

# The Tea Party Coalition: Some Racial Resentment, Lots of Economic Resentment

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Abstract

In this paper I argue that the main impulse underlying the tea party movement is a conviction that activist government unfairly rewards the undeserving at the expense of the productive leading them to demand limited government. I say main impulse because racial resentment and other illiberal attitudes also contribute to tea party involvement. But illiberal motives do not play the dominant role that much of the leading research suggests. When tests are properly conducted, preference for limited government is the strongest and most consistent predictor of tea party support. Further I show the tea party is a heterogeneous coalition, consisting of three distinct groups. I find the largest of these subgroups has a strongly libertarian flavor and scarcely a whiff of racial animus. Social conservatives comprise another significant group, with strong preferences for limited government and moral traditionalism, and some racially conservative attitudes. Racial conservatives are a substantial subgroup too, but my analysis shows that they are no less motivated by the issue of limited government than others in the movement. These groups are different from one another but came together in the same movement largely because they shared a belief that the federal government had violated basic fairness in its response to difficult economic times.

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## **An Emergent Movement**

Few anticipated the conservative backlash that burst into American political life in the early 2000s and came to be known as the tea party movement. The movement emerged during one of the most serious economic downturns in American history. After a period of credit expansion and economic boom, the housing bubble popped followed by a severe devaluation of capital bringing down with it home prices and the highly over-leveraged investment banks. In the fall of 2008, some of the nation's largest financial institutions failed or were on the verge of failing, the economy shed hundreds of thousands of jobs each month, and home values plummeted.

In the span of only six months, Congress passed two significant spending bills in efforts to mitigate the crisis totaling over \$1.5 trillion. The first, the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act secured \$700 billion in Troubled Asset Relief (TARP) dollars or the "bailouts" for Wall Street banks and automakers. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), also known as the stimulus, authorized roughly \$800 billion toward infrastructure, social services, domestic investments, and tax cuts.

Also during this timeframe Democrats swept the 2008 election further consolidating their power in both Congressional chambers and the executive branch, leaving the Republican Party in shambles. In addition, the country witnessed the historic election of President Barack Obama, the first African-American president.

It was within this context in February 2009 that CNBC contributor Rick Santelli standing on the floor of the Chicago mercantile exchange took to the show Squawk Box to lambast President Obama's stimulus funds directed toward homeowners facing foreclosure. In short, he proclaimed such actions as fundamentally unfair as he declared that the "government is promoting bad behavior!" and questioned whether Americans should "subsidize the losers' mortgages" or "reward people who can carry the water

instead of drink the water.” In an unusual fashion, stock floor traders shouted out in affirmation with one exclaiming: “how about we all stop paying our mortgage? It’s a moral hazard!” Santelli proceeded to invite “capitalists” to a Chicago “tea party” to dump some derivative securities into Lake Michigan.

Something in Santelli’s outburst struck a nerve. Within a week, thousands of angry conservative and libertarian activists in early 2009 began holding protests under the banner of “tea party” with explicit opposition to increased government spending, the growing national debt, and the expansion of government power in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Activists called for a return to constitutional principles, reining in of federal power, retrenchment of government spending and the national debt all for the sake of protecting individual liberty. At tea party protest and rallies, activists brought homemade signs conveying their belief that activist government was unfair: “Big Government= Less Freedom,” “Stop The Spending-Give Us Liberty Not Debt,” “Stop Punishing Success; Stop Rewarding Failure,” “Don’t Spread My Wealth, Spread My Work Ethic,” or “Free Markets Not Freeloaders” (Ekins 2010, Zernike 2010, Loc. 735).

Surveys confirmed the widespread emphasis on fiscal issues and limited government: a 2010 CBS/New York Times survey found that 96 percent of tea party sympathizers favored a “smaller government, providing fewer services” compared to 42 percent of non-supporters, and 81 percent of sympathizers wanted the government to prioritize deficit reduction over spending money to create jobs, compared to 36 percent of non-supporters (CBS News/New York Times 2010).

Although tea party members insist their true motivation is their desire for limited government, leading scholarship on the tea party views it through a prism of racial resentment and out-group hostility (Parker and Barreto 2013, Skocpol and Williamson 2012, Perrin et al. 2011, Abramowitz 2012, Knowles et al. 2013).

In this paper I review this scholarship and subject it to empirical scrutiny with three main results. The first result is that existing scholarship is correct in its claim that racial attitudes correlate with support for the tea party movement. However, the second empirical result is that, when tests of the kind used in existing studies are properly conducted, variables measuring preferences for limited government have about twice the statistical impact of variables measuring racial attitudes. The third empirical result, based on latent class analysis, is that tea party supporters consist of three distinct clusters of individuals.

The first cluster, which leans libertarian, comprises 41 percent of the movement and highly endorses limited government but takes moderate to liberal positions on social issues and race. The second cluster, 36 percent of all tea partiers, leans socially conservative and is also strongly defined by limited government preferences and harbors some racially conservative attitudes. The third group of racial conservatives, 24 percent of all tea partiers, also shares strong preferences for limited government but also takes racially conservative positions. While these three groups differ in their attitudes on moral traditionalism and race, they share a strong preference for limited government. I then supplement these findings with qualitative interviews with 53 tea party activists across the country, including early organizers of the movement. In sum, I argue that the tea party movement is a heterogeneous coalition, in which its prevailing impulse is largely a sincere demand for limited government.

### **What Tea Partiers Say They Are About**

Qualitative interviews I conducted with 53 tea party activists across the country revealed their central *explicit* complaint was that government was getting too expansive and their top priority was to reduce the size and scope of government.<sup>1</sup> One method to

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<sup>1</sup> States included California, Washington, Utah, Texas, Kentucky, Florida, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, Ohio, and Minnesota. See Appendix A for additional information.

quantitatively test the salience of this overarching complaint is to systematically measure signs at a major tea party protest rally. While signs certainly do not tell us everything that protestors care about, it tells us how they prioritized using a limited amount of time and space to express themselves.

I conducted such an analysis of tea party signs at the 9/12 Tea Party Capitol Hill rally in Washington, D.C. in September 2010. Walking in a systematic fashion along each row from the back of the tea party rally to the front (about 1pm-4pm), I took pictures of every visible sign.<sup>2</sup> The sampling procedure of protest signs produced 234 readable pictures of signs. I coded the signs' content, identifying sixteen unique categories. Signs could be assigned multiple topics, and signs with even subtle connotations were assigned the relevant category. (See Table 1).

The analysis revealed that more than half the signs (56%) themed a limited government ethos, either in the form of mentioning the proper role of government or problems with socialism (36%), concrete economic policies like cutting spending and taxes (33%), or individual liberty (19%).

Forty percent expressed populist anger, including 28 percent that specifically mentioned ousting elected officials in the upcoming election, and 12 percent mentioned the elite versus the people. Twenty-seven percent expressed anger toward or disapproval of President Obama. Twelve percent of the signs had patriotic or nationalistic themes,

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For additional methodological details, see Chapter 4, (p. 116) in Ekins, Emily. 2015. *Tea Party Fairness: How the Idea of Proportional Justice Explains the Right-Wing Populism of the Obama Era*, Doctoral Dissertation: Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

<sup>2</sup> The sampling procedure could not prevent sign-holding protestors from moving from one place to the other, or ensure that some protestors did not leave during the sampling procedure, which means that some signs would be missed. Also, some signs were placed on the ground and under bags as the protestors occasionally sat down to rest. Bias could be introduced if there were systematic differences among the types of protestors who may have left early, especially if they were grouped together in the audience. Also, understandably, older protestors would be more likely to become tired and place their signs on the ground, perhaps under bags, to rest. However, I did not find a high number of signs placed on the ground out of view.

while less than ten percent respectively of protestors' signs explicitly referenced health care (9%), the US Constitution (8%), cultural or religious conservatism (5%), ethnic "othering" (5%), anti-unauthorized immigration (3%), the mainstream media (1%), Obama's birthplace or "birtherism" (1%), and generational theft (<1%).

Table 1  
Tea Party Protest Signs by Category at the 9/12 2010  
Tea Party March on Washington D.C.

<b>Sign Category</b>	<b>%</b>
Limited Government Ethos..	56%
Role of Government	36%
Spending, Taxes, Deficits	33%
Liberty/ Freedom	19%
Populist.....	40%
Ousting Politicians	28%
People versus Ruling Elite	12%
Anger Toward Obama.....	27%
Patriotic/Nationalistic.....	12%
Healthcare.....	9%
Constitution.....	8%
Social Conservatism.....	5%
Ethnic Undertones.....	5%
Anti-illegal Immigration.....	3%
Anti-mainstream media.....	1%
"Birther".....	1%
Generational theft.....	0.4%
Ambiguous.....	6%

Source: 9/12 Tea Party March on Washington, D.C., September 12, 2010; Method: Author took pictures of every visible sign from 1pm to 4pm on the day of the event, and walked throughout the entire crowd in a systematic fashion, going row by row during this period, starting from the back moving to the front. Percentages add up to more than 100% since signs could be tagged with more than one category.

Overall, the central thrust of the signs confirmed the principal explicit complaint tea partiers make: that the movement is about limited government in general, in the form of cutting spending, taxes, or deficits, or more philosophically in terms of promoting liberty. The signs' second most common complaint reflects the populist nature of the conservative uprising: these activists want to "throw the bums out" and

feel resentful toward elites who they believe want to tell them what to do. Thirdly, the movement places Obama in the position of the opposition's symbolic standard-bearer.

However, just because it's on a sign doesn't make it so. If latent racial anxieties were at the root of tea party angst, we would expect most tea partiers to know better than to put it on a sign. Indeed, further empirical work is needed to determine if demand for limited government or racial anxieties is the movement's prevailing impulse.

### **More Racialized Politics?**

Over the past several decades, a number of important studies of public opinion have stressed the importance of race and racial resentment on voting behavior and political attitudes, especially attitudes toward government action. Moreover, attitudes toward government functions that have little to do with race are found to be "racialized," such that they are impacted by underlying hostility toward African-Americans and people of color more generally (Sears and Kinder 1971, Sears, Hensler, and Speer 1979, Kinder and Sears 1981, Kinder and Sanders 1996, Sears et al. 1997, Gilens 1999, Sears and Henry 2003, Hutchings and Valentino 2004, also see Kinder and Kam 2010, Kluegel and Smith 1986). The election of President Barack Obama in 2008 led to new studies documenting the continuing impact of race on political attitudes (Tesler 2012, Knowles, Lowery, and Schaumberg 2010).

Consequently, since the first widely known tea party protests erupted shortly after the inauguration of the first African-American president, much of the leading work on the tea party has viewed it within the literature on racialized politics, particularly Parker and Barreto (2013) and to some extent Skocpol, Williamson, and Coggin (2012, 2011), Perrin et al. (2011), Abramowitz (2012), and Knowles et al. (2013).<sup>3</sup> In the same

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<sup>3</sup> Arceneaux and Micholson (2012) find racial attitudes failed to significantly impact support for government aid among tea party supporters in controlled experiments and thus such attitudes do not appear to primarily undergird their opposition to government action. Knowles et al. (2013) find no

vein, researchers have also compared the tea party to social movements like the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s, Father Charles Coughlin and his followers (Parker and Barreto 2013, Berlet 2012) or the John Birch Society (Parker and Barreto 2013, Skocpol and Williamson 2012).

