

THESIS

THE TEA PARTY: THE DISCOURSE OF CLASS, RACE, & GENDER/SEXUALITY

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ABSTRACT

THE TEA PARTY: THE DISCOURSE OF CLASS, RACE, & GENDER/SEXUALITY

My thesis seeks to examine the Tea Party and its effects on the discourse around the intersections of race, class, and gender. It is my contention that the actions and discourse around the Tea Party Movement creates a cultural pedagogy that promotes structural violence that stems from an ideology of individualism. The promotion of individualism breaks down the foundations of democratic practices. In order to examine this, my investigation will work to: 1) explore the ties between neoliberalism, nationalism, and patriotism; 2) trace the ways in which race plays a role in Tea Party rhetoric and show its ties to racism, and; 3) locate the ways in which the Tea Party movement promotes hyper-masculinity. The final chapter will explore the construction of communal traditions that promote volunteerism and/or community engagement, which in turn could build social capital that could counter the endemic ideology of individualism.

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INTRO

“Each Individual is Accountable for His Actions”

On January 8, 2011, tragedy struck in Tucson, Arizona, as 22-year-old Jared Lee Loughner made an assassination attempt on US House Representative Gabrielle Giffords (D-Incumbent). In the process six people were killed and thirteen more were gravely injured. A flurry of finger pointing from the news media and political pundits arose in the wake of this event. While pundits on the political right claimed that Loughner was “a leftist Marxist,” pundits on the political left were blaming the Tea Party for their common usage of violent rhetoric. At the center of this maelstrom of accusations is Tea Party authority, Sarah Palin.

While promoting political candidates for the 2010 mid-term election, Sarah Palin used a controversial political advertisement which had a list of congressional districts and names of the oppositional representatives who were running in those districts, highlighted with gun crosshairs over their districts. One of the people highlighted was Representative Giffords, and within days of the shooting, the ad was removed from Palin’s website.¹ On the Wednesday following the shooting, Palin responded to the criticism by releasing a video statement on her Facebook account defending her first amendment rights to free speech and deflecting any blame from herself onto the “deranged, apparently apolitical criminal.”² In her statement, Palin cites the words of Tea Party favorite, Ronald Reagan, by stating, “We must reject the idea that every time a law’s broken, society is guilty

¹ This ad is highlighted and can be seen in Chapter Three of this thesis.

² Palin, Sarah. <http://www.facebook.com/notes/sarah-palin/americas-enduring-strength/487510653434>. (Accessed 01/17/2011).

rather than the lawbreaker. It is time to restore the American precept that each individual is accountable for his actions.” Palin went on to add, “Acts of monstrous criminality stand on their own. They begin and end with the criminals who commit them, not collectively with all the citizens of a state, not with those who listen to talk radio, not with maps of swing districts used by both sides of the aisle.”³ Remarkable for its complete denial of personal culpability, Palin’s response was equally significant for the ways it signaled the responsibility of the individual over the group, and they are instructive in the sense that individualism stands as one of the core tenets of the Tea Party.

This thesis, therefore, seeks to examine the Tea Party and its effects on the discourse around the intersections of race, class, and gender/sexuality. It is my contention, that the actions and discourse around the Tea Party Movement, creates a cultural pedagogy that promotes neoliberalism through an ideology of individualism. In this respect the promotion of individualism works to break down the foundations of democratic practices. In order to examine this, my investigation will work to: 1) explore the ties between neoliberalism, nationalism, and patriotism; 2) trace the ways in which race plays a role in Tea Party rhetoric, showing its ties to racism, and; 3) locate the ways in which the Tea Party movement promotes hyper-masculinity. To this end, my study aims to take seriously the precepts of intersectionality: that is the interplay of race, class, and gender/sexuality. The final chapter will explore the construction of those communal traditions that promote volunteerism and/or community engagement, which could potentially build social capital that, would counter the endemic ideology of individualism. The remainder of this chapter will articulate the importance of this study,

³ Ibid.

by locating how the Tea Party promotes structural violence through the perpetuation of individualism, and discuss the methods used for this thesis.

Neoliberalism & Individualism

To begin, a framework of neoliberalism is needed in order to move forward. Throughout this thesis, neoliberalism will refer to the political processes, which work to attack the downward redistribution of wealth, while enabling an upward consolidation of wealth. This has primarily been accomplished through a pro-business activism, focused on “identity and cultural politics,” in order to maintain hegemonic control of material wealth and resources. While the Tea Party is a very anomalous and erratic group amongst its membership, the core fundamentals to which the Tea Party abides by, are fairly similar. These ideals primarily originate from the neoliberal agenda of big business and the strategy constructed by the Republican Party in the 1960’s, which will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

Over the last forty years, big business corporations seeking to deregulate the market and promote free market capitalism have transformed the US economy. This restructuring has created a system where, in the words of Henry Giroux, “everything is either for sale or plundered for profit.”⁴ This is primarily due to the ways that corporations have come to influence legislators and public policy. Citizen participation in government processes is at an all time low and as participation declines, the informed citizen declines as well. Citizenship has become more of a function of consumerism rather than of participation.⁵ With corporations controlling the legislative process, companies are then allowed to create benefits for their own interests, such as: paying

⁴ Giroux, Henry. “The Terror of Neoliberalism: Rethinking the Significance of Cultural Politics”. College Literature. 32.1 [Winter 2005]. Pg. 2.

⁵ Ibid.

fewer taxes, deregulation of environmental protections, deregulation of protection for workers, and a forfeiture of public resources. Benefits move from the poor to the wealthy, while the burden of paying for societal needs shifts from the wealthy to the poor,⁶ thus there is an upward consolidation of wealth, and an attack on policies and programs that work towards a downward redistribution of the wealth.⁷

This accumulation of wealth by the few creates an image that the ruling force in everyday life is the market, and that “big government is disparaged as either incompetent or threatening to individual freedom, suggesting that power should reside in markets and corporations rather than in governments and citizens.”⁸ This has an effect, which privatizes public space and changes the power dynamics of citizen engagement, thus rendering citizens nearly powerless. Businesses and corporations then take precedence over the value of the people and there is a collapse in democratic effectiveness, ideals, and participation.⁹

Within neoliberalism, there is a monopolization of businesses, e.g. Wal-Mart, taking over communities, displacing the small local shops thus creating a system of impersonal markets.¹⁰ Whereas with local shops, personal connections were made between owner and customer, boss and employee, manufacturer and distributor, there is no longer any social cohesion or civic commitment for businesses, which also leads to this extension of individualism.¹¹

⁶ Ibid. 2-3.

⁷ Duggan, L. (2003). *The Twilight of Equality?*. Beacon Press: Boston. Pg. 14.

⁸ Giroux, Henry. “The Terror of Neoliberalism: Rethinking the Significance of Cultural Politics”. *College Literature*. 32.1 [Winter 2005]. Pg. 2-3.

⁹ Ibid. 5-6.

¹⁰ Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, NY. Simon & Shuster. Pg.283.

¹¹ Ibid.

Neoliberal institutions, promote a rhetoric that everybody is equal within the United States, and that anybody can get ahead economically if one tries hard enough. This has caused people to move away from the ideals of civic participation to a pursuit of individual gains, where the community is therefore an afterthought. This combined with neoliberal policies, has caused a decline in the welfare of the standards of living for citizens of the United States, thus creating a system of structural violence which is marked by racism, poverty, oppression, and inequality. Structural violence is a form of violence built into the structure of society that prevents the people from meeting their basic needs to survive. “The concept of structural violence draws our attention to unequal life chances, usually caused by great inequality, injustice, discrimination, and exclusion and needlessly limiting people’s physical, social, and psychological well being.”¹² Structural violence is created through the production inclusionary and exclusionary zones, where those who are included are the privileged, while those who are excluded are not.¹³

According to Michal Foucault, the state’s sovereignty lies in its power to determine “what must live and what must die.”¹⁴ It is here that a hierarchy is formed which creates a system of “Self” and “Other,” which stems from the states role in the regulation of the population and the individual body, this is where the structural violence resides. Within the hierarchy of the Self/Other dichotomy, those who conform to the values which are considered the “norm” and are allowed to live; those who deviate are either killed, excluded, or outcast from society. This is usually used through a structural

¹² Uvin, P. (1998). *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*. Kumarian Press. West Hartford, CN. Pg. 105.

¹³ A further examination of privilege will be the focus of Chapter Two.

¹⁴ Foucault, M. *Society Must Be Defended*, Pg. 253-254

system of racism, where inferior races are deemed as unworthy of existence and must be purged to create a “healthier and purer” society.¹⁵ Giorgio Agamben takes this analysis a step further, by applying it to the political process in which zones of inclusion and exclusion are created to order the hierarchies that are formed.¹⁶ This Self/Other dichotomy also sets up a system of moral absolutes, such as a “good versus evil,” where the “Self” is morally correct and good, and the “Other” is unmoral and evil. Furthermore, the Self/Other dichotomy convolutes the nature of power into a double bind that is a subjective individualization to which all must submit to this binary of Self versus Other.¹⁷ To Foucault, however, the power of the state and its sovereignty are not a given, but rather a relation of resistance between the “Self” and the “Other.”¹⁸ Therefore, “Without resistance there is no power.”¹⁹ It is in this point, which a turn back to the contemporary “Tea Party” must be made, as the movement is being used as a tool of resistance against the current administration.

With the contemporary “Tea Party” claiming that their individual rights are being trampled on by the state, they are therefore performing a spectacle of resistance by playing the role of the “Other,” whereas the government is the “oppressor” with the power. However, their rhetoric, is based upon this “Self versus Other” dichotomy in which “Self” represents the “Tea Party,” individual rights, patriots, the founding fathers, moral, and good; and, the government then becomes the “Other,” representing socialism, communists, unmoral, and evil. By using this binary of power, it creates a zone of

¹⁵ Ibid. 255.

¹⁶ Agamben, G. Introduction. *Homo Sacer*. Pg. 8.

¹⁷ Ibid. 5.

¹⁸ Edkins, J. & Pin-Fat, V. Chapter 1 Introduction. *Life, Power, Resistance*. Pg.4.

¹⁹ Ibid.

exclusion for anyone who does not agree with the “Tea Party” rhetoric, and thus labels those who do not as a socialist, communist, unmoral, and/or evil.

The Tea Party’s rhetoric is important to examine because it creates a cultural pedagogy that privileges certain forms of cultural capital such as symbolic power and privilege. Henry Giroux neatly sums up why this work is important, he states, “...when right-wing journalists, bloggers and politicians make comments about Obama instituting death panels, concentration camps, mass round ups and a socialist government, such comments are either dealt with as simply individual opinions or individual prejudices. Individual free speech now trumps any claim to social and racial justice.”²⁰ Giroux’s focus here, delineates how racism is permeated throughout the rightwing ideology, however, as I will show, this pedagogy can be seen perpetuated along lines of race, class and gender/sexuality. Furthermore, Giroux points out that this structural racism is driven by “a market-driven discourse that imagines itself free of racism, legitimated by the election of the first African-American president.”²¹ Therefore, in what is being called a “post-racial”²² society, by the political right, it is important to examine how this discourse is appearing throughout the Tea Party movement.

Because the contemporary ideology of democracy is rooted in the ideal of sovereignty, it is inherently tied to the politics of the us/them double bind, which as previously mentioned is where this structural violence resides. The only way to move forward is through an end of sovereignty, as it is currently understood. It must be done

²⁰ Giroux, H. 09/07/2010. Racialized Memories and Class Identities - Thinking About Glenn Beck's and Rush Limbaugh's America. <http://www.truth-out.org/racialized-memories-and-class-identities-thinking-about-glenn-becks-and-rush-limbaughs-america63035>. (Accessed 01/21/11).

²¹ Ibid.

²² D'Souza, Dinesh. “Obama And The End Of Racism” http://townhall.com/columnists/DineshDSouza/2008/09/01/obama_and_the_end_of_racism? (Accessed 10/01/2008).

through an ontological rearticulation of what sovereignty and democracy mean. The next section, will explore the methods used in this thesis in order to ultimately uncover this rearticulation of democracy.

Methods

For this study, grounded theory is used in order to analyze the ways that the Tea Party views areas of identity, specifically race, class, and gender/sexuality.²³ Each chapter will specifically focus on one target identity by opening up with a vignette, which encapsulates the base of theory being put forth. A theoretical framework is then built in order to understand the ways in which the Tea Party interacts with the presented identity and examines the political implications of that theoretical framework. Finally, a content analysis of political signs brought to Tea Party rallies, in relation to the theory that has been presented.

Grounded theory is the construction of theory from the ground up, where an analysis is done before any structural foundation is formed; it is in the analysis that a theoretical formulation is created. The following is the step-by-step process used for this thesis. An analysis of the rhetoric used by popular media figures that seemed to speak as representatives of the Tea Party was the first step that was taken. This created the foundation for the opening vignettes. A heated topic of contention, within the media analysis, was the political signs that were being brought to Tea Party rallies. This debate guided the research into an analysis of these signs. If you only look at the words of what is being said by Tea Party figure heads you get a narrow view of who the Tea Party is,

²³ Neuman, W. (2006) Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Boston, MA. Pearson Education Inc. Pg. 60, 157-158.

however when one looks at the messages being disseminated by the political signs at Tea Party rallies a sense of how complex and fragmented the Tea Party is, comes to light.

With the erratic and elusive nature of the Tea Party, an understanding of the messages being circulated to the public through the signs used at the rallies was needed. In order to do so, a basic Google search for “Tea Party Rally Signs,” brought up a wealth of information.²⁴ Next was an examination of a vast number of the signs and then coding the information into a number of different categories. Through the coding process, a number of theoretical ideas was formed to which the different theorists used throughout the chapters were used to construct my own theory of understanding the Tea Party on more of a macro-level by this examination of a micro-level analysis.

Three main themes were found in the coding process: 1) Race & Ethnicity; 2) Class, and; 3) Gender/sexuality. A prominent theme of Barak Obama being black and/or of African ancestry was a point that was frequently referred to amongst Tea Party members. Another point within the theme of race & ethnicity that was seen is a high frequency of labeling Obama as a Muslim. The next major theme found was centered on the issues of taxation, which led to a theoretical framing of class. While the Tea Party claimed that this was the foundation of their movement, many ties to race within the rhetoric was used to portray the message they were attempting to disseminate. The final theme found in high frequency was rhetoric around guns and gun culture that led to a formulation of gender/sexuality through hypermasculinity.

²⁴ I would like to note that this work is strictly qualitative, there is no quantitative analysis, and therefore there is no specific sample size. By using a basic Internet search I am able to see all information that is available to the public. It is in this idea of public information that I am interested in, because if anyone can see it on-line then the message has the opportunity of being perpetuated. Furthermore, the pictures shown in this thesis is a small representation of all the signs analyzed. There are thousands of signs which exemplify the themes of this thesis.

With these three themes in place, locating the rhetoric and images that exemplified these themes, was possible.²⁵ Next was a direct examination of the language being used in the signs and analyzing it for possible meanings that were tied to race, class, or gender/sexuality. If there was an image in the sign, an abstraction of the meaning of the picture was sought. The significance of the words being used, and the significance of images being portrayed, was closely looked at. A connection between the three themes was found, which led to an understanding of neoliberalism that has guided the rest of this research. This connection also led to intersectionality theory, which works to examine the relationships between the different aspects of one's identity.

While the theory of intersectionality was originally used to center the identity of the black female the theory has taken on a life of its own and has become a popular model for showing the impacts that having multiple subordinated identities has. While the demographics of the Tea Party show that the identities of its members comprise of primarily dominant identities, an inversion of the concept of intersectionality was used, in order to examine the impacts that multiple dominant identities has on a societal level. In other words, intersectionality is largely used to understand oppression through an examination of oppressed identities; however, this thesis aims to understand the dynamics of oppression through an understanding of the oppressor.²⁶

²⁵ In my analysis, I am focusing solely on the sign. However, there are times where I will comment on the person holding the sign, which cannot be seen. I have cropped out all people in order to focus on the message of the sign. The one exception is in Chapter 4: Gender/sexuality, where participants use props, I analyze these as I would a sign. When commenting on the person holding the sign it is usually in order to accentuate a point from the sign. It is therefore a secondary function and is not as relevant as the actual message of the sign.

²⁶ For more on the original foundation on intersectionality see: Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color, *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 43, No. 6., pp. 1241–1299.

While individual signs are not indicators of the beliefs of every member within the Tea Party, the signs used at Tea Party rallies perpetuate an image that is being displayed on behalf of the Tea Party. In other words, just because one person may bring a racist sign to a rally, which means they could hold some racist ideals and beliefs, does not mean that every member of the Tea Party is racist. However, it does create a spectacle that promotes those ideals, thus giving space for those ideals and beliefs to grow.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter One of this thesis, is a historical background chapter that will explore three primary areas of interest: 1) A focused examination of Democracy through the lens of Alexis Tocqueville, Robert Putnam, and Samuel Huntington; 2) Examine the origins of the Tea Party, and; 3) Examine the rhetoric which is at the foundation of the Tea Party which traces back to “The Southern Strategy,” and Ronald Reagan.

