has shown that a more reliable measure of public opinion is found when branching questions are utilized. Specifically, Krosnick and Berent (1993) found that once a preliminary direction in opinion is found, branching the endpoints of the public's positions results in a more valid measure.

In terms of the polls available for this analysis, the vast majority did not utilize a branching format. For instance, of the 256 polling items collected only 48 used branching questions. Moreover, the only types of questions that utilized branching were those that measured the intensity of the public's opinion. Although relatively small in number, it is still important that these types of questions are accounted for, specifically, given the

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evidence supporting their superior validity in measuring public opinion (Krosnick &

Berent, 1993). Thus, a two-sample *t* test was used to determine if there was a significant

difference between those intensity questions that included branching and those that did

not.[68] As expected, a significant difference was found between questions that included

branching and those that did not.[69]

Table 4.5 presents the results of the *t* test showing that branching questions

yielded lower levels of support on average. Support for the Tea Party was three

percentage points higher on average for questions that did not include branching as

compared to those that did. Overall, these findings suggest that branching has a

significant effect on measures of public opinions of the Tea Party and that it remains an

important variable to consider when analyzing public opinion data.

[Insert Table 4.5]

Measuring Public Opinion over Time: Support for the Tea Party

The first approach used to analyze opinions of the Tea Party over time relies on

simple questions of support for the Tea Party. In other words, questions that generally

ask, do you support or oppose the Tea Party? Figure 4.1 displays the results of the Tea

Party simple support question, with the first poll occurring in February of 2010 and the

last poll in mid-November of 2011. This figure plots support for the Tea Party by days

and includes all simple support polls excluding those that sampled only Republican

voters. The results indicate that support for the Tea Party peaked around the midterm

elections in November 2010 and has remained on a steady decline through the end of

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[68] As a reminder, the process of question branching consists of two steps where the first step establishes the direction of the respondent's opinion and the second steps involves a follow up question measuring the strength of the opinion (Krosnick & Berent, 1993, p. 943).

[69] A significant difference was not found for the favorability questions, most likely given the small sample size. Only 41 observations total.

2011. Although the decline is only a couple of percentage points, the trend does show support has eroded.

[Insert Figure 4.1]

To further account for Tea Party support over time, a second measure of support was plotted. As mentioned earlier, depending on the responses offered to the respondent, support for the Tea Party differs dramatically (as much as 8 percentage points depending on the question type). Moreover, combining all of the responses for the intensity of support questions into either support or oppose contributes significantly to the different average support results, as documented in the two-sample t tests tables. It is reasonable to assume that combining the support categories together will not accurately reflect support for the Tea Party over time. Specifically, since respondents may be indicating to pollsters a decline in support by moving from strongly support to somewhat support in their responses. Certainly a decline in support, but something that would not be reflected in a support category that combined all of the intensity of support responses into one measure of support. Thus, a separate variable was created to reflect only survey responses of strong support for the Tea Party.

This strongly support data was then plotted over time, to determine if the intensity in support for the Tea Party has indeed declined over time. Figure 4.2 presents the results of this alternate measure. Examining Figure 4.2, support for the Tea Party, as measured by strong intensity in support, has been on the decline since its average high of around 20 percent strongly supporting the Tea Party in early 2010, leveling off at around 16 percent of the public strongly supporting in December of 2011.

Taken together, these two figures present a marked decline, or at least, a leveling off in support for the Tea Party from 2010 through the 2011. Although useful, these trends should not be considered in a vacuum. As noted earlier, measuring public opinion can be a tricky endeavor and results should be carefully considered taking into account the many different approaches to the survey process. Specifically, Figure 4.1 and 4.2 did not take into account the various factors related to survey methodology that can influence survey response.

[Insert Figure 4.2]

Predicted Support

To account for differences in survey methodology the following factors were controlled for in predicting support for the Tea Party. These factors include organizational house effects, the type of sample (and whether the sample consisted of registered voters or national adults[70]), type of survey methodology (whether the survey was conducted via internet or telephone), the inclusion of a neither or middle category, and the use of question branching (for the intensity in support questions). Thus, predicted support for the Tea Party was obtained by estimating a regression model to see if support or favorability changed over time when controlling for all of the survey effects.[71]

Figure 4.3 plots the predicted support for the Tea Party using the simple support question. This figure shows a steady rise in support for the Tea Party beginning in February 2010 (averaging 25 percent support) through November of that year where it levels off at around 28 percent average support. Beginning in the months shortly after

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[70] It should be noted that other factors were controlled for, but were not shown to be influential in predicting Tea Party support and, thus, are not reflected in Figures 4.3 or 4.4. Specifically, regressions were run that incorporated a limited samples dummy variable. This limited samples dummy variable controlled for whether each particular poll included a sample of likely and registered voters or other limited samples of adults over 50 or samples that excluded respondents not aware of the Tea Party.
[71] The results from each regression model utilized in this chapter can be found in the appendix at the end of the chapter.

November 2010, support for the Tea Party starts a steady decline to about 23 percent in December of 2011.

[Insert Figure 4.3]

Figure 4.4 plots the predicted share of the public strongly supporting the Tea Party controlling for the same factors utilized in Figure 4.3 (however, the dummy measure for the neither category was excluded in Figure 4.4 as it did not improve the model fit). However, Figure 4.4 utilizes the variable measuring strongly support responses and takes into account the influence of question branching. This figure indicates that those expressing a high level of support for the Tea Party has declined since early 2010 where is stood at around 20 percent. The decline in the high intensity of support continues until around March of 2011 where it levels out at around 13 percent.

The figure also appears to show that share of the public strongly supporting the Tea Party may be on the rise towards the end of 2011. However, the confidence interval for the predicted support widens towards the end of the trend line indicating greater uncertainty in the predicted support. This is due to the limited amount of polls utilized in this model that took place in the late months of 2011. Thus, the intensity in support for the Tea Party for the majority of 2011 is best described as flat. Overall, Figure 4.4 suggests that the high intensity levels of support for the Tea Party has been on a steady decline since polls regarding the Tea Party have been conducted through the end of 2011.

[Insert Figure 4.4]

Measuring Public Opinion over Time: Favorable Opinions of the Tea Party

The results of the questions pertaining to public support for the Tea Party indicate that support has been declining. To further investigate these findings, survey items

pertaining to favorable opinions of the Tea Party were also plotted. Figure 4.5 displays

public opinion of the Tea Party focusing on the simple favorability question (the question

asking respondents whether they had a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the Tea Party

without measuring the intensity of opinion). Figure 4.5 plots favorable opinions by the

day, with the first poll beginning in January of 2010 and the latest occurring in November

of 2011, showing a trend in Tea Party favorability that has been on the decline since its

peak at around 31 percent in November of 2010.

<div align="center">[Insert Figure 4.5]</div>

Even more striking are the results presented in Figure 4.6 which plots very or

strongly favorable opinions of the Tea Party, from the intensity of favorability question

responses. This figure indicates that the percentage of the American public with a very

favorable opinion of the Tea Party has been on a steady decline since the summer of

2010. Still yet, we cannot be too confident of these trends unless we account for the

various factors shown to influence public opinion responses. In other words, will these

results hold up when polling house effects, the survey methodology, question branching,

and the sample have all been controlled for?

<div align="center">[Insert Figure 4.6]</div>

Predicted Favorability

Figure 4.7 plots the predicted share of the public with a favorable opinion of the

Tea Party, using the simple favorable question, and controlling for the above-mentioned

factors. The results present a picture of Tea Party favorability that has remained stable at

around 27 percent, although showing signs of decline. Although the decline is around one

percentage point, it is consistent with all of the previous models that show a decline in

Tea Party support.

[Insert Figure 4.7]

As mentioned previously, questions utilizing more options for respondents to

choose from have been shown to produce public opinion results with greater validity.

Thus, the findings of Figure 4.8, which takes into account the intensity of public's

opinion (plotting the percentage of respondents with a strong or very favorable opinion of

the Tea Party) controlling for polling house effects, survey mode, sample, and question

branching should be a more reliable indicator of trends in Tea Party favorability.

The plotted data in Figure 4.8 shows that the predicted share of the public with a

strongly favorable opinion of the Tea Party has declined dramatically. The average

percentage of respondents with a very favorable opinion of the Tea Party peaked at

around 21 percent in February of 2010. Following this month, the percentage of

respondents indicating a very favorable opinion of the Tea Party has declined to around

13 percent in October of 2011. Overall, holding all other variables constant, the results of

Figure 4.3, 4.4, 4.7, and 4.8 provides strong evidence that Tea Party support as well as

favorability has been on a steady and steep decline, with the decline being particularly

strong among the most ardent supporters.

[Insert Figure 4.8]

Measuring Public Opinion over Time: Is the Public More Aware of the Tea Party?

So far, the results of this chapter have provided substantial evidence that the

public's opinion of the Tea Party has been on the decline. This is true whether opinions

are measured through favorability or support questions. It can be assumed that as time

progresses the percentage of the American public indicating a don't know opinion of the Tea Party should also decline. Reasons for this decline include factors such as increased media attention driven by the media's curiosity concerning Tea Party supporters, the public's support or opposition to the Tea Party, and political events associated with the Tea Party such as the 2011 debate over raising the federal debt ceiling. Moreover, previous studies have shown that don't know opinions are more likely to be given concerning complex issues that respondents are less familiar with (Bishop, Oldendick, & Tuchfarber, 1983). Thus, as time progresses the public is expected to become more familiar with the Tea party, decreasing the expected instances of don't know opinions. Furthermore, although not inherently complex on its face, as time progresses the public's knowledge of the Tea Party is expected to increase, decreasing the uncertainty regarding what the Tea Party stands for, leading to a decrease in the preponderance of don't know responses.

As we now know, public opinions of the Tea Party have been increasingly negative, or at least less favorable. It could also be that declines in the level of support are related to an increased awareness of the Tea Party by the American public. In other words, when the Tea Party initially emerged its support could be attributed to its amorphous or ambiguous nature. As the Tea Party has been increasingly defined by issues, controversies, and associations with political leaders this perception may have eroded. One way to get at this is to measure the extent to which the public indicates an overall awareness of the Tea Party.

As mentioned previously, the no opinion categories used in this analysis are an aggregation of the followings responses, don't knows, never heard of, refused, undecided,

can't say, and no opinion. Although this aggregation is far from a perfect measure of the public's awareness of the Tea Party, it does give a sense of some attributes of the public's opinion. For instance, the measure can serve as a useful proxy concerning how opinions of the Tea Party have changed, whether it is through the development of a once nonexistent opinion, an increased awareness or interest in the Tea Party, or a shift in the polarization of public opinion from indifference to direct support or opposition.

To test whether awareness of the Tea Party has increased over time, the predicted share (obtained through same regression method used to predict support and favorability) of the public with no opinion (or a don't know opinion) of the Tea Party was plotted. Like the previous measures of support and favorability, these opinions were examined incorporating the four different types of questions pertaining to the Tea Party. Furthermore, such factors as survey mode (internet or telephone), the type of sample (whether the respondents where registered voters or the national population over 18, excluding samples of only Republicans), survey house effects, the use of branching (only for the intensity of support and favorability questions), and the inclusion of a middle category in the question were also controlled for. The results of each of these models will be discussed as follows.