*Economic Resentment, Racial Resentment, or Both?*

These scholars largely agree a fear of change mobilized the tea party, but contend that the change it fears is rooted in some form of demographic change and out-group hostility (Parker and Barreto 2013, Perrin et al. 2011, Skocpol and Williamson 2012). Nevertheless, the literature varies in the extent to which researchers argue out-group hostility drives tea partiers' fears. For instance, Parker and Barreto argue that the election of President Obama, the first non-white president, signifies subversive change—a “plot to undermine dominance” of white Americans, in tea partiers' view (p. 45). Perrin et al (2011) and Skocpol and Williamson (2012) make a softer, more nuanced, argument that nativism and racial stereotypes color tea partiers' fears and give a strong indication that Obama's election played a role in stimulating these concerns.

Perrin et al (2011) finds that tea partiers are more likely than non-tea partiers to be very concerned about “changes taking place in American society these days” leading the authors to conclude they are similar to earlier right-wing movements concerned with “status defense” (p. 4). The authors go on to say that this deontological insecurity (fear of change) is blended with nativism, the fear that newcomers will change the system and their society.

Interestingly however, the very quotes Perrin et al use to demonstrate tea partiers' fear of change perhaps better reflects a grievance with activist government than it does status defense. For example, Perrin et al cite one tea party survey

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association between racial prejudice and tea party identification when controlling for other variables in their latent growth model, but that prejudice is mediated by belief in national decline and libertarianism.



respondent who explained, “we don’t want the big government that’s taking over everything we worked so hard for...the government’s becoming too powerful...we want to take back what our Constitution said” which in their view is limited government (p. 7). Instead of identifying this as a specific complaint of government being unfair, the authors explain it as a categorical fear of change: “Such emotional statements are rooted in feelings of ontological insecurity and are consistent with expressions of earlier right wing movements that were based on status defense” (p. 7).

However, some researchers find that the changes tea partiers feared were not necessarily or exclusively about losing social prestige. For instance, in their in-person interviews with tea partiers, Skocpol and Williamson find tea partiers were distressed over perceived changes to the rewards system in America: “...for members of the Tea Party, it felt as though the fundamental rules about the American Dream had changed. Working hard no longer meant getting ahead” (p. 30). These concerns are predictable given the 2008 financial crisis that punished everyone regardless of merit. What distinguished tea partiers was where they laid blame: “government efforts at redistribution,” to soften the impact of the economic downturn, “skewed the rewards and costs that should rightly [have been] apportioned by the free market,” explain Skocpol and Williamson (p. 31). In other words, tea partiers viewed government action as the culprit changing the rewards system in America, thereby unfairly rewarding the “freeloaders” at the expense of the “hard working taxpayers.”

Nevertheless, Skocpol and Williamson further argue that tea partiers’ distinction between “hard working taxpayers” and “freeloaders” has “ethnic, nativist, and generational undertones” (p. 74) They conclude this because the authors believe tea partiers made a “big government” exception for themselves in the form of Social Security and Medicare. As Skocpol wrote for *Politico*, “[tea partiers] stand for nothing clear besides deep generational and racial anxieties” (Skocpol 2010). If Skocpol and

Williamson are correct that tea partiers' support large government programs for their ingroup but not for other groups, this undermines supporters' claims that the movement is about limited government and not about race.

Skocpol and Williamson base their argument on the belief that tea partiers are not really opposed to large government programs and services that "benefit people like them," they are opposed to programs going to others outside of their "social orbit" (p. 60).<sup>4</sup> They cite an April 2010 CBS/*New York Times* survey which found 62 percent of tea party supporters believe Social Security and Medicare are "worth the costs...for taxpayers" (p. 60). Further the report from their interviews that:

"not a single grassroots tea party supporter we encountered argued for privatization of Social Security or Medicare along the lines being pushed by ultra free market politicians like Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI) and advocacy groups like FreedomWorks and Americans for Prosperity...They are sure that Obama's Affordable Care Act is unconstitutional but elide this standard **for *their own entitlements***" (p. 60-61).  
[emphasis added]

They reason that since tea partiers oppose cutting entitlements, but favor cutting other programs, tea partiers' aversion to government spending is conveniently self-serving, perhaps shaped by racial anxieties, rather than grounded in some sort of moral orientation toward politics.

Their interpretation fits within the literature on racialization, in which some individuals are more likely to view people in their race/ethnic group as producers and thus deserving of government services and individuals in other race/ethnic groups as "takers" disqualifying their desert for government services.

However, there are several shortcomings with Skocpol and Williamson's assessment. First, Skocpol and Williamson based their conclusion on an incomplete understanding for how tea partiers comprehend Social Security and Medicare entitlement programs. Contrary to the authors' assertion, tea partiers are in fact

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<sup>4</sup> Skocpol in Politico also explains, "Rank-and-file tea partiers are not even opposed to the core of federal spending for defense, Medicare, and Social Security" (Skocpol 2010).

supportive of reforming entitlements if they can get back what they put in—consistent with a more limited government approach—and are often more supportive of reform than those not supportive of the tea party movement.

Social Security and Medicare are extraordinarily complicated programs, the details of which are lost on most Americans. Further complicating the public's understanding is that these programs are not funded by their own tax dollars in some sort of "lock box." Moreover, some individuals will get back less than the real amount they contributed plus interest while others will get back more. When overly simplistic survey questions find the public opposes cutting entitlements, it's unclear if the public opposes losing redistributive benefits they could receive from the programs, or if they are afraid of losing the dollars they could have otherwise saved in a retirement account.

To further investigate how tea partiers viewed these programs, I requested that Reason Foundation place several questions on Social Security and Medicare on the Reason-Rupe national telephone survey. The survey revealed that, contrary to Skocpol and Williamson's argument, tea party supporters were willing to support cutting entitlement benefits if they were guaranteed to get back what they contributed into the system, and were more likely than non-tea party supporters to favor changing entitlement programs.

For instance, although a majority (62%) of tea party supporters thought entitlements were worth the costs to taxpayers, a majority (74%) were also willing to reduce their own Social Security benefits if they were guaranteed to receive benefits equal to the amount they and their employer contributed into the system (Reason Foundation/Princeton 2012). (See Table 2). At first a slim majority (51%) of tea partiers would favor reducing their own Medicare benefits to help balance the federal budget, while a majority (54%) of non-tea partiers would instead oppose. However, if respondents were guaranteed to receive what they contributed toward the system (this

question did not mention employer contributions) then 67 percent of tea partiers would support, compared to 57 percent of non-tea partiers (Reason Foundation/NSON 2011).

Furthermore, in contrast to Skocpol and Williamson's qualitative findings, a September 2012 national survey, which included 300 tea party sympathizers, found this group far more supportive of voucher-like entitlement reform methods than non-tea party supporters. Indeed, fully two-thirds of tea partiers favored a reform that would give "seniors a credit to purchase the health insurance plan of their choice" even if it might result in "seniors paying more money out-of-pocket for their own health care." In contrast, only 40 percent of non-tea partiers agreed (Reason Foundation/Princeton 2012).

Similarly in an August 2011 survey, which also included about 300 tea party sympathizers, nearly three fourths of sympathizers agreed that "people like me should be primarily responsible for saving enough money to meet basic expenses in retirement" compared to 55 percent of non-supporters. Similarly six in 10 tea party supporters also felt that "people like me should be primarily responsible for saving enough money to purchase health insurance in retirement." However, among non-supporters numbers were flipped with nearly 6 in 10 instead agreeing that "people like me should primarily expect help from the government to pay for health insurance in retirement" (Reason Foundation/NSON 2011). Tea party supporters were also roughly 25 points more likely to favor allowing workers to opt-out of Social Security (71 to 47 percent) and Medicare (74 to 48 percent) than non-supporters.

Table 2  
Beliefs about Entitlements and Entitlement Reform by Tea Party Support

	Tea Party Supporter	Not a Supporter
<b>Q1 <i>Favor or Oppose Reducing own Medicare Benefits to balance federal budget?</i></b>		
Favor	51%	41%
Oppose	44%	54%
<b>Q2 <i>Favor or Oppose Reducing own Medicare Benefits if Guaranteed to Receive Benefit Equal To Amount R and R's Employer Contributed Into System?</i></b>		
Favor	74%	65%
Oppose	19%	28%
<b>Q3 <i>Favor or Oppose Reducing own Social Security Benefits to balance federal budget?</i></b>		
Favor	42%	37%
Oppose	52%	58%
<b>Q4 <i>More Willing to Reduce own Social Security Benefits if Guaranteed to Receive at Least the Amount of Money R Contributed Into the System?</i></b>		
Favor	65%	61%
Oppose	27%	31%
<b>Q6 <i>Favor or oppose allowing workers to opt-out of Social Security?</i></b>		
NET Favor	71%	47%
NET Oppose	24%	48%
Strongly Favor	53%	27%
Somewhat Favor	18%	20%
Somewhat Oppose	7%	10%
Strongly Oppose	17%	38%
<b>Q7 <i>Favor or oppose allowing workers to opt-out of Medicare?</i></b>		
NET Favor	74%	48%
NET Oppose	21%	46%
Strongly Favor	51%	28%
Somewhat Favor	23%	20%
Somewhat Oppose	8%	12%
Strongly Oppose	13%	34%
<b>Q8 <i>Who Should Be Primarily Responsible for Paying for Basic Expenses in Retirement?</i></b>		
R should be primarily responsible	72%	55%
R should expect help from government	19%	37%
<b>Q9 <i>Who Should Be Primarily Responsible for Paying for Health Insurance in Retirement</i></b>		
R should be primarily responsible	59%	37%
R should expect help from government	36%	56%
<b>Q10 <i>Favor or oppose giving seniors a credit to purchase the health insurance plan of their choice from private companies or the government? Supporters say this would lower Medicare's costs and ensure that seniors have more health care choices. Opponents say it would result in seniors paying more money out-of-pocket for their own health care.</i></b>		
Favor	66%	40%
Oppose	29%	56%
REASON-RUPE POLL, September 2012 Reason-Rupe Survey: Q2, Q10; August 2011 Reason-Rupe Survey: Q1, Q3-Q9, <a href="http://reason.com/poll">reason.com/poll</a>		

These data indicate that tea partiers were more likely to take a more fiscally conservative position on not only taxes, spending, and social welfare programs, but also on entitlements as well. This does not imply tea partiers want to privatize or abolish old-age retirement programs, but it weakens' Skocpol and Williamson's underlying assumption that tea partiers selectively favor programs for people like themselves, but not for other groups.

This leads to the next shortcoming of their analysis. Without further empirical research, it remains unclear the extent to which racial anxieties color tea partiers' perceptions of deservingness and attitudes toward government. This is important to ascertain because if racial anxiety is a prevailing feature of tea party support, this undermines members' claims that the movement is about limited government, rather than about race.<sup>5</sup>

Arceneaux and Micholson (2012) conduct such an empirical investigation finding little evidence that race drives tea party opposition to government aid. Using an experiment, the authors test if tea partiers are more likely to support increases in unemployment benefits and college aid if such a request were paired with a Caucasian face, compared to a Latino or African-American face. They find little statistical support for the claim that racial animus drove tea party opposition to program expansion. Interestingly, they find that non-conservative tea party supporters were more likely to support unemployment aid when paired with Latino and African-American faces than white faces ( $p < .05$ ). However, even though not statistically significant, they also find

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<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, qualitative research is particularly sensitive to salient news events. For instance, Skocpol, Williamson, and Coggin (2011) report that tea partiers voiced disproportionate concern over immigration; however the authors conducted a bulk of their qualitative interviews in April-May 2010 the same timeframe during which Arizona passed SB 1070, a controversial immigration law that made immigration a nationally salient issue in the news cycle at that time. In my interviews conducted between 2010-2014 only about half of the activists brought up the issue of immigration on their own, but all brought up issues of limited government.

that conservative tea partiers rated government assistance to the unemployed 4 points higher when attributed to a white face compared to a nonwhite face (p-value .07). The authors conclude that, “racial animus does not appear to be the primary force behind [tea partiers’] opposition to government aid” but that it may “color...judgments.”