In Chapter Two, this thesis takes up the question of how the Tea Party’s promotion of neoliberalism affects democracy. More specifically, how free market capitalism promotes an ideology of nationalism and overt patriotism. Furthermore, it will examine the political implications within the promotion of an ideology centered on neoliberalism. The end of the chapter will examine how nationalism and overt patriotism are displayed through political signs used at Tea Party rallies, and explain how these ideals are tied to neoliberalism.

Chapter Three, addresses the ways in which racism shows up within the Tea Party movement. To do so, the idea of racism will be examined and tied to the concept of the “Other.” Furthermore, racism must not be seen as an either/or dichotomy but rather on a spectrum, and even the smallest offence has large impacts and ramifications. An

examination of Tea Party signs will be returned to, in order to see different levels of racism that is displayed by the Tea Party.

Chapter Four, takes a different perspective on the concept of democracy, by examining the masculine and feminine features of democratic processes. It is in this gendering of democratic thought that a conception of hypermasculinity can be found. The balance between the masculine and the feminine for a healthy democracy will be looked at, and the effects of hypermasculinity. It is through the Tea Party's adamant promotion of individualism and gun culture that an understanding can be found on the impacts hypermasculinity has on democratic practices.

Finally, in the conclusion, the threads of the argument are brought together in order to show how none of these ideals are mutually exclusive and are all tied together. This ardent promotion of individualism, through neoliberal practices creates structural violence, which is harmful to the fabric of democracy. While the scope of this investigation is limited due to its focus on the relation between popular discourse and sign analysis, this epidemic construct of structural violence which is being perpetuated by the Tea Party can be countered through a new conceptualization of citizenship through the promotion of civic and/or community service. It is through the building of social capital, that communities, which cherish the ideal of equality, can be found.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter creates an understanding of the complexities which encapsulate the Tea Party's fragmented ideology by examining three different aspects: 1) historically exploring the relationship between democracy and individualism; 2) investigates the formation of the Tea Party, and; 3) traces the roots of Tea Party rhetoric. By examining these three aspects, a framework for understanding the Tea Party can be found. In light of the Tea Party's perpetuation of individualism, the first section will explore how the foundations of American democracy were based on the idea of participation and a belief of the welfare of all within US society. The second section will examine how the contemporary Tea Party came to be. The final section of this chapter will trace how the rhetoric of the contemporary Tea Party is rooted in the Republican's Southern Strategy, which is crucial for understanding the ways in which the Tea Party interacts along intersections of race, class, and gender/sexuality.

A Historical view of Democracy

The word democracy roots from the Greek word *demokratia*, which literally translated means, "people-power."²⁷ Democracy in ancient Greece was a system of 'one person one vote,' where everyone was meant to participate within the political process. It was used as a means to promote equality and freedom, and it is within these ideals that the founding fathers built a system for the United States. As Thomas Jefferson said, "making every citizen an acting member of the government, and in the offices nearest

²⁷ Cartledge, P. (2009). *The Democratic Experiment*.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/greeks/greekdemocracy_01.shtml. (05/05/2010)

and most interesting to him, will attach him by his strongest feelings to the independence of his country, and its republican constitution.”²⁸ Therefore, while representatives are elected to hold office and make decisions on behalf of the people, thus making the United States a republic, it takes the democratic participation of the people to have an effective society.

The idea of democratic ideals was not lost as a committee appointed by Congress in 1776 was tasked with creating a seal for the United States government. Out of this committee the Latin term “*E Pluribus Unum*” was designated to be the motto for the seal. Translated *E Pluribus Unum* means “plural unit.” It was meant to signify "Out of many, one" which was meant to symbolize a unity between state and federal government. Furthermore, it can be translated to show the democratic beliefs of the many it takes to create a unified nation. The phrase carries on today as the motto, which is still on the great seal and on most all US currency.²⁹ It was this idea that would come to symbolize American democracy, which would be studied throughout time.

In the 1830’s, Alexis De Tocqueville traveled to the United States to explore the construction of American society and consequently wrote the book *Democracy in America*, which has been subsequently used to describe the American model of democracy. This study sought to capture the trends in American life that created civil society via American democracy. Throughout his exploration of democracy, Tocqueville makes a number of revelations about the effectiveness of the American model. Tocqueville describes a bottom up formation of society in which the people participate on

²⁸ Jefferson to Kercheval, July 12, 1816, in Merrill Peterson, ed. Writings (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1227, quoted in Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York, NY: Simon & Shuster, 2000). 336.

²⁹ <http://www.greatseal.com/mottoes/unum.html>. (04/28/2010).

all levels of government to create a civil society. Participation came in many forms such as: voting, town hall meetings, civic organizations, and public duties. By participating in society people became informed of what was happening, how their governance worked, and the virtues of society.³⁰ It was through the bottom up participation on all levels of government that rights stemmed from, community was formulated, justice was served, and a system of equality for all was created.³¹

On terms of individualism, Tocqueville recognized the strong affinity the American people had towards individual rights but only so far as it was good for the whole of the community. It is worth examining at length when he punctuates his point by writing:

He obeys the government, not because he is inferior to the authorities which conduct it, or that he is less capable than his neighbor of governing himself, but because he acknowledges the utility of an association with his fellow-men, and because he knows that no such association can exist without a regulating force... Hence arises the maxim that every one is the best and sole judge of his own private interest, and that society has no right to control a man's actions, unless they are prejudicial to the common weal, or unless the common weal demands his cooperation.³²

Individualism therefore is a time honored tradition, but once that individualism harms society, or if society calls for the individual to surrender some rights for the general well-being of society, the people generally forewent the notion of individualism for the perpetuation of the betterment of the community. It was a person's civic duty to

³⁰ Tocqueville, Alexis. American Democracy. Pgs. 50-55.

³¹ I would like to recognize that at the time slavery was still in existence, women's rights were nonexistent, and repression of minority populations was taking place within the United States, this system of participation perpetuated equality and justice amongst free white male land owners. However, this system of participation did create equality for those who were able to utilize it, thus making it an effective system for its aims.

³² Ibid. 60-61.

recognize this and one could not recognize this without being involved or participating in and for the community, which in turn meant that they were informed because of that participation. Political theorists such as John Stewart Mill, John Dewey, and even contemporary theorists such as Robert Putnam, first and foremost, have echoed this idea of citizenship that benefits the whole.

Tocqueville felt that the fabric of American democracy rested in civic participation and for the past 50 years social scientists have shown time and time again the benefits of civic engagement due to the creation of social networks, and how it consequently perpetuates democratic ideals and practice.³³ In Robert Putnam's groundbreaking work, *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*, Putnam discusses the decline in civic participation in US society, from political participation and town hall meetings to small group functions such as bowling leagues.³⁴ This lack of participation in civic society has perpetuated a sense of distrust of others throughout society and a decline in social capital,³⁵ thus creating a deepened sense of individualism that damages the social fabric of democracy. Putnam argues that civic participation helps inform individuals about the happenings of society, promotes democratic life, and fosters community bonds.³⁶

Putnam examines the generational differences in civic participation and its relation to democratic practice, and finds that over the past seventy years there has been a change in values. This change has contributed to the decline in civic participation, Putnam states, "The changes are part of a larger societal shift toward individual and

³³ Putnam, Robert. "Bowling Alone". *The Journal of Democracy*. Pg. 65 (01/01/1995)

³⁴ *Ibid.* 66-70.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 72.

³⁶ Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, NY. Simon & Shuster. Pg. 338.

material values and away from communal values.”³⁷ Putnam clearly articulates this in a survey of entering college freshmen when asked what they hoped to get out of college. In 1975, 38% said that they wanted to make “a lot of money,” while 38% said they wanted “a job that contributes to the welfare of society.” In 1996 the same questions were asked and while 32% wished to contribute to society, the number who wished “to make a lot of money,” jumped up to 63%.³⁸ This articulates a shift in values from people looking out for the “common weal” of society, to a more individualistic view where the self comes first and foremost.

Since the events of September 11th 2001, there has been a reframing of the way in which American democracy is viewed. In *Who Are We*, Samuel Huntington argues that democracy has been eroded by identity politics and that what is needed is a sense of civic nationalism to create a more democratic society.³⁹ Furthermore, his work contends that America is based upon an Anglo-Protestant culture that promotes “liberty, equality, law, and individual rights.”⁴⁰ These qualities exemplify neoliberal thought which encapsulates the Tea Party’s movement and while they are all terms which have noble and positive intent, Huntington uses these terms to reframe democratic ideals and beliefs into those that would be used to exclude those who promote diversity and frame them as anti-patriotic citizens.

Huntington’s work has become a popular tool of the political right, as he concludes that the true threat to American democracy is the culture war that is taking

³⁷ Ibid. 272.

³⁸ Ibid. 272-273.

³⁹ Huntington, S. (2004). *Who Are We?* New York: Simon & Schuster. Pg. 15-16

⁴⁰ Ibid. xvii.

place and the dislocation of Anglo-Protestant ethics by multicultural identity politics.⁴¹ This idea of a “culture war” perpetuates a fear of the “other,” but specifically a fear of immigrants and Muslim’s, which have been a primary target of the Tea Party. The centering of culture in an “Anglo-Protestant” framework is also problematic as it further excludes anyone who is not white and/or Christian. Huntington believes that the perpetuation of this exclusionary “Anglo-Protestant” individualism is what makes America so exceptional, which is counter to the social capital theory that is promoted by Putnam and Tocqueville , which promotes inclusion through contact via participation.^{42 43} While the Tea Party is acting in a form of democratic participation, it is using and promoting anti-democratic ideals through exclusionary tactics and ideals. The next section will explore how the Tea Party came to be, while the following section will explore the foundation of the Tea Party’s rhetoric, which promotes this exclusionary ideology.

From the Boston Tea Party to Today

On December 16, 1773, approximately 50 members of the political organization, The Sons of Liberty, boarded three ships in Boston Harbor and threw barrels of British tea into the harbor. “The Boston Tea Party,” as it was declared, was a protest of British tax policies, which the Sons of Liberty felt was an infringement upon their rights by a foreign ruler.⁴⁴ In December of 2007 and on the 234th anniversary of this historical event, Libertarian Presidential candidate Ron Paul held a “tea party moneybomb” to raise funds for his run at the 2008 Presidential campaign. This would be one of the earliest moments

⁴¹ Ibid. 19.

⁴² Ibid. 69-70.

⁴³ This concept will be further explored in the conclusion of this thesis.

⁴⁴ http://www.pbs.org/ktca/liberty/chronicle_boston1774.html. (Accessed 09/26/2010)

leading up to the contemporary Tea Party movement in which the motto of “Tea Party” would be used, playing off the 1773 movement by the Sons of Liberty.⁴⁵

It would be roughly a year later, after the election of Barack Obama but before his inauguration, that the concept of the “Tea Party” would resurface through a number of different online forums spearheaded by the Libertarian Party of Illinois.⁴⁶ An unaffiliated action was then held by a group of corporate investors, headed by Koch Industries, who founded an organization called FedUpUSA, in which they sent out a call for people to send tea bags to members of congress as a sort of “Commemorative Tea Party.”⁴⁷

On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the \$787 billion dollar American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law. The aims of this stimulus package was to create over 3 million new US jobs, giving tax cuts to nearly all US tax payers, and to stimulate a number of different sectors of the economy including energy, education, and health care.⁴⁸ In reaction to this stimulus package, fiscally conservative organizations such as FreedomWorks, Americans for Prosperity and, the Independence Institute hosted rallies in Seattle, WA, Denver, CO, and Mesa, AZ to protest the event calling for “less pork spending.”⁴⁹ ⁵⁰ These protests were the first public protests and on February 19,

⁴⁵ Burghart, Devin & Zeskind, Leonard. Tea Party Nationalism: A Critical Examination of the Tea Party Movement and the Size, Scope, and Focus of Its National Factions. Pg. 15.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid 15-16.

⁴⁸ Teslik, L. 01/27/2009. Backgrounder: The U.S. Economic Stimulus Plan. The New York Times. http://www.nytimes.com/cfr/world/slot3_20090126.html. (Accessed 01/02/2011).

⁴⁹ Beutler, B. (04/14/2009). FreedomWorks' Long History Of Teabagging. <http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2009/04/freedomworks-long-history-of-teabagging.php>. (Accessed 09/26/2010).

⁵⁰ Burghart, Devin & Zeskind, Leonard. Tea Party Nationalism: A Critical Examination of the Tea Party Movement and the Size, Scope, and Focus of Its National Factions. Pg. 16.

when CNBC commentator Rick Santelli erupted in anger announcing that he was to start a “Chicago Tea Party,” a name for the movement was born.⁵¹

Shortly after the February 2009 protests, FreedomWorks announced a nationwide tour to organize the formation local Tea Party groups. This idea blossomed into a national movement in which a number of different national organizations jumped on board causing disjuncture amongst all the different factions of the newly formed political power. While the primary and initial tenants of the movement were based upon the ideals of lowering budget deficits, taxes and the power of the federal government, many of the splinters within the Tea Party promoted issues around President Obama’s race and gave a platform for racist and anti-Semite speech.⁵²

The anomalous nature of the Tea Party made defining the group difficult for many observers as the composition of the Tea Party has been the focus of a number of polls, but it can be concluded that the Tea Party is primarily white, male, married and over 45 years of age.⁵³ On September 12, 2009, with no lead organization guiding the Tea Party FreedomWorks organized the Tea Party’s largest national rally yet in Washington D.C. bringing together all the different factions, thus elevating the status of the Tea Party to a full-fledged social movement.⁵⁴ With popularity growing, public figures including politicians and media personalities such as Sarah Palin, Glenn Beck, and Rush Limbaugh

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. 7.

⁵³ Zernike, K. & Thee-Brenan (04/12/2010). Poll Finds Tea Party Backers Wealthier and More Educated. The New York Times. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/us/politics/15poll.html?_r=1&src=me&ref=general%20article%20covering%20it. (Accessed 10/15/2010).

⁵⁴ Ibid. 17.

became a part of the movement speaking at a number of Tea Party events, promoting candidates and perpetuating the rhetoric produced by varied organizations.⁵⁵

On February 4-6, 2010, members from across the country came together again this time in Nashville, Tennessee for the National Tea Party convention. This convention catapulted a number of different potential candidates for political office for the 2010 congressional midterm elections into the national spotlight, including: Rand Paul, Christine O'Donnell, Sharron Angle, Ken Buck, and many more. This momentum carried all the way up to the 2010 fall election. With the Tea Party movement gaining national notoriety and political momentum, the rhetoric that was being used seemed all too familiar. The next section will explore the roots of the rhetoric being used by Tea party members and their political candidates.

From the Southern Strategy to the Tea Party

Historically the Republican Party was known as the “party of Lincoln,” and the GOP was the moderate alternative to the Democratic Party.⁵⁶ However, after the great depression, the Democratic Party gained national popularity with its New Deal policies, and the GOP lost favor on almost all demographics besides the affluent white voters. In 1948, amid the Jim Crow era, Democratic president Harry Truman desegregated the military and the Democratic Convention approved a pro-civil rights platform for the party. This enraged many Dixicrats who were in favor of Jim Crow laws, but not enough to shift their party affiliation.⁵⁷ This outrage was further flamed by the Supreme Court

⁵⁵ Media personalities Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh, and others of that ilk, have long perpetuated a conservative doctrine, and can be said to be a source of some of the Tea Party’s rhetoric and promotion of Tea Party ideals and values. They are not the founders of this movement, however they have become leading figures in the Tea Party movement.

⁵⁶ Aistrup, J. (1996). *The Southern Strategy Revisited: Republican Top-Down Advancement in the South*. The University Press of Kentucky. Pg. 25.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 6.

decisions *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, which desegregated schools and, *Baker v. Carr*, which gave more protection to urban voters.

It was in the mid-50's that the Republican National Committee realized that an ideological shift would be needed to cut into the "Democratic Power base."⁵⁸ I. Lee Potter devised a program named "Operation Dixie," which was, "an attempt to build on Eisenhower's popularity in the south by creating a moderate-to-conservative, 'non-racist' Southern Republican Party."⁵⁹ With Nixon's loss in the 1960 Presidential race, Republicans realized a further shift would be needed. Arizona Republican Barry Goldwater would formulate what would come to be known as the "Southern Strategy." Goldwater would attribute Nixon's loss to his pro-civil rights stance and, in 1961-62, the Republican Party would try to target specific Democratic incumbents in the South and attempt to tie them to President Kennedy's pro-civil rights stance. This tactic was popular amongst Southern segregationist voters and a slight shift was seen in the 1962 mid-term election. While it was not the shift Republicans were looking for, it showed enough promise to make the Southern Strategy the doctrine for the GOP.⁶⁰

In the summer of 1963, the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing, and President Kennedy was pressured into moving forward with civil rights legislation, to which the Republicans sought to capitalize on. In 1964, Barry Goldwater ran for President against Johnson, on a platform of "states' rights, an old euphemism for continued segregation."⁶¹ Goldwater ended up winning his home state of Arizona and five Deep South states, but lost the rest of the country.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 26.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 27.

⁶¹ Ibid. 29.