Figure 4.9 displays the predicted no opinion responses concerning the Tea Party utilizing the simple support question responses. As expected, the percentage of the public expressing no opinion of the Tea Party has been on the decline since polling began in February of 2010 leveling off at around 8 percent in June of 2011.

[Figure 4.9]

Plotting the predicted no opinion responses of the public using the questions that measure the intensity of support, displayed in Figure 4.10, produces a similar trend displayed in Figure 4.9. The figure indicates that percentage of the public expressing no opinion of the Tea Party has been on a fairly steady decline since polls began. Figure 4.10, indicates that the percentage of don't know responses levels off at around 10 percent in the summer of 2011.

In terms of the regression results used in Figure 4.10, it should also be noted that the dummy variable for the inclusion of a middle category resulted in a statistically significant drop in the percentage of individuals indicating a no opinion response concerning of the Tea Party.[72] Substantively, the inclusion of the neither category in the question resulted in a 10-percentage point drop, on average, in no opinion (or don't know) responses. The influence of this middle options on the percentage of no opinion or don't knows in light of the findings of Bishop (1987), suggests that the decision to select the middle alternative can be attributed to ambivalence towards the other options (p.229). Thus, it reasonable to assume that a lower percentage of no opinion responses would be predicted if more questions offered a middle option. The inclusion of a neither option, or a middle category, may allow for a more accurate depiction of awareness of the Tea Party when compared to responses where this option is not made available.

[Figure 4.10]

To further examine the public awareness of the Tea Party, Figure 4.11 plots the predicted share of the public with no opinion of the Tea Party using the simple favorability question. This figure shows a steady decline in the average no opinion

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[72] The middle option control variable was not significant for the regression models used in Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.11 and was excluded from the regression used in Figure 4.12 because of collinearity. The regression results are presented in Table 4.11 of the appendix at the end of the chapter.

responses beginning in January of 2010, where it peaked at around 53 percent through November of 2011 where it declined to around 29 percent.

[Figure 4.11]

An additional examination of the percentage of the public indicating no opinion of the Tea Party is plotted in Figure 4.12 which presents the predicted share of the public indicating no opinion of the Tea Party, incorporating the intensity in favorability opinions. This figure shows a decline in the percentage of no opinion responses beginning at its peak of 19 percent in February of 2010, declining to around 15 percent in June of 2011.

[Figure 4.12]

Overall Figures 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, and 4.12, after controlling for a variety of different factors shown to influence public opinion responses, indicate that percentage of respondents indicating that they have no opinion of the Tea Party has steady declined since polls began. To summarize, familiarity tends to breed contempt when it comes to public support for the Tea Party.

Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter has examined public support for the Tea Party, taking advantage of consistent polling regarding the Tea Party over the years. In doing so, this analysis has incorporated over 250 survey items taken from more than 20 different polling organizations. Drawing from this extensive aggregation of polling data, four important findings have been yielded. These findings are worth revisiting.

First, the findings of this chapter support the hypothesis proposed in Chapter 1. Specifically, Chapter 1 began with the hypothesis that:

Hypothesis 7: Support for the Tea Party will decline from 2010 to 2011.

This chapter has shown that after controlling for the manner in which questions are worded, substantial evidence is found for a decline in support for the Tea Party. Whether measured by simple support or simple favorable opinions, or in the intensity of support or favorability, the Tea Party has seen its image in the eyes of the American public decline. Moreover, this decline has been most precipitous among those expressing very strong support or very favorable evaluations, indicating a substantial drop in the Tea Party base. Given the attention paid to the various factors known to influence survey responses, these findings cannot be ignored.

The decline in Tea Party support observed in this chapter may be the result of political and economic changes. For instance, one explanation could be that over time the number of political independents and Democrats expressing support for the Tea Party declined. Specifically, as the Tea Party became increasingly associated with Republican politicians, such as former Governor of Alaska Sarah Palin, support among non-Republican identifiers declined. Another explanation could be that as the economy improved from 2010 through 2011 those who sympathized with the Tea Party because of economic concerns began to relinquish their support. While these theories are not tested in this chapter, they do lend themselves to further examination in future research.

Second, the results from this analysis also make it clear that the number of individuals who indicate that they don't know or have no opinion of the Tea Party has declined. Such decline is expected, given increased media attention, but it also shows that the American public has become increasingly aware of the Tea Party. Given that public support and favorability has also been on the decline, it is not too far of a leap to infer

that as the public has become more aware of the Tea Party, it has expressed less support for it. As such, the public has begun to identify the Tea Party with particular events, issues, and candidates. The result of this is that the enigmatic appeal of the Tea Party that initially attracted broader support has now largely vanished.

The findings of a decline in support for the Tea Party also expose a potential danger for the Republican Party. If the Republican Party becomes increasingly linked to support for the Tea Party, then the GOP may also see its image decline among the American public. This presents a conundrum as the Tea Party represents a major component of the GOP's activist base (as Chapter 3 demonstrated). At the same time, the Tea Party also poses a significant danger for the Republican Party as support for the Tea Party has peaked and, through the progression of time, steadily eroded.

Third, this analysis has shown that the manner in which questions are asked plays a significant role in the degree of support for the Tea Party. Depending on the options given to a respondent, the levels of support or favorability can vary dramatically. On average, asking respondents whether they support the Tea Party and allowing for an option that indicates the intensity of that support yields an additional 8 percentage points in support for the Tea Party, as compared to those survey questions that simply give respondents the option of support or oppose. Moreover, the same effect is found for the favorability questions. Simply asking respondents whether they have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the Tea Party, without allowing an option for intensity of favorability, generates favorability ratings that are 5 percentage points lower for the Tea Party on average.

Aside from the different types of questions that measure intensity of support and those that measure a direction of support, this analysis has also taken notice of the significant influence that question branching can have on public opinions. Reexamining Table 4.5, it is apparent that question designs that include a branching format produce significantly different responses than those that do not. In fact, questions that did not include branching resulted in a significantly higher level of support (around 3 percentage points) than those that did not.

In should also be noted that the vast majority of polling organizations did not use branching questions to measure Tea Party support (as evidence by polls gathered in this analysis). Given that studies have shown that branching questions increase the validity of public opinion measures (Krosnick & Berent, 1993), it is likely that the predicted support for the Tea Party reported in this analysis would have been lower had all organizations utilized a form of question branching.

What these findings suggest is that measuring support or favorability for a particular group, issue, party, or politician can be a tricky proposition. Questions that seemingly set out to measure the same type of opinions can generate substantially different results. Special care should not only be taken in how questions are asked, but how the results are reported. When surveyors ask about the intensity of support and report the results as either support or opposition, they are ignoring the influence that question options can have on public opinion. In summary, if one finding is to be taken from this chapter, it is that branching and question wording matter.

Finally, what this chapter has shown is that the intensity in support, or favorability, towards the Tea Party has gradually subsided. Whether measured by

strongly support or strongly favorable, the intensity of support for the Tea Party has been

declining. The ramifications for Tea Party supporters, organizers, and leaders are

potentially troubling. Specifically, given that some scholars have suggested that the

excitement generated by the Tea Party contributed to increased turnout in the 2010

midterm elections (Carson & Pettigrew, 2011; Jacobson, 2011a, 2011b), it is interesting

to note that the decline in support or favorability has occurred even among the most

intense supporters. This finding holds true even after controlling for numerous factors

providing significant evidence that Tea Party support, and the intensity of that support,

has been on the decline.[73] If mobilizing supporters to turnout and support the Tea Party's

core issues is vital to its continued influence and relevancy, doing so may be substantially

more difficult than what has been seen in times past.

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[73] The findings of a decline in support among the most ardent Tea Party supporters, is also consistent with news reports and research on the decline of local Tea Party groups. Specifically, these reports indicate that the number of local Tea Party groups, across the country, has declined from 2010 to 2012 (Arrillaga, 2012).

Table 4.1: Two-Sample *t* test of Question Wording and Percent Supporting the Tea Party[74]*Data collected from 2011 Tea Party support dataset*

Group	Observations	Mean	Std. Error	Std.Dev
Simple Support Question	89	26.29	.57	5.40
Intensity Support Question	83	34.31	.48	4.27
Combined	172	30.16	.48	6.31
Difference		-8.02	.75	

t = -10.66   p<.001*
*Two-tailed test of significance

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[74] For the intensity support and the intensity favorable questions, the strongly support or very favorable and the somewhat support or somewhat favorable categories were combined into either support or favorable to get a measure of overall support/favorability for the two-sample *t* tests.

Table 4.2: Two-Sample *t* test of Question Wording and Percent with a Favorable Opinion of the Tea Party. *Data collected from 2011 Tea Party favorability dataset*

Group	Observations	Mean	Std. Error	Std.Dev
Simple Favorable Question	43	30.93	1.07	6.99
Intensity Favorable Question	41	35.90	.66	4.24
Combined	84	33.36	.69	6.30
Difference		-4.97	1.27	

t = -3.92   p<.001*
*Two-tailed test of significance

Table 4.3: Two-Sample *t* test of Question Wording and Percent Indicating Unfavorable Responses. *Data collected from 2011 Tea Party support dataset*

Group	Observations	Mean	Std. Error	Std.Dev
Simple Favorable Question	43	35.02	1.62	10.62
Intensity Favorable Question	41	44.37	1.45	9.28
Combined	84	39.58	1.20	10.98
Difference		-9.34	2.18	

$t = -4.29$ $\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad$ $p<.001*$
*Two-tailed test of significance

Table 4.4: Two-Sample *t* test of Question Wording and Percent with No Opinion of the Tea Party Favorability Questions. *Data collected from 2011 Tea Party support dataset*

Group	Observations	Mean	Std. Error	Std.Dev
Simple Favorable Question	43	34.56	2.38	15.58
Intensity Favorable Question	40[75]	19.53	1.22	7.10
Combined	83	27.31	1.57	14.33
Difference		15.03	2.69	

t = 5.59   p<.001
**Two-tailed test of significance

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[75] One case was excluded because it asked only respondents who were aware of the Tea Party and did not give a don't know option.