Interestingly Arceneaux and Micholson (2012) find that racial attitudes influence support for aid only among conservatives who were *not* tea party supporters: they were the only group who substantially and significantly offered greater aid when paired with a Caucasian face than an African-American face by about 12 points ( $p < .05$ ). If racial anxieties were a primary motivator for tea party support, why didn’t these conservatives join? Nevertheless, Arceneaux and Micholson do not discuss these implications or fully address the extent to which racial anxieties may define support for the tea party movement itself.

To date, the most systematic and quantitative study of sources for tea party support is Christopher Parker and Matt Barreto’s *Change They Can’t Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America*.

Parker and Barreto take a stronger position than Skocpol and Williamson, and Perrin et al, with their central thesis being that the election of Barack Obama threatened a substantial number of Americans, who turned to the tea party as an expression of their perceived loss of power and status in their own country:

“We believe that President Obama, by virtue of his position as president, and the fact that he’s the first nonwhite person to hold the office of president, represents to some an assault upon a specific ethnocultural conception of American identity and everything for which it stands...” (p. 35).

“We argued that if members of out-groups hold positions of power, members of the in-group are likely to perceive the powerful out-group members’ goals to be antagonistic to those of the less powerful in-group. Based on the power and authority the president wields, it’s no surprise that people who support the tea party, most of whom are white, feel a loss of control” (p. 97).

As evidence for this view, they use original survey data they collected in 13 states, selected disproportionately from competitive states. They run a regression model predicting tea party support, finding that preferences for limited government, racial resentment (modern racism) and social dominance (old-fashioned racism) predict tea party support. In the most careful statement of their findings in Table 2.8 on page 96 they report that a movement across the full range of their Limited Government scale increases support for the tea party by 9 percentage points, while the corresponding increase for their Racial Resentment scale is 14 percentage points and Social Dominance is 15 percentage points.<sup>6</sup> The measures were standardized to a 0-1 range, min to max.

This analysis has some shortcomings. One is that the Limited Government scale consists of three dichotomous items, while the Racial Resentment scale consist of four items, each having a range of 1 to 5 and the Social Dominance scale consists of six items, also ranging from 1 to 5. Thus the latter measures are likely to be more reliable, and more likely to generate minimum and maximum values that are more extreme than those of the Limited Government measure. Conversion of both scales to a 0-1 metric will not change the likelihood that scores of 0 and 1 will be more extreme positions on the racial resentment scale than on the limited government scale. For both reasons – more reliable measurement and greater extremity of min and max values – the Racial Resentment and Social Dominance scales are likely to have an unmerited advantage in competing for effect size with the Limited Government scale.

Another shortcoming of the analysis is that it does not determine whether the effect of racial resentment or social dominance is statistically significantly larger than the effect of belief in limited government.<sup>7</sup> Yet the book refers 81 times to Racial

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<sup>6</sup> Full regression results found in Table A2.2 on p. 290

<sup>7</sup> Table A2.2 on page 290 shows the limited government variable in an ordered logistic regression for tea party support has a coefficient of .84 (.315) while the racial resentment variable has a coefficient of -.25 (.095) and Social Dominance .19 (.062). The racial resentment variable is negative because these items



Resentment as a cause of support for the tea party, but only 18 times to the impact of Limited Government. The strong impression is that the tea party is mostly the product of racial resentment, but this is by no means demonstrated by the book's analyses.

An additional problem is their measure of old-fashioned racism, Social Dominance. Researchers have found agreement with statements like "inferior groups should stay in their place" predicts old-fashioned racism and aggressive intergroup interactions (Ho et al. 2011). However, there are some statistical problems with using these measures. First, few people endorse such views. For instance the 2004 National Politics Survey finds only 13 percent of Americans agree that "inferior groups should stay in their place," including 11 percent of Republicans, 13 percent of independents, and 15 percent of Democrats (Jackson et al. 2004).

These small percentages lead to the next problem: regressions using these measures with skewed distributions have results driven by extreme cases. This may be the reason Parker and Barreto supplemented the standard Social Dominance battery with a separate battery that some view as related but also a separate construct that measures egalitarian preferences. This egalitarianism battery has been shown to predict "conservatism and opposition to redistributive social policies" (Ho et al. 2011). It is problematic to conflate one battery than has been shown to predict racism and zero-sum competition (social dominance) with another battery that predicts conservatism and opposition to redistributive social policies, suggesting they indicate the same latent preference for social dominance. This is analogous to surveying beliefs about abortion and gay marriage and using those as a proxy for limited government preferences. They may be related, but they are by no means the same thing. Consequently, it is

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were coded in reverse (see page 271). The authors say they reversed coded racial resentment due to "survey question order." It is unclear why they did not recode the results when running the regression.

questionable that this egalitarianism construct is properly measuring if tea partiers believe Obama becoming president symbolizes “subversion.”

## Hypotheses and Method

Further analyses are needed in order to determine if tea partiers’ explicit claims—concerns about limited government—or out-group hostility are primarily driving their support. I will test these competing explanations in a series of head-to-head tests of variables measuring both factors. However, these tests will take care to ensure both variables are measured with comparable reliability and will utilize tests to compare the relative explanatory power in predicting tea party support.

## Data Analysis I

First, I have selected the CBS/*New York Times* (CBS/NYT) April 2010 dataset to test these hypotheses for several reasons. First, the CBS/NYT survey was one of the earliest surveys conducted of the tea party movement, being fielded in April 2010, capturing earlier joiners. Second, in part because of its earlier fielding, it asks about the issues most salient when the tea party emerged, for instance about bailouts, the stimulus, racial resentment, where Obama was born, about prioritizing economic or social issues, etc. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the survey includes an oversample of tea party supporters (775) that allows for greater precision in predicting tea party support.

The survey includes questions that can measure the variables of interest. (Question wording can be found in Appendix B). I measure preferences for limited government and racial anxiety using one variable each, coded 0-1; the variables were selected to be as similar in variance as possible.<sup>8</sup> I also run an additional regression

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<sup>8</sup> The CBS/NYT question used to measure racial anxiety arguably maps onto the standard battery of racial resentment questions used in the literature, “Has too much or too little been made of the problems

model including a measure of unauthorized immigration anxiety, since Skocpol and Williamson found this issue featured prominently in their interviews.

## Data Results I

Table 3 shows the results of the logit regression model predicting tea party support. I run a separate model with each primary variable of interest and the standard demographic variables, and then combine the primary variables of interest into one regression model.

Similar to Parker and Barreto's results, the model finds both preferences for limited government and racial anxiety are statistically significant predictors, even when included in the same model. The model finds tea partiers are significantly more likely to be male, Republican and independent, evangelical, have more education, be older, and middle income. These demographics fit what one would expect of a middle class, conservative social movement.

Table 3 Model 4 adds a measure for unauthorized immigration anxiety finding this to also significantly predict tea party support, without significantly altering the significance or coefficients for limited government or racial anxiety.

The full regression model offers an opportunity for a “contest” between the two primary explanations of tea party support—preferences for limited government or racial anxiety. The results reveal that preference for limited government has about twice the impact of racial attitudes. A linear-combinations-of-estimates test indicates that the coefficient for limited government is a statistically more influential predictor of tea party support than racial attitudes ( $p < 0.01$ ).<sup>9</sup>

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facing black people, or is it about right?” However, to differentiate this question from the standard four, I labeled it “racial anxiety” rather than racial resentment.

<sup>9</sup> The linear combinations of estimates test reveals the odds ratio between limited government and racial anxiety is 1.47 in Model 6 and 1.39 in Model 7.

Table 3  
Predicting Tea Party Support:  
Regressions on Measures of Preference for Limited Government, Racial Attitudes, and  
Immigration Anxiety (CBS/NYT April 2010 Survey)

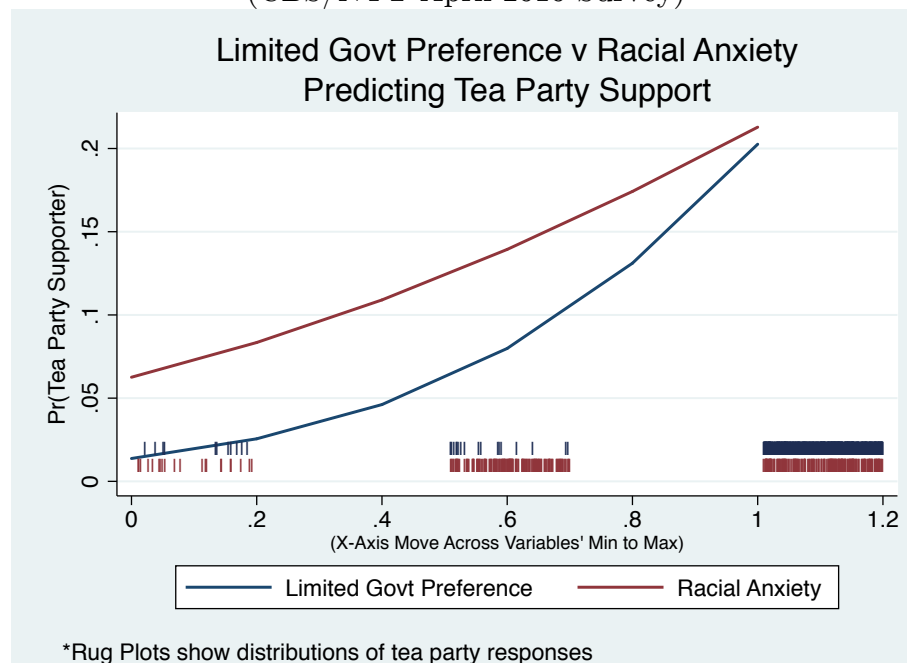
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Logit Regression</i>	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter
<i>Linear Combinations Test Limited Govt-Racial Resentment</i>						<i>Difference= Significant</i>	<i>Difference= Significant</i>
<b>Preference for Small Government</b>	3.544***				3.379***	3.336***	3.187***
<i>Would you rather a smaller govt w/ fewer services or a larger govt w/ more services?</i>	(7.65)				(7.15)	(7.27)	(6.87)
<b>Racial Anxiety</b>		2.038***		1.957***		1.862***	1.793***
<i>Has too much or too little been made of problems facing black people, or is it about right?</i>		(8.08)		(7.54)		(6.98)	(6.70)
<b>Illegal Immigration Anxiety</b>			1.650***	1.535***	1.209***		1.048**
<i>How serious a problem do you think the issue of illegal immigration is for the country right now?</i>			(4.69)	(4.26)	(3.33)		(2.76)
<b>Male</b>	0.524*	0.557*	0.543**	0.527*	0.513*	0.531*	0.521*
	(2.24)	(2.44)	(2.60)	(2.35)	(2.21)	(2.27)	(2.25)
<b>Republican</b>	1.854***	2.361***	2.345***	2.222***	1.796***	1.767***	1.711***
	(4.67)	(6.93)	(7.28)	(7.11)	(4.87)	(4.52)	(4.76)
<b>Independent</b>	1.323***	1.772***	1.707***	1.684***	1.266***	1.306***	1.241***
	(4.04)	(5.62)	(5.90)	(5.74)	(4.08)	(4.02)	(4.03)
<b>Evangelical</b>	0.401*	0.650***	0.632***	0.651***	0.386*	0.447**	0.446**
	(2.47)	(4.78)	(3.98)	(4.71)	(2.35)	(2.93)	(2.89)
<b>Education</b>	0.303***	0.436***	0.429***	0.478***	0.329***	0.334***	0.352***
	(5.08)	(6.78)	(7.91)	(7.51)	(5.47)	(4.81)	(5.17)
<b>Age</b>	0.036***	0.043***	0.038***	0.039***	0.033***	0.037***	0.035***
	(6.96)	(7.58)	(7.99)	(6.97)	(6.74)	(6.48)	(6.19)
<b>Nonwhite</b>	-0.147	-0.246	-0.377	-0.098	0.030	0.026	0.128
	(0.47)	(0.84)	(1.33)	(0.33)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.37)
<b>Middle Income</b>	0.448**	0.385*	0.485**	0.450**	0.467**	0.443**	0.467**
	(2.83)	(2.36)	(3.20)	(2.67)	(3.02)	(3.07)	(3.25)
<b>High Income</b>	0.053	0.032	0.256	0.181	0.136	0.044	0.123
	(0.25)	(0.15)	(1.31)	(0.80)	(0.61)	(0.18)	(0.49)
<b>Constant</b>	-9.140***	-8.681***	-8.466***	-9.797***	-9.938***	-10.33***	-10.96***
	(13.23)	(16.06)	(15.36)	(17.87)	(14.20)	(14.06)	(15.29)
N	1490	1490	1490	1490	1490	1490	1490