As Joseph Aistrup points out, in *The Southern Strategy Revisited*, “Goldwater’s popularity in the South was in part due to his stressing conservative themes consistent with traditionalist culture of the Old South and the individualistic culture of the New South.”⁶² Goldwater’s message was primarily an attack on the welfare state, and taxes against the elites. Furthermore, Aistrup states, “While the Old South heard and digested Goldwater’s message on states’ rights, the New South heard this individualistic theme and became the backbone of the Southern GOP.”⁶³ Therefore, a slight shift in power and the exodus of Southern Democrats begin towards the Republican Party.

Though Goldwater lost, the strategy was far from dead, George Wallace ran on a similar platform in 1968 as an independent. While the Republican Party did not endorse him due to his reputation as a segregationist, it was a learning point for the Republicans.⁶⁴ Richard Nixon ran and won in the same election and deployed the Southern Strategy in a less direct way, as Aistrup notes:

Nixon’s plans were to structure his appeal around support for the idea of civil rights, but opposition to its active enforcement. This put him squarely between the states’ rights, racial reactionary position of Wallace and the pro-active national government approach of Humphrey.⁶⁵

Nixon promoted three main themes of the Southern Strategy, “which resulted in the ‘Southernization’ of national politics.”⁶⁶ First, was his attack on bussing, where he stated that it was not the job of the federal government to carry out the mandates used to enforce desegregation, thus promoting “states’ rights.” Second was his staunch promotion of “law

⁶² Ibid. 31.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 32.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 33.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 36.

and order.”⁶⁷ Third was his attack on welfare, which he framed benefactors of welfare within the context of, “the white, blue-collar worker who supported with his tax dollars those who are poor because they refuse to work.”⁶⁸ This racially coded message was meant to make white voters think that their “hard earned” money was going to pay for poor blacks, when in fact a majority of welfare money was actually benefiting poor whites. Nixon’s message portrayed that, “to be a conservative meant not only being for less government intervention in economic affairs, but also in managing race relations.”⁶⁹

One of Nixon’s senior political strategists, Kevin Phillips claimed:

From now on, the Republicans are never going to get more than 10 to 20 percent of the Negro vote and they don't need any more than that... but Republicans would be shortsighted if they weakened enforcement of the Voting Rights Act. The more Negroes who register as Democrats in the South, the sooner the Negrophobe whites will quit the Democrats and become Republicans. That's where the votes are. Without that prodding from the blacks, the whites will backslide into their old comfortable arrangement with the local Democrats.”⁷⁰

This strategy would become the draw of the Republican Party, especially within the Deep South. By alienating black voters in favor of white voters, the Republican Party went from a party which historically known as the “Party of Lincoln,” who ended slavery, to the “white man’s party,” who fought against civil rights.⁷¹ This drastic ideological shift is problematic in it was solely meant to gain votes. The hypocrisy of this shift is that by

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 37.

⁷⁰ Boyd, James (May 17, 1970). "Nixon's Southern strategy: 'It's All in the Charts'". The New York Times. Pg. 215. Can also be found: [http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/books/phillips-southern.pdf?scp=1&sq=Boyd,%20James%20\(May%2017,%201970\)&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/books/phillips-southern.pdf?scp=1&sq=Boyd,%20James%20(May%2017,%201970)&st=cse).

⁷¹ Aistrup, J. (1996). The Southern Strategy Revisited: Republican Top-Down Advancement in the South. The University Press of Kentucky. Pg. 29.

opposing Civil Rights, the Republican's were further denying individual rights to the disenfranchised, which is counter to their ideal of individual freedom.

The Southern Strategy would go into hibernation in the wake of the Nixon scandal, but would soon be revived by Ronald Reagan.⁷² Reagan would take Nixon's strategy and perfect in a way that would, "realign white conservatives as a reliable source of Republican support and neutralize white moderates as a consistent foundation of Democratic strength. Reagan attracted a majority of white conservatives into the Republican Party and persuaded many other conservatives to think of themselves as 'independents' rather than as Democrats."⁷³ He did this with the similar rhetoric of lower taxes, smaller government, and an emphasis on military strength.

Reagan's staunch promotion of "American values," were focused on the religious and southern populism which Wallace ran on, while including the individual states' rights/small government of Goldwater, and the tax cuts/smaller bureaucracy of Nixon, turned out to be the perfect mix to promote the Southern Strategy and capture the nation as he beat out incumbent President Jimmy Carter in the 1980 election. In his tenure as President, "Reagan would reluctantly sign the twenty-five-year extension of the Voting Rights Act in 1982, oppose but finally accept a federal holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., try to preserve tax-exempt status for private schools that practiced racial

⁷² One interesting point, which could be expanded upon in another project is the religious right's affluence in the Tea Party and amongst Republicans. This coalition was largely formed during the Carter administration. As Aistrup points out, "In the South, the New Right was galvanized into political action by the Carter Administration's proposed IRS regulations to revoke the tax-exempt status of many Christian fundamentalist schools formed during desegregation of public schools in the mid-1970's. The proposed IRS regulations shifted the burden of proof onto the private schools to show that they did not discriminate in their admissions practices. As Richard Viguerie noted, 'It kicked a sleeping dog' and 'ignited the religious right's involvement in real politics.'" Ibid. 40.

⁷³ Black, E. & Black, M. (2002). *The Rise of Southern Republicans*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Pg. 206.

discrimination in admissions, shift the government's position on affirmative action questions, and veto the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, President Reagan had the uncanny ability to demonize the issues that he saw as “un-American,” for example: his coded language which created the “welfare queen,” and his ability to associate welfare programs and big government with the communist Soviet Union.⁷⁵ While running for President, Reagan gave a number of speeches highlighting the “welfare queen” when he falsely claimed, “she has 80 names, 30 addresses, 12 Social Security cards and is collecting veterans' benefits on four nonexistent deceased husbands. She received welfare under each of her names, overall obtaining \$150,000 in tax-free cash income.”⁷⁶ This creation of the “Other” perpetuated a constant fear of big government and portrayed those who benefited from big government as a threat to American morals and beliefs.

In Robert Dallek's work, *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism*, he discusses a speech given by Reagan to Christian evangelists in 1983. In the speech he discussed the evil of big government and then stated:

Soviet power and influence must be combated, not simply because they are the embodiment—the symbol—of those trends toward government control and relaxed social conventions that conservatives deplore... Their attention is largely fixed on challenges to their values from leftists round the world.⁷⁷

This speech shows the ways in which Reagan frequently related the Soviet Union with big government and communism. Furthermore, Dallek states that Reagan primarily saw

⁷⁴ Ibid. 218.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 217-219.

⁷⁶ "'Welfare Queen' Becomes Issue in Reagan Campaign". *New York Times*. 1976-02-15. p. 51.

⁷⁷ Dallek, R. (1984). *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism*. Harvard University Press. Pg. 193.

the world “as a contest between good and evil.”⁷⁸ Dallek shows how through Reagan’s presidency he was consistently centering the debate on this idea of “good vs. evil,” thus perpetuating the “Othering” process.

President Reagan’s Vice President, George H.W. Bush would ride Reagan’s coattails of popularity and rhetoric to a victory in 1988. In a face off with Michael Dukakis, Bush ran the infamous “Willie Horton” ads to show he was tough on crime compared to his competitor. While President, Bush would continue Reagan’s attack on civil rights as he “vetoed the first version of the extension of the Civil Rights Act (1990) on the basis that it represented a ‘quota’ bill.”⁷⁹ However, Bush had to stray from the Southern Strategy, with the political emergence of the polarizing David Duke, who’s overt racism made Republicans weary of how to use the Southern Strategy.⁸⁰ With the fall of the Soviet Union, and his broken promise of not raising taxes, George H.W. Bush would lose the 1992 election to Arkansas governor Bill Clinton.

It would seem that the Southern Strategy had went back into hibernation until the election of President George W. Bush who would take 67% of the southern white vote.⁸¹ It would be the events of September 11, 2001, that would solidify Bush’s presidency in the 2004 elections, as the US was entrenched in the war on terrorism, fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. These wars would grow to become unpopular by 2008, and a shift would come with political newcomer Barack Obama, who would be elected as the first African American President of the United States.

⁷⁸ Ibid. IX.

⁷⁹ Aistrup, J. (1996). *The Southern Strategy Revisited: Republican Top-Down Advancement in the South*. The University Press of Kentucky. Pg. 52.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Black, E. & Black, M. (2002). *The Rise of Southern Republicans*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Pg. 221.

The rhetoric of the Southern Strategy would return, as the Tea Party would establish itself as a political threat, as previously highlighted. The following chapters will highlight this rhetoric as Chapter Two examines the attack on class issues such as the promotion of “small government,” and a Reaganesque framing of government programs as either communist or socialist. Chapter Three will examine the ways in which the Tea Party attacks President Obama’s race and ethnicity in the same vein as the Southern Strategies attack on civil rights and the exclusion of minority voters. Chapter Four will return to Tocqueville’s view of democracy, highlighted in this chapter, and show the ways in which it interacts with the promotion of hypermasculinity through the Tea Party’s strong promotion of gun culture. The conclusion will bring it all together showing the ways that race, class and gender/sexuality intersect, and advocate a normative move in which the promotion of communal ideals can heal the damages caused by the Southern Strategy and neoliberalism.

CHAPTER 2: INTERSECTIONS OF CLASS

On February 16, 2011, over 10,000 people descended upon the Capitol Building in Madison, Wisconsin to protest the self-proclaimed newly elected Tea Party Governor Scott Walker's attack on state unions ability to collectively bargain. The unions of Wisconsin had agreed to the pay and pension cuts proposed by Governor Walker, but refused to give up their rights for collective bargaining. The protests would continue with an estimated 25,000 people attending, even as this is being written, neither side will budge. Two days after the protests began fourteen Democratic Senators fled the state in order to prevent a vote that would pass the proposed bill. As protests grew in Wisconsin, similar protests began in New Jersey, Indiana, and Ohio, where similar budget cuts and attacks on unions were occurring. Democratic legislators in Indiana also fled the state in order to block a vote by Republican dominated legislatures. Back in Wisconsin, Governor Walker sent state troopers to the homes of the missing Democrats in hopes to force them back to the floor in order to vote on the bill that would disenfranchise the hundreds of thousands of state workers who would be affected by the loss of their ability to collectively bargain.⁸²

On February 23, Ian Murphy an editor for the online Buffalo, New York newspaper, prank called Governor Walker pretending to be billionaire and Tea Party funder, David Koch. Walker had a 20 minutes conversation with Murphy all the while thinking he was Koch. Towards the end of the conversation Walker relays a story to

⁸² Washington Post. http://voices.washingtonpost.com/political-economy/2011/02/state_unions.html#feb1611. (Accessed 02/24/2011).

Murphy about a dinner he had with his cabinet just before they released the news of what was to come. In the story Walker states:

I stood up and I pulled out a picture of Ronald Reagan and I said ‘...thirty years ago, Ronald Reagan... had one of the most defining moments of his political career... when he fired the air traffic controllers.’ I said that, ‘that moment was more important than just labor relations, and the federal budget, that was the first crack in the Berlin Wall and the fall of communism, because from that point forward the Soviets and the communists knew that Ronald Reagan wasn’t a push over,’ and I said that ‘...this is our moment to change history...’⁸³

This story highlights a number of interesting points. By bringing up Reagan’s staunch anti-unionism, Walker portends to have a Reaganesque impact in destroying unions and promoting the goals of neoliberalism. Furthermore, this declaration was being professed to who he believed is one of the most successful energy tycoons of our time, who is purported to have a vested interest in the outcome, thus making his support for neoliberal thought that much more clear. Second was Walker’s relating of unions to communism. The demonization of unions is problematic in that this is how groups like the Tea Party are framing the conversation around unions. By labeling unions as a bastion of communist ideology, it makes those who are protesting for their rights to collectively bargain as an evil other, and Governor Walker as the hero American who is here to save Wisconsin from the communists and/or socialists.

At Tea Party rallies it has become common to see signs calling President Obama a dictator, a socialist, a communist, relating Obama to Hitler, etc.⁸⁴ These messages do

⁸³ The Beast. Koch Whore. <http://www.buffalobeast.com/?p=5045>. (Accessed 02/25/2011).

⁸⁴ I would like to note, that the relating of a president and/or politician to Hitler is not only done by groups like the Tea Party, but have also been perpetuated by the left towards figures such as President Bush, and even Governor Scott Walker. This kind of message should be discouraged on both sides of the political spectrum as it promotes anti-Semitism and makes a mockery of the seriousness of the holocaust.

three things: 1) establishes “socialism” and/or public entitlement programs as the “enemy” of neoliberalism, capitalism, and free markets; 2) promotes the advancement of neoliberalism through an ideology that places capitalists as patriots, and; 3) creates an vague “other” which encompasses people of color, lower and working class people, and people on the left side of the political spectrum, and paints them as unpatriotic, communists and/or socialists, who wish to do harm to America and all who reside within the US. Similarly, these messages that infer to socialism can then be understood as class issues, where neoliberalism is the antidote to a sickness of liberal entitlement programs that steal from the rich and deserving to give to the poor and undeserving.

The next section will explore the foundations of these attacks focusing specifically on how class has become intertwined with nationalism and identity politics. This identity formation has been driven by the perpetuation of neoliberalism, which has created a self vs. other society where those who are against tax raises are American, while those who believe that taxes are vital to a national economy are unpatriotic, communists and/or socialists.

The Loss of Class Interests

In Anthony Marx’s construction of race, in *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil*, Marx shows a shift away from class interests starting around the Reconstruction era after slavery. With tensions still high after the Civil War, elites and politicians faced a problem of triadic tensions, between two white groups and one black. The two white groups comprised of those from the North and those from the South, who had different economic interests. The North “sought a coalition... with the white South, because those defeated whites had earned a

reputation in the prior conflict as being capable of violent disruption. Liberal interest in blacks was overshadowed by the stronger imperative to unify whites within the nation-state in order to maintain national stability, in part because blacks themselves... outnumbered in the United States, were not seen as a comparably violent threat.”⁸⁵ What resulted from this unification were the *de jure* passage of Jim Crow laws in the South and the *de facto* practice of the ideals of Jim Crow laws in the North. This shifted the conflict to a dyadic form of control of a unified white supremacy over blacks.

Marx attributes this shift to two factors: 1) the ability to keep national cohesion. 2) The economic advancement and development of the nation. It is in the second point that is of great concern to this chapter. Marx states, “Economic interests were subordinated to white racial unity, with this class compromise made explicit and enforced by state policy varying in response to ongoing class tensions. Race trumped class.”⁸⁶ This shows a shift away from class-consciousness as poor whites start to think in a way that is disadvantageous in class aspects in exchange for racial solidarity. A result from this shift was “reconciliation, and racial domination was imposed to unify white nationalism and allow for state centralization.”⁸⁷

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Southern Strategy had a heavy hand in shifting the vote for Republicans, specifically in the Deep South, and it was not until Ronald Reagan that there was a national shift in ideology that was inline with the Southern Strategy. Reagan was partially motivated by the tax revolt in 1968, which took place with the passing of Proposition 13 in California. Proposition 13 was a tax-relief aimed at

⁸⁵ Marx, A. (1998). Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil. New York: Cambridge. Pg. 9-10.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 15.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 16.

homeowners (originally proposed by wealthy homeowners, not middle-class or suburban), however it primarily helped businesses “approximately two-thirds business, one-third homeowners, and none for renters.”⁸⁸ California at the time had been known for having the best public services in the nation, which was in part due to its progressive tax system. However, the debate was being shifted from “tax-payers vs. taxeaters, those who paid the bill, and those who siphoned off the funds of suburban property taxes to support inner city services” and, “Suburban taxpayer citizens imagined themselves in direct competition with city welfare recipients for government services... a zero sum battle of white versus black and Latino housing projects.”⁸⁹

Lisa Duggan describes this strategic shift as one of the functions of neoliberalism, where there is an upward consolidation of wealth, and an attack on policies and programs that work towards a downward distribution of the wealth. Duggan states,

This rhetoric promotes the *privatization* of the costs of social reproduction, along with the care of human dependency needs, through *personal responsibility* exercised in the family and in civil society- thus shifting costs from state agencies to individuals and households. This process accompanies the call for tax cuts that deplete public coffers, but leave more money in the “private” hands of the wealthy.⁹⁰

Duggan shows that this shift is a fusion of identity politics and economic policy, however the identity aspect of it is obfuscated and denied. This was primarily achieved through coded rhetoric, which helped construct hierarchies along race, class, and gender lines.⁹¹ Moreover, this obfuscation is further enabled by the complex and shifting alliances by

⁸⁸ Duggan, L. (2003). *The Twilight of Equality?*. Beacon Press: Boston. Pg. 37.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 38.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 14.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 15.

neoliberal politicians who are able to shape the context of the debate, “issue by issue and location by location.”⁹²

After the success of Proposition 13, large corporations led the charge in promoting a top down campaign to reduce taxes, primarily for businesses. The campaigns were “a series of interconnected, race-based, issue-driven campaigns that worked to combine local racist populism with elite agendas.”⁹³ It was this series of events that would open the door for neoliberalism to thrive as businesses pushed for a “market philosophy” to all social problems. As Henry Giroux states,

...the logic of the free market exchange undermined those collective structures that fought for social guarantees, public services, and equality of rights. As the social became individualized, uncertainty and fear worked to depoliticize a population that is educated to believe that social problems can only be addressed through private solutions. Within such a climate, shared responsibilities gave way to shared trepidation.⁹⁴

Therefore race-based politics coupled with class issues, allowed the creation of the “Other” to be perpetuated, white vs. black, rich and middle-class against the poor, with it all being guided by business solutions and goals. People were no longer invested in the welfare society and the community no longer came together to help one another, it was everyone’s own responsibility to take care of themselves, and if they could not turn to their community there were possible business solutions and charities that they must turn to.

