

TERROR, EDUCATION AND AMERICA: A CASE STUDY OF A LOCAL TEA PARTY
GROUP IN NORTH CAROLINA

by

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Abstract

Street and DiMaggio (2011) argue that the national Tea Party movement is an extension of the Republican Party in the United States, claiming that it's an "ugly, authoritarian, and fake-populist pseudo movement directed from above and early on by and for elite Republican and business interests" (p.9). On the other hand, Skocpol and Williams (2012) argue that "the Tea Party is neither a top-down creation nor a bottom-up explosion" (p.12). I argue that the North Carolina movement, at the local level, represents a group of grassroots activists who were first mobilized on December 2nd, 2005, according to the "Triangle Conservatives Unite!" website. Because of the South's history with race relations and Ku Klux Klan violence in North Carolina around the issue of public education, for the purposes of this study I want to pose the following questions: How is Tea Party "craziness" functional for the local 9/12 project group, "Triangle Conservatives Unite!"? How is symbolic racism used as a framing device by the Tea Party, as a social movement, around public education in North Carolina?

In order to capture Tea Party member and civil society attitudes toward the Wake County Board of Education decision to scrap the old, nationally-recognized socioeconomic diversity policy in favor of one that much resembled the 1960s neighborhood/community schools policy, I use a case study approach to look at how the Tea Party Social Movement deals with race, with regard to the Wake County School Board decision to go back to neighborhood/community schools. When analyzing popular news sources, I draw on Bonilla-Silva's (2014) theory of Color-Blind Racism. I also draw on Tilly's (1978) Resource Mobilization Theory to explain how the Tea Party Movement came to power in North Carolina, affecting the Wake County School Board Decision to go back to neighborhood schools.

Major findings suggest that sometime after 2005, the group began to adopt the goals and mission statement of the national 9/12 project group, led by conservative commentator Glenn Beck. I also find mixed support for Bonilla-Silva's (2014) theory of Color-Blind Racism as well as support for Tilly's (1978) Resource Mobilization Theory in my study.

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Dedication

For Thomas, “TH,” Harrington Morrison.

To the one who gave up his chance at a formal education to help his family during their time of great need. To the one who took heed to the call to serve his family, friends and the Lord in a way that was most pleasing. To the one who may be gone from this earth, but never ever forgotten. To the one whose warmth and compassion for others in need inspired me to pursue something greater than myself. To the one who taught me that fairness and honesty are virtues worth keeping. To the one who watched FOX news every afternoon while your grandchildren played superheroes, Nintendo, or basketball. To the one who taught me that in order to be “just fine” I must leave my comfort zone to seek out God’s plan for me. To the one whose legacy continues to breathe fresh air into my craft. To the one who would never ever forsake his family. To the one who will always be our “TH.”

This work is for you.

Your smile and endless love for all you knew will never be forgotten.

I love you granddaddy.

Love,

Your favorite oldest granddaughter, who took your words of wisdom to heart to make sure they never left my mind.

Preface

It was a cold, February morning in downtown Raleigh, North Carolina. It was a cold, February morning in downtown Raleigh, North Carolina. The streets were filled with vendors selling ethnic food, giving the general public a chance to embrace international culture. It was my kind of scene. However, I knew I could not stay here in my comfort zone. I crossed the corner at Fayetteville Street only to be met by what appeared to be an angry mob of white folks on one side, and an equally angry sea of racial minorities on the other. I looked over at the crowd of long-bearded militiamen who call themselves the “Moccasin Creek Minutemen,” looked back across the street at the union supporters lobbying for their rights and said to myself, “Kristin, what have you gotten yourself into this time?”

In what appeared to be a Civil Rights Movement re-enactment was a new reality. It was the type of reality that I had only heard stories about from my conservative background and from contemporary, university sociology professors. Thoughts raced through my mind constantly when approaching the protest; my heart pounded in fear, and, in an instant, rationality returned, enabling me to continue with what I had always wanted to do since I first learned of the infamous “Tea Party Movement” across America. I put on my best qualitative researcher face and worked my way through the crowd of angry, white conservatives, and set out to answer the question, “why do people who look just like those I grew up loving and respecting “buy into” these ideologies that keep some people so far on the bottom?” Certainly, I must have misinterpreted something growing up because I was always taught to reach out to those in need, and these people certainly were not. In this new reality, I confirmed what I had always feared; and in fact, I believe I have broken the surface in understanding my original thought-provoking question.