Source: CBS/NYTimes April 2010 Survey; Logit Regression, t statistics in parentheses,  
\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001, Clustered standard errors by state.

Limited government has about three times the impact of unauthorized immigration anxiety, and a linear-combinations-of-estimates test also finds the coefficient for limited government is a statistically more influential predictor ( $p < 0.001$ ).<sup>10</sup>

Predicted probability plots with associated rug plots (see Figure 1) shows how the probability of being a tea party supporter increases as one moves from the min to max values (0 to 1) for the limited government variable and racial attitudes variable respectively. The slopes in the predicted probability plots visually demonstrate that tea party support is more strongly related to preferences for limited government than racial attitudes.

Figure 1 Predicted Probability of Tea Party Support: Limited Govt and Racial Attitudes  
(CBS/NYT April 2010 Survey)



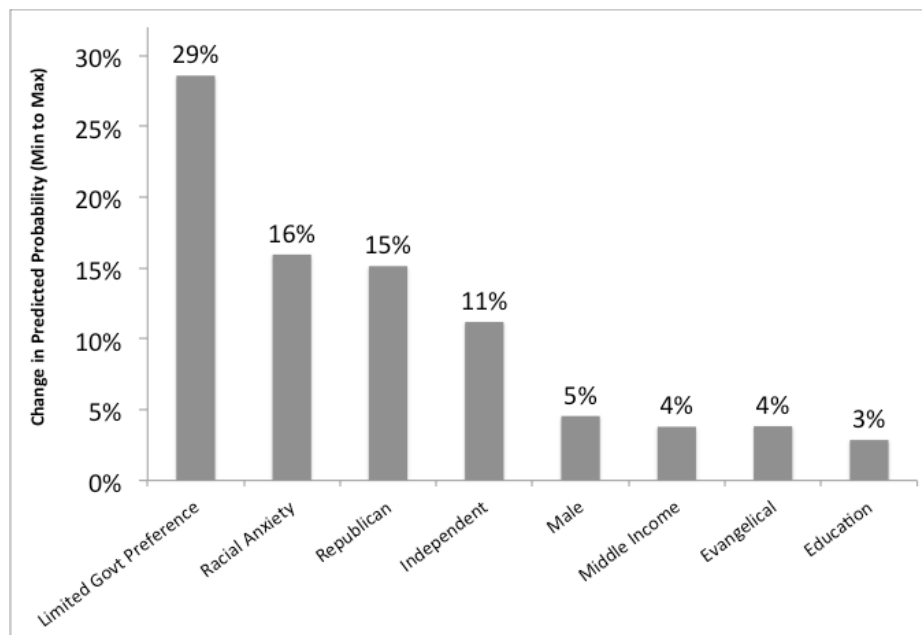
Note: Figure displays predicted probability plots moving from min to max values for limited government preferences and racial attitudes in predicting tea party support. Random noise was added to the rug plots to enhance ability to observe frequency of responses. Without random noise, the responses would be on top of each other. For this reason, the rug plots are slightly shifted to the right. Rug plots show distributions of tea party supporters' responses.

<sup>10</sup> The linear combinations of estimates test reveals the odds ratio between limited government and immigration anxiety is 2.17 in Model 5 and 2.14 in Model 7.

The rug plots display the distributions of responses among tea party supporters. The rug plots indicates that almost all tea party supporters (96%) indicated a high preference for limited government (blue plot). However, a little more than half (55%) of tea party supporters indicated a racially conservative position, while the remaining were at the national median or below (45%) (red plot).

Calculating marginal effects shows that, while holding other variables at their observed values, moving from low to high support for limited government increases the probability of being a tea party supporter 29 percent. In contrast, moving from low to high racial anxiety increases the probability of being a tea party supporter by 16 percent, almost half the effect of limited government (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Probability of Supporting the Tea Party, Marginal Effects  
(CBS/NYT April 2010 Survey)



Note: Predicted probabilities of significant predictors of tea party support. All predictors shown are significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

## Data Analysis II

In this section I replicate this model using the American National Election Studies 2012 Evaluations of Government and Society Survey (ANES12). Although it lacks the tea party oversample of the CBS/NYT survey, and is conducted 3 years after the tea party mobilized, there are several benefits to using the data. First, the dataset includes the four standard racial resentment questions most often used in the academic literature and four questions about the size of government or its economic scope. The advantage of having four survey items each is that research has shown that averaging multiple survey questions reduces measurement error of policy preferences (Ansolabehere, Rodden, and James M. Snyder 2008). Additionally, when averaging the four items into scale, they can be standardized in such a way to reduce the influence of extreme cases.

If using the standard battery of racial resentment questions, and controlling for extreme cases, we once again find limited government a significantly more influential predictor of tea party support, this would provide additional compelling evidence that the tea party is primarily about the size of government.

In this dataset I average responses across four items for both limited government preferences and racial resentment respectively, taking care they are measured with comparable reliability and comparable variance.<sup>11</sup> (Question wordings found in Appendix B). I then transform both variables such that moving from 0 to 1 indicates moving across the interquartile range, reducing the influence of outliers. (This also will reduce the size of the coefficients relative to coding 0-1 from min to max.)

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<sup>11</sup> It is important to ensure both the variables measuring limited government preference and racial resentment have comparable reliability and comparable variance to prevent one variable from having an unmerited advantage in competing for effect size. The 4 racial resentment questions range from 1-5, 2 of the limited government questions range from 1-3 and another two range from 1-7. Combining these questions into respective scales creates a limited government measure with a standard deviation of .68, and a racial resentment measure with a standard deviation of .75.

## Data Results II

Table 4 shows the results of the logit regression using the ANES12 data predicting tea party support. As before, I run a separate model with each primary variable of interest and standard demographic variables, and then combine the primary variables of interest into one regression model. In this analysis, the coefficients represent moving from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile (the interquartile range) for both the limited government and racial resentment scales.

Like the CBSNYT model, the ANES12 model finds both preferences for limited government and racial resentment are statistically significant predictors of tea party support. (See Table 4). Being Republican or independent remain significant predictors, and in several models tea partiers are significantly less likely to be in the highest income group.

In the contest between preference for limited government or racial resentment, similar to the CBSNYT model, the former has nearly twice the impact of the latter. Moreover, a linear-combinations-of-estimates (lincom) test indicates that the coefficient for limited government is a statistically more influential predictor of tea party support than racial anxiety ( $p < 0.01$ ).<sup>12</sup> Limited government has about 3 times the impact of unauthorized immigration anxiety, and a lincom test also finds the coefficient for limited government is a statistically more influential predictor ( $p < 0.01$ ).<sup>13</sup>

Predicted probability plots of the interquartile range (See Figure 3) again show a steeper slope for limited government preferences than racial resentment, demonstrating the strong relationship. Calculating marginal effects shows that when holding the other variables at their observed values, moving across the limited

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<sup>12</sup> The linear combinations of estimates test reveals the odds ratio between limited government and racial resentment is 1.75 in Model 6 ( $p < .05$ ) and 2.02 in Model 7 ( $p < .001$ ).

<sup>13</sup> The linear combinations of estimates test reveals the odds ratio between limited government and immigration anxiety is 2.59 in Model 6 ( $p < .001$ ) and 2.43 in Model 7 ( $p < .001$ ).



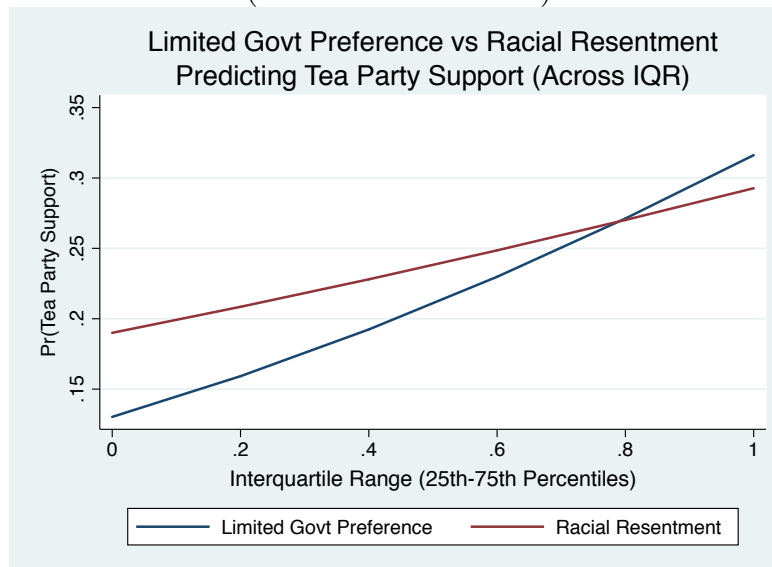
**Table 4**  
**Predicting Tea Party Support:**  
**Regressions on Measures of Preference for Limited Government, Racial**  
**Attitudes, and Immigration Anxiety (ANES EGSS 2 Survey)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Logit Regression</i>	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter	Tea Party Supporter
<i>Linear Combinations Test</i>						<i>Difference=</i>	<i>Difference=</i>
<i>Limited Govt-Racial Resentment</i>						<i>Significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>
<b>Limited Government Preferences</b>	1.514***				1.490***	1.327***	1.345***
<i>4-Item Scale, 0-1 Represents IQR SD: .68</i>	(10.84)				(10.47)	(9.53)	(9.30)
<b>Racial Resentment</b>		1.071***		0.928***		0.801***	0.647***
<i>4-Item Scale, 0-1 Represents IQR SD: .75</i>		(8.23)		(7.63)		(5.18)	(4.46)
<b>Unauthorized Immigration Anxiety</b>			0.581***	0.445***	0.558***		0.463***
			(5.45)	(3.90)	(4.52)		(3.71)
<b>Male</b>	0.24	0.241	0.25	0.185	0.185	0.188	0.146
	(1.31)	(1.47)	(1.49)	(1.10)	(1.06)	(1.05)	(0.82)
<b>Republican</b>	2.026***	2.370***	2.742***	2.307***	1.912***	1.775***	1.706***
	(5.93)	(7.08)	(9.25)	(6.95)	(5.69)	(4.80)	(4.62)
<b>Independent</b>	0.941**	1.113***	1.242***	0.995***	0.774**	0.807**	0.678*
	(3.18)	(4.26)	(5.02)	(3.93)	(2.83)	(2.72)	(2.40)
<b>Evangelical</b>	0.317	0.22	0.2	0.155	0.21	0.248	0.165
	(1.28)	(0.95)	(0.91)	(0.65)	(0.83)	(0.93)	(0.62)
<b>Education</b>	0.0822	0.236	0.252*	0.277*	0.131	0.119	0.147
	(0.76)	(1.90)	(2.38)	(2.10)	(1.09)	(0.90)	(1.06)
<b>Age</b>	-0.007	0.0008	0.0005	0.0004	-0.008	-0.007	-0.008
	(1.20)	(0.14)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(1.40)	(1.19)	(1.34)
<b>Nonwhite</b>	-0.258	-0.096	-0.275	-0.061	-0.225	-0.061	-0.056
	(1.12)	(0.41)	(1.17)	(0.23)	(0.91)	(0.25)	(0.21)
<b>Middle Income</b>	-0.126	-0.003	0.244	0.0778	-0.0647	-0.202	-0.149
	(0.49)	(0.01)	(0.96)	(0.31)	(0.25)	(0.78)	(0.57)
<b>Higher Income</b>	-0.541**	-0.228	-0.148	-0.24	-0.557**	-0.577*	-0.595**
	(2.63)	(1.02)	(0.71)	(1.11)	(2.70)	(2.51)	(2.63)
<b>Constant</b>	-3.097***	-3.809***	-5.120***	-4.983***	-4.583***	-3.354***	-4.494***
	(6.22)	(6.89)	(6.82)	(6.30)	(6.12)	(6.40)	(6.00)
<b>N</b>	1198	1193	1194	1189	1194	1193	1189