This shift in paradigm has made the market philosophy the guiding principles of democracy in and of itself, where “capitalism now defines the meaning of freedom...

⁹² Ibid. XVI.

⁹³ Ibid. 39.

⁹⁴ Giroux, H. (2003). *The Abandoned Generation: Democracy Beyond the Culture of Fear*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. Pg. 31.

[and] profit-making is the essence of democracy.”⁹⁵ The public welfare then becomes only a function of making profit and security to make said profit, no longer is it interested in social justice, equality, or even protection for the most disadvantaged.⁹⁶ Individualism and complete self-reliance is thus glorified as the ultimate achievement in US society regardless of circumstances.

Nationalism & Identity Politics

The idea of individualism, which is perpetuated by neoliberalism, is further complicated by the implementation and introduction of identity politics. Kathryn Woodward shows the creation of identity through the relations of difference and is formed through an atmosphere of exclusion. Even if there are similarities between oppositional groups, difference is created to exclude the other group. “Sometimes these claims are based on nature; for example, ‘race’ and kinship in some versions of ethnicity. But often the claims are based on an essentialist version of history and of the past, where history is constructed as an unchanging truth.”⁹⁷ Therefore, this suggests that the view of the “Other” is based upon an unchanging history of preconceived notions, while forming a shared history for the self that creates a sense of one-ness within the in-group. This is an example of the creation of difference that excludes the “other,” and can be used to understand how class can be seen as a group identity that creates kinship.

To create this system of difference, individuals must build communities of peers, which are strong enough to create a shared history, so that it can reaffirm its own identity. This community builds influence by recruiting others with similar ideals into that community. When there is a conflict of interest, which contradicts or disrupts unity, it is

⁹⁵ Ibid. 29.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 30.

⁹⁷ Woodward, K. (1997). Identity and difference. London: Sage. Pg. 12.

the job of the community to try and reshape the identity of the individual contradicting or disrupting said unity. This is done by altering the individual's version of history to conform to the community's version of history.⁹⁸

Benedict Anderson would say that these communities in and of themselves are “imagined communities” which are tied to national images seeking to unify members to a similar mindset. Anderson is specifically focusing on the “imagined communities” of nationalist parties, which in the case of this thesis can be applied to the Tea Party.⁹⁹ With the Tea Party's identity wrapped in neoliberal ideology, we see a nationalistic imagined community built upon blurred class lines but a definite class ideology. Furthermore, in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein's work *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, they link racism and nationalism, thus making the goals and ideals of a nationalist organization interchangeable with that of a racist organization.¹⁰⁰ Therefore an inescapable link can be seen between race and class within the Tea Party's rhetoric.

The Tea Party movement pushed by neoliberal policies would be an example in how racism and nationalism (enveloped in neoliberalism) evidence this framework. Built with a composition of different conservative factions, this coalition often attacks the gains of the civil right movement, the “morality,” and the alleged “bad behavior” of minorities. This is to “produce a perpetual state of anxiety that obscures the actual failures of conservatism as economic and social policy, while promoting demands for even more draconian measures of similar nature for the future.”¹⁰¹ Therefore, we see the

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 13.

⁹⁹ Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. New York: Verso. Pg. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Balibar, E. & Wallerstein, I. (1992). *Race, nation, class: Ambiguous identities*. London: Verso. Pg. 37.

¹⁰¹ Feagin, J. (2000). *Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations*. New York: Routledge. Pg. 134

inextricable ties between race and class within the Tea Party rhetoric whereas when class issues are discussed race issues are being inferred to. This chapter highlights the economic rhetoric whereas the next chapter will highlight the specific inferences to race which help perpetuate this “Other.”

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, conservative groups have also unified through the idea of patriotism, which is also tied to nationalism. The Tea Party and their demagogues, call themselves patriots, and shroud themselves in the American flag. In defining patriotism, it is worth returning to Henry Giroux and quoting at length the different ways in which patriotism can be seen.

At its best, patriotism means that a country does everything possible to question itself, and to provide the conditions for its people to actively engage and transform the policies that shape their lives and the lives of others. Patriotism in this sense connects a culture of questioning and dissent with those democratic values that inform public citizenship and legitimate access to decent healthcare, housing, food, meaningful employment, child care, and childhood education programs for all citizens. At its worst, patriotism detaches itself from public citizenship and turns its back on citizens who are poor, hungry, and unemployed... In its most virulent form, patriotism confuses dissent with treason, arrogance with strength, and envisions brute force as the only exemplar of justice.¹⁰²

Through the Tea Party dissent is apparent, however it is in promotion of detachment from the public citizenship and for a blind promotion of the free market. The Tea Party’s perpetuation of neoliberalism shows that any deviance from capitalism is a treasonous act and therefore labels those who differ as a communist, a socialist, a Marxist, un-American, etc. In other words, there is a multifaceted relationship between class and race which is tied to the idea of patriotism, all being driven by the rhetoric of neoliberalism. Socialism

¹⁰² Giroux, H. (2003). *The Abandoned Generation: Democracy Beyond the Culture of Fear*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. Pg. 25.

thus becomes unpatriotic and again an enemy of capitalism and neoliberal thought. This identification of patriotism also helps to obscure class lines and create an imagined community to which fellow “patriots,” can rally together in unity against the dangerous “Other.”

Furthermore, as will be discussed in Chapter four, the Tea Party’s promotion of violence and gun culture has been also wrapped up within this idea of patriotism, thus tying class with gender/sexuality. With quotes such as Thomas Jefferson’s "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants," becoming a popular theme/slogan of the Tea Party, a dangerous ideology of patriotism can be seen. The next section will explore the political implications neoliberalism has on the healthcare debate, which Giroux points out as a democratic value that should be protected.

Political Implications

There are a number of political implications that come to light around the Tea Party and intersections of class, from their view on the elimination of social programs such as welfare and healthcare, to the elimination of the department of education. The Tea Party has heavily opposed any kind of reform that has been proposed by the Obama administration, especially ones that have any kind of tax implications, including the health care reform that President Obama proposed early in 2010, which the Tea Party dubbed as “ObamaCare.”

The aims of the healthcare reform proposed by the Obama administration was to bring down insurance premiums and the costs which contribute to the national deficit, cover the millions within America whom are uninsured, strengthen the current Medicare

system for seniors, and stop abuses by insurance companies.¹⁰³ These reforms would have dramatic economic impacts upon the billions of dollars which are made by insurance companies as they would have to accept people who previously did not qualify for their insurance plans, and pay out on procedures which the insurance companies saw as too costly. The reforms were seen as an attack on neoliberal institutions and policies that saw profit as the ultimate goal and providing healthcare to citizens as a secondary goal that was not as important as the bottom line.

Insurance and pharmaceutical companies fought back by appealing to middle class citizens who largely already had insurance by claiming that many will lose the quality of benefits that they already receive if this reform were to take place. The Tea Party jumped on this band wagon by calling the healthcare reforms an action of socializing the US healthcare system and that the Obama administration was promoting communism and/or socialism. They were effectively “Othering” the millions of uninsured people who would benefit from the reforms and creating an atmosphere of fear that the Obama administration was attempting to destroy American ideals and democracy. Those who were uninsured were seen as people who “didn’t work hard enough,” or who had “no work ethic.”¹⁰⁴ The ideal of Health Care was changed from what should have been seen as the promotion of the welfare of the society to a socialistic program for “freeloaders.”¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, because the political right framed Obama’s healthcare plan as a Socialistic program, it caused a unification amongst the “patriots,”

¹⁰³ http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/State_of_the_Union/president-obama-state-of-the-union-address/story?id=9678571. (Accessed 10/08/10).

¹⁰⁴ See signs #18 & #20 below.

¹⁰⁵ See sign #21 below.

whom would possibly benefit from the reforms, to fight against the “un-American Other.”

Currently the Tea Party is using the healthcare debate as a primary platform issue. The Tea Party candidates whom are running for office are claiming that they will repeal the healthcare reforms made in 2010, regardless of the people who will be impacted by the loss of the ability to get affordable insurance. Sarah Palin, a leading Tea Party figure and 2008 GOP Vice-Presidential candidate, created a website featuring members of the Democratic Party whom are up for re-election and voted for the healthcare reforms. To highlight these candidates, her website had gun crosshairs which representing those members, saying ‘we’re taking aim at these Democrats.’¹⁰⁶ This stirred up controversy across the nation as Palin’s rhetoric of “reload” and “take aim,” is thought to have possibly spurred supporters on to make physical threats to those whom were on the list.¹⁰⁷ This will be further examined in Chapter four, but exemplifies how a class issue like healthcare has been framed in hypermasculine terms.

Tea Party Signs and Class

Nationalist movements that are motivated by neoliberal ideals have close ties to racism and there is the creation of the Self/Other dichotomy that separates those who are “Patriots” from those who are the “Other.”¹⁰⁸ There were many techniques used to create this dichotomy amongst the participants at the Tea Party rallies, such as marking the president as a communist, a dictator, a Marxist, or a socialist which is meant to be seen as anti-capitalist.

¹⁰⁶ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/03/24/sarah-palins-pac-puts-gun_n_511433.html. (Accessed 10/08/2010).

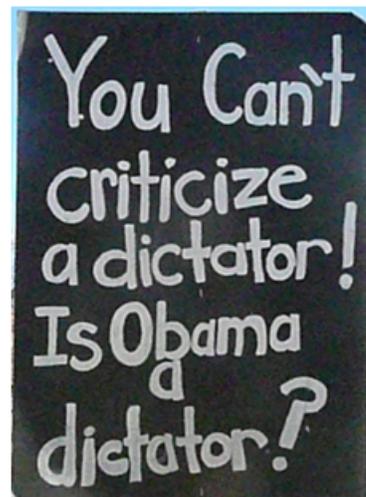
¹⁰⁷ http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20001170-503544.html. (Accessed 10/08/2010).

¹⁰⁸ Billig, M. (2003). Political Rhetoric. In D. Sears, L. Huddy, & R. Jervis's: Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pg.

Michael Billig describes this as a tactic of nationalist groups so as to cause constant anxiety, raise emotions, and to persuade others to join their cause or in other words, into their imagined community.¹⁰⁹ Creating a sense of anxiety can be widely seen in almost all the Tea Party actions across the country, and there is a constant comparison of Obama to that of Hitler. Sign #1 & #2 compare Obama to a Marxist and a dictator, and paint him as un-American. As highlighted, the painting of Obama as a socialist/Marxist/dictator, states that Obama is an enemy of capitalism, and would rather create a “downward distribution” of wealth.



Sign 1: photo taken October 19, 2009 @ Denver Tea Party Rally.



Sign 2: photo taken October 19, 2009 @ Denver Tea Party Rally.

The next set of pictures (on the next page) relate Obama to Adolf Hitler, use the holocaust as a reference to Obama’s policies, or label his policies as either socialist or communist.¹¹⁰ This perpetuates the fear tactics described by Billig, and creates a fear that Obama and “his promotion of socialism” is leading the United States to a holocaust comparable to Nazi Germany. Signs #3, #4, & #5 specifically use swastikas within their

¹⁰⁹ Billig, M. (1995) Banal nationalism. London : Sage

¹¹⁰ It should be noted that the depiction of a President as Hitler is not a new tactic as it was used to depict President George W. Bush. This however does not make it anymore right or ok.

message. #4 specifically calls Obama a fascist, while #5 places Obama on a flag next to Hitler above a swastika, stating “Same shit, different a**hole” thus saying that Obama has the same philosophy as Hitler.



Sign 3: <http://lynnrockets.wordpress.com/2010/12/02/new-rule-nobody-else-is-hitler/>



Sign 4: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Obama-Nazi_comparison_-_Tea_Party_protest.jpg



Sign 5: <http://chattahbox.com/us/2009/10/14/secret-service-investigating-anti-obama-swastika-carved-into-golf-course/>

Sign’s #6 & #7 put a mustache on Obama to make him resemble Hitler. Sign #8 states, “The American Taxpayers are the Jews for Obama’s Ovens,” which creates an image that Obama is looking to recreate the holocaust here in the United States.



Sign 6: <http://www.chapatimystery.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/herrboj.jpg>



Sign 7: <http://www.naacp.org/news/entry/naacp-delegates-vote-to-repudiate-racist-elements-within-the-tea-party/>



Sign 8: <http://www.naacp.org/news/entry/naacp-delegates-vote-to-repudiate-racist-elements-within-the-tea-party/>

Sign #9 places Obama in between Adolf Hitler and Vladimir Lenin. Above Hitler it states “National Socialism,” above Obama, “Democratic Socialism,” above Lenin, “Marxist Socialism,” and below all of them it says “Change.” This is meant to draw parallels between the three figures by claiming that they were all wanting the same thing, “change,” and this “change” will have a similar consequence to the previous two leaders outcomes. Sign #10 states, “Obama = Socialism” and that “Socialism =

Evil.” This statement is logically stating that Obama is a socialist, and socialism is evil, therefore Obama is evil. This creates the “Othering” process and places a morality judgment of evil, upon Obama. Sign #11 say’s “Obama,” but replaces the “O” with the Soviet Union’s “Hammer and Sickle,” basically stating that Obama is a communist.



Sign 9: <http://threeseccondsdeadair.wordpress.com/tag/waste-of-oxygen/>



Sign 10: <http://www.wnd.com/?pageId=95135>



Sign 11: <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2010/0701/Is-Obama-a-socialist-What-does-the-evidence-say>



Sign 12 & 13: <http://libertypundits.net/article/photos-from-the-washington-d-c-tea-party>



Sign 14: http://www.signpictures.net/pictures/God_Hates_Taxes.htm



Sign 15: <http://www.conservative-cafe.com/images/9121206PM.jpg>

The three photos above all have the similar theme of anti-tax rhetoric, which helps perpetuate the ideals originated on behalf of big corporations in the interest of promoting neoliberalism. The first picture actually has two signs in it, the first (sign #12) linking environmentalism with Marxism and communist Russia, which as previously noted, will in turn perpetuate a fear against anyone who promotes environmentalism. The second

sign in picture (#13) says, “Don’t tax what I haven’t earned yet Mr. President!!!” In the original photo, a child can be seen carrying this sign. The child probably has no idea what taxes are, and is carrying the sign as a message from the child’s parents. The child no doubt probably benefits in some way from taxes, most likely through education. Sign #14 states, “God Hates Taxes,” which carries a message that if you believe in God, you too should be against taxes, therefore taxes are against God’s will. Sign #15 states, “Tax Slavery Sucks,” which is equating paying taxes to being a slave. The idea of equating slavery to contemporary times will be discussed in the following chapter. It should be noted though that slavery is one of the most violent forms of oppression, whereas many funds from taxes can be seen as a tool to combat oppression: i.e. police, federal law enforcement, civil rights legislation, etc.

Sign #16 highlights a number of issues which when coupled together send a message which accentuates the points of this chapter;



Sign 16: <http://bettystaley.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/Tax-Day-Tea-Party-4.15.10-Signs-Me-01.jpeg>

1) If you tax “us,” “we” will vote you out in the next election; 2) Healthcare is an entitlement which is bad, and for Obama and Pelosi’s trying to reform it, they should be removed from office; 3) The first two messages, coupled with “Proud American! God Bless the U.S.A.,” creates a patriotic message that states taxes are un-American, and once again if you believe in God,

then you should be against taxes and entitlement programs. Furthermore, it creates a sense of patriotism in anti-tax rhetoric.



Sign 17 & 18: <http://westbroward.info/teaparty/>



Sign 19: [http://www.examiner.com/images/blog/wysiwyg/image/Tea_Party_3\(1\).jpg](http://www.examiner.com/images/blog/wysiwyg/image/Tea_Party_3(1).jpg)



Sign 20: <http://photos.upi.com/slideshow/lbox/41be70199a6d24e94cc720d651e47aa9/Tea-Party-Tax-Day.jpg>

The three photos above, specifically tie class and race. Within their message, they promote the idea of work ethic, the first two directly. Sign #17 states, “Don’t spread my wealth... spread my work ethic!” which creates the mythical other who is leaching off society, “not working as hard” as they are to make it. This rhetoric is similar to Reagan’s “welfare queen” scare tactics, which promote an image for listeners and viewers that evoke a racial connotation. Sign #19 sends the same message as Sign #17, promoting the idea of “work ethic.” Sign #18 is a play off a slogan which originally stated, “Don’t Taze me bro,” however has been transformed into saying, “don’t tax me bro,” which is being contorted to play off the slang within the usage of the word brother, by African Americans, thus sending the message directly to President Obama. Sign #20, says, “Free Markets, NOT Free Loaders,” thus suggesting that free market ideology is the answer, rather than government programs aimed at helping people, who it assigns the title of “Free Loader.” This goes along the same lines to which Giroux was inferring to of a paradigm shift from communal solutions to neoliberal market ideology.