Table 4.5: Two-Sample *t* test of the influence of Branching on Percent Supporting the Tea Party.[76] *Data collected from 2011 Tea Party support dataset*

Group	Observations	Mean	Std. Error	Std.Dev
Intensity Question No Branching	54	35.24	.55	4.06
Intensity Question With Branching	29	32.59	.78	4.18
Combined	83	34.31	.47	4.27
Difference		2.65	.94	

t = 2.81   p<.05**
**Two-tailed test of significance

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[76] Note: This table is only comparing questions that measure the intensity of support for the Tea Party.
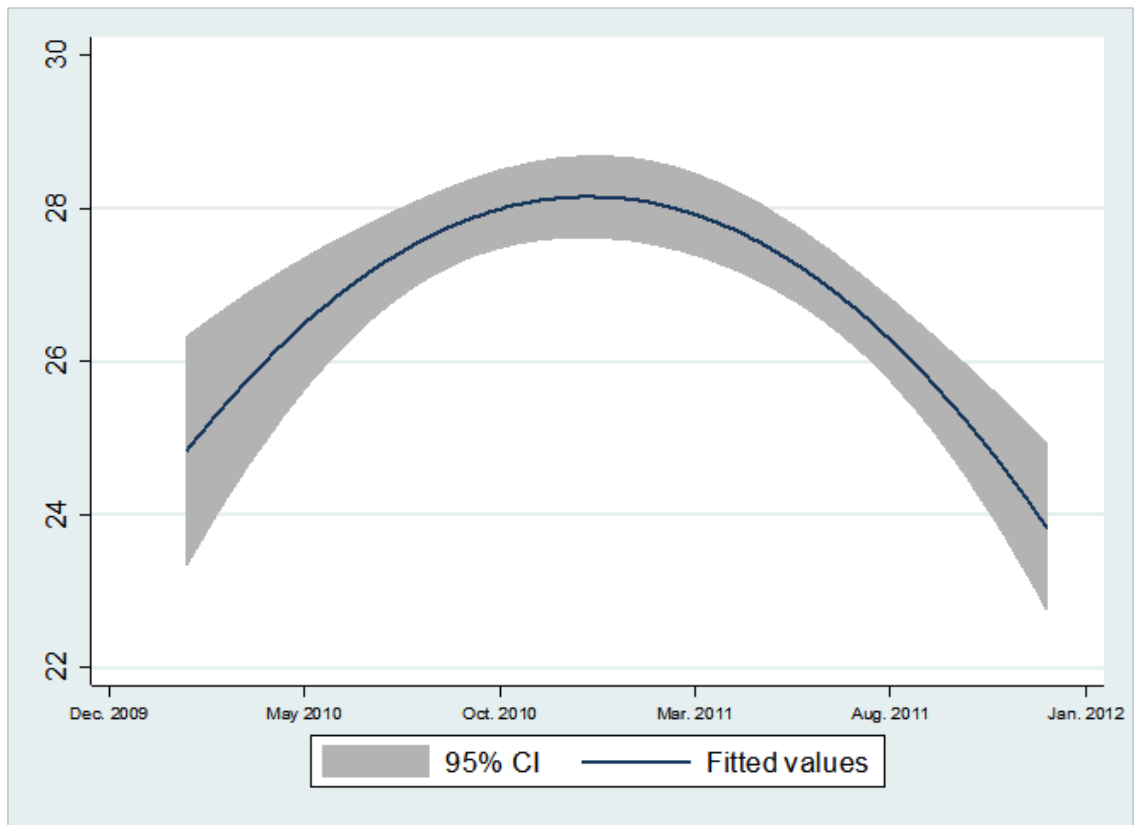
Figure 4.1: Support for Tea Party over Time using the Simple Support Question
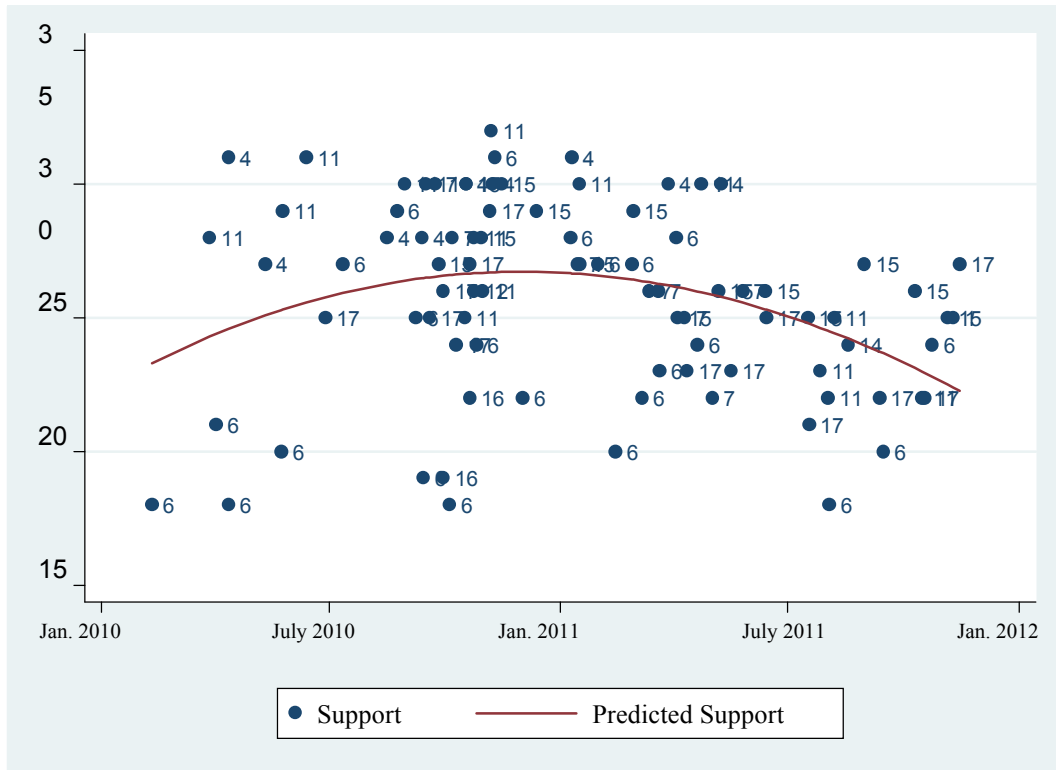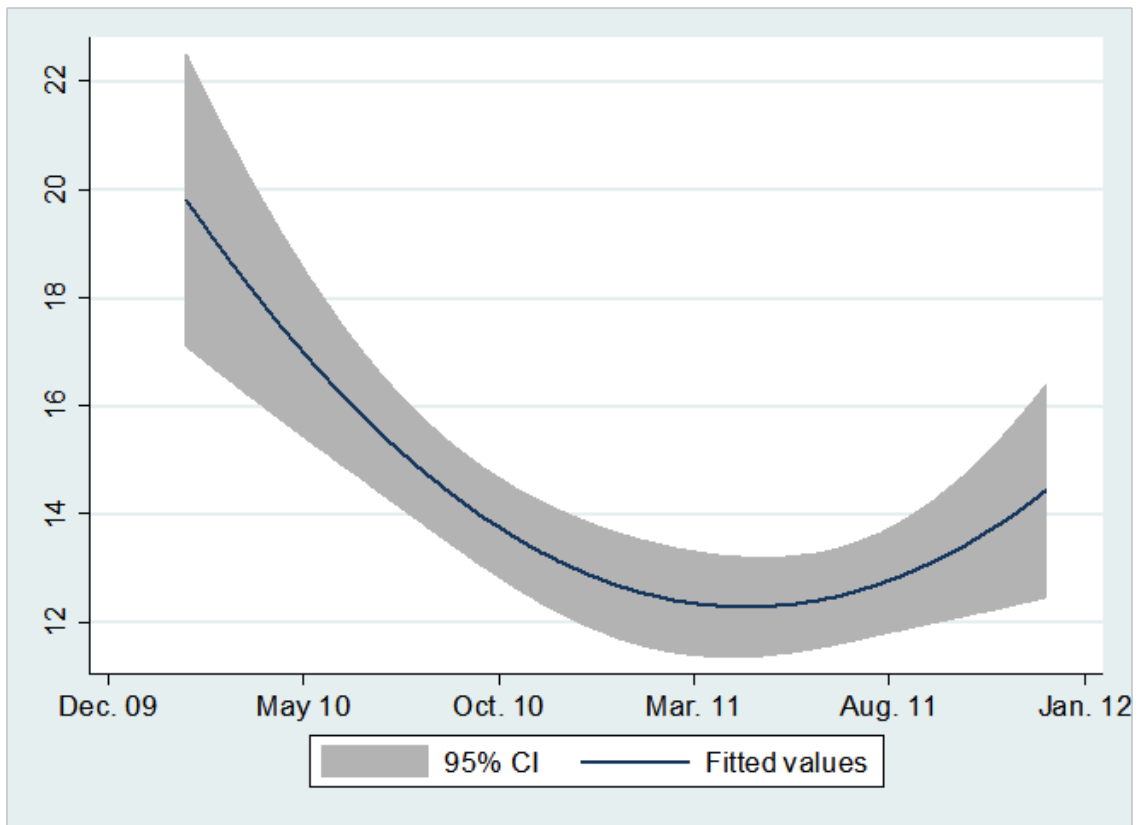
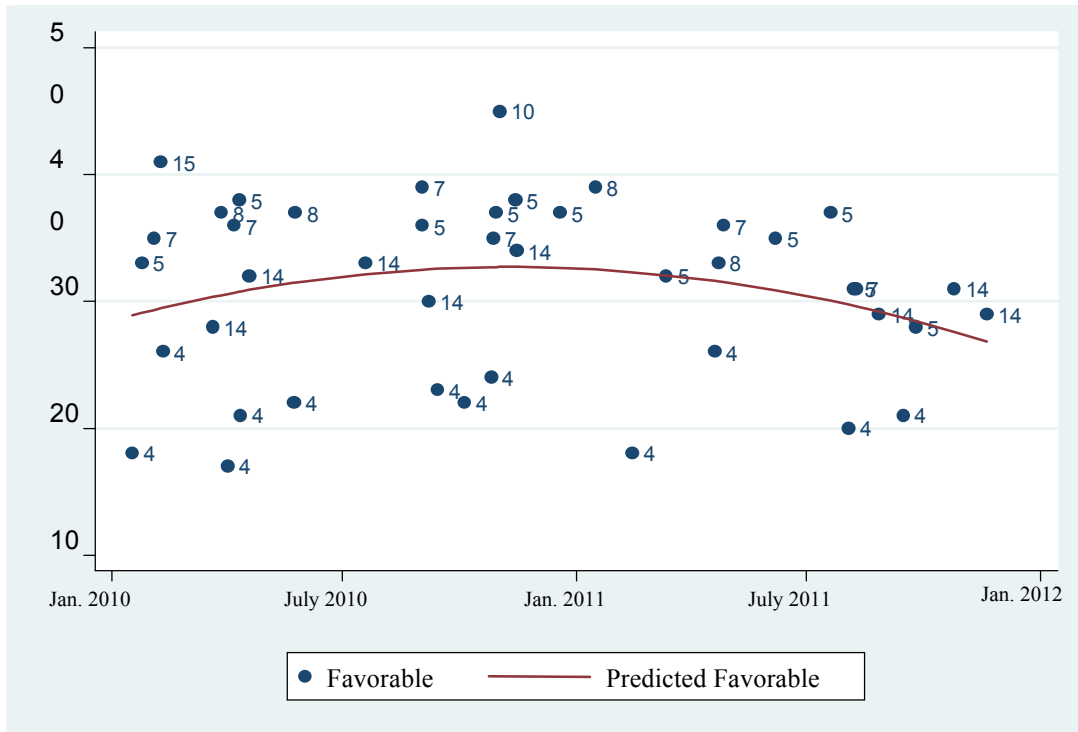**Figure 4.2:** Support for Tea Party over Time using the Strongly Support Response
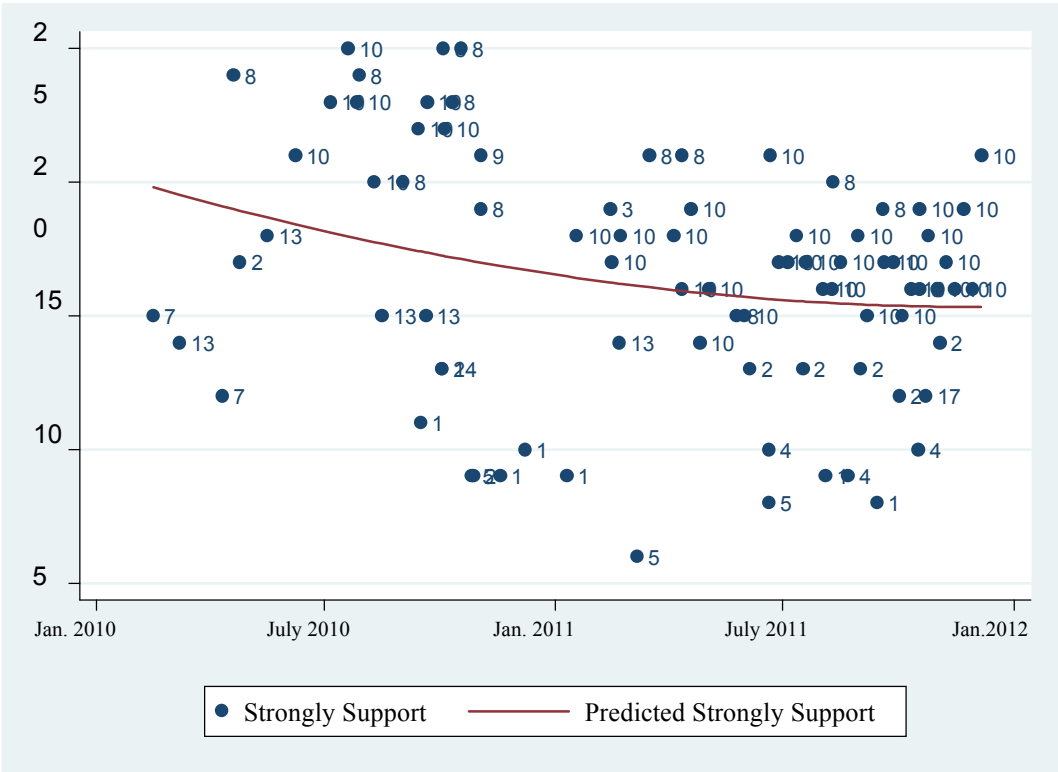
Figure 4.3: Predicted Support for the Tea Party using the Simple Support Question
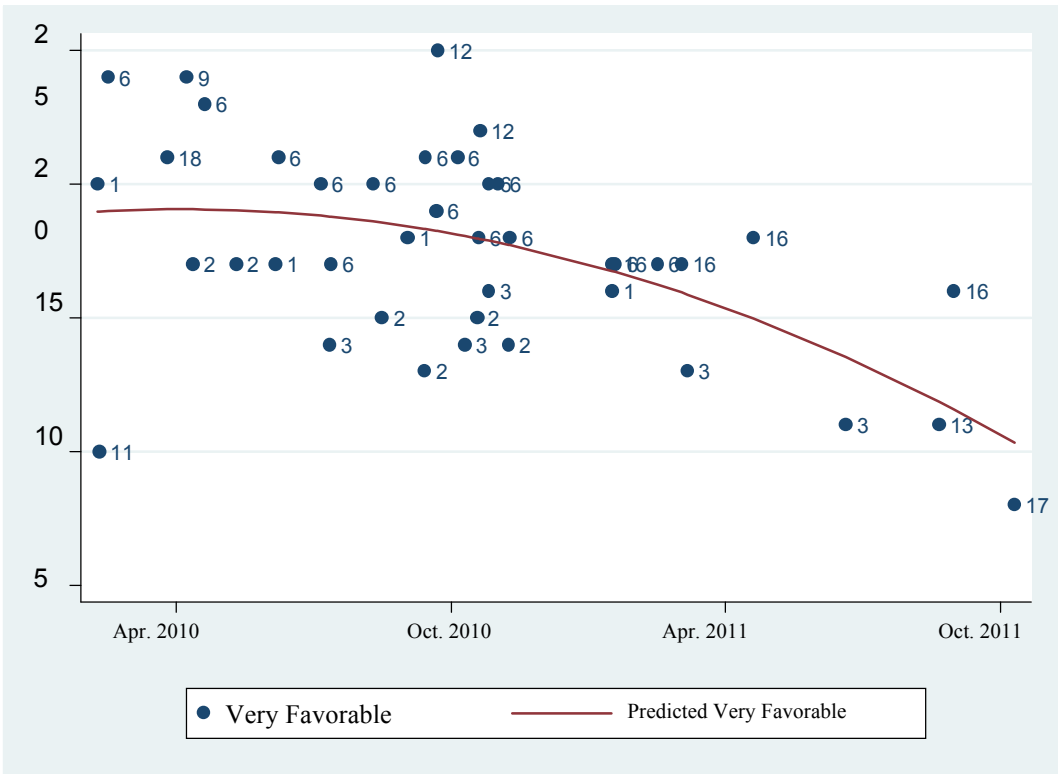
Figure 4.4: Predicted Share of the Public Strongly Supporting the Tea Party