Chapter 1: History of North Carolina Politics

The Paradox of North Carolina Politics: At a Glance

North Carolina has been described as a “swing state,” vacillating between either Democratic or Republican rule throughout its history (Mayer, 2011). Although “North Carolina’s brand of racial segregation was a milder version than was found elsewhere in the South,” (Christenson, 2008, p. 40), there’s no doubt that “playing the race card” has always been a part of the political rhetoric in the state; education has, historically, been a huge political issue; and, the transition from the “radical right” to the “New Right” has been largely visible. All these factors have significantly influenced the state’s political landscape throughout the years.

According to Rob Christenson, author of *The Paradox of Tarheel Politics* and noteworthy political writer/commentator for the leading newspaper in Raleigh, North Carolina, *News and Observer*, the state “was the industrial giant of the South, leading the region in total value added by manufacturing,” as of 1930 (Christenson, 2008, p. 69). This business progressivism and the state’s increase in Republican Party membership after the Goldwater election, during the last third of the 20th century when the “democratic advantage over Republicans in voter registration shrank from a 4.5-to-1 ratio to a 1.5-to-1 ratio,” (Christenson, 2008, p. 227) illustrates one of the state’s most interesting facets.

On the one hand, North Carolina is home to the Research Triangle Park, comprised of many industries, including leading pharmaceutical companies and other research-based facilities, making it attractive to diversity. On the other “right” hand, there is a traditionalist vibe that emphasizes political regress on social issues, such as abortion, LGBT rights, and immigration. The complexity behind this paradox is important for understanding the enigma that is the Tea

Party in North Carolina. To do this, I feel that unraveling the state's complicated political history is necessary.

The McCarthy Era and the Rise of the John Birch Society

What has been described as one of the “most frightening periods in history,” by NC Tea party member, back in February of 2011, could be felt in North Carolina in 1948, when the state's first female candidate for governor, Mary Watkins Price, was accused of spying for the Soviet Union (Christenson, 2008, p. 130). The McCarthy “witch-hunts,” better known as the “Red Scare periods” in American history, forever changed the face of North Carolina politics, spawning a rise in the John Birch Society, founded in 1958 by a man named Robert Welch, which disguised segregationism in constitutional arguments (Judis, 1988). Adding to the party's radical factions, during the early 1960s, the leadership in the Right shifted in the South “to openly racist White Citizens Councils and a new generation of Populist and racist Southern Democrats” (Judis, 1988, p. 192).

During this time, William F. Buckley, Jr., prominent political figure of the Right and founder of the *National Review*, disliked what the John Birch Society stood for and attacked them in a series of articles published in the magazine, which helped create the dividing line between the “‘Crackpot Far Right’ and the ‘Responsible Right’,” and eventually trickled down South into North Carolina politics (Judis, 1988, p. 200). The ‘Responsible Right,’ also known as the ‘New Right’ dissociated itself from blatant racism and violence, focusing instead on anti-communism and, increasingly, the traditional morality issues of the Christian Right (Staggenborg, 2011).

Jim Crow Segregation

During the Jim Crow period in North Carolina political history, blacks were kept in a subordinate position through a variety of very blunt racist practices (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). At the economic level, blacks were restricted to menial jobs by the effort of planters corporations and unions. At the social level, the rules of the new racial order emerged slowly given that the war and the Reconstruction (1865-1877) shook the rules of racial engagement and challenged the place of blacks in society (Bonilla-Silva, p. 824). Politically, blacks were virtually disenfranchised in the South and were almost totally dependent on white politicians in the North (Bonilla-Silva, p. 824), while ideologically, during the Jim Crow period, things were explicitly racist.