The final picture (Sign #21), promotes the patriotic coupling of capitalism and Christianity as an American ideal. It goes on to ask “Is that OK with you Mr. President?” Thus, inferring that the president is neither a Christian nor a Capitalist. Again painting the President and those who believe in communal or non-market solutions as the “Other.”



Sign 21:
<http://www.washingtonphotojournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/whelan-2009-teabag.jpg>

Conclusion

With the Tea Party’s staunch promotion of neoliberalism, a sense of exclusivity is formed which is centered on the white male identity. It states that if one does not conform or abide by this norm, then it is the “Other” which is not in line with American values. The Tea Party’s rhetoric which is being disseminated through these signs create an imagined community which is centered around three primary idea’s that all relate to class: 1) American nationalism; 2) anti-tax/small government, and; 3) free market capitalism.

The perpetuation of American nationalism establishes the “Othering” process, which allows the other two ideas to flourish. By centering Obama as a Marxist, a communist and/or a socialist, the Tea Party is effectively creating a message which allows the upward consolidation of wealth while demonizing the downward redistributive programs, which is evident within the anti-tax/small government rhetoric. All of this is in

the name of free market capitalism, which extends the goals of neoliberalism. Those who benefit most by this shift would be the wealthiest few within society, yet demographics of all classes can be seen participating within the Tea Party disseminating the same message. Therefore the imagined community must be bound by other means, which the following chapters will explore.

Class has become the tie that binds this examination of Tea Party and their intersections between race and gender/sexuality. With rhetoric that stems from the Southern Strategy and Reaganism, economic euphemisms tied to racism can be found such as the promotion of individualism and smaller government. The next chapter will show specific attacks on the President's race and ethnicity, which as before mentioned, are tactics that help reinforce the ideal of the "Other" being a person of color. As for the class tie to gender/sexuality, this notion of patriotism will be coupled with violent rhetoric and gun culture that will be expanded upon in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 3 INTERSECTIONS OF RACE & ETHNICITY

An Attack on Civil Rights

On February 4, 2010, at the first Tea Party convention, the opening remarks were given by longtime conservative politician from Colorado, Tom Tancredo. Tancredo has been known for his small government stance, his anti-immigration view, and disdain towards social welfare programs. Nearing the end of his speech, while demonizing the political left, Tancredo stated:

And then, something really odd happened, mostly because I think that we do not have a civics literacy test before people can vote in this country. People who could not even spell the word "vote," or say it in English, put a committed socialist ideologue in the White House, name is Barack Hussein Obama.¹¹¹

A wild applause broke out amongst the crowd. These statements set the tone for the prevailing discourse on race in the United States. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 abolished the use of literacy tests due to the disenfranchisement of voters, particularly people of color who were not allowed to vote unless they passed a literacy test. Tancredo's remarks were targeted at the Latino community at large, blaming their supposed inability to speak English as a reason for implementing these poll tests. Tancredo then blames the people who he feels should be ineligible to vote for the election of President Obama, who he is demonizing as a "socialist." Furthermore, to use a statement for political clout that is historically insensitive to the disenfranchisement of citizens, shows the ways in which the Tea Party discourse is being used in racial terms.

¹¹¹ 02/05/2010. <http://mediamatters.org/blog/201002050021>. (Accessed 01/20/2011).

In another attack on the Civil Rights Movement, in March 2010, Kentucky's *Courier Journal* editorial board interviewed Rand Paul, another iconic leading figure of the Tea Party. In the interview Paul was asked, "Would you have voted for the Civil Rights Act of 1964?" Paul's response, "I like the Civil Rights Act in the sense that it ended discrimination in all public domains, and I'm all in favor of that." To which the interviewer asked, "but?" Paul responded:

You had to ask me the "but." um.. I don't like the idea of telling private business owners - I abhor racism - I think it's a bad business decision to ever exclude anybody from your restaurant. But at the same time I do believe in private ownership. But I think there should be absolutely no discrimination on anything that gets any public funding and that's most of what the Civil Rights Act was about to my mind.¹¹²

It was not for another month that the national news media would pick up on this story, to which it became a firestorm of interviews with Rand Paul, questioning what he meant in this interview. Paul would continue to defend his position a number of times that it is not the government's place to restrict business owners' rights to do what they wish with their business. When asked by Rachel Maddow about the desegregation of lunch counters, Paul gave a vague analogy, attempting to avoid the question, about the right to bring a gun into a business. It was soon after the Maddow interview that Paul would attempt to recant his earlier statements in order to save political face.

Paul's comments are instructive in understanding the level of government intervention that the Tea Party doctrine advocates for. However, Paul's comments are counter-intuitive to the Tea Party message when looked at next to the comments of Tom Tancredo. Tancredo's message is for stronger intervention in securing the nation's

¹¹² 05/19/2010. Huffington Post. Rand Paul on Civil Rights: Private Restaurants Wouldn't Have To Serve Martin Luther King. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/taylor-marsh/rand-paul-on-civil-rights_b_582674.html. (Accessed 01/21/11).

borders, which requires a high amount of government spending. Paul's message is for no regulations towards business owners, which would include the belief that a business owner could hire whom ever they choose, documented or undocumented. With these opposing view points within the same party, it can be extrapolated that the usage of race in both instances are merely political rhetoric aimed at creating a mythical "Other," composed primarily of people of color, that the Tea Party can rally against.

These two examples illustrate the doctrine put forth by the Tea Party that has major racial implications. Both attack legislation put forth during the Civil Rights Movement in order to promote equality and fight the disenfranchisement being caused by racism, which is similar to the approach of the Southern Strategy. This chapter will look at what race is in a supposed "post-racial" society. It will close with examining how racism and privilege show up at Tea Party rallies through Tea Party signs, thus showing the maintenance of white privilege while simultaneously disavowing race/racism.

Race and Racism

It is important to distinguish what race is, in a purported "post-racial" society, so that it can be determined if the Tea Party does in fact have impacts upon racial issues. This has been a major point of debate since former President Jimmy Carter spoke out in September of 2009 against the Tea Party by calling them "a radical fringe," which is motivated by "racist attitudes."¹¹³ Since that time, the Tea Party has held steady that they are not racist and that race plays no factor in their politics.

The formation of race is a "sociohistorical" process that is fluid and can be created, changed, and destroyed over time. The process is tied to the political forces,

¹¹³ Carter, J. (2009, September 17). Carter again cites racism as factor in Obama's treatment. CNN.

which control the legal and justice systems.¹¹⁴ Racism is thus the implementation of oppression by those with privileged identities. One of the problems with the concept of racism is the way in which it is defined by those with privileged identities. Most privileged identities see racism as a dichotomy, either you are a “racist” or you are not. Whites see racist people as someone who makes overtly racist comments or actions. Racism however must not be seen as a “not racist/racist” dichotomy, but rather seen on a “continuum” which ranges from “less racist” to “more racist.”¹¹⁵ This is important because those who are in the position of the oppressed do not see racism as the dichotomy which whites see it as, they see it more as a systemic force which permeates from institutions and society in and of itself.¹¹⁶ It will be useful to now examine the ways in which racism can be seen as a continuum rather than the “racist/not racist” dichotomy.

Barbara Trepagnier outlines four different types of racism in her book *Silent Racism: How Well Meaning White People Perpetuate the Racial Divide*. The first form of racism Trepagnier describes is “symbolic racism,” which involves a racial bias against people of color and a sense of meritocracy. In this form of racism, whites object to policies which help minorities because they feel that people should be “responsible for their own welfare.” This is very similar to the rhetoric of the Tea Party in that they believe that it is the individuals responsibility not the governments responsibility to take care of the people. The second form of racism she outlines is “aversive racism,” this form of racism involves a denile of negative thoughts and feelings to maintain the “not racist” status. This too relates to the Tea Party, in their constant deniles that racism exists within

¹¹⁴ Omi, M. & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formations in the United States*. New York: Routledge. Pg. 55-56.

¹¹⁵ Trepagnier, B. (2006). *Silent racism: How well-meaning white people perpetuate the racial divide*. London: Paradigm Publishers. Pg. 22

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* Pg. 24

their movement. The third form of racism is “everyday racism,” which refers to the everyday actions which go unnoticed and unquestioned by whites that can be considered racist. This type of racism has been a hot topic of debate around Tea Party rallies since there has been debate over the content of Tea Party members political signs which they bring to the rallies, as it can often be labeled racist. This will be further explored at the end of this chapter. The fourth and final form that Trepagnier describes is “colorblind racism,” which is an absolute denial of the contemporary impacts of race.¹¹⁷ This final form of racism has also become an issue surrounding the Tea Party as they attempt to deny that their movement is not racist, by specifically highlighting people of color within their movement.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva takes the concept of “colorblind racism” a step further and breaks it down into four frames which white people use to discriminate. The first frame is “abstract liberalism,” which consists of a twisting of the term equality to oppose affirmative action. This frame has become a popular tactic of the Tea Party and conservative pundits alike. The appropriation of the term equality is rampant in the Tea Party rhetoric. The second frame is “naturalization,” in this frame white people argue that self-segregation is a natural occurrence. The third frame is “cultural racism,” this argument claims that people of color are disadvantaged due to their culture. The fourth and final frame that Bonilla-Silva examines is the “minimization of racism,” which argues that racism ended with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and similar

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

legislation.¹¹⁸ This frame is similar to Trepagnier's "colorblind racism" which was previously discussed.

These forms of racism, lead to the perpetuation and the maintaining of white supremacy. Furthermore, these forms of racism lead to a system of white privilege, which is not recognized by white people. It will be important to explore the concepts of, and the construction of white privilege, which is embedded within our society.

White privilege, which is another aspect of racism, would primarily dwell in the "less racist" area of Trepagnier's scale of "less racist/more racist." Joe Feagin outlines white privilege as the historical buildup of advantages given to white elites, to which benefits have trickled down to "ordinary whites" due to the fact that they were not only the numerical majority within the United States at the time but also because it was politically advantageous for the white elites as well. These advantages have created a system of privileges which are now hidden in almost all aspects of society.¹¹⁹ Stephanie Wildman and Adrienne Davis define privilege in general as:

First, the characteristics of the privileged group define the societal norm, often benefiting those in the privileged group. Second, privileged group members can rely on their privilege and avoid objecting to oppression. Both the conflation of privilege with the societal norm and the implicit option to ignore oppression mean that privilege is rarely seen by the holder of privilege.¹²⁰

This creates a precarious situation since the recognition of one's own privilege is invisible thus allowing the perpetuation of stereotypes and preconceived notions.

¹¹⁸ Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). *Racism without racist: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC. Pg. 26.

¹¹⁹ Feagin, J. (2000). *Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations*. New York: Routledge. Pg. 190.

¹²⁰ Wildman, S. & Davis, A. (1995). Making Systems of Privilege Visible. In *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*. Ed. Rothenberg, P. Worth Publishers. (2002). Pg. 92.

Furthermore, this is a primary factor for the continuation of systemic racism.¹²¹ This systemic racism can be seen as a form of white supremacy.

The perpetuation of white supremacy due to white privilege, which is what racism looks like in a “post-racial” society, is usually invisible to white folks but is usually blatantly obvious to people of color. As was highlighted in chapter 1, a vast majority of the Tea Party members identify as white, therefore a vast majority of Tea Party members would benefit from white privilege without even knowing it. Furthermore, this white supremacy is played out in everyday life, from the everyday actions of an individual to institutional forms of racism. It is engrained in our past, present, and probable future. The next section will examine different ways in which race has played a role in politics and continues to have political ramifications.

Political implications

With Tea Party candidates such as Rand Paul sprouting up across the nation the political ramifications, which are tied to race, are substantial. Furthermore, with the Tea Party candidates gaining momentum in US politics, it has become problematic to the current structure of power, thus causing the Republican Party to come to a truce with the extremist views that are guided by white privilege within the Tea Party candidates.¹²² By the GOP doing so and supporting Tea Party candidates financially, it could cause a radicalization of the Republican Party, thus making bipartisan politics impossible. One possible aspect of race, which will be affected, will be within the current debate around immigration.

¹²¹ To read more about everyday examples of white privilege read Peggy McIntosh’s article, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.”

¹²²Kuhnenn. J. 09/21/10. New Tea Party: Energy, Money and Detente with GOP. AP.org. http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_TEA_PARTY?SITE=TNJAC&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT. Accessed 09/22/10

The current debate lies in Arizona's "Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act," also known as SB 1070. With Arizona's economy hit hard by the 2008 recession, Arizona legislators looked for a scapegoat for the economic woes of the state, and with the consistent attacks on immigrants since the mass exodus after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), immigrants were the easy target for desperate legislators. The logic behind Arizona's 1070 began in the early 90's when there were a number of "militarized crackdowns" at high flow entry points such as "Operation Hold the Line in El Paso, Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego, and, Operation Safeguard in Arizona. Border Patrol agents wielding sophisticated military technology saturated and sealed off the traditional immigration crossing routes in the towns of Nogales and Douglas, and 16-foot walls went up."¹²³ These crackdowns led the migration patterns to reroute through the dangerous deserts of Arizona where an average of 200 migrants die every year.¹²⁴ Furthermore, these crackdowns helped to organize many vigilante groups like the Minutemen, whom have many ties to the Tea Party.¹²⁵

In 2005, the Department of Homeland Security launched Operation Streamline, which criminalized undocumented migration for the first time.¹²⁶ This led to an increase in migrants being sent to jail, which also boosted the amount of prisons needed. In response to the inflow of "criminals," Arizona allowed a number of private prisons to

¹²³ Miller, T. (2010). Arizona, the Anti-Immigrant Laboratory. NACLA Report on the Americas. North American Congress on Latin America. July/August edition. Pg. 3.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 4.

¹²⁵ Burghart, Devin & Zeskind, Leonard. Tea Party Nationalism: A Critical Examination of the Tea Party Movement and the Size, Scope, and Focus of Its National Factions. Pg. 25.

¹²⁶ Miller, T. (2010). Arizona, the Anti-Immigrant Laboratory. NACLA Report on the Americas. North American Congress on Latin America. July/August edition. Pg. 3.

operate. “SB 1070 obeys the same ‘zero tolerance’ logic behind Operation Streamline,” thus it will create larger gains for the prison industrial complex operating in Arizona.

The specifics of SB 1070 look very similar to laws that have historically been used in the past to discriminate against different racial groups. SB 1070 echoes antiquated laws, which had racist sentiments, meant to subjugate and control specific parts of the US population. One example is the Geary Act of 1892, which was an extension upon the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, requiring Chinese immigrants to carry identification cards.¹²⁷ Much like the Geary Act, SB 1070 requires police to obtain proof of citizenship if there is “reasonable suspicion” that they are an “illegal immigrant.” This “reasonable suspicion,” is an ambiguous term that gives a police officer leeway in deciding who they think could be an “illegal immigrant.” This usually shows up by means of the way one looks and/or the way ones speech sounds, also known as racial profiling. For example, if you look as if you come from a Hispanic background, the police then have a “reasonable suspicion” that you are an “illegal alien” and can thus pull you over to inspect whether or not you are a citizen. The Fourth Amendment of the US Constitution, which guarantees the right to be safe from unreasonable search and seizure without probable cause, and, the Fourteenth Amendment that requires that all citizens be treated equally under the law has challenged racial profiling in courts. While proponents of SB 1070 contend that this bill is targeted at those who are here illegally and technically have no protection under the constitution, it still impacts those who are legally here and are protected by the law of the land by subjugating them to unconstitutional search and seizure.

Another interesting point that permeates from SB 1070 stems from the origins of the bill itself. Kris Kobach, a lawyer, wrote the bill for the Federation for American

¹²⁷ Citation needed

Immigration Reform (FAIR), which has been labeled by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) as an anti-immigrant hate group.¹²⁸ Kobach has had a history of writing policy that incorporates racial profiling; for example, Kobach was the architect of the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, which was subsequently discontinued due to its racial profiling and discriminatory practices.¹²⁹ According to the SPLC, FAIR also has a history of accepting funds from organizations with ties to racism and having prominent members who promote blatantly racist ideologies.¹³⁰

Another disturbing trend in the immigration debate is a program created by the department of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), known as “Secure Communities.” This program is labeled as an information-sharing program between ICE, the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and local police departments that implement the program. According to ICE, the program was designed to make an advanced network “to quickly and accurately identify aliens who are arrested for a crime and booked into local law enforcement custody... to accommodate the increased number of criminal aliens being identified and removed.”¹³¹ While ICE claims that this program is focused on targeting criminals who are “illegally” within the United States, there have been a number of cases in which undocumented immigrants were pulled over for minor violations and/or were racially profiled and ended up being deported due to the Secure Communities program.

¹²⁸ <http://www.splcenter.org/blog/2010/04/28/hate-group-lawyer-drafted-arizona-anti-immigrant-law/> (Accessed 09/24/2010).

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities. (Accessed 01/20/11).