Source: ANES EGSS 2 2012 Survey; Logit Regression, t statistics in parentheses, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001, Clustered standard errors by state.

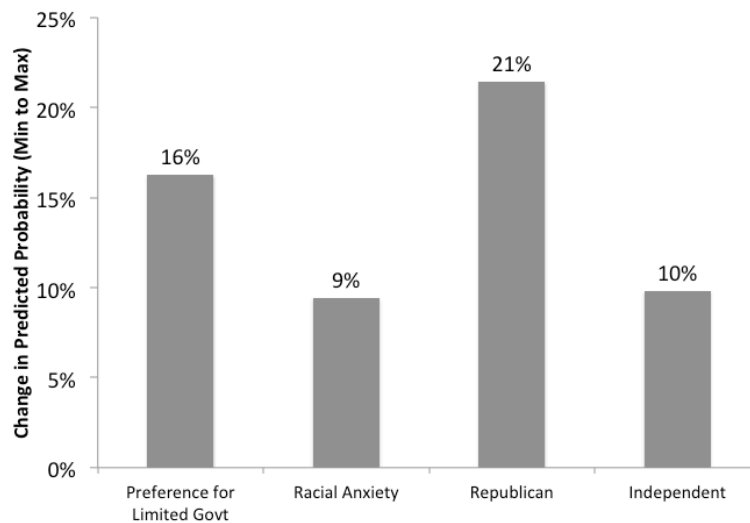
government variable's interquartile range increases the probability of being a tea party supporter by 16 percent. In contrast, moving across the racial resentment measure's interquartile range increases the probability by 9 percent, almost half the effect of limited government.

Figure 3 Predicted Probability of Tea Party Support:  
Limited Govt and Racial Attitudes  
(ANES 2012 EGSS 2)



Note: Figure displays predicted probability plots moving from 25<sup>th</sup>-75<sup>th</sup> percentiles for limited government preferences and racial resentment in predicting tea party support.

Figure 4 Probability of Supporting the Tea Party, Marginal Effects  
(ANES 2012 EGSS 2)



Note: Predicted probabilities of significant predictors of tea party support. All predictors shown are significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level. Figure displays predicted probabilities moving from the 25<sup>th</sup>-75<sup>th</sup> percentiles for each variable.

These results indicate that even when muting the effect of min and max values by examining the interquartile ranges of these variables, desire for small government is a significantly more influential variable than racial resentment.

In sum, even when using different datasets, and different questions within these datasets to operationalize the two variables of interest, the ratio of limited government to racial anxiety remains almost 2 to 1. The results from these two investigations provide compelling evidence that the tea party is more about limited government than racial resentment.

### The Tea Party as a Coalition

Initially using these standard logit regression models are advantageous because most of the academic literature has been thinking about the tea party as a homogenous block. Using improved measures in head-to-head contests demonstrate that even if the tea party is homogenous, limited government preferences are the prevailing impulse, ahead of racial anxiety.

However, what this standard logit model (and the models used in Parker and Barreto (2013) and (Abramowitz 2012)) ignore, is the possibility that the tea party movement is comprised of dissimilar types of people. Standard logit regression models assume that every tea party supporter places the same weight on all the variables. However, the results cannot distinguish whether the tea party is comprised of a homogenous group of conservatives in which everyone harbors some resentment but are more strongly motivated by limited government preferences, or if the tea party is a coalition of those primarily motivated by limited government preferences, others primarily motivated by racial resentment, and some motivated by a mix of both. Under either scenario, the aforementioned regression models wouldn't distinguish between the two.

There are several reasons to think that different people in the tea party place different weights on various considerations. First, both my activist interviews and supplementary activist surveys revealed that supporters held dramatically different positions on privacy, civil liberties, race, immigration, gay rights, but all were very fiscally conservative. Second, running the standard logit model predicting tea party support among subgroups in the CBSNYT dataset reveals that when offered the ability to do so, tea partiers do place substantially different weights on limited government and racial anxiety. (See Table 5).

Interestingly, among tea partiers with high levels of economic information (reported both knowing a lot about the Federal Reserve and the federal budget deficit, 25%), racial resentment drops out as a significant predictor, while preference for limited government remains significant and larger than the coefficient in the standard model. Among those with less than high economic information, both competing variables are significant, but limited government remains significantly more influential.

Dividing tea partiers into social conservatives (58%) and social moderates (42%) in the sample demonstrates that the latter are significantly more predicted by their support for limited government than racial anxiety by a factor of almost 3 to 1.<sup>14</sup> However, among social conservatives, even though limited government has a larger coefficient, tests fail to reject the null that's its significantly larger than racial anxiety. In another model, libertarian-leaners are also not significantly predicted by unauthorized immigration anxiety, while social conservatives are.

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<sup>14</sup> Socially moderate tea party supporters were also significantly more likely than socially conservative tea partiers to know Obama was born in the United States, to say Roe v Wade was a good thing, and to prioritize economic issues over social issues.

**Table 5 Predicting Tea Party Subgroups:**  
**Regressions on Measures of Preference for Limited Government and Racial Attitudes**  
**(CBS/NYT April 2010 Survey)**

Logit Regression of Subgroups	1a	1b	2a	2B	3a	3b	4a	4b	5a	5b
	Tea Party	Tea Party	Tea Party	Tea Party	Tea Party	Tea Party	Tea Party	Tea Party	Tea Party	Tea Party
Subgroup	High Economic Info	Not High Economic Info	Know A Lot About TP	Know < A Lot About TP	TP Libert	TP Social Con	South	Non-South	Evangelical	Non-Evangelical
% of Tea Party Supporters	25%	75%	56%	44%	42%	58%	41%	59%	41%	59%
<hr/>										
Linear Combinations Test	N/A	Significant	Significant	Not Significant	Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Significant	Not Significant	Significant
Limited Govt-Racial Resentment										
<b>Preference for Small Government</b>	4.84*** (3.84)	3.14*** (6.58)	4.38*** (5.41)	2.74*** (4.36)	3.94*** (7.30)	3.04*** (5.73)	2.96*** (5.10)	3.62*** (5.64)	3.83*** (5.44)	3.23*** (5.52)
<i>Would you rather a smaller govt w/ fewer services or a larger govt w/ more services?</i>										
<b>Racial Anxiety</b>	0.66 (1.17)	2.10*** (6.08)	2.08*** (3.71)	1.84*** (6.90)	1.51*** (5.76)	2.09*** (6.24)	2.29*** (5.04)	1.66*** (5.02)	2.46*** (5.60)	1.39*** (4.55)
<i>Has too much or too little been made of problems facing black people, or is it about right?</i>										
<b>Male</b>	0.21 (0.39)	0.52* (2.13)	0.15 (0.45)	0.54** (2.60)	0.46 (1.85)	0.57* (2.15)	0.82*** (3.44)	0.32 (1.01)	0.50 (1.28)	0.47* (2.08)
<b>Republican</b>	1.44* (1.99)	1.75*** (4.05)	1.91*** (3.97)	2.12*** (7.13)	1.87*** (3.83)	1.78*** (4.23)	1.24** (2.68)	2.32*** (4.07)	0.97 (1.91)	2.33*** (5.43)
<b>Independent</b>	0.61 (0.90)	1.31*** (4.01)	1.45*** (3.32)	1.65*** (6.76)	1.59*** (4.34)	1.16** (2.68)	0.87 (1.69)	1.66*** (3.99)	0.72 (1.37)	1.72*** (5.26)
<b>Evangelical</b>	0.20 (0.44)	0.47* (2.26)	0.77* (2.31)	0.24 (1.29)	-0.32 (1.64)	0.89*** (5.00)	0.78*** (3.79)	0.14 (0.62)		
<b>Education</b>	0.15 (0.86)	0.34*** (4.18)	-0.12 (0.73)	0.42*** (4.45)	0.40*** (4.08)	0.28*** (3.83)	0.26* (2.44)	0.43*** (4.62)	0.35* (2.24)	0.30*** (3.43)
<b>Age</b>	0.04*** (3.36)	0.04*** (5.36)	-0.002 (0.20)	0.04*** (6.49)	0.04*** (6.62)	0.04*** (5.10)	0.04*** (10.27)	0.03*** (3.39)	0.03*** (3.43)	0.04*** (5.41)
<b>Nonwhite</b>	0.80 (1.22)	-0.13 (0.36)	-0.07 (0.16)	-0.10 (0.28)	0.02 (0.07)	0.12 (0.30)	-0.30 (0.52)	0.18 (0.44)	-0.10 (0.21)	-0.03 (0.08)
<b>Middle Income</b>	0.76 (1.55)	0.46* (2.57)	0.49 (1.42)	0.36 (1.74)	0.35 (1.53)	0.48** (2.66)	0.59* (2.25)	0.33 (1.59)	0.16 (0.47)	0.49* (2.17)
<b>High Income</b>	-0.03 (0.11)	0.06 (0.23)	0.26 (0.73)	-0.07 (0.26)	0.43 (1.55)	-0.21 (0.78)	0.26 (0.73)	-0.21 (0.71)	-0.48 (1.47)	0.38 (1.13)
<b>Constant</b>	-9.09*** (6.12)	-10.31*** (12.43)	-6.42*** (5.40)	-10.99*** (12.08)	-11.78*** (13.29)	-10.76*** (11.53)	-10.38*** (11.99)	-10.42*** (9.13)	-9.66*** (10.60)	-10.34*** (10.10)
N	314	1176	560	930	1078	1181	556	934	474	1016

Source: CBS/NYTimes April 2010 Survey; Logit Regression, t statistics in parentheses, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001, Clustered standard errors by state

Third, Those who know “a lot” about the tea party (56%) place significantly more weight on limited government than racial anxiety, compared to those who are less engaged in the movement (44%). This indicates that more energized supporters are better predicted by their concerns about the size of government than racial anxiety they may harbor.