Overall, “the apartheid that blacks experienced in the United States was predicated on keeping them in rural areas, mostly in the South, maintaining them as agricultural workers, and excluding them from the political process altogether” (Bonilla-Silva, p. 824). In fact, “for every dollar spent on a black child in North Carolina in 1915, three dollars and twenty-two cents was spent on a white child; but, during the period of segregation, North Carolina did better by its black students than any other Southern state” (Christenson, p. 45).

The mid 1920s, in North Carolina, saw a rise in fundamentalism. In fact, a major political effort in North Carolina was launched to ban the teaching of evolution in North Carolina schools (Christenson, p. 55). By the 1940s, North Carolina was spending sixty-five cents per black child for every dollar spent on a white child; and by 1950, eighty-five cents was spent per black child for every dollar spent on a white child” (Christenson, p. 155).

Neighborhood Schools & Integration



This picture was taken during the 1960s, and originally appeared in the *News and Observer* during this time. The *News and Observer* featured an article on integration, in 2009, which is where the above picture was taken from.

Source: News and Observer, 2009

Just before Helms won the election into the United States Senate for the first time, the 1971 *Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* Supreme Court decision ordered the mandatory busing of black students to suburban white schools, and suburban white students to the city to try to integrate student populations, generating a lot of controversy in the state. Helms, known for consistently vocalizing his political views during the period when he was editor of the *Tarheel Banker* magazine, argued that the “public school system would collapse if the courts forced white and black children to attend the same school,” comparing the effects of integration to the beginnings of Karl Marx’s communist and socialist revolution (Christenson, 2008, p. 266).

Modeled after the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school assignment, the Wake County school system and Raleigh City schools merged in 1976 out of concerns that the continued “white-flight” from its inner-city schools would negatively impact the county’s overall economy (Silberman, 2010). Just as the busing decision in Charlotte, North Carolina was met with riots and fierce violence in the 1970s, similar policies in Wake County’s school district, in North Carolina, have been met with the same anger and hatred, instead of resorting to physical violence, the “New” Right has achieved their goals through legislative power gained by creating a seemingly grassroots anti-authoritarian movement, full of “concerned citizens” who have recently formed an alliance with the Republican Party of North Carolina.

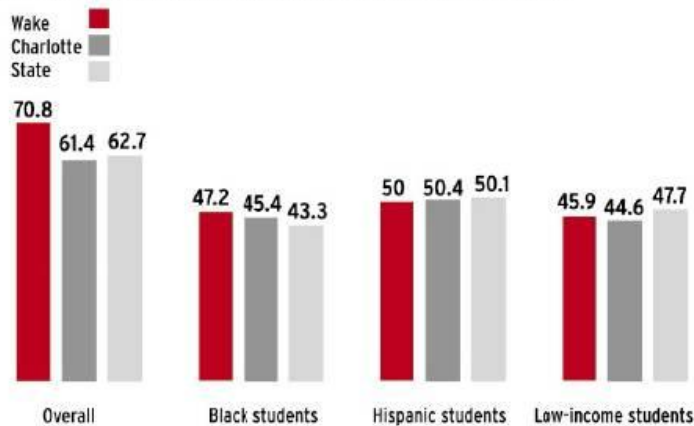
The Socioeconomic Diversity Policy in Wake County, NC vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC

According to an article in Raleigh, North Carolina’s local newspaper, the *News and Observer*, “Through the 1990s, both Wake and Charlotte-Mecklenburg based students’ assignments on race to keep schools integrated.” The article goes on to say that “Wake did it by choice; Charlotte was following a federal court order” (Hui, Staff Writer). During this time, Charlotte continued with a race-based assignment until a lawsuit by parents resulted in a 2001 court ruling ending the busing order. Rather than adopt Wake’s approach of using family income levels on applications for federally subsidized school lunches, with the goal of having a maximum ratio of 40% low-income students at any one school, in 2002, Charlotte began to let students attend schools close to where they live. The article goes on to note that “Wake disperses low-income students with busing; Charlotte gives high-poverty schools extra money” (Hui, Staff Writer). In an article in the *News and Observer* on February 8th, 2010, the graph below was displayed under the heading “Whose schools work better?” Consider the following:

NARROW GAP BETWEEN WAKE AND CHARLOTTE SCHOOLS

Even with the different approaches that Wake and Charlotte-Mecklenburg have taken toward school diversity, there's little difference in how minority and low-income students are doing in either school district.