On the Secure Communities page of the ICE website, a section is dedicated to stating, “ICE is committed to protecting civil rights and civil liberties, and is serious about responding to complaints or allegations of racial profiling as a result of Secure Communities.”¹³² However, this program coupled with laws such as Arizona’s SB 1070 and Colorado’s proposed SB 54, create a violation of due process because racial profiling is legal through such laws. This situation makes it precarious for any undocumented person within the United States. So far 35 states have signed on to the Secure Communities program, and with many of those states looking to emulate Arizona style legislation advocating the use of racial profiling a police state could be on the horizon.

The Tea Party has used the immigration debate as a platform point in that they agree with SB 1070 and more should be done to protect the US-Mexico border.¹³³ Supporting SB 1070 exemplifies one way in which the Tea Party has a definite impact upon issues around race and shows where racism can be injected into the conversation about the Tea Party. While supporting the SB 1070 bill does not make one a blatant racist, it does however contain traces of white privilege, symbolic racism, and everyday racism.

The next section will examine the political signs used at Tea Party rallies by their members and present a textual analysis of those signs and explore how racism is showing up amongst the everyday members of the Tea Party, via their signs. Most the signs directly targeted the President’s race and ethnicity. This further exemplifies the ways in which race and ethnicity factor into the politics of the Tea Party and perpetuate the “Othering” process.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/08/15/tea-partiers-rally-arizona-border-mexico/>. (Accessed 09/23/2010).

Tea Party Signs and Race/Ethnicity

Sign #22 is clearly a stereotype of the ways in which African Americans might speak. This conveys a lack of education due to the language used, “Messiah done come... You all gettin free stuff.” Secondly it infers laziness amongst African Americans by implying that they all want free stuff.¹³⁴



Sign 22: photo taken October 19, 2009 @ Denver Tea Party Rally.

Sign #23, a popular Tea Party sign during the rallies against healthcare, depicts President Obama as an aboriginal African. While this creates the imaging of the “Other,” it is also a stereotypical image of an African, inferring that this is what all African Americans look like and should be thought of as.¹³⁵



Sign 23: <http://newsbusters.org/blogs/brent-baker/2009/09/14/cnns-situation-room-charges-racial-tinge-tea-movement>

¹³⁴ In October 2009, I attended a Tea Party rally to observe and learn where these people were coming from. While attending this rally I purchased a couple of buttons, which were a high commodity amongst the crowd. The buttons being sold and worn were the primary source of blatant racism that I observed (one of which can be seen to the left). When asked about the motivations of creating the buttons, the person selling them stated that she was frustrated with the president and bored so she decided to create a wide variety of buttons. Many of the buttons had a racial message similar to the one pictured; Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). Racism without racist: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC. Pg. 40.; Feagin, J. (2000). Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations. New York: Routledge. Pg. 25 & 104.

¹³⁵ Ibid.



Sign 24: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/16/10-most-offensive-tea-par_n_187554.html



Sign 25: <http://www.sodahead.com/living/who-would-you-invite-to-your-tea-party/question-808743/?link=ibaf&imgurl=http>



Sign 26: <http://www.teapartylol.com/category/racism/>



Sign 27: <http://www.osborneinrk.com/2009/09/tea-party-racism.html>

The four photos above all specifically reference Obama as an African, not an African American nor is there any reference to his white roots. Sign #24 reads, “We want our country back. Send Obama back to Africa.” This message infers that Obama is not one of “us,” and that because Obama has roots in Africa, he should be sent back there. Similarly, Sign #25 calls for Obama to be sent back to Africa, specifically Kenya. Sign #26 blends the theme of the previous chapter and this one, by not only labeling him as a “socialist” but also by drawing attention to his Kenyan roots. Sign #27, compares Obama to a Lion by stating, “The Zoo has an African [Picture of a Lion is inserted here] and the White House has a Lyin’ African.” This labeling of Obama as a “dangerous beast,” as Feagin points out is problematic in that it, “culturally stigmatize[s] and routinely trigger[s] antiblack stereotypes in white minds, which in turn often generate defensive or discriminatory actions.”¹³⁶

The four pictures below all portray the idea of slavery. The mockery and levity used to describe a historical event such as slavery minimizes the significance of slavery. Sign #28 states, “Chains we can believe in,” playing off of Obama’s slogan “Change we

¹³⁶ Ibid. 108.

can believe in,” insinuating that Obama’s change is tied to slavery. Sign #29 identifies the president as “Black,” and states that he is leading the “U.S. into Slavery.” Sign #30, perpetuates an anti-tax rhetoric, discussed in chapter 2, but insinuates that paying taxes is comparable to slavery. Sign #31 states that “Obama’s Plan,” is to institute “White Slavery.” To insinuate that white people are now “slaves” is culturally insensitive to the reality of what slavery actually entailed for those who were imported here to serve whites.¹³⁷



Sign 28:
<http://politicalrevolution.putblog.com/>



Sign 29: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/16/10-most-offensive-tea-par_n_187554.html



Sign 30:
<http://www.conservativecafe.com/images/9121206PM.jpg>



Sign 31:
<http://www.naacp.org/news/entry/naacp-delegates-vote-to-repudiate-racist-elements-within-the-tea-pary/>

¹³⁷ Ibid. 67.

Sign #32 (seen to the left) perpetuates the stereotype of the “aggressive,” “dangerous” black male perpetuating violence against white people. Furthermore, the positioning of the caricature suggests the figure could be possibly attempting to rape the depicted “Uncle Sam.” The image of black males as rapist has been used in the media since the turning of the 20th century and the mass media boom.¹³⁸



Sign 32 <http://www.boomantribune.com/story/2010/8/7/213410/7382>

Signs #33 & #34 reference Obama and African Americans as “monkeys.” Feagin, states that whites often associate blacks as “apes,” which also perpetuates the animalistic/dangerous image of blacks.¹³⁹ This also center’s blacks as a “sub-species,” or as inferior to whites. This is caused by a sense of white supremacy, and can be considered “*auto-referential*” racism.¹⁴⁰



Sign 33: <http://www.blackagenda.com/category/us-politics/tea-party-white-nationalism>



Sign 34: http://3.vp.blogspot.com/_Xs-pcweLu1s/S-DjBAIEuDI/AAAAAABKo/r7633gQqius/s1600/03_full_600.jpg

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 97.

¹⁴⁰ Balibar, E. & Wallerstein, I. (1992). Race, nation, class: Ambiguous identities. London: Verso. Pg. 39.; Furthermore, perhaps most disturbing is the fact that children were used to perpetuate the message of this one sign and a previous sign addressing slavery. The parents of these children are potentially breeding hate to future generations. Were instead of having discussions as to why racism is bad, they are encouraging it. For more on this subject see *Newsweek* article from November 10th 2009: “See Baby Discriminate”

Painting Obama as a Muslim further perpetuates an idea of “Otherness,” and as discussed in the previous chapter, this is tied to a rhetoric of patriotism, where the enemy are non-Christians. Signs #35 & #36 attempt to frame Obama as a Muslim. #35 does this by not specifically calling him a Muslim, but rather by placing him as “not a Christian.” Sign #36 specifically calls Obama a Muslim and also frames him as a Marxist. This causes a lot of anxiety especially in wake of the events of September 11, 2001, and our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which have primarily Muslim populations. Furthermore, within the Tea Party there is a large group of conspiracy theorists, whom are known as “Birther’s,” who claim that Obama is not an American citizen, and should be impeached due to being a “foreign born” citizen. These descriptions of Obama as a Muslim not only create anxiety towards Muslims but also help perpetuate stereotypes that have numerous effects on Muslims.¹⁴¹



Sign 35: <http://leftistmoon.wordpress.com/2009/04/15/tea-party-2009/>



Sign 36: <http://mattwisdom.wordpress.com/2010/03/page/2/>

This anxiety is not localized only towards Muslims, as outlined throughout this chapter, there is a perpetuation of animosity by the Tea Party towards the Latino

¹⁴¹ Schildkraut, D. (2002). The more things change... American identity and mass and elite responses to 9/11. *Journal of Political Psychology*. 23 (3), 511-535.

population who have come to the United States. The next set of pictures exemplifies racism within the Tea Party targeting immigrants.

Sign #37 claims that “Illegal immigration is destroying the America”, this type of rhetoric effectively “Others” immigrants by painting them as the dangerous foreigners who are attempting to “destroy” America. Furthermore the, sign could be inferring to two different ideas when it states, “look what it did to the White House.” First could be stating that because of “illegal immigration,” Obama was elected, or it could be going back to the “Birther” conspiracy theory and be labeling Obama as an “illegal immigrant.” Similar to sign #37, sign #38 perpetuates the threat of immigrants by stating that there is an “invasion,” and that the US in imperil. Sign #39 portrays the idea that immigrants are dirty and “trashing” the country, which is similar to the ascription of laziness, which is a stereotype often attributed to African-Americans, as discussed for sign #22.



Sign 37: http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_femhrxbNtS0/TKP04DFHhOI/AAAAAAAAAHOM/WWd8Qha4lUo/s1600/ILLEGAL+IMMIGRATION+02.jpg



Sign 38: http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com/assets_c/2010/08/seal-the-borders-cropped-proto-custom_2.jpg



Sign 39: <http://progressivenation.us/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/anti-immigration-tea-partier.jpg>

Sign #40 is calling for a boycott of Mexico, which ironically would probably cause more migration to the United States from Mexico. Sign #41 is promoting English-only policies, which have been a longtime fight, primarily by many racist organizations and

furthermore, it is closely relate to the racist policies and rhetoric advocated by Tom Tancredo.¹⁴²



Sign 40 & 41: http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_Xs-pcweLu1s/S-DjBAIEuDI/AAAAAAAAAKo/r5463gQqius/s1600/03_full_600.jpg

Conclusion

A popular idea amongst Tea Party members and Tea Party leaders has been this idea that it is “time to take our country back,” as seen in the two signs on the right. This popular rhetoric is problematic in that it directly promotes the dichotomy of power and perpetuates the Self/Other dichotomy. It states that “We” are the people and that if you are not like “us,” whereas the “us” is the Tea Party, you are the “Other.” President Obama is clearly being



Sign 42: <http://www.lincolntea-party-patriots.com/pict1/tea45.jpg>

portrayed as the “Other,” immigrants are the “Other,” and anyone who does not share the

¹⁴² I would also like to highlight the irony in the grammatical error within the sign promoting English-only policy. The sign reads “Respect Are-Country Speak English.”

ideology of the Tea Party is considered the “other.” The Tea Party is imparting an ideology of fear of this “other.”

The logical question is, who is the “we” and “our” that the Tea Party is saying that they need to “reclaim their country,” as shown in chapter one, many who are painted as the “Other” are labeled as “socialists,” “Marxists,” and/or “communists.” This is part of the “culture war” which Samuel Huntington outlines in his work *Who Are We?*, and this is the way that the political debate is being framed, in a cloak of fear, where violence may be inevitable. This chapter



Sign 43: http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3512/3467484754_1d14700e91.jpg

shows that the label of the “Other” commonly has a racial connotation, which is to be feared. As stated in the intro, this thesis is not meant to paint every member of the Tea Party as a radical racist, however the platform which the Tea Party has created allows space for the dissemination of racism. It cannot be stressed enough that racism cannot be seen as a dichotomy where one is or is not racist, rather it must be seen as a scale from most to least racist, and white privilege must be revealed and recognized as a form of racism, where white supremacy is allowed to thrive.

With a majority of Tea Party members identifying as white, it would be easy to understand why many within the Tea Party do not understand how their signs could be seen as supporting racist ideology, such as the perpetuation of the “dangerous black male,” or in trying to make the subject of slavery into a joke, etc. However, this type of rhetoric is being used as a tool to maintain the dyadic and perpetuate neoliberal goals.

Furthermore, this type of rhetoric intensifies the tension and trauma in race relations, thus proving that we are not in a “post-racial” society, because if we were this type of imagery would not be used.

The next chapter will explore the ways in which the Tea Party promotes hypermasculinity through their usage of rhetoric centered in gun culture. This rhetoric is nothing new to the right-wing extremist ideology, and has dangerous undertones within its message.

CHAPTER 4 HYPERMASCULINITY

Introduction: “Extremist Groups, Timothy McVeigh, and the ‘Tea Party’ Movement”

On December 26, 1994, Tim Cornwell wrote an article for *The Scotsman*, the Scottish National newspaper, which focused on the American militia movement. The article included a number of provocative quotes from members of various American militias, which were notable for their open expressions of hate and violence directed against the United States government. One such quote stated, “They've stamped on us enough... America was built on war, and I feel like that's the only way we're going to be able to take it back. The enemy is all around, but the main target is Washington.”¹⁴³ Given that militia member Timothy McVeigh would bomb Oklahoma City’s Alfred P. Murrah Building just four months later, the aforementioned quote stood as a haunting premonition. Despite the tragic lessons learned through the Oklahoma City attack—the deaths of 168 people—there has been a recent resurgence in similar-sounding rhetoric that can be found across radio airwaves, television, and the Internet. Within the US there has been an irrefutable rise in popularity in incendiary anti-State sentiments, this is represented with an estimated 18% of the US population subscribing to some form of the Tea Party doctrine.¹⁴⁴ While the particularities of each Tea Party group differs from chapter to chapter, the common beliefs among these somewhat heterogeneous groups are:

¹⁴³ Cornwell, Tim. (1994) *Back at the ranch*. The Scotsman Publications Ltd. 12/26/1994.

¹⁴⁴ Zernike, Kate & Thee-Brenan, Megan. (2010). *Poll Finds Tea Party Backers Wealthier and More Educated*. The New York Times. 04/14/2010.

1) the federal government has overstepped the limits of the US Constitution; 2) taxation and government expenditures are out of hand, and; 3) an unwavering commitment to their Second Amendment right to bear arms. Moreover, much of their anti-state hostility seems to be compounded by Barack Obama's presidency. For instance, an April 2010 *New York Times/CBS News* poll of the Tea Party found that "nearly 9 in 10 disapprove of the job Mr. Obama is doing over all, and about the same percentage fault his handling of major issues: health care, the economy and the federal budget deficit. Ninety-two percent believe Mr. Obama is moving the country toward socialism."¹⁴⁵

It is instructive to note how closely the present-day Tea Party rhetoric resonates with the ideals and beliefs of Timothy McVeigh prior to his bombing of the Murrah Building. In a 1993 interview with a student journalist given outside the Branch Davidian standoff in Waco Texas, McVeigh remarked, "I believe we are slowly turning into a socialist government. The government is continually growing bigger and more powerful, and the people need to defend themselves against government control."¹⁴⁶ That this fear of an "out of control government" moving closer towards socialism apparently animates Tea Party politics in ways similar to McVeigh's act of domestic terrorism, is significant and demonstrates the need for closer scrutiny. Furthermore, the Tea Party believes that the key to this defense lies within their second amendment right, the right to bear arms. This chapter will attempt to highlight this rugged individualism that seeks to protect itself from the government, with guns and violence. This promotion of violence through gun culture creates a hypermasculine culture, which propagates actions similar to McVeigh's.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Michel, Lou & Herbeck, Dan. *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh & the Oklahoma City Bombing*. Pg. 120.

To begin, it is important to note that the information, ideas, and rhetoric that are being disseminated do not originate from the Tea Party *per se*, but rather from more extremist groups whose membership overlap with Tea Party organizations. For example, the use of the Gadsden Flag, the slogan “Don’t Tread on Me,” and comparisons of the U.S. government to Nazi Germany have long been used by anti-government militias. Moreover, the conspiracy theory which has been widely disseminated throughout the Tea Party that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is creating concentration camps for those who dissent against the government.¹⁴⁷ Much like Timothy McVeigh, this brand of fear rhetoric bolsters a sense of paranoia among participants, which encourages people to invest in the ideas and beliefs.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, the groups which the Tea Party gets a wealth of its information from, and has many overlapping members, i.e. militia members and white supremacists, root in an extremist white male ideology.

What these groups largely share in common is an ideological commitment to the “reclamation of individual rights,” which they claim have been taken away from them by the Federal Government. Yaron Brook, executive director of the Ayn Rand Institute, encapsulates this ideology succinctly in a speech he gave for Tea Party members:

...when it comes to liberty, when it comes to individual rights, when it comes to capitalism, we will need to be radical. But let me remind you of some other radicals: the Founders of this country. These were men who stood up when it counted. Remember Patrick Henry’s famous words: “Give me liberty or give me death.” He didn’t say just give me a *little* bit of liberty. He didn’t say “please lower my taxes a *little* bit.” He didn’t say “I want the king in my business some of the time, but the rest of the time, leave me

¹⁴⁷ Southern Poverty Law Center, Intelligence Report, Spring 2010, Issue Number: 137, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2010/spring/rage-on-the-right>.