Figure 4.5: Favorable Opinions of the Tea Party using the Simple Favorability Question
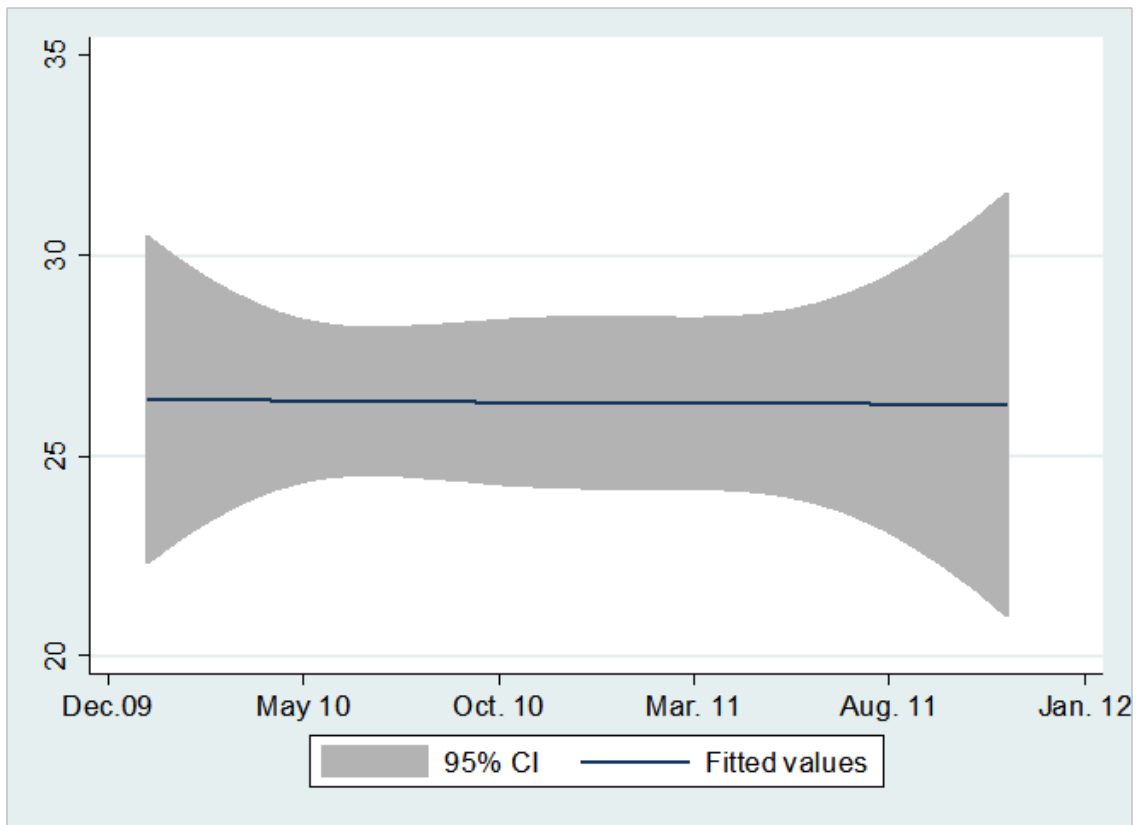
Figure 4.6: Favorable Opinions of Tea Party using Very/Strongly Favorable Response
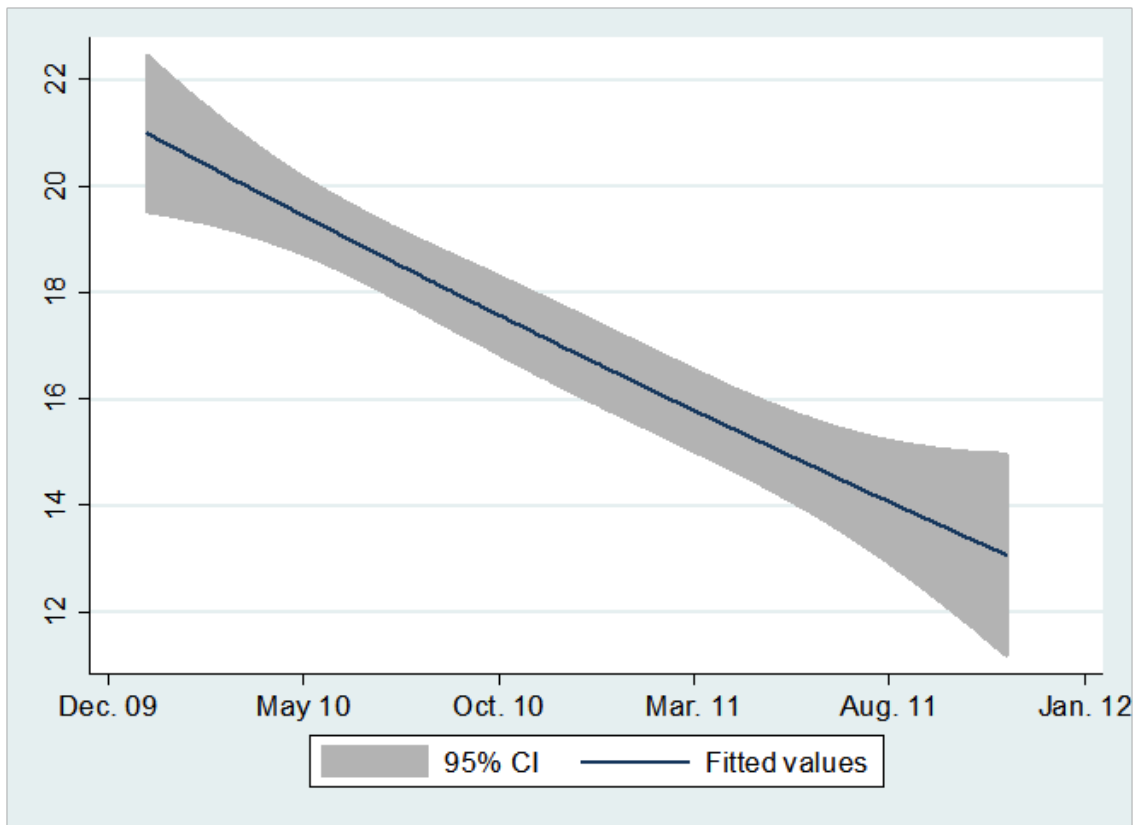
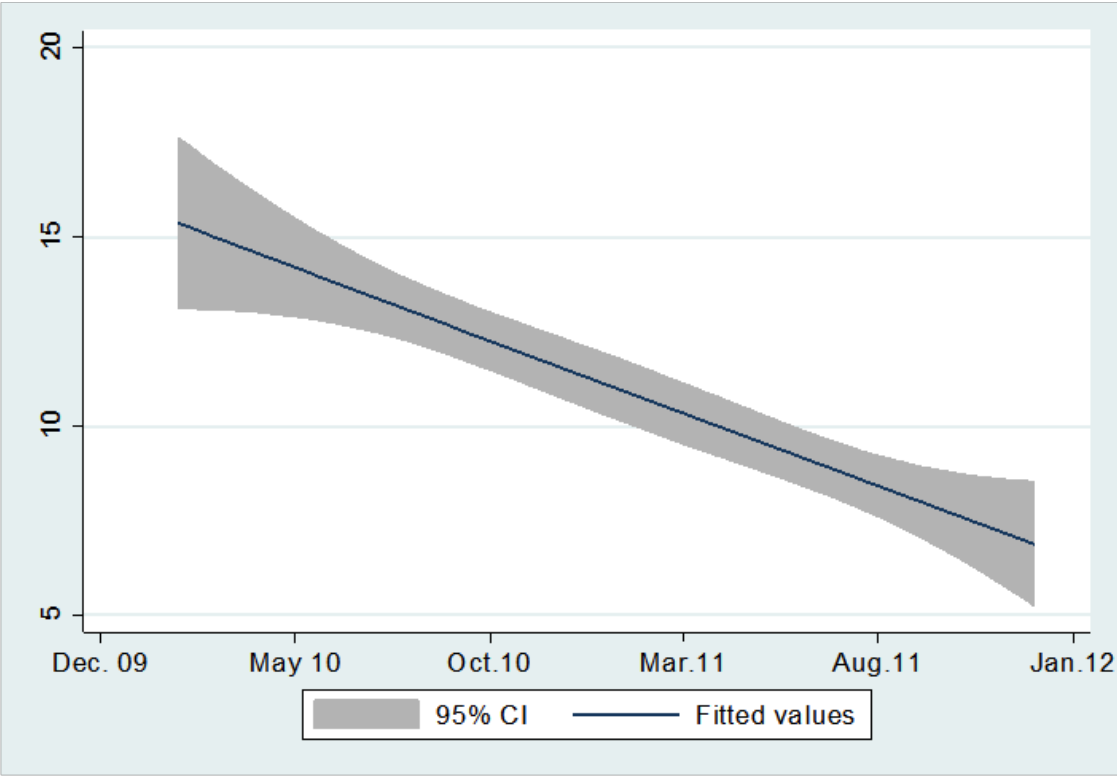**Figure 4.7:** Predicted Share of the Public with a Favorable Opinion of the Tea Party