The following additional groups placed significantly greater weight on limited government than racial anxiety: non-southerners, non-evangelicals, non-birthers, and those with average or above average education levels. Conversely, for southern, evangelical, less educated tea partiers, tests failed to reject the hypothesis that supporters placed equal weight on both variables.

These results imply that the core tea party supporters are more motivated by the size of government than racial anxiety, but dissimilar types of people joined the movement. While nearly all are strong fiscal conservatives, they vary in the extent to which racial attitudes inform their political judgments.

### **Data Analysis III**

As a more incisive test of whether the tea party following consists of different kinds of people, I will run a latent class regression model for polytomous outcome variables (poLCA) (See Blaydes and Linzer (2008)) to identify clusters of like-minded tea partiers. Latent class models define response clusters according to an unobserved, or latent, categorical variable, and assign respondents’ probabilities of class membership in each class. The average posterior probabilities indicate the predicted share of respondents within each latent class.

Consequently, this analysis can distinguish whether the tea party is largely homogenous, or if it contains different groups who place different weights on competing considerations. It will identify what people place more weight upon limited government

concerns or racial concerns or a combination of both. I can then examine these groups, who they are, where they are from, their differences and similarities.

To identify the clusters, I include both economic and race related questions: limited government, taxing the wealthy, the problems facing African-Americans, Obama's treatment of Caucasians and African-Americans, and Obama's birthplace. I include several manifest variables on social issues as well. (See Appendix C for question wording). As covariates to the latent class regression, I include partisanship, gender, income, education, age, region, and evangelicalism. I run the poLCA model only on the tea party subset sample of 735 respondents to identify clusters within the tea party movement.<sup>15</sup>

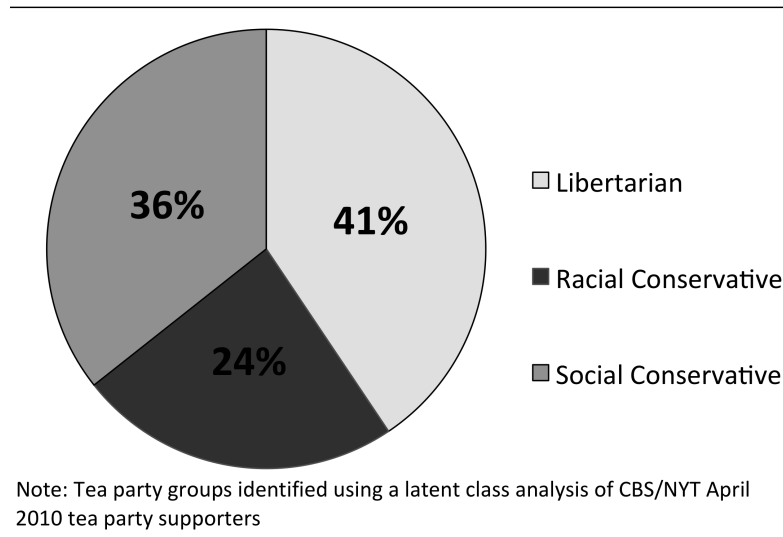
### Data Results III

Based on an assessment of minimizing both the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), I determine that three clusters is the appropriate number of classes (See Figure 5). Doing so reveals a cluster representing 41 percent of tea party supporters who are libertarian leaning and racially moderate and very economically conservative. Another cluster making up 36 percent of tea party supporters are socially conservative, also very economically conservative, and in between being racially moderate and conservative. The third group are racial conservatives, comprising 24 percent of the tea party movement. A key finding is that all three tea party clusters are strong economic conservatives, but vary substantially in their positions on social issues and race. It should be noted that the group denoted as libertarian-leaning, or libertarian, are not necessarily Libertarian Party identifiers, but rather take economically conservative positions and moderate to liberal positions on social and cultural issues.

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<sup>15</sup> The CBS/NYT April 2010 survey included an oversample of 775 tea party supporters. However, in the poLCA analysis I excluded 40 observations with missing data.

Figure 5:  
The Tea Party Coalition  
Tea Party Clusters Discovered Through Latent Class Analysis



### Demographic Profiles

Table 6 provides basic demographic information on the three types of tea party supporters.

#### Libertarian Leaning Tea Partiers

The libertarian group has significantly more education, higher incomes, are middle aged, male, and are less likely to attend church regularly or be evangelical. This group also feels less comfortable within the Republican Party with half identifying as independent, almost twice as many as the other two tea party groups. These tea partiers are also much less likely to identify as staunch conservatives and are less favorable toward President George W. Bush compared to the other groups. Libertarian-leaning tea partiers are solidly favorable toward former Fox News host Glenn Beck and former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, but considerably less so than the other groups. Only a third of libertarian leaners think Palin would make an effective president.



Table 6 Tea Party Clusters:  
Demographics, Political Identification, Tea Party Engagement  
(CBS/NYT April 2010 Survey)

	Tea Party Supporters		
	Libertarian (41%)	Racial Conservative (24%)	Social Conservative (36%)
<b>Demographics and Political Identifications</b>			
High School or Less	19%	36%	35%
Some College	32%	36%	35%
College Grad+	49%	28%	30%
Under \$30K	15%	21%	20%
\$30K-\$75K	37%	42%	49%
\$75K+	44%	29%	19%
Female	32%	39%	46%
Male	68%	61%	54%
Non-Southerner	70%	45%	58%
Southerner	30%	55%	42%
Non-Evangelical	83%	65%	29%
Evangelical	17%	35%	71%
18-29	6%	1%	9%
30-44	22%	9%	18%
45-65	49%	40%	46%
64+	23%	50%	27%
Employed	62%	39%	59%
Retired	27%	50%	29%
Attend Church Weekly	21%	41%	60%
Democratic	4%	4%	2%
Independent	51%	33%	30%
Republican	46%	63%	68%
Liberal	2%	3%	<1%
Moderate	27%	18%	9%
Somewhat conservative	45%	30%	28%
Very conservative	25%	48%	63%
<b>Political Favorabilities</b>			
Favorable of Republican Party	49%	63%	62%
Favorable of Democratic Party	5%	3%	1%
Favorable of George W. Bush	53%	63%	68%
Favorable of Glenn Beck	57%	65%	79%
Favorable of Sarah Palin	62%	82%	79%
Thinks Palin Would Be Effective President	34%	60%	46%
<b>Tea Party Activity</b>			
Tea Party in R Community	54%	60%	51%
Contributed to Tea Party (Money/Rally)	17%	21%	15%
Visited Tea Party Website	34%	33%	35%
Source: CBS/NYTimes April 2010 Survey; Latent Class Analysis identified three groups in the tea party.			

## Socially Conservative Tea Partiers

Social conservatives are middle class, middle-aged evangelicals, and staunch conservative Republicans who attend church weekly. They are solidly favorable of the Republican Party and George W. Bush, and are also overwhelmingly positive toward

Glenn Beck and Sarah Palin. Nevertheless, this group doesn't think Palin should be the president. In comparison to libertarian leaners, these tea partiers have less education, are more middle income, more female, but roughly the same age and similarly likely to be employed.

#### Racially Conservative Tea Partiers

Racial conservatives are considerably older, retired, male, and from the South. In fact, fully half are over 65 years old, and a majority (56%) are from the South. This group is similar to social conservatives in terms of education, partisan identification, and favorability toward the Republican Party, George W. Bush, and Sarah Palin. However, racial conservatives are the only tea party group that thinks Sarah Palin would be an effective president (60%). This group differs from social conservatives on religiosity, is significantly less evangelical and less likely to attend church weekly but is not as secular as libertarian leaners. This seems to translate into this group being in between social conservatives and libertarians on ideology.

When it comes to tea party participation, no one group seems to have the advantage. Nearly equal numbers (slightly more than half) say there is a tea party group active in their community, about a fifth have participated in a tea party group either by attending a rally or donating money, and a third have visited tea party websites. These similar participation rates are particularly notable given the fairly heterogeneous demographic profiles across these groups' ages, incomes, education, religiosity, and region.

#### Political Beliefs

Taking a closer look at these tea party groups' political beliefs (see Table 7), reveals they are all very fiscally conservative, but differ across partisan loyalties, social issues, and race.

All three tea party groups equally favor smaller government offering fewer services (roughly 96%) and overwhelmingly oppose raising taxes on high-income households (roughly 85%). Moreover, 7 to 8 in 10 still favor smaller government even if it requires cuts to defense, education, Social Security and Medicare. However, when it comes to priorities, 95 percent of libertarian tea partiers prioritize economics over social issues, compared to 57 percent of social conservatives and 80 percent of racial conservatives.

Table 7  
Political Beliefs Across Tea Party Clusters and Non-Tea Party Groups  
(CBS/NYT April 2010 Survey)

	Tea Party Supporters			Not Tea Party		
	Libertarian (41%)	Racial Conservative (24%)	Social Conservative (36%)	Republican (Not-TP)	Independent (Not-TP)	Democrat (Not-TP)
<b>Obama</b>						
Disapprove of Obama's Job Performance	90%	99%	94%	61%	31%	11%
Says Obama Moving US Toward Socialism	92%	97%	99%	67%	45%	29%
Correctly Defined Socialism (Open-Ended)	59%	52%	57%	40%	19%	16%
Says Obama Expanded Govt Role Too Much	92%	95%	95%	50%	31%	7%
Says Obama Doesn't Share Values	69%	94%	87%	45%	33%	15%
<b>Size of Government/Economics</b>						
Favors Smaller Government, Fewer Services	95%	96%	96%	64%	44%	24%
Still Favors Small Govt if Cuts to Defense, Education, Medicare, Social Security Required	80%	70%	70%	57%	53%	36%
Oppose Raising Taxes on \$250K	80%	85%	90%	56%	30%	13%
Says Welfare Keeps People Poor	73%	86%	74%	57%	30%	17%
Says Economics More Important Than Social	96%	80%	58%	76%	75%	90%
<b>Obama and Race</b>						
Says "Too Much" Has Been Made of Problems Facing Black Americans	41%	75%	58%	34%	18%	22%
Says Obama Favors Blacks Over Whites	8%	84%	8%	21%	4%	3%
Says Obama Born in United States	65%	18%	25%	44%	53%	81%
Says Obama Born Abroad	15%	59%	32%	30%	23%	3%
<b>Social/Cultural Issues</b>						
Oppose Gay Marriage/Civil Unions	8%	50%	77%	38%	24%	24%
Abortion Should Be Illegal	8%	23%	73%	30%	22%	12%
Says US Should Decrease Legal Immigration	37%	49%	44%	49%	38%	40%
Says Roe v Wade a Good Thing	61%	43%	8%	54%	62%	68%

Source: CBS/NYTimes April 2010 Survey; Latent Class Analysis identified three groups in the tea party.

In comparison to their non-tea party Republican counterparts, tea partiers are substantially more fiscally conservative. Compared to Republicans who do not support the movement, tea partiers are about 30 points more likely to favor smaller government, and oppose raising taxes on upper income households, and about 20 points more likely to continue favoring small government if it requires difficult cuts (significant at  $p < .001$ ) and to believe that social services fosters dependency (significant at  $p < .01$ ). Libertarian tea partiers are also about 20 points more likely to prioritize economics over social issues compared to regular Republicans ( $p < .001$ ), but socially conservative tea partiers are about 20 points less likely ( $p < .001$ ). Racial conservatives are similar to regular Republicans. Less surprisingly, independents and Democrats are far less likely to select fiscally conservative positions.