¹⁴⁸ Michel, Lou & Herbeck, Dan. American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh & the Oklahoma City Bombing. Pg. 108.

alone.” He said give me freedom or I am willing to fight to the death for it.¹⁴⁹

This particular formulation of individualism is meant to permeate through all aspects of life, meaning little to no government intervention in the lives of the American people. While this may indeed stand as one of the central principles of America’s “Founding Fathers,” to subscribe to its tenets wholesale is problematic in the sense that the nation’s present-day political-economic climate is substantially different than that of 1773. Therefore, a return to the Tea Party’s peculiar ideal of individualism and idea around rights will be used as a starting point for this chapter as it explores an understanding of how hypermasculinity ties to this idea of rugged individualism and how that bolsters extremism. The following sections will theoretically explore how the promotion of absolute individualism leads to extremism. I will then explore the political implications of the Tea Party’s perpetuation of hypermasculinity. The final section of the chapter will look at how the Tea Party’s use of gun culture in political signs ties to hypermasculinity.

Individualism & Masculinity

As discussed in Chapter One, Alexis De Tocqueville wrote extensively on the idea of American democracy and the balance between individualism and civic duty, it is a return to Tocqueville’s work, seen in new light, which will prove most informative for this chapter. Laura Janara’s *Democracy Growing Up* examines Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* and “reveals that Tocqueville’s democratic society is not homogeneous, but is structured by radical binary differentiation. *Male* citizens, caught up in associative self-governance and notions of the right, are detached from a world of *female* moral

¹⁴⁹ Brook, Y. *A Message to Republicans from the Ayn Rand Center for Individual Rights*. http://www.aynrand.org/site/DocServer/Message_to_Republicans_TeaParty_flyer.pdf?docID=2101. (Accessed 03/10/2011).

governance.”¹⁵⁰ In other words, Tocqueville’s formulation of democratic society is constructed in a gendered binary where the promotion and practice of politics is portrayed in a masculine form while the moral and nurturing aspects of democracy take a feminine form.

As noted in Chapter One, participation in the political process educated citizens about the functions of democracy and thus created a well-informed society. Janara labels this process of political participation and individualism as “manly” functions, and that the freedom and rights given to men come with the knowledge that they come with the price of that participation.¹⁵¹ Women on the other hand were seen as the nurturers of society, whom selflessly took care of the family and ensured equality and morality.¹⁵² It would take a balance of these two aspects, masculine participation and feminine nurturing, for American democracy to mature into fruition. Without the feminine aspects of democratic practice Tocqueville feared that “its maturation [would be] potentially stalled by individualism, aggressive majority tyranny, or passive submission to public opinion.”¹⁵³ This would primarily be caused by an over masculine state driven by the self-interested ego’s of men.

As time passed, this balance was primarily kept in check with the help of a number of social movements throughout the years, from the suffrage movement to modern day feminism. This is not to say that patriarchy and male domination have not existed or thrived, even to this day, in the state structure, but rather to state that gains of equality were primarily due to the “feminine” aspects which Janara describes through her

¹⁵⁰ Janara, Laura. *Democracy Growing Up: Authority, Autonomy, and Passion in Tocqueville’s Democracy in America*. Pg. 189.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 75-76.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* 44.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* 129.

interpretation of Tocqueville. As Janara points out, there has been a conservative backlash as of late which seeks to return to “family values,” and promote a more masculine hierarchy once again.¹⁵⁴

In Wendy Brown’s *States of Injury*, Brown repackages this idea of the “masculine state” by examining the works of Michel Foucault, specifically aspects of how power is used by the state. Brown states that while there has been a transformation of society, the state still allows for the systemic exploitation of women by men and that within “the more formally free setting, the deeper this vulnerability, the more that male social power is masked.”¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, Brown states, “empowerment is a formation that converges with a regime’s own legitimacy needs in masking the power of the regime.”¹⁵⁶ In other words, the transformation which has been seen throughout society wasn’t actually sustained by “feminine” ideals of democracy and equality, as Janara might suggest, but rather was used as a tool of the “masculine state” to quell the resistance and maintain power.

Chela Sandoval describes this masking of social power as a form of supremacy. In *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Sandoval states:

All socially constructed forms and essences are “placed in scales,” and the successful, middle-class, colonizing citizen-subject in its illusion of power becomes “the motionless beam.” The final computation of the rhetoric of supremacism freezes the world, for essentializing and weighing processes incapacitate difference and the unknown... so that after all is said and done, the dominant arrives at what is the same.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 45.

¹⁵⁵ Brown, Wendy. *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Pg. 20-21.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 23.

¹⁵⁷ Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Pg. 125-126.

Therefore, what can be seen is not a shift in power towards more “feminine” forms of democratic thought, but rather the dominant “masculine” society masking its power in order to maintain a hegemonic control over all aspects of society, from culture and legal precedence, to even what Foucault would characterize as one’s own control over the body and the mind.

Hypermasculinity & Extremism

As articulated earlier, Tocqueville theorized that individualism was a part of democratic practices, however it is necessary to be individualistic only so far as it doesn’t impede on the good of society.¹⁵⁸ On the subject Laura Janara writes:

... in “concentrating on the single object of making his fortune,” this man of “pride” is “deprived of the usual contacts with his fellow men” and has “learnt to make solitude a pleasure.”... Such extreme androcentric autonomy signals not Tocquevillian “manliness” as republican maturity, but an excessive or hypermasculinity. Rejecting the mutualism and public concern facilitated by female political liberty, this man seizes extreme personal self-governance... Tocqueville eschews individualism as an excessive harbinger of democratic unmanliness, his U.S. democracy, as young male subject in search of autonomy, is nevertheless enticed by the idea of masculine supraautonomy.¹⁵⁹

In other words, progress is hindered when the focus upon individualism becomes so great that the greater whole of society is forgotten, which Janara labels as hypermasculinity. Furthermore, the balance between the “masculine” and the “feminine,” which is the “hallmark of a healthy democracy,” is disrupted when individualism ardently

¹⁵⁸ Also as previously discussed Laura Janara labels this idea of individualism as a masculine feature of democratic practice.

¹⁵⁹ Janara, Laura. *Democracy Growing Up: Authority, Autonomy, and Passion in Tocqueville’s Democracy in America*. Pg. 131.

fought for.¹⁶⁰ Janara concludes that this idea of hypermasculinity perpetuates “implacable hatreds” and are “engendered between the classes.”¹⁶¹

In Wendy Brown’s analysis of the hypermasculinity within the state, Brown turns to Max Weber. In this analysis, Brown articulates how the state is founded upon violence and “war making,” and how this display of masculinity is seen within the “organized political institutions” which are set up as “men’s leagues,” but can also be found within the patriarchic family structure.¹⁶² The male authority, which derives from these groups “is rooted in a physical capacity to defend the household against the pillaging warrior leagues.”¹⁶³ Brown goes on to state, “politics between men are always already the politics of exchanging, violating, protecting, and regulating women.”¹⁶⁴ In this analysis the formation of militias and even the mass accumulation and/or obsession with weapons and gun culture can be seen as a promotion of this hypermasculine identity.

In Douglas Kellner’s work, *Guys and Guns Amok*, Kellner examines the construction of male identities within US culture. To do so, Kellner looks at four case studies: The Oklahoma City bombing, the Columbine shootings, the Unabomber, and the Virginia Tech massacre. Kellner states that these hypermasculine “acts of violence and terror are a way to guarantee instant celebrity...” and that, “they exhibit in common a crisis in masculinity, obsession with guns and weapon culture, and the creation of mediated identities through spectacles of terror that qualify as examples of homegrown domestic terrorism.”¹⁶⁵ One of the root causes Kellner identifies is centered on “white

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 132.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Brown, Wendy. *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Pg. 187.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 188.

¹⁶⁵ Kellner, Douglas. *Guys and Guns Amok: Domestic Terrorism and School Shootings from the Oklahoma City Bombing to the Virginia Tech Massacre*. Pg. 89-90.

male identity politics.”¹⁶⁶ Kellner states, “Until the 1960’s, white male identity appeared to be fairly secure and unreflectively given, with white males a relatively uncontested ruling group.”¹⁶⁷ It was a number of movements including but not limited to, the civil rights movement and the feminist’s movement, which began to challenge the supremacy of white males. Before the 60’s, white males were the breadwinners of the family who ruled over not only the household but also over all aspects of society: cultural, political, and economic.¹⁶⁸ In the 60’s came a number of social reforms to promote a more egalitarian society, policies which changed the culture and perpetuated diversity. Policies such as affirmative action injected women and minorities into jobs which previously would have gone to white males.

This shift in society caused a split amongst white males as many accepted and embraced the changes, others felt threatened by the shift in society. To compound the problems, in the 1970’s the US economy started on an inflationary downturn which caused many people to lose their jobs. Those who felt threatened took on a victim mentality, blaming the government and minorities for their plight.¹⁶⁹ As Kellner states, “This situation gave rise to a new strain of white male politics fueled by intense rage, resentment, paranoia, and apocalyptic visions, often exploding into violence and finding solidarity in militia movements, right-wing hate and extremist groups, Christian fundamentalism, survivalist sects, and talk radio and Internet subcultures.”¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, it is these groups that use the rhetoric of, “bringing things back to the way they once were,” and, “a return to family values,” which was discussed earlier in the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 90.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 92.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

chapter.¹⁷¹ Kellner believes that it is this white male identity politics that is at the heart of events such as the Oklahoma City Bombing.

Extremism & the Tea Party

As shown in the intro of this chapter, there are a number of parallels between the rhetoric that has been disseminated by the Tea Party and that of Timothy McVeigh and the American militia movements. It is not the point of this thesis to demonize Tea Party members nor is it to claim that they will follow in McVeigh's footsteps. However, it is important to show the commonalities that exist and allows for another situation that could cause extreme danger to a number of people. These parallels have been tracked by a number of nonprofit organizations including: The Institute for Research & Education on Human Rights (IREHR), People for the American Way (PFAW), and Media Matters for America.

In the fall of 2010 the IREHR did a comprehensive report on the links between different factions of the Tea Party and a number of hate groups around the US. Specifically this report examines six of the national Tea Party networks (FreedomWorks Tea Party, 1776 Tea Party, Tea Party Nation, Tea Party Patriots, ResistNet, and Tea Party Express), their founders, and their roots.¹⁷² Furthermore, the Tea Party movement has become a "multimillion dollar complex that includes for-profit corporations, non-party non-profit organizations, and political action committees."¹⁷³ Throughout the IREHR report, there are a number of ties to different militias and the promotion to join the ranks of those militias. Furthermore, there have been a number of militia groups who have

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 94. Also in Janara, Laura. *Democracy Growing Up: Authority, Autonomy, and Passion in Tocqueville's Democracy in America*. Pg. 45.

¹⁷² Burghart, Devin & Zeskind, Leonard. *Tea Party Nationalism: A Critical Examination of the Tea Party Movement and the Size, Scope, and Focus of Its National Factions*. Pg. 7.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 8.

taken on the Tea Party label and doctrine.¹⁷⁴ These militias, which have been perpetuated by the Tea Party, are a perfect example of what Max Weber calls the “pillaging warrior leagues,” that are obsessed with protection and guns, which is described earlier in this chapter.

In the joint report between the People for the American Way (PFAW), and Media Matters for America, they track the rhetoric used by Tea Party idol Glenn Beck and show the ties between that rhetoric and violence. The report shows the use of violent rhetoric/”radicalized propaganda,” targeted at the government, political organizations, and people who lean towards the political left, which perpetuates fear, anxiety, and paranoia. This violent rhetoric can be tied to a number of incidents including an assassination attempt on members of the Tides Foundation, the murder of three Pittsburg Police officers, death threats to Senator Patty Murray of Washington, and hate mail/calls sent to two members of the League of Women Voters of Illinois.¹⁷⁵ This violent rhetoric does two things: 1) In the current economic downturn, it causes the already desperate to become more desperate and bitter; 2) It can cause “loners to cross the line from anger to violence.”¹⁷⁶

Political Implications

There are two primary problematic political implications around gender/sexuality which the Tea Party perpetuates, besides the possible threat of a “lone wolf” attack which could seriously harm many people: 1) the continuation of male dominated political discourse

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 63.

¹⁷⁵ People for the American Way & Media Matters for America. Glenn Beck: Irresponsible And Indifferent To The Violent Consequences of His Dangerous Rhetoric. Pg. 6-7.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 7.

which enables hypermasculinity; 2) the maintenance of historical developments which have disenfranchised women economically.

In a number of speeches and actions by Sarah Palin, the darling of the Tea Party, Palin has repetitively used hypermasculine rhetoric. First and foremost, as mentioned in the intro of this thesis, is Palin's use of gun crosshairs and saying that conservatives must "re-load and take aim" on Democrats who supported the Obama healthcare plan. This type of violent imagery, as previously mentioned, could have potentially dangerous impacts.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, this imagery perpetuates

the protectionist gun culture that promotes hypermasculinity. Sarah Palin has frequently used her Alaska background, which includes a history of

hunting and gun imagery, to try and relate to conservative voters. The hunting and gun imagery which is used is most likely aimed at relating to male voters, showing that she is "tough enough" to be a political figure.

On October 18, 2010 Sarah Palin further perpetuated this idea of manliness in politics when she said, "Politicians, some of you who are in office today, need to man up



Figure 1: From http://www.bostonherald.com/news/us_politics/view/20110109tucson_rampage_casts_light_on_toxic_political_tone/

Formerly on Sarah Palin's Facebook Page

¹⁷⁷ Jonsson, Patrik. Sarah Palin's gun-imagery takes aim at political targets. 03/27/2010. *Christian Science Monitor*. <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2010/0327/Sarah-Palin-s-gun-imagery-takes-aim-at-political-targets>. (Accessed 12/11/10).

and spend some political capital supporting these Tea Party candidates.”¹⁷⁸ This phrase of “man up,” became a shibboleth for a number of female Tea Party candidates, directed towards their male opponents, challenging them to answer the calls of the Tea Party constituents and legislate the way in which they saw fit. The idea of “man up” has a number of different connotations connected with the ways in which the Tea Party has used it. First and foremost is the direct attack to their opponents masculinity, it is basically saying that if they do not act accordingly, then they are not “man enough” to legislate and/or implies that they are a woman. The implication here is that women cannot legislate and that politics is a “man’s” game, thus furthering the idea and forcing women to enter politics on male terms. As discussed earlier, the balance of democracy is based upon both masculine individualism and feminine equality. This push of masculine individualism, specifically by women in the Tea Party movement, is detrimental to the promotion of equality for women in general.

The second problematic political implication around gender/sexuality, which the Tea Party perpetuates, is the maintenance of historical developments that have disenfranchised women economically. In other words, the maintenance of a highly patriarchic system has created a disadvantage for women in a society dependent upon the capitalist system. With the Tea Party calling for smaller government, many of these women would be put into an even worse situation. Wendy Brown highlights some of these statistics where she states:

The dramatic increase in impoverished, woman-supported households over the last two decades—raises a related set of issues about dependence and autonomy, domination and freedom. The

¹⁷⁸ Damon, Anjeanette. 10/19/2010. *Sarah Palin delivers message to Republicans: ‘Man up’*. Las Vegas Sun. <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2010/oct/19/palin-delivers-message-gop-man/>. (Accessed 12/12/10).

statistics are familiar: today, approximately one-fifth of all women are poor and two out of three poor adults are women; women literally replaced men on state poverty rolls over the past twenty years. The poverty rate for children under six is approximately 25 percent—and is closer to 50 percent for African American and Hispanic children. Nearly one-fifth of U.S. families are officially “headed by women,” but this fifth accounts for half of all poor families and harbors almost one-third of all children between three and thirteen. Approximately half of the poor “female-headed” households are on welfare; over 10 percent of all U.S. families thus fit the profile of being headed by women, impoverished, and directly dependent on the state for survival.¹⁷⁹

Therefore, it is easy to see that an elimination of many of these governmental programs would have detrimental effects upon society, which would have the largest impact upon women and children. While the primary cause for women being dependent upon the state is already rooted in the patriarchy of the system, to make an erratic shift in policy which would deprive many of these women of the forms of support which they depend upon to survive would be a dangerous proposal, especially in an already declining economy.

The next section will look at how this hypermasculinity is portrayed by members of the Tea Party through an analysis of Tea Party members political signs used at Tea Party rallies. This can be seen primarily through the Tea Parties constant promotion of gun culture. In this promotion of gun culture, a number of different messages can be seen, from a display of violent imagery to the threat of violence.

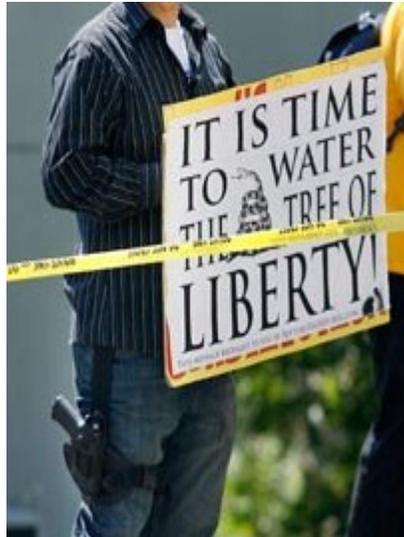
¹⁷⁹ Brown, Wendy. *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Pg. 171.