Figure 4.8: Predicted Share of the Public with a Strongly Favorable Opinion of Tea Party

Figure 4.9: Predicted Share of the Public with No Opinion of the Tea Party using the Simple Support Question

Figure 4.10: Predicted Share of the Public with No Opinion of the Tea Party using the
Strongly Support Question
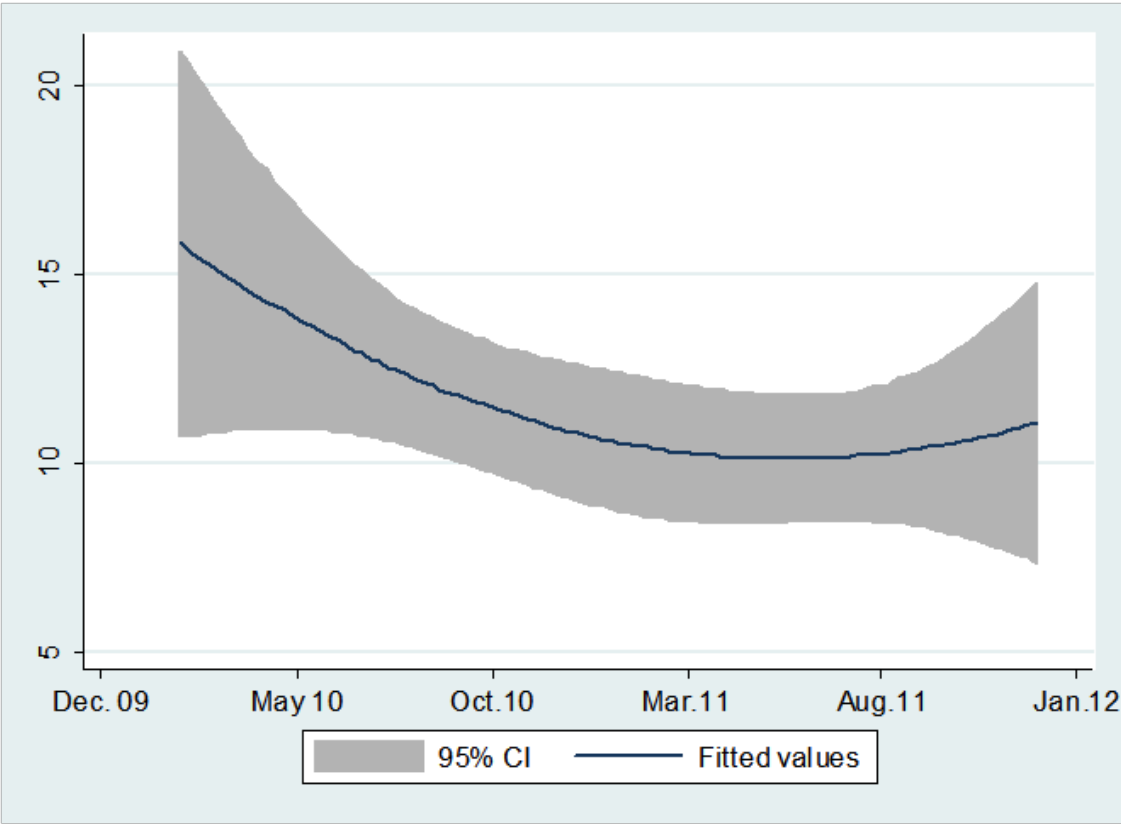
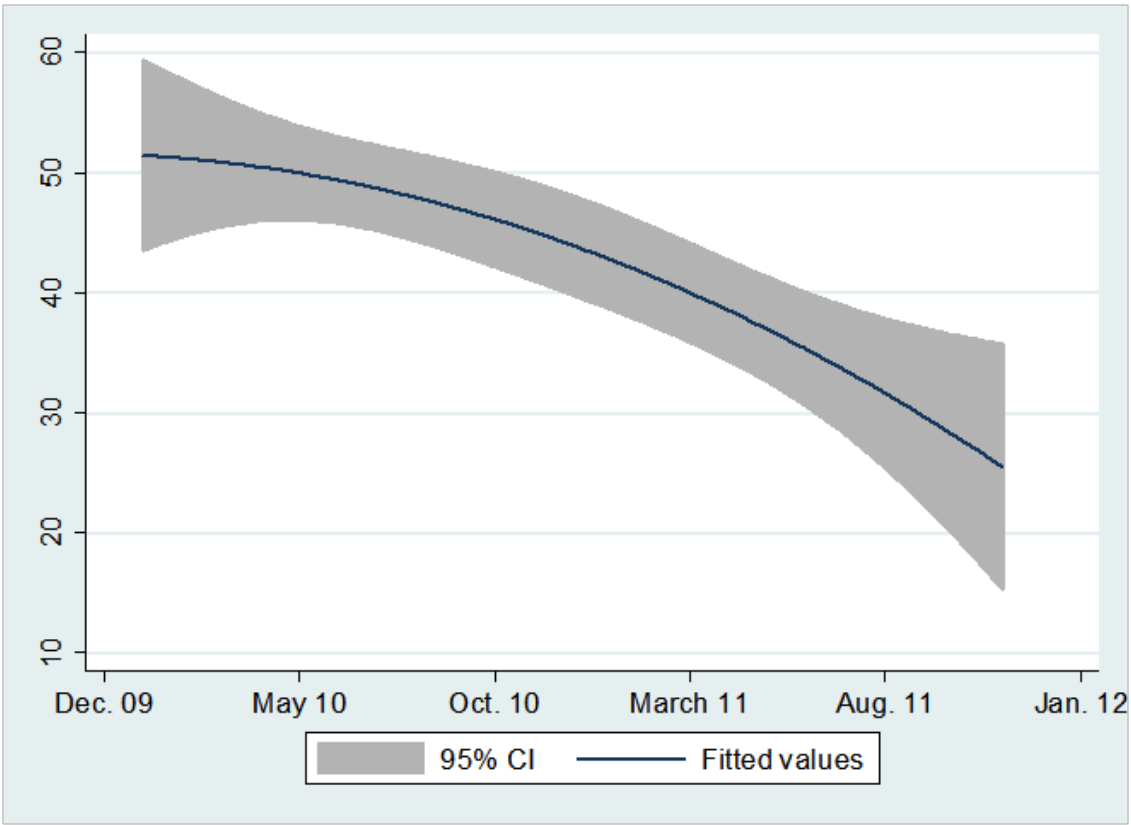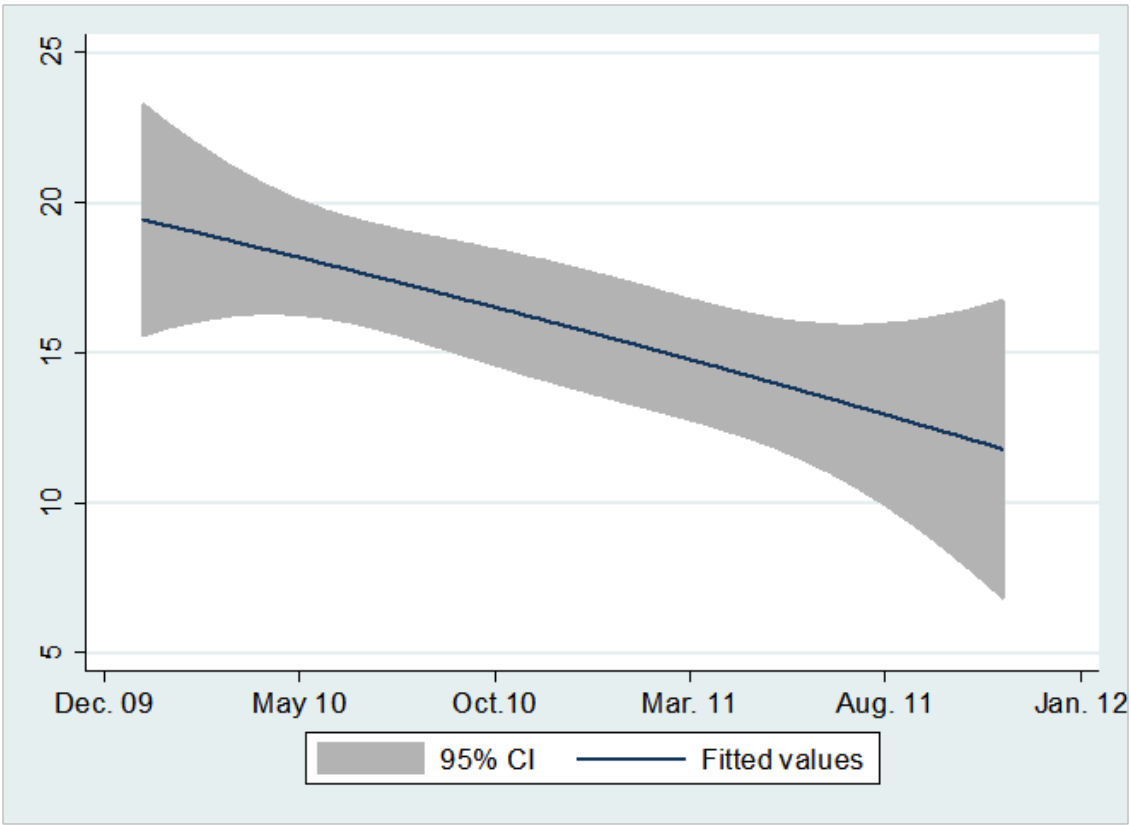**Figure 4.11:** Predicted Share of the Public with No Opinion of the Tea Party using the Simple Favorability Question