Major differences emerge among tea party groups on the issue of race and moral traditionalism. On race, racial conservatives (75%) are nearly twice as likely as libertarian tea partiers (41%) and nearly 20 points more likely than social conservatives (58%) to say “too much” has been made of the problems facing African-Americans. Racial conservatives were more than 10 times as likely as both libertarian leaners and social conservatives to say that President Obama favors black Americans over white Americans (84% to 8%). Only 15 percent of libertarian tea partiers thought President Obama was born outside of the United States, compared with 59 percent of racial conservatives and 31 percent of social conservatives.

Interestingly, on issues of President Obama and race, libertarian tea partiers take more liberal positions than non-tea party independents and Republicans, or are about the same. For instance, only 8 percent of libertarian tea partiers said they believed Obama favored black Americans over white Americans, compared to nearly three times that among Republicans who do not support the tea party movement, with this difference being statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), and were statistically similar to

independents. In addition, libertarian tea partiers were more than 20 points more likely than regular Republicans (significant  $p < .001$ ) and 12 points more likely than independents (significant  $p < .05$ ) to believe President Obama was born in the United States. Furthermore, a comparison of means tests finds that libertarian tea partiers are equally likely as non-tea party Republicans to say “too much” has been made of the problems facing African-Americans, but significantly more likely than independents ( $p < .001$ ).

Similar to libertarian tea partiers, socially conservative tea partiers are significantly less likely than non-tea party Republicans to say that the president favors African-Americans over Caucasians ( $p < .001$ ), and are statistically similar to independents. However, they are less likely to believe President Obama was born in the United States than regular Republicans ( $p < .01$ ) and independents ( $p < .001$ ), but equally likely to go so far to say he was born abroad. While not as high as racial conservatives, social conservatives are considerably more likely than non tea party Republicans and independents to say “too much” has been made of the problems facing African-Americans (significant,  $p < .001$ ).

Given the heterogeneous attitudes on race and Obama, it is particularly interesting that tea partiers are still nearly universally unfavorable toward him. Fully 90-99 percent of all three groups say they “disapprove” of Obama’s job performance, and nearly equal numbers say he’s moving the country toward socialism and expanded the role of government too much. Rather than abstract trepidation, socialism connotes a very specific outcome across tea party groups. Interestingly, despite differential levels of education, the three tea party groups correctly defined socialism in roughly equal proportion. Tea party supporters were the only political group in the CBSNYT survey that could accurately define socialism using their own words in response to an open-ended survey question. While nearly 6 in 10 tea partiers could accurately define

socialism, only 40 percent of non-tea party Republicans, 19 percent of independents, and 16 percent of Democrats could do the same. Overwhelming numbers also disbelieve the president shares their values; however, libertarian-leaners are less likely to believe they have disparate values (68% versus ~90%). These data indicate that tea partiers may reach similar unfavorable conclusions about President Obama but perhaps for different reasons.

On traditionalism, 77 percent of socially conservative tea partiers say there should be no legal recognition for same-sex couples and 74 percent think abortion should be illegal. In comparison, only 8 percent of libertarian tea partiers agree. Instead 62 percent of libertarian tea partiers say that Roe v Wade was a “good thing” compared to 8 percent of social conservatives. On each of these social issues, racial conservatives are in between (50 and 23 percent respectively).

Again, libertarian tea partiers take more liberal positions on social issues compared to some non-tea party groups. For instance, non-tea party Republicans are nearly 5 times as likely to oppose legal recognition of same-sex couples compared to libertarian tea partiers, 38 to 8 percent respectively, (significant at the  $p < .001$ ). Non-tea party independents and Democrats are about 3 times as likely to oppose as libertarian tea partiers, (significant at  $p < .001$ ). Similarly on abortion, non-tea party Republicans are about 4 times as likely to say abortion should be illegal and independents are about 3 times as likely, compared to libertarian tea partiers (both significant at  $p < .001$ ). Libertarian tea partiers are statistically as likely as Democrats to say abortion should be illegal. Six in 10 libertarian tea partiers say Roe v. Wade was a good thing, statistically similar with non-tea party independents and Democrats. On immigration, libertarian tea partiers are 12 points less likely than non-tea party Republicans to support decreasing immigration levels ( $p < .05$ ) and statistically similar to non-tea party independents and Democrats. Socially conservative tea partiers are

statistically similar with non-tea party Republicans and independents on lowering immigration levels.

Table 8 reports some additional information on how the three subgroups of tea partiers differ from the rest of the population. Each column of the table reports results for a different subgroup. In the first column, for example, the dependent variable is membership in the tea party libertarian subgroup versus everyone else in the CBSNYT sample. Results from logit models show that preference for limited government is a large and significant predictor of membership in each of the three tea party subgroups. However, racial anxiety loses its statistical significance in predicting tea party libertarians and is considerably less influential among social conservatives. Among the latter group, limited government has roughly 2.5 times the effect of racial anxiety, and a lincom test reveals it's a significantly more influential predictor ( $p < .01$ ).<sup>16</sup> For the racially conservative quarter of tea partiers, both racial anxiety and preference for limited government are equally significant predictors of this group.

The model verifies that libertarian tea partiers are significantly more likely to be male, independent or Republican, be older, have more education and have higher household incomes, and are less evangelical. Socially conservative tea partiers are significantly more Republican (but not independent), evangelical, and middle income. Being older and Republican are significant predictors of being racially conservative.

In sum, these three tea party groups are extraordinarily similar in their fiscal conservatism and preference for small government—the very issues they say they are about. However, they differ substantially across race and moral traditionalism—issues scholars have emphasized as defining the movement. The presence of these three groups in the tea party indicates that while race and traditionalism matter, and that racial

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<sup>16</sup> The linear combinations of estimates test reveals the odds ratio between limited government and racial attitudes is 7.82.

conservatives and social conservatives were drawn to the tea party, the prevailing impulse of the movement is what they say: it's primarily about limited government.

TABLE 8  
Predicting Tea Party Cluster Membership:  
Regressions on Measures of Limited Government Preferences and Racial Attitudes  
(CBS/NYT April 2010 Survey)

<i>Logit Regression</i>	1 Social Moderates, Racial Moderates, Fiscal Conservatives	2 Racial Conservatives, Fiscal Conservatives	3 Social Conservatives, Racial Mod/Con, Fiscal Conservatives
% of TP	41% of Tea Party	24% of Tea Party	36% of Tea Party
<i>Linear Combinations Test: Limited Govt-Racial Anxiety</i>	N/A	<i>Difference= Insignificant</i>	<i>Difference= Significant</i>
<b>Preference for Small Government</b>	2.908***	3.082**	3.624***
<i>Would you rather a smaller govt w/ fewer services or a larger govt w/ more services?</i>	(5.45)	(3.27)	(5.19)
<b>Racial Anxiety</b>	0.36	2.920***	1.567***
<i>Has too much or too little been made of problems facing black people, or is it about right?</i>	(1.83)	(6.99)	(4.01)
<b>Male</b>	0.532**	0.316	0.267
	(2.91)	(1.36)	(0.90)
<b>Republican</b>	1.742***	1.575**	1.290**
	(4.18)	(3.08)	(3.21)
<b>Independent</b>	1.881***	0.973	0.353
	(6.36)	(1.86)	(0.81)
<b>Evangelical</b>	-1.052***	-0.023	1.795***
	(4.85)	(0.15)	(8.32)
<b>Education</b>	0.405***	0.0462	0.137
	(5.63)	(0.41)	(1.33)
<b>Age</b>	0.019***	0.060***	0.015*
	(4.66)	(8.01)	(2.04)
<b>Nonwhite</b>	-0.013	-0.326	-0.059
	(0.05)	(0.85)	(0.13)
<b>Middle Income</b>	0.152	-0.094	0.759***
	(0.74)	(0.38)	(3.33)
<b>High Income</b>	0.469*	0.129	-0.779*
	(2.00)	(0.48)	(2.06)
<b>Constant</b>	-9.266***	-12.72***	-9.948***
	(13.03)	(-10.82)	(-12.54)
N	1490	1490	1490

Source: CBS/NYTimes April 2010 Survey; Logit Regression, t statistics in parentheses, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001, Clustered standard errors by state. Each model includes whole sample in which 1=Tea Party Subgroup 0=Remainder of sample not in tea party subgroup.

Furthermore, these results indicate the tea party is comprised of libertarian leaners who take moderate positions on race and social issues, a group of older, largely Southern, racial conservatives who also care about limited government, and social



conservatives who are primarily concerned about limited government but also harbor some racial resentments.

## Discussion

These results somewhat reflect groupings Lipset and Raab (1970) identified nearly 50 years previous when they wrote “there are at least three different kinds of right-wing strains” (Lipset and Raab 1970, p. 472). The first comprised economic conservatives who were higher income, more educated and did not hold prejudicial views towards African-Americans, similar to the libertarian tea party group. The second group comprised “radical rightists” were also very economically conservative, but less educated, working class, more religious, with a strong desire to preserve or bring back the past with which they identified, similar to the tea party social conservatives. The authors labeled the third group the pejorative term “rednecks” who were less economically conservative, but shared demographic characteristics with the radical rightists, and were “susceptible to status preservatism, whenever it becomes or is made salient and when it jibes with their economic position” and that the backlash target is “typically ethnic or racial in nature” (Lipset and Raab 1970, p. 474). This third group seems most similar to, although not the same as, the third group of tea party racial conservatives.<sup>17</sup>

There are also useful parallels between the modern tea party movement and the 1890s populists. For instance, few scholars deny that some 1890s populists engaged in anti-Semitic conspiratorial rhetoric or revealed prejudice (see Johnston 2007, Collins 1989, Hofstadter 1955, Ostler 1995, Handlin 1951, Pollack 1962, Woodward 1959).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lipset and Raab further report that radical rightists and economic conservatives were united in their support of Republican Barry Goldwater’s presidential candidacy and the John Birch Society; however, they were divided in the support for George Wallace’s third party bid in 1968 (Lipset and Raab 1970, pgs. 475-476).