Tea Party Signs and Hypermasculinity

The first set of pictures that will be examined, and can be seen below, contains the actual display of violent imagery through the use of props. In each picture, the protestor, portraying the ability to cause harm, is displaying an actual firearm.¹⁸⁰ The third picture is particularly interesting in that not only is the weapon an assault rifle made for armed



Sign 44: <http://stbsmartpeople.blogspot.com/2010/06/gun-rights-gun-riots.html>



Sign 45: <http://www.thepeoplesvoice.org/TPV3/Voices.php/2010/03/23/the-far-right-fringe-armed-bigoted-and-d>



Sign 46: <http://thedcuniverse.blogspot.com/2010/04/rednecks-guns-and-stickers.html>

combat, but the slogan boldly

written across it states, "Liberty or Death." This idea portrays that the messenger is willing to sacrifice his life for that which he believes in.

Sign #45, of a man with a sidearm, is similar in that his sign is encouraging viewers to take action and perpetuate violence. The sign reads, "It is time to water the tree of liberty," which refers to the famous Thomas Jefferson quote that states, "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants."

¹⁸⁰ While some of these weapons may be fake firearms, the implication of that threat is what is important. The fact that somebody would think it is important to bring a weapon to such a political event is the point.

This idea does two things, first it perpetuates the “us/them” dichotomy, where the “us” becomes patriots, and the “them” become tyrants. Secondly, it tells the viewer that they should be willing to sacrifice their lives and take the lives of those who do not agree with them, in order to promote their ideals.

Sign #47 also uses violent imagery. In this sign a male caricature can be seen shooting a gun into a baby carriage. Within the head of the caricature is the symbol that the Obama campaign used for the 2008 Presidential election cycle. This sign is meant to portray the idea that the Obama administration is “looting” the healthcare system. However, what can be extrapolated from the drawing within the sign is the idea that the Obama administration is a deadly treat to children, and creates an imagery of danger if

the US stays on
reforming the



its current path of
healthcare system.

Sign 47: <http://swerrv.wordpress.com/category/wtf/>



Sign 48: <http://mockingwords.blogspot.com/2009/04/protest-sign-violations.html>



Sign 49: <http://www.therainbowcollective.com/?p=2168>



Sign 50: <http://insiderlouisville.com/news/2011/01/10/will-kentucky-be-the-next-arizona-observations-of-a-heavily-armed-liberal-in-louisville/>

The signs seen above and to the right portray a threat of violence with firearms. Sign #48 tells the viewer that guns will be brought “tomorrow,” or to the next rally, and could be seen as promoting others to bring their guns as well. Similarly, signs #49 & #50 state that they will bring firearms to future rallies if they are pleased with the future political actions of legislators, by stating “yet” or “this time.”



Sign 51: <http://hisvorp.wordpress.com/2011/01/10/wounding-healing-heeling-and-heiling/>



Sign 52: <http://www.thinkprogress.org/2010/03/20/code-red-gun/>

Sign #51, refers to items in the healthcare bill which were called triggers. This sign plays off that term to by using firearm imagery along with mentioning the second amendment in order to infer that they will or can promote violence if the healthcare bill is passed. Sign #52 sends a similar message as the signs read, “Warning: If Brown can’t stop it A Browning can.” This sign is referring to Republican Senator Scott Brown of Massachusetts, who filled the vacant seat of Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy after his death. Brown was said to be the deciding vote that could stop the Obama healthcare

reform. This sign, used at a Tea Party rally in Washington D.C., states that if Brown can't stop it, gun violence will or can be used in order to stop the reform from happening. Also, there is more than one of the same sign that can possibly mean that there were many of these signs used to promote this violent hypermasculine message. Furthermore, in the last picture, in the background, many Gadsden flags can be seen in the crowd, which as discussed earlier in this chapter, have many ties to a number of different militia groups.

Sign #53 is a flag that has been used by a number of militias, and has been seen at a number of Tea Party rallies, to promote their Second Amendment right to bear arms. Threatening harm to whoever should attempt to disarm them of their weapons. Texans fighting the Mexican government who attempted to disarm the people of Texas first used the design.¹⁸¹



Sign 51:
<http://stbsmartpeople.blogspot.com/2010/06/gun-rights-gun-riots.html>

¹⁸¹ When visiting the website <http://www.comeandtakeit.com/txhist.html> a history of the flag can be found as well as many different perspectives as to why people feel that this flag is important. Throughout the perspectives there are many who use the website to warn others that the government is becoming a tyranny and that others should fear an impending doom. They tell of their patriotism and paint the government, the military, and the police as potential enemies whom wish to disarm the people of the USA and subjugate them. Thus perpetuating the fear rhetoric discussed earlier in this chapter.



Sign 54: <http://errortheory.blogspot.com/2009/07/dirt-baggers-at-san-jose-tea-party.html>



Sign 55: <http://www.snowflakesinhell.com/2009/04/18/tea-party-bucks-county-pennsylvania/>



Sign 56: <http://greenwichroundup.blogspot.com/2010/04/041510-2-year-out-of-town-boy-travels.html>

The final set of pictures, seen above, connects guns to their freedom. While the constitution secures citizens rights to bear arms, these signs insinuate that due to the election of Barak Obama, their rights are at risk of being lost. Furthermore, these signs perpetuate the hypermasculine gun culture that has become inherent in US society. Signs #54 & #55 carry the same message, showing that this slogan of, “I’ll keep my guns, freedom, and money. You can keep the change” is a common message that is being disseminated amongst the Tea Party members. Sign #56 carries a similar message; however it introduces a religious tone, which also ties into the patriarchic hypermasculine image, equating weapons, rights, and religion.

Conclusion

If, as Janara suggests, the symbolic masculine ideology of individualism and the feminine ideology of nurture and equality are tenants which balance a healthy democracy, then there must be forces which can tilt these balancing forces. On one side there is the matriarchal aristocracy, which can push the democracy too far towards the symbolic feminine, and on the other side is the hypermasculine egotistic individual, which can push democracy to far towards the symbolic masculine ideology. It is within this balance that a healthy democracy can be found; however, this ideology is complicated and compounded with a number of different factors that have occurred

throughout the course of history that Alexis De Tocqueville and the Founding Fathers never foresaw. First is the dominating economic structure that has been constructed in US society, specifically in the last 30 years, by neoliberal practices that was discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. This perpetuation of neoliberal ideals has made it so that “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” is all but impossible without some sort of government intervention. Secondly is the ways in which race and ethnicity have been constructed and how identity politics have played out within the US, which is focused on in Chapter Three. These factors combined have led to a crisis in white male identities, which can be one root source of groups such as the Tea Party. As highlighted in this chapter, this crisis of white male identity which promotes a hypermasculine ideology and unbalances the vitality of a healthy democracy, can be located within the Tea Party’s intense promotion of individualism and their staunch advocacy of gun culture and violent rhetoric. The final chapter of this thesis will examine the how these three factors of class, race, and gender/sexuality overlap within the Tea Party and are problematic for American democracy. To counter this trend, I propose that some sort of mandatory civic service is needed to balance out the individualism, which has been perpetuated, by neoliberalism, racism, and hypermasculinity. If this is achieved, perhaps as Tocqueville suggests, society will once again learn from and participate within society.

CONCLUSION

Chapter One discussed the foundations of democratic thought, the origins of the Tea Party, and the origins of the Tea Party's rhetoric. This historical background chapter set up a framework of understanding the ways in which the Tea Party's interaction with race, class, and gender/sexuality stimulate structural violence through a promotion of neoliberal ideology. The subsequent chapters highlight each section of identity, race, class, and gender/sexuality. *Chapter Two: Intersections of Class* is the cornerstone for this thesis, as it is through neoliberal ideology that the performance of racism and hypermasculinity are founded upon. It is through this class perspective by which the foundation of who is the "Self" and who is the "Other." *Chapter Three: Intersections of Race and Ethnicity* shows how that "Other" is projected and perpetuated through racism. *Chapter 4: Hypermasculinity* shows the impacts of individualism, a tenant of neoliberal ideology, and how that is perpetuated by the Tea Party's promotion of gun culture and violent rhetoric. It should be noted again that this thesis was not aimed at targeting individual Tea Party members, but rather aimed at examining the platform that allows for messages that carry this rhetoric. By providing space for classism, racism, and hypermasculinity, a dangerous environment is created which I argue is anti-democratic.

While a definite Tea Party identity remains elusive, the policies and rhetoric is motivated by an intersectional white, market driven, masculinity, which stems from

neoliberal ideology. Lisa Duggan's take on neoliberal ideology is informative when looking at the intersections of identity when she states:

...despite their overt rhetoric of separation between economic policy on the one hand, and political and cultural life on the other, neoliberal politicians and policy makers have never actually separated these domains in practice. In the real world, class and racial hierarchies, gender and sexual institutions, religious and ethnic boundaries are the channels through which money, political power, cultural resources, and social organizations flow.¹⁸²

The Tea Party can thus be seen as a tool for neoliberal institutions and politicians in order to maintain a hegemony that perpetuates an upward consolidation of wealth, while attacking the downward redistribution of wealth, which in turn is a form of structural violence that reduces the life chances of the non-wealthy, people of color, and women.

Limitations

The first limitation I see with this project is the antidotal nature of the project. A more quantitative approach, in which surveys of Tea Party members could be analyzed, would be beneficial to this work. Qualitative one-on-one interviews would also be beneficial in understanding individual opinions of Tea Party members, so that a clearer understanding of how members of the Tea Party are interpreting the rhetoric which is being promoted, not only at rallies but also by leaders of the Tea Party movement.

One aspect, which is briefly discussed throughout this thesis, is the concept of religion. Within the Tea Party message, religion is a reoccurring theme that I found throughout my research. This theme and its intersections with the Tea Party, race, class, and gender, would be beneficial to explore at a later time. With an overwhelming

¹⁸² Duggan, L. (2003). *The Twilight of Equality?*. Beacon Press: Boston. Pg. XIV.

majority of Tea Party members identifying as Christians, the impacts that Christian ideology may have on the rhetoric that is used by the Tea Party could be significant.

Another aspect, which has become intertwined with intersectionality theory, is sexual orientation. It would be instructive for future study to examine the ways in which this plays out in the Tea Party. While I have done no research on the sexual orientation demographics of the Tea Party, I am assuming that a majority of them identify as straight. Furthermore, with incidents like the verbal attack on Representative Barney Frank, it would be fruitful to see the ways in which this intersects with the rhetoric used by the Tea Party.¹⁸³

The final section, which follows, will examine how a rearticulation of citizenship can combat the ideology of neoliberalism that is at the heart of this argument. Another limitation, which is important to this normative move, would be a closer examination of the ways in which Tea Party members serve their community. While many may contribute to society, their staunch promotion of individualism is counter to the notion of community service.

Redefining Citizenship

As stated throughout Robert Putnam's research, highlighted in Chapter 1, civic engagement increases social capital, altruism, trust in others, political participation, and has many positive effects for individuals, communities, and society as a whole. One caveat that Putnam identifies is that participation must come on a volunteer basis. However, when looking at his generational analysis it can be seen that one of the highest points of civic participation came during and after World War II, when a military draft

¹⁸³ Hooper, M. 03/20/2010. *Rep. Frank wants GOP to distance itself from Tea Party protests after gay slurs*. <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/88059-frank-wants-gop-to-distance-itself-from-tea-party-protests-after-gay-slurs>. (Accessed 03/08/2011).

was in place.¹⁸⁴ There was little to no choice at this time of US history whether or not one would participate, yet volunteerism was at all time high. Perhaps this time in history had a model which can be emulated to reproduce the American spirit, which some will say was the era which made America the most productive country on the planet.

There are many models of mandatory service around the world from macro forms such as mandatory military service or conscription (which is utilized in a large number of countries around the world), to micro forms such as mandatory community service programs and service learning courses required for graduating high school. Countries such as Germany implement a wide range of programs that are geared towards civic participation.¹⁸⁵ First and foremost, Germany has implemented mandatory service learning classes which seek to boost civic participation. Secondly, Germany also implements a mandatory nine-month military service; however, those who consider themselves conscientious objectors have the option of doing an alternative form of civil service that can include work in hospitals, nursing homes, environmental organizations, etc. Germany also has the option to serving in a foreign aid/development agency (similar to the Peace Corps.) if they do not wish to join the military. Thirdly, Germany has a civic participation program for immigrants so that they can integrate into society more easily. The results of these programs can be found through the levels of political participation,

¹⁸⁴ Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, NY. Simon & Shuster. Pg.268.

¹⁸⁵

http://www.zivildienst.de/cln_007/lang_de/Navigation/DasBAZ/Chronik/Chronik_node.html_nnn=true. (05/06/2010)

where there is a much higher level of voter turnout that averages around 80%¹⁸⁶, compared to the 50% turnout of registered American voters.¹⁸⁷

To look at the micro level within the United States, there are at least twenty-three states and a large number school districts across the United States which have varied policies that requires either service learning courses or community service hours to graduate.¹⁸⁸ Susan Anderson's issue paper on the subject highlights the pros and cons of community service and service learning courses.¹⁸⁹ Many of the positive aspects of community service coincide with Putnam's work, including: social trust, rise in civic participation, acceptance of difference, civic attitudes, a rise in academic achievement, and much more. The cons included: an argument that it was a violation of the 1st and 14th amendments of the constitution, it is unbeneficial for those who do not wish to participate, and that it is costly.¹⁹⁰ As pointed out in Anderson's paper however, most of these arguments against mandatory service seem to be arguments centered on partisan politics rather than based in any factual or analytical studies.

On the meso-level, there are organizations such as AmeriCorps, which is a US Federal Program that "offers 75,000 opportunities for adults of all ages and backgrounds to serve through a network of partnerships with local and national nonprofit groups."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm?id=61 (05/06/2010)

¹⁸⁷ Further research could be done similar to Putnam's research in Germany to find correlatives between civic participation and social capital.

¹⁸⁸ Anderson, S. (1999). *Mandatory Community Service: Citizenship Education, or Involuntary Servitude? Issue Paper*. Education Commission of the States. Denver, CO. Report # SL-99-1. Pg. 6.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 8-10.

¹⁹⁰ Those against this claimed that it was against the 1st amendment due to the teaching of non-secular religious values which violated the separation between church and state. They also claim that it is in violation of the 14th due to the outlawing of slavery, which they claim mandatory community service and service learning classes constitute involuntary servitude; There are additional arguments against, to explore more see Susan Anderson's Issue paper: *Mandatory Community Service: Citizenship Education, or Involuntary Servitude?*

¹⁹¹ <http://www.americorps.gov/about/ac/index.asp> (05/06/2010).

AmeriCorps works on programs that range from education to disaster relief. Those who volunteer receive educational benefits based on the extent of their work. In a study by the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, it was found that there are many long term impacts which were beneficial for AmeriCorps volunteers, including: an increase in civic engagement, an increase in work skills, and an increase in teamwork and life skills.¹⁹² The expansion of AmeriCorps, could be one viable option for all citizens to participate in which could help build the values and ideals that have been lost in American culture.

Lastly, on a macro-level, a mandatory military service as earlier discussed or service in a foreign aid/development organization such as Peace Corps could be a beneficial option. This would not only build the values of civic participation but could also benefit the nation, society, and the world as a whole. With a larger military, there would not be as much “deployment burnout” for soldiers, which has been happening due to the two current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁹³ It would also allow for the US to participate in more “Peace Keeping” type missions, which it cannot currently accomplish due to the constraints based on the present size of the military. The Peace Corps could be another viable alternative of service which would not only provide participants with valuable skills and values in civic participation but also would allow conscientious objectors a viable option to military service.

¹⁹² Frumkin, P. Jastrzab, J. Vaaler, M. Greeney, A. Grimm, R. Cramer, K. Dietz, N. (2009) Inside National Service:

AmeriCorps' Impact on Participants. The Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management.

¹⁹³ I am in no way advocating a pro-war stance. As a military veteran who served in Iraq in 2004-2005, I am staunchly against war. However, with soldiers currently going on their 5th & 6th deployments, there has been a drastic increase in the negative effects that these multiple deployments have had, such as: PTSD, marital problems, suicide, etc. This would relieve some of that combat fatigue experienced by those deployed. Furthermore, it is my personal belief that the US would be less likely to consent to future wars so easily with a large proportion of the population effected by military status.

With the current programs that are already in place within the United States, there is already a framework to promote civic participation that could build social capital. If civic service were mandatory within the United States it could promote civic participation that could boost democratic values. If every citizen had to serve in order to qualify for and to receive public services, such as welfare, healthcare, education, and social security, it could raise the standards of living and create a more positive atmosphere for those who reside within the United States. Furthermore, if the US ideological norm shifted from “Self” vs. “Other” we could all reap the benefits of democracy. Some would see this as a further perpetuation of the deterioration of individual rights; however, there is no individual in this nation which is completely self-reliant, Americans depends upon one another to grow their food, purify their water, build their roads, etc. The government is a tool to organize those services and the people cannot fully benefit if they do not participate. If the United States can return to the ideals of civic participation it can truly be a one person one vote system, where every voice is heard, and every vote counts. There will still be winners and losers, but voters can rest assure that they participated and that it was their vote that counted rather than the money of a corporation. It is a necessity that the US finds this American spirit again and returns to a civic participatory ideology, because the alternative is not a desirable outcome.

*“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what
you can do for your country.”*

-John F. Kennedy

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