Figure 4.12: Predicted Share of the Public with No Opinion of the Tea Party using the Strongly Favorable Question

Appendix

Survey Organizations

Support Dataset

1   Marist Institute for Public Opinion
2   ABC News/ Washington Post
3   American Lung Association
4   Associated Press/ GfK
5   Bloomberg
6   CBS News/New York Times Poll
7   CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll
8   Democracy Corps
9   Democracy Corps 2 (Created because had another poll on same day)
10   Economist/ YouGov
11   Gallup Poll
12   Gallup Poll 2 (Created because had another poll on same day)
13   Harris Poll
14   Harvard University
15   NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll
16   Newsweek
17   Princeton Survey Research Associates International

Favorability Dataset

1   ABC News/Washington Post
2   Associated Press/Gfk
3   Bloomberg
4   CBS News/New York Times
5   CNN/Opinion Research Corporation
6   Economist/YouGov
7   Fox News/Opinion Dynamics
8   Gallup
9   George Washington University
10   News Models National Brand
11   Pew Research Center for the People/ the Press
12   Politico/George Washington University
13   Princeton Survey Research Associates
14   Quinnipiac University
15   Rasmussen
16   Resurgent Republic
17   Time/Abt SRBI
18   Washington Post

Table 4.6: Predicted Support for the Tea Party using Simple Support Question	
Polling Organizations	
Associated Press/ GfK	0.208
	(3.04)
CBS News/New York Times Poll	-5.695
	(2.93)
CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll	-3.978
	(3.62)
Gallup Poll	-2.087
	(3.40)
Gallup Poll 2	-4.764
	(4.45)
Harvard University	-3.039
	(3.87)
NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll	-1.584
	(2.97)
Newsweek	-9.575**
	(3.61)
Princeton Survey Research Associates International	-3.825
	(2.93)
Day Variable	1.445***
	(0.42)
Day Variable Squared	-0.000***
	(0.00)
Middle Category Dummy	0.910
	(2.10)
Registered Voter Dummy	0.525
	(1.32)
R-Square	0.511
Number of Observations	87
Note: Data are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Note: Branching and Method dummies omitted because of collinearity. Note: Two cases were excluded because they samples only Republicans.	
* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$	

Table 4.7: Predicted Strong Support for the Tea Party using Intensity of Support Question	
Polling Organizations	
ABC News/ Washington Post	3.368
	(1.99)
American Lung Association	11.441***
	(2.25)
Associated Press/ GfK	1.483
	(1.47)
Bloomberg	-1.803
	(1.43)
CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll	-4.041
	(2.46)
Democracy Corps	12.086***
	(1.26)
Democracy Corps 2	11.997***
	(2.25)
Economist/ YouGov	10.283**
	(3.80)
Harris Poll	0.999
	(2.00)
Harvard University	4.419
	(2.90)
Princeton Survey Research Associates International	2.450
	(2.62)
Day Variable	-0.962**
	(0.31)
Day Variable Squared	0.000**
	(0.00)
Middle Category Dummy	-2.766
	(2.32)
Branching Dummy	-1.443
	(1.82)
Registered Voter Dummy	-1.804
	(1.20)
R-Square	0.869
Number of Observations	83
Note: Data are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Note: Method Dummy omitted because of collinearity. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001	

Table 4.8: Predicted Favorability for the Tea Party using Simple Favorability Question	
Polling Organizations	
CNN/Opinion Research Corporation	13.305***
	(1.11)
Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	15.735***
	(2.12)
Gallup	14.491***
	(1.51)
News Models National Brand	24.555***
	(3.36)
Quinnipiac University	12.027***
	(2.17)
Rasmussen	22.495***
	(3.43)
Registered Voter Dummy	-2.414
	(2.01)
Day Variable	1.227**
	(0.43)
Day Variable Squared	-0.000**
	(0.00)
Middle Category Dummy	-0.802
	(2.72)
R-Square	0.897
Number of Observations	43
Note: Data are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Note: Method and Branching Dummy omitted because of collinearity.	
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001	

Table 4.9: Predicted Strong/Very Favorable Opinion of the Tea Party using Intensity in Favorability Question	
Polling Organizations	
Associated Press/Gfk	-2.221**
	(0.79)
Bloomberg	-2.835**
	(0.92)
Economist/YouGov	2.696***
	(0.70)
George Washington University	2.114
	(1.95)
Pew Research Center for the People/ the Press	-10.411***
	(1.44)
Politico/George Washington University	4.415*
	(1.74)
Princeton Survey Research Associates	-3.051
	(1.80)
Resurgent Republic	-0.332
	(1.82)
Time/Abt SRBI	-5.959**
	(2.03)
Washington Post	1.464
	(1.39)
Registered Voter Dummy	2.591
	(1.38)
Day Variable	-0.595
	(0.38)
Day Variable Squared	0.000
	(0.00) .
R-Square	0.934
Number of Observations	41
Note: Data are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Note: Method, Branching, and Middle Category Dummies omitted because of collinearity.	
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001	

Table 4.10: Predicted No Opinion of the Tea Party using Simple Support Question	
Polling Organizations	
Associated Press/ GfK	-8.610
	(4.75)
CBS News/New York Times Poll	1.018
	(4.58)
CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll	-8.649
	(5.76)
Gallup Poll	-5.289
	(5.44)
Gallup Poll 2	-0.310
	(7.11)
Harvard University	4.861
	(6.16)
NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll	-1.872
	(4.61)
Newsweek	10.644
	(5.60)
Princeton Survey Research Associates International	-3.289
	(4.58)
Logarithm of Date	-256.319***
	(59.90)
Middle Category Dummy	-0.912
	(3.31)
.	
Registered Voter Dummy	0.894
	(2.11)
R-Square	0.593
Number of Observations	87
Note: Data are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Note: Method and Branching dummies omitted because of collinearity. Note: Gallup Poll 2 created because organization had another poll on same day.	
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001	

Table 4.11: Predicted No Opinion of the Tea Party using Intensity in Support Question	
Polling Organizations	
ABC News/ Washington Post	4.343
	(3.59)
American Lung Association	-0.931
	(4.07)
Associated Press/ GfK	-2.218
	(2.67)
Bloomberg	0.171
	(2.61)
CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll	35.552***
	(4.04)
Democracy Corps	-1.216
	(2.31)
Democracy Corps 2	-3.690
	(4.09)
Economist/ YouGov	15.831*
	(6.90)
Harris Poll	13.159***
	(3.54)
Harvard University	9.013
	(5.29)
Princeton Survey Research Associates International	14.379**
	(4.70)
Logarithm of Date	-137.195**
	(48.74)
Middle Category Dummy	-10.584*
	(4.24)
Branching	1.129
	(3.31)
Registered Voters Dummy	2.348
	(2.16)
R-Square	0.822
Number of Observations	83
Note: Data are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Note: Method dummy omitted because of collinearity Note: Democracy Corps 2 created because organization had another poll on same day.	
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001	

Table 4.12: Predicted No Opinion of the Tea Party using Simple Favorability Question	
Polling Organizations	
.	
CNN/Opinion Research Corporation	-27.372***
	(2.47)
Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	-25.870***
	(4.72)
Gallup	-33.505***
	(3.35)
News Models National Brand	-40.716***
	(7.48)
Quinnipiac University	-16.158**
	(4.78)
Rasmussen	-28.717***
	(7.44)
Registered Voters Dummy	-2.028
	(4.46)
Logarithm of Date	-552.377***
	(85.29)
Middle Category Dummy	1.154
	(6.06)
R-Square	0.893
Number of Observations	43
Note: Data are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Note: Method and Branching dummy omitted because of collinearity	
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001	

Table 4.13: Predicted No Opinion of the Tea Party using Intensity in Favorability Question	
Polling Organizations	
.	
Associated Press/Gfk	-10.055***
	(1.98)
Bloomberg	8.412**
	(2.34)
Economist/YouGov	5.576**
	(1.77)
George Washington University	17.623**
	(4.86)
Pew Research Center for the People/ the Press	-1.624
	(3.56)
Politico/George Washington University	12.536**
	(4.41)
Princeton Survey Research Associates	9.825*
	(4.09)
Resurgent Republic	14.400**
	(4.47)
Time/Abt SRBI	30.746***
	(4.25)
Washington Post	0.231
	(3.50)
Registered Voters Dummy	-7.147*
	(3.45)
Logarithm of Date	-347.908**
	(106.11)
R-Square	0.871
Number of Observations	40
Note: Data are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Note: Method, Middle Category, and Branching dummy omitted because of collinearity Nope: One observations was not included because it do not offer a don't know option.	
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001	

Chapter 5: Implications of the Tea Party for American politics

What does mass support for the Tea Party mean for American politics? The preceding chapters have demonstrated that Tea Party supporters represent an active and ideologically conservative element of the Republican Party base. As such, the emergence of the Tea Party has been an important development for the Republican Party helping to catapult the GOP back into the majority of the U.S. House of Representatives in 2010 (Jacobson, 2011a, 2011b). In one sense, the Tea Party has helped to revitalize and rebrand a Republican Party whose image had been damaged by the unpopular policies pursued by the George W. Bush Administration; contributing to large GOP loses in the 2006 and 2008 national elections.[77]

On the other hand, this dissertation has exposed some potential weaknesses of Tea Party support. For instance, Chapter 4 demonstrated that support for the Tea Party has peaked and steadily declined since the fall of 2010. Furthermore, as the public has become increasingly aware of the Tea Party, it has expressed lower levels of support; suggesting that a large rebound in support is unlikely. In addition, Chapter 3 found that Tea Party supporters differ from third party supporters and do not represent a new constituency that can be folded into the GOP to increase its base of supporters (see Chapter 2). The previous chapters have also demonstrated that Tea Party supporters are more ideologically conservative than other Republicans and harbor conservative views on many issues that place them at significant odds with the American electorate as a whole. In short, while the Tea Party has energized the Republican Party base, it also presents a problem for the GOP, as it attempts to expand its base of support.