<sup>18</sup> In *Age of Reform* Richard Hofstadter (1955) caused controversy by proposing there were strains of anti-Semitism in the 1890s populist movement: “In the books that have been written about the Populist movement, only passing mention has been made of its significant provincialism; little has been said of its

However, as the debate over Richard Hofstadter's *Age of Reform* reveals,<sup>19</sup> historians largely agree that such illiberal strains were not central to the 1890s populist core. Instead, they argue that populists' economic grievances were the most important motive of their mobilization and thus largely define scholarly understanding of the movement (Woodward 1959, Nugent 1963, Johnston 2007, Ostler 1995, see Hicks 1931, Goodwyn 1976).<sup>20</sup> This is similar to my argument of the contemporary tea party, which is that illiberal attitudes are present in some parts of the movement, but they are not the

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relations with nativism and nationalism; nothing has been said of its tincture of anti-Semitism" (Hofstadter 1955, Loc. 990, also see Handlin 1951). However, it was Hofstadter's bolder argument which instigated much debate: "It is not too much to say that the Greenback-Populist tradition activated most of what we have of modern popular anti-Semitism in the United States" (Hofstadter 1955, Loc. 1231-1263). However, other historians remained unconvinced by Hofstadter's argument, evidenced by Lawrence Goodwyn's (1991) recent declaration that "the world of populism constructed by Hofstadter now languishes in ruin" (cited in: Ostler 1995, p. 2, see Woodward 1959, Pollack 1960, 1962, Nugent 1963, Goodwyn 1976). However, few historians today deny that there were strains of anti-Semitism found among some parts of the 1890s populist movement (see Johnston 2007, Collins 1989, Hofstadter 1955, Ostler 1995, Handlin 1951, Pollack 1962, Woodward 1959). Robert Johnston (2007) points out that "without a doubt many Populists did engage in a search for "Shylock" bankers...and most of these writers were not innocent of the cultural work of the term "Shylock" (p. 132). (The term "shylock" is considered an anti-Semitic slur). Rhetoric often made references to conspiracies involving Jews versus the "toilers," or like populist orator Mary E. Lease accused President Grover Cleveland as being the "the agent of Jewish bankers and British gold" (Higham 1957, p. 132, Johnston 2007). In populist leader Tom Watson's 1892 campaign book he wrote: "Did [Jefferson] dream that in 100 years or less *his* party would be prostituted to the vilest purposes of monopoly, that redeyed Jewish millionaires would be chiefs of that Party, and that the liberty and prosperity of the country would be...constantly and corruptly sacrificed to Plutocratic greed in the name of Jeffersonian Democracy?" (Watson 1892/1975 cited in: Kazin 1995, Loc. 252). Woodward (1959) pointed out that among some in the movement there was a "tendency to turn cranky, illiberal, and sour...to take off after race phobias, religious hatreds, and witch hunts" (p. 70). Nevertheless, the prevailing scholarly view is that illiberal attitudes did not define the movement or the primary grievances of the movement adherents.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Hofstadter was perplexed by the backlash against his proposition that late 19<sup>th</sup> century populism had strains of anti-Semitism. Robert Collins (1989) writes that some historians viewed Hofstadter's research as reducing the Populists to "a horde of xenophobic, anti-Semitic, delusional cranks" (p. 152, see Pollack 1960, Pollack 1962). In a letter to historian C. Vann Woodward in 1963 Hofstadter wrote "if I had known what an imbecile fuss would be raised about my having mentioned the occasional anti-Semitic rhetoric among the Populists, I would either have dropped it as not worth the trouble or else spent even more time than I did in clarifying what I was saying" (cited in Johnston 2007, p. 130).

<sup>20</sup> For instance, C. Vann Woodward (1959) contended "Whatever concern the farmers may have had for their status was overwhelmed by desperate and immediate economic anxieties....while their legislative program may have been often naive and inadequate, it was almost obsessively economic" (p. 63).

dominant force behind tea party members' grievances and mobilization. Just as economic grievances are viewed as the dominant force defining the 1890s populists, so too do limited government preferences define the tea party movement of the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## Conclusion

This article has evaluated competing claims that the tea party is primarily motivated by racial attitudes or a desire for limited government. This has been done using standard logit regression models that assume homogeneity of the movement, latent class models allowing for heterogeneity, and then specialized models predicting membership in the classes identified in the LCA model. Opinion data starting from 2010 onwards show that preference for limited government is a significantly more influential predictor of tea party support than racial anxiety.

The latent class analysis reveals three distinct clusters of tea partiers, one being libertarian-leaning tea partiers who are racially moderate and very fiscally conservative, another being socially and very fiscally conservative who also hold some racially conservative attitudes, and then a third group of racial conservatives who are also fiscally conservative.

In light of this heterogeneity in the composition of the tea party movement, these results further imply that scholars should use care in making statements that apply to all members. In particular, my results imply that it is not quite accurate to make statements of the form, "tea party membership is partly predicted by racial resentment," because this statement implies that all tea party supporters are to some degree predicted by racial resentment. Rather, based on my results, one should say that some tea party members are predicted by racial resentment and some are not.

The tea party is surely not the only social movement with a heterogeneous composition. Latent class analysis should therefore probably be used more often than it

is in the study of public opinion. When, for various practical reasons, scholars cannot test for the sort of heterogeneity uncovered by latent class analysis, they should use caution in statements they make on the basis of simple regression analysis.

In sum, these results demonstrate that the tea party movement attracted many different kinds of people, including secularized fiscal conservatives, social conservatives, and some racially anxious people as well. While these groups vary substantially in their attitudes on race and moral traditionalism, what all three groups share in common is an explicit desire for small government. In sum, race is some but not all of the tea party story. Instead, fiscal conservatism and a preference for limited government is the movement's prevailing impulse.

## APPENDIX A

### Activist Information

Between 2010 and 2014 53 interviews were conducted with tea party activists in California, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia.

State	Gender	Race	Age Range	Occupation	Interview Method
California	Male	White	40s	Computer/IT	Phone
California	Female	White	50s	Small Business Owner	In-Person
California	Female	Hispanic	60s	Small Business Owner	Phone
Florida	Male	Hispanic	30s	Non-Profit	In-Person
Florida	Male	White	40s	Small Business Owner/Mortgage Broker	Phone
Georgia	Female	White	40s	Computer Programmer	Phone
Kentucky	Female	White	30s	Small Business Owner	Phone
Kentucky	Male	White	30s	Business	Phone
Kentucky	Male	White	30s	Student	Phone
Kentucky	Male	White	70s	Doctor	Phone
Minnesota	Male	White	30s	Finance	Phone
New Jersey	Male	African-American	40s	Activist	In-Person
New Jersey	Female	Hispanic	40s	Homemaker	In-Person
New Jersey	Male	White	40s	Small Business Owner	In-Person
New Jersey	Male	White	40s	Finance	In-Person
New Jersey	Male	White	50s	International Business	In-Person
New Jersey	Female	Hispanic	50s	Homemaker	Phone
New Jersey	Male	White	50s	Manufacturing Manager	In-Person
New Jersey	Male	White	50s	Unemployed	In-Person
New Jersey	Male	White	50s	Business Management	In-Person
New Jersey	Male	White	50s	Project Manager	In-Person
New Jersey	Male	White	60s	Electrical Engineering	In-Person
New Jersey	Male	White	60s	Computers	In-Person
New Jersey	Female	White	60s	Educator	In-Person
New York	Male	African-American	40s	Media	In-Person
North Carolina	Female	Asian/White	50s	Construction Surveyor	Phone
Ohio	Male	White	30s	Business Management	Phone
Ohio	Male	White	60s	Retired	Email
Pennsylvania	Female	White	30s	Homemaker/Small Business Owner	In-Person
Pennsylvania	Male	White	40s	Small Business Owner	In-Person
Pennsylvania	Female	White	40s	Homemaker	In-Person
Pennsylvania	Female	White	40s	Medical Field	In-Person
Pennsylvania	Female	White	40s	Medical Field	In-Person
Pennsylvania	Male	White	40s	Working Class	In-Person
Pennsylvania	Male	White	50s	Business Management	In-Person
Pennsylvania	Male	White	50s	Nurse	In-Person
Pennsylvania	Male	White	60s	Sales, of Manufacturing Products	In-Person
Pennsylvania	Male	White	70s	Retired	Phone
Tennessee	Male	White	50s	Retired	Phone
Texas	Male	White	30s	Activist	Phone
Texas	Male	White	40s	Attorney	Phone
Texas	Male	White	50s	Business Management	In-Person
Texas	Male	White	50s	Small Business Owner	Phone
Utah	Female	White	30s	Recruiter	In-Person
Virginia	Female	White	40s	Computer Programmer	Phone
Virginia	Male	White	40s	Health Care	Phone
Virginia	Male	White	70s	Retired	Phone
Virginia (Appalachia)	Male	White	40s	Coal Surveyor/Small Business Owner	In-Person
Virginia (Appalachia)	Male	White	60s	Famer	In-Person
Virginia (Appalachia)	Male	White	70s	Retired	In-Person
Washington	Female	White	30s	Writer	Phone
Washington	Male	White	60s	Small Business Owner	Email
DC	Male	White	30s	Journalism	Phone

## APPENDIX B

### CBS/*New York Times* April 2010 National Survey

#### **Tea Party Issues**

- Q22. If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services, or a bigger government providing more services?

#### **Racial Resentment**

- Q72. In recent years, do you think too much has been made of the problems facing black people, too little has been made, or is it about right?

#### **Immigration Anxiety**

- Q65. What about illegal immigration, how serious a problem do you think the issue of illegal immigration is for the country right now — very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

#### **Tea Party Libertarian-Leaners/Social Moderates and Social Conservatives**

Tea party supporters were divided into two groups, reflecting the divide I found on the ground among tea party activists, and the entrance poll I conducted. While most of the tea party is extremely fiscally conservative, one part is fairly socially moderate while the other part is socially conservative. Using the method developed in Boaz and Kirby (2006), I categorize tea party libertarian-leaners as those who are socially moderate to liberal and tea party social conservatives as those who are socially conservative.

In this dataset I use a question about same-sex marriage and another on abortion. Tea party social conservatives say there should be no legal recognition for same-sex couples and abortion should not be permitted. Tea party libertarian leaners favor civil unions or same sex marriage and say abortion should be generally available or available with limits.

- Which comes closest to your view? Gay couples should be allowed to legally marry, or gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not legally marry, or there should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship?
- Which of these comes closest to your view? Abortion should be generally available to those who want it, abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now, abortion should not be permitted?

## APPENDIX B (Cont.)

### ANES EGSS 2 2012 National Survey

#### Tea Party Fiscal Issues

- c2\_zh\_ Do you think that the government should provide more services than it does now, fewer services than it does now, or about the same number of services as it does now?
- c2\_zr1 Some people feel that the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others think the government should just let each person get ahead on their own. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?
- c2\_w7 As you may know, about 10 years ago the federal government cut income taxes for Americans at all income levels through 2010. In December 2010 the tax cuts were extended until 2012. Do you think the tax cuts should have been extended for all income levels, extended only for incomes under \$250,000, or not extended at all?
- c2\_zk3 Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose the government trying to make this income difference (income inequality) smaller?

Scale Reliability Coefficient: .676; Standard Deviation .68

#### Racial Resentment

- c2\_zgg1 Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.
- c2\_zgg2 Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.
- c2\_zgg3 Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.
- c2\_zgg4 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.

Scale Reliability Coefficient: .795; Standard Deviation .75

#### Unauthorized Immigration Anxiety

- c2\_zb1 Which comes closest to your view about what government policy should be toward unauthorized immigrants now living in the United States? Should the government
  - Make all unauthorized immigrants felons and send them back to their home country.
  - 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.
  - 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.
  - Allow unauthorized immigrants to remain in the United States and eventually qualify for U. S. citizenship, without penalties.

## APPENDIX C

### CBS/*New York Times* April 2010 National Survey

#### Manifest Variables Included in Latent Class Regression Model

- If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services, or a bigger government providing more services?
- Do you think it is a good idea or a bad idea to raise income taxes on households that make more than \$250,000 a year in order to help provide health insurance for people who do not already have it?
- In recent years, do you think too much has been made of the problems facing black people, too little has been made, or is it about right?
- According to the Constitution, American Presidents must be "natural born citizens." Some people say Barack Obama was not born in the United States, but was born in another country. Do you think Barack Obama was born in the United States, or do you think he was born in another country?
- In general, do you think the policies of the Obama administration favor whites over blacks, favor blacks over whites, or do they treat both groups the same?
- Which comes closest to your view? Gay couples should be allowed to legally marry, or gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not legally marry, or there should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship?
- Which of these comes closest to your view? Abortion should be generally available to those who want it, abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now, abortion should not be permitted?



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