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[77] In the lead up to the 2010 midterm elections, Nate Silver noted that "In some ways, the Tea Party represents an end-around for Republicans -– it may help to facilitate large electoral gains for them in November in spite of a party brand which is badly damaged" (Silver, 2010).

The findings of this dissertation indicate that Tea Party supporters represent a double-edged sword for the GOP as they are both a source of strength and potential weakness. This chapter will explore these themes in greater detail, while also revisiting some of the main findings of the preceding chapters. This chapter will proceed as follows. It will begin with a discussion of the main findings of each chapter as the hypotheses posed in Chapter 1 are revisited in the order of their appearance. As the findings of each chapter are discussed, specific attention is paid to their implications for American politics. Finally, this chapter will close with a discussion of the current state of the Tea Party and its future prospects as an enduring political force.

Chapter 2 and 3 Reviews and Key Findings

Chapter 2 explored the relationship between Tea Party and third party supporters. Specifically, it examined the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: *Tea Party support is predicted by Republican Party identification and conservative ideology.*

Hypothesis 2: *Tea Party support is not predicted by dissatisfaction with both parties.*

The findings of Chapter 2 support the assertions presented in Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, as Tea Party support was predicted by both Republican Party identification and conservative ideology and not by dissatisfaction with both parties. Chapter 2 found that Tea Party supporters are ideologically conservative Republicans, while third party supporters were shown to be political independents that express higher levels of dissatisfaction with the major parties. These findings contrast with claims that Tea Party supporters are "avowedly nonpartisan" (Rasmussen & Schoen, 2010, p.8). In addition, the findings of Chapter 2 suggest that Tea Party supporters are unlike past third party

supporters and represent a constituency already within the Republican Party. In short, the Republican Party cannot count on the Tea Party to expand its party base.

Chapter 3 examined the attitudinal predictors of Tea Party support. A major contribution of Chapter 3 was to control for many of the competing explanations of Tea Party support, while also assessing the relative size of their impact on Tea Party support. The goal of this chapter was to sort through common characterizations of the Tea Party to uncover the core motivations of supporters. In doing so, the following hypotheses were tested:

> *Hypothesis 3:   Tea Party support is predicted by racial resentment.*
>
> *Hypothesis 4: Tea Party support is predicted by traditional moral values.*
>
> *Hypothesis 5: Tea Party support is predicted by libertarian traditional free-market conservative viewpoints.*
>
> *Hypothesis 6: Tea Party support is predicted by feelings of fear and anger concerning the state of the country.*

The evidence presented in Chapter 3 supports each hypothesis as Tea Party support is predicted by racial resentment, traditional moral values, and libertarian traditional free-market conservative viewpoints. Specifically, higher levels of racial resentment, support for traditional moral values, and adherence to libertarian traditional free-market conservative viewpoints motivate support for the Tea Party. In addition, a unique contribution of this chapter was to examine the emotional component of Tea Party support finding evidence that supporters are motivated by feelings of fear and anger concerning the state of the country.

While the findings related to racial resentment are consistent with previous research (Abramowitz, 2012), they also confirm claims that Tea Party supporters are

motivated by social conservatism (Brody, 2012), libertarian world views (Perrin, Tepper, Caren, & Morris, 2011), as well as fear and anger (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). There is also evidence that Tea Party supporters are motivated by negative feelings towards immigrants (see Table 3.3) consistent with the work of Baretto, Cooper, Gonzalez, Parker, and Towler (2011), animosity towards President Obama, consistent with Abramowitz (2012), as well as conservative ideology and Republican Party identification, consistent with the work of Abramowitz (2012) as well as Deckman (2012), among others.

The findings of Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate that the primary motivator of Tea Party support is conservative ideology. This finding is echoed by the previous work of Skocpol and Williamson (2012) who contend that Tea Party supporters are "best understood as *conservatives*" (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p.32). Moreover, the findings of this dissertation are also consistent with characterizations of the Tea Party as the polarized component of the Republican Party base (Abramowitz, 2012).

Chapter 3 also found that Tea Party supporters embody full-throttled support for all of the GOP's major policy platform and grievances. Evidence is presented that support or opposition to the Tea Party represents a dividing line between the moderate and extreme elements of the Republican Party. Tea Party supporters were consistently shown to express conservative viewpoints that placed them at odds with the American public as well as ordinary Republican Party identifiers. Chapters 2 and 3 also found that compared to other Republican Party identifiers who did not support the Tea Party, as well as the American electorate as a whole, Tea Party supporters were much more likely to view President Obama and the Democratic Party in ideologically extreme terms. Tea Party

supporters were also more likely to express negative opinions of the president and the Democratic Party. Again, these findings are consistent with the contention that Tea Party supporters represent the polarized component of the Republican Party base (Abramowitz, 2012).

The findings of Chapters 2 and 3 also helped to dispel popular explanations of Tea Party support. For instance, despite the assertions made by Tea Party leaders Dick Armey and Matt Kibbe (2010), the Tea Party is more than a group of Americans primarily focused on fiscal conservatives and small government libertarians. While there is a certainly an segment of Tea Party supporters who support libertarian small government philosophies, the Tea Party is also motivated by social issues and traditional moral values. These two viewpoints appear to clash as in Chapter 3 Tea Party supporters were shown to express contradictory opinions concerning the role of government.

For instance, in 2012, over 70 percent of Tea Party supporters were in favor of basing American laws on Christian values (Table 3.2) and less than one-fifth of supporters opposed the Federal Intelligence and Security Act which allows the government to eavesdrop on suspected terrorist suspects without first obtaining a court order (Table 3.1). At the same time, a majority of Tea Party supporters also state that the government should be doing less and believe that little to no government regulation of business is good for society (Table 3.2). Thus, Tea Party supporters express support for a unique form of libertarianism, and the role of government, that stresses opposition to business regulation, but support for government promotion of religion.

Chapter 4 Review and Key Findings

An additional goal of this dissertation was to observe changes in opinions concerning the Tea Party over time. To do so, Chapter 4 analyzed a collection of polling data sources centered on testing the following hypothesis regarding Tea Party support:

Hypothesis 7: Support for the Tea Party will decline from 2010 to 2011.

Using a carefully constructed measure of Tea Party support, evidence was found that support for the Tea Party has declined from 2010 to 2011. Specifically, Tea Party support reached its high point of support in November of 2010 and has declined steadily ever since. In addition, Chapter 4 demonstrated that support for the Tea Party has also declined among its most ardent supporters. This finding is of added importance given that strong supporters are more than likely the individuals who are politically active. While Tea Party supporters remain more active than average Republicans, the decline in strong support suggests that Tea Party activism has diminished somewhat since 2010. Chapter 4 also demonstrated that increased awareness of the Tea Party has also coincided with a decline in levels of support, suggesting that it will be difficult for the Tea Party to regain past levels of support as time progresses.

Another important finding of Chapter 4 relates to survey question wording and branching. Chapter 4 demonstrated that depending on the options given to a respondent, the levels of support or favorability towards the Tea Party varied dramatically. These findings suggest that measuring support or favorability for a particular group, issue, party, or politician must be done carefully. These findings also have implications for public opinion research that goes beyond an understanding of the Tea Party. Specifically, Chapter 4 demonstrated that branching and question wording can change survey

responses in sometimes unexpected ways and that careful attention must be paid to how survey questions and responses are worded.

A Rift within the Republican Party

The emergence of the Tea Party has created a rift within the Republican Party between moderate members and ideological purists. This rift has been exposed by publicized battles between the Republican Party establishment and Tea Party supporters in nomination contests. It has also been revealed in the public criticisms of the Tea Party by GOP elites.

The 2010 midterm elections resulted in some of the largest gains that either party had made seen since the 1940s with the Republican Party gaining 63 seats in the United States House of Representatives (Barone & McCutcheon, 2011). These gains were made in large measure with the aid of Tea Party supporters who helped to mobilize the party base (Jacobson, 2011a, 2011b). However, in 2010 and 2012, the Tea Party also contributed to the nomination of candidates not supported by the Republican Party establishment who went on to lose key general election races in Delaware, Nevada, Indiana, Missouri, and Colorado which arguably cost the Republican Party majority control of the United States Senate in 2013 (Zelizer, 2012).[78] In short, while the Tea Party had a positive impact on turnout in the 2010 midterm elections, it also had a negative impact on the Republican Parry's ability to gain a majority in the U.S. Senate in 2010 and 2012.

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[78] Recent research supports the assertion that the Tea Party played an important role in the 2010 Republican primaries. Specifically, Karpowitz, Monson, Patterson, and Pope (2011) found that Republican candidates who proclaimed support for the Tea Party, or received the endorsement from a Tea Party group, increased their vote share by as much as 20 percentage points in the 2010 Republican primaries (p.306).

In 2010 and 2012, Tea Party supporters helped to defeat several ideologically moderate candidates, supported by the Republican establishment; in favor of more conservative Tea Party candidates.[79] The clash between the Republican Party establishment and Tea Party supporters has exposed a rift within the Republican Party described by some columnists as a "civil war between establishment Republicans and Tea Party supporters" pitting interest groups sympathetic to the Republican Party establishment against Tea Party activists in a battle over the candidates nominated in Republican Party primaries (Blow, 2013).

For instance, former George W. Bush strategist Karl Rove and the political action committee that he helped to form, American Crossroads, were often at odds with Tea Party activists over the candidates nominated in Republican Party primaries (Lapidos, 2013). This war within the Republican Party has also been noted by conservative news websites such as Breitbart.com, reflected in headlines such as "Rove Declares War on Tea Party" (Shapiro, 2013). By 2013, the war within the Republican Party had escalated as *The New York Times* reported on the founding of the Conservative Victory Project, described as a "new group to recruit seasoned candidates and protect Senate incumbents from challenges by far-right conservatives and Tea Party enthusiasts" and "intended to counter other organizations that have helped defeat establishment Republican candidates over the last two election cycles" (Zeleny, 2013).

Overall, the emergence of the Tea Party has lead to a battle within the Republican Party that has played out in nomination contests across the country as Tea Party supporters have often opposed the nomination of moderate Republican candidates.

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[79] For instance, in U.S. Senate Republican primary contests in 2010, Christine O'Donnell defeated moderate Mike Castle in Delaware, in Nevada Sharon Angle defeated Sue Lowden and Danny Tarkanian, and in Alaska Joe Miller defeated Lisa Murkowski (Silver, 2010).

Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated that Tea Party supporters hold opinions to the right of ordinary Republicans and that Tea Party supporters are much more politically active than average Republican voters. The Tea Party has likely pushed Republican legislators in Congress and the states to the right as GOP incumbents must be more concerned about a primary challenge from the right if they alienate Tea Party members. Thus, it is not surprising that the Tea Party has created a rift within the Republican Party as supporters attempt to move the GOP further to the right.

Criticism of the Tea Party by Moderate Republican Elites

The divide within the Republican Party has also been made apparent by the remarks of party elites. In the summer of 2010, former speechwriter for George W. Bush David Frum penned a column warning the Republican Party about the dangers posed by the Tea Party entitling his column "The Tea Party is a Turn-Off for US Moderates" (Frum, 2010). In his column, Frum warned the Republican Party that a close association with the Tea Party ran the risk of alienating moderate voters.

In May of 2013, former Republican presidential nominee and Senate majority leader Bob Dole commented that the modern day GOP had reached a point that neither former President Ronald Reagan nor Richard Nixon would be welcomed in today's Republican Party (Good, 2013). Dole's comments were made in reference to the Republican Party's recent ideological shift to the right, evidenced by the defeat of moderate Republicans in GOP nomination contests in 2010 and 2012 (Berman, 2013; Good, 2013).

Overall, these statements reflect growing tensions between moderate members of the Republican Party establishment and more ideologically conservative Tea Party

supporters. These developments have important ramifications for American politics as they signal a shift in the ideological direction of the Republican Party as moderate members of the GOP find it difficult to win their party's nomination.

The Tea Party, Public Policy, and Opposition to Compromise

The Tea Party has also influenced the policies pursued and votes cast by Republican lawmakers (Bailey, Mummolo, & Noel, 2012). Tea Party opposition to the Affordable Care Act has led the Republican controlled U.S. House to vote over 30 times to repeal the legislation (O'Keefe & Kane, 2013). These votes have occurred despite little possibility that these measures would pass the United States Senate or be signed into law by President Obama. Republican Speaker of the U.S. House John Boehner has had widely publicized differences with Tea Party members within the House (Johnson, 2013). These differences occasionally have led to the defeat of legislation in the House publicly supported by the speaker, as members of the House Tea Party Caucus would not lend their support (Terbush, 2013). The inability of the Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner to pass compromise legislation poses serious problems for meaningful policy reform in the United States.

The 2011 debate over whether to raise the nation's debt ceiling magnifies the influence that the Tea Party has had on policy making in the United States. In the summer of 2011, Tea Party activists were instrumental in leading many Republican lawmakers to vote against a measure to raise the national debt ceiling. The failure to raise the ceiling would have resulted in the federal government defaulting on its loan obligations (Bailey, Mummolo, & Noel, 2012).

Although the national debt ceiling had been raised several times prior with little controversy, Tea Party supporters opposed an increase due to concerns over increased spending and borrowing (Balkin, 2012). The president and Congress ultimately agreed to a compromise measure to raise the debt limit signed by the president on August 2, 2011. However, the United States saw its credit rating downgraded and a marked decline in the Dow Jones Industrial Average (Balkin, 2012). Despite winning bi-partisan congressional approval, the compromise measure was opposed by Tea Party leader and founder of the House Tea Party Caucus Representative Michelle Bachmann as well as many other freshman Republicans associated with the Tea Party (Isenstadt, 2011).

The events of the summer of 2011 symbolize the implications of the Tea Party for American politics. Specifically, Tea Party supporters limit the ability of Republican elected leaders to compromise with the Democratic Party. Tea Party supporters within Congress have come to be characterized by their aversion to compromise (Arrillaga, 2012) and many Republican elected officials face the threat of a primary challenge if they support compromise legislation that is opposed by the Tea Party (Altman, 2010; Kellman, 2011).[80] This is not surprising given that many grassroots Tea Party supporters also express opposition to compromise.

For instance, Table 5.1 presents EGSS survey data from February 2012 that asks respondents about their views on compromise. Specifically, respondents were asked if they preferred a U.S. President or a representative in the U.S. Congress "who compromises to get things done, or who sticks to his or her principles no matter what?"

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[80] In 2011, long time Michigan Senator Carl Levin (D) voiced concerns over the current state of congressional policymaking and the inability of legislators to compromise. Levin blamed the Tea Party and its supporters within the U.S. Congress for inhibiting legislative compromise, noting that "compromise is fundamental to representative government, because that government exists to balance the varying needs and desires of a large and diverse nation," Levin said. "If we can't compromise, the system just won't work" (Cwiek, 2011).

Compared to Republican non-Tea Party supporters, Tea Party supporters were more likely to state that they preferred a president as well as a congressional representative who stuck to their principles rather than compromised. Among Tea Party supporters, 51 percent stated that they preferred a representative in the U.S. Congress who sticks to her principles no matter what, compared to 40 percent of Republican non-Tea Party supporters and 33 percent of the public.

Moreover, respondents were also asked a more abstract question about compromise. The survey question asked respondents if they would "prefer to live in a place where most people have the same opinions you have about politics or, in a place where people have lots of different opinions about politics, or do you have no preference at all?" Accenting their aversion to compromise, Tea Party supporters were twice as a likely as non-Tea Party supporters to state that they would prefer to live in a place where most people had the same opinions. At the grassroots level, Tea Party supporters value principle over compromise and uniformity of opinion over diversity in political viewpoints.

These findings highlight an important ramification for American democracy and the ability of government to pass legislation. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, Tea Party supporters are more politically active and knowledgeable than the American public as well as other Republicans. As such, Tea Party supporters are more likely to hold GOP legislators accountable for their actions. Given that Tea Party supporters are more likely than other Republicans and the public to oppose compromise from elected leaders, the Tea Party represents a powerful pressure on the Republican Party that will likely inhibit compromise and contribute to further legislative gridlock.

[Insert Table 5.1]

The Tea Party and Ideological Polarization

As mentioned previously, the findings of this dissertation are consistent with the work of Abramowitz (2012) who frames the Tea Party as a product of long-term trends in partisan polarization. The data presented in Chapters 2 and 3 indicates that Tea Party supporters hold political views that are inconsistent with the views of the American public as well as other Republicans. Thus, it is not surprising that the Tea Party has supported candidates in Republican primaries who express very conservative viewpoints on issues of public policy.

As a consequence of the pressure that the Tea Party has put on the Republican Party in primaries, and on matters of compromise and public policy, it is possible that the Tea Party has also contributed to an increase in the level of ideological polarization witnessed in the U.S. Congress. For instance, recent research suggests that the 112th Congress (served form 2011-2012), was the most ideologically polarized (the ideological distance between the two parties) in history (Matthews, 2013).[81] Although the polarization levels of the 112th Congress are a continuation of recent trends, making it difficult to place recent changes solely on the Tea Party, it is logical to assume that the emergence of Tea Party will make a reversal of these trends unlikely.

The Tea Party, the 2012 Elections, and Beyond

Compared to the 2010 midterm elections, the 2012 presidential election outcomes served as a reversal of fortunes for the Tea Party as the Tea Party Caucus lost one-sixth of its supporters within the U.S. Congress (Gonyea, 2012; Parker, 2013; Parkinson, 2012;

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[81] Ideological polarization is measured using DW-NOMINATE scores developed by Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal (Matthews, 2013).

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Reich, 2012). Furthermore, in 2012, the Tea Party image was also harmed by high

profile loses in U.S. Senate contests in Missouri and Indiana where Tea Party candidates

lost general election races in states very favorable to Republican candidates (Jaffe,

2012).[82] Moreover, Tea Party supporters had difficulty unifying behind a Republican

candidate for president and many supporters expressed little enthusiasm over the

nomination of former Governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney (Kirby & Ekins, 2012;

Murphy, 2012).

In 2013, the Tea Party also faced major setbacks as the founders of both the

Senate (Senator Jim DeMint co-founder) and House (Representative Michelle

Bachmann) Tea Party Caucuses announced that they would be leaving Congress

(Pryzbyla & Wallbank, 2013).[83] The Tea Party has also faced problems at the grassroots

organizational level as powerful Tea Party interest group FreedomWorks, which was

instrumental in helping to organize early Tea Party protests and funding Tea Party

candidates in Republican primaries, was plagued by controversy in late 2012. The former

head of FreedomWorks Dick Armey was reportedly forced out of the group and, under

the terms of the deal to leave the organization, Armey was awarded $8 million dollars

(Walshe, 2012).[84]

In May of 2013, the Tea Party was thrust back into the spotlight when allegations

emerged that the Internal Revenue Service had been unfairly targeting Tea Party groups

for government scrutiny. The media coverage of the events and the unfair nature of the

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[82] Todd Akin in Missouri and Richard Mourdock in Indiana were damaged by controversial statements made concerning the issue of rape.
[83] However, it is likely the that the loss of Michelle Bachmann may serve as a benefit for the Tea Party's image; given allegations that Bachmann engaged in illegal campaign activity during her 2012 run for the presidency.
[84] The turmoil at FreedomWorks is of added importance given that recent scholarly research has found that the endorsement of FreedomWorks was correlated with higher vote shares for Republican candidates in the 2010 U.S. House elections and Republican primaries (Karpowitz, Monson, Patterson, & Pope, 2011)

government activities helped to improve the image of the Tea Party as polls indicated that support for the Tea Party had risen (Parker, 2013). Nevertheless, it is unlikely that this will lead to a meaningful rebound in long–term support for the Tea Party. The IRS scandal is only one media story among many that will occur over the coming months, and if the scandal cannot be tied to the president, it will likely fade from the national consciousness (Parker, 2013).

These recent developments make foretelling the future impact of the Tea Party difficult. However, the Tea Party faces certain demographic realities that may constrain its future impact. For instance, the majority of Tea Party supporters are older than 45 and white (Table 3.1 and Table 3.2) representing a constituency of American voters on the decline in a country that is increasingly diverse. As such, if the Tea Party cannot find a way to reach out to minorities and young voters then its political impact will likely decline and eventually evaporate as time progresses.

What does the Tea Party Mean for America?

The Tea Party represents the most important political development in political parties in recent history. Tea Party supporters embody full-throttled support for all of the GOP's major policy platform and grievances. Supporters express lower levels of support for compromise than non-Tea Party Republicans and harbor higher levels of opposition to most of the Democratic Party supported legislation passed since 2009. Thus, Republican Party opposition to legislation supported by the Democratic Party and President Obama will likely continue to be felt in policy debates as the Tea Party puts pressure on the GOP to avoid any attempts to move public policy in an ideologically liberal direction.

The findings of this dissertation also suggest that the Tea Party will continue to push the Republican Party away from compromise contributing to increased levels of legislative gridlock and partisan polarization. Tea Party supporters oppose the majority of the legislative agenda offered by the Democratic Party making substantive policy changes in the remainder of President Obama's term unlikely. Whatever its future, the Tea Party will continue to play a major role in determining the outcomes of Republican primaries shaping the ideological direction of the Republican Party, and influencing the trajectory of public policy in the country for several years to come.

Table 5.1: Tea Party Supporters and Views on Compromise

View on Compromise	Tea Party Supporters	Republican Non-Tea Party Supporters*	American Electorate
Prefer a U.S. President who sticks to his or her principles no matter what.[1]	48%	41%	35%
Prefer a representative in the U.S. Congress who sticks to his or her principles no matter what. [2]	51%	40%	33%
Prefer to live in a place where most people have the same opinions you have about politics.[3]	30%	15%	18%

Source: American National Elections Study Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, February 18-23, 2012
Cell number indicates the percentage of the Tea Party, Republican Identifiers, and overall respondents who hold those characteristics or attitudes listed in the first column.
1 Original question format: "Would you prefer a U.S. President who compromises to get things done, or who sticks to his or her principles no matter what?"
2 Original question format: "Would you prefer a representative in the U.S. Congress who compromises to get things done, or who sticks to his or her principles no matter what?"
3 Original question format: "Would you prefer to live in a place where most people have the same opinions you have about politics, or in a place where people have lots of different opinions about politics, or do you have no preference at all?"
*Republicans who do not support the Tea Party.

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