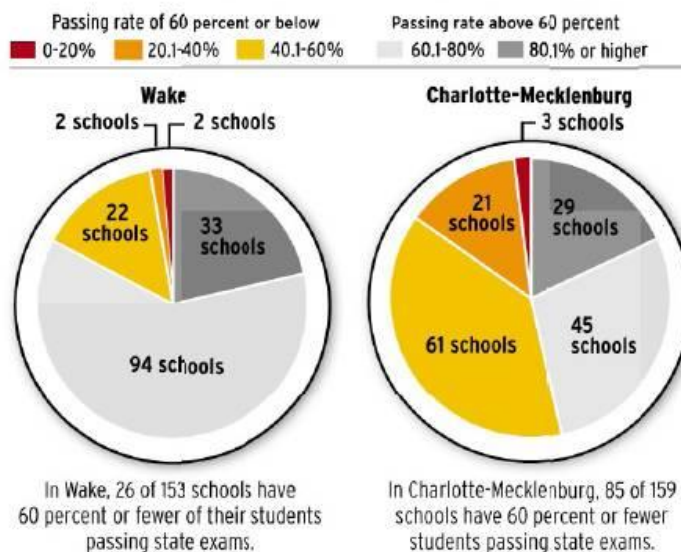
Percentage passing state math or reading end-of-grade exams



MORE LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS IN CHARLOTTE

Wake school leaders argue that their policy of balancing the percentage of low-income students at individual schools means Wake has far fewer lower-performing schools than other districts, such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg, which has halted its diversity policy and has more low-performing schools.

Number of schools and percentage of students passing state exams



Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction

The News & Observer

Source: News and Observer, February 8th, 2010

Controversy in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District

In May 2005, Wake County Superior Court Judge Howard Manning Jr. issued a ruling in which he accused the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School district (CMS) of "academic genocide" against at-risk, low-income students in low-scoring high schools. Since the new student assignment plan's introduction in 2002, and the end of its court-ordered busing program, CMS has seen an increase in concentrations of poverty, with schools that have student-poverty rates of at least 75 percent at twice the number they were before.

Wake County Public School District in Comparison

According to a November 20th, 2010 article in Raleigh, NC's *News and Observer* newspaper, "Wake's overall proficiency rates remain above Charlotte-Mecklenburg's because Wake schools have fewer poor and minority students. Last year, about one third of Wake students qualified for lunch subsidies, used to gauge school poverty; in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, just over half did" (N&O, Ann Doss Helms, Staff Writer). With the implementation of the socioeconomic diversity policy in Wake County's School district, in North Carolina, for the first time in the state's history minority populations had the opportunity to receive a better education, while many of the policy's opponents viewed it as a threat to their superior, white status.

Jesse Helms: A Lasting Figure in NC Politics

Race continues to be a touchy subject in North Carolina politics, with the Civil Rights movement playing a pivotal role in changing North Carolina into a two-party state. Today, "the state's black population is almost 22 percent, compared to 13 percent nationally." (Cooper & Knotts, *New Politics of NC*, p. 209). Josiah Bailey, once a North Carolina Senator, told the Senate, "the civilization in the South is going to be a white civilization; its government is going to be a white man's government" (Christenson, 2008, p. 204). Meanwhile, Helms as the voice of

the “New Right” in North Carolina used “alarmist rhetoric and [stressing] hot-button issues, warning conservatives that militant Blacks, homosexuals, labor bosses, and bra-running feminists were about to take over the country” (Christenson, 2008, p. 223). In fact, after the Helms’ era in politics, the Republican party factionalized into the “Helms wing” vs. the “Holshouser wing,” where social conservatives from the eastern part of the state and from the mill towns of the Piedmont formed the “Helms wing,” while the fiscal conservatives of the western foothills and mountains, along with the businesspeople from North Carolina’s cities and suburbs comprised the Holshouser wing (Christenson, 2008).

While Helms went on to serve a total of five terms in the United States Senate until his retirement and death in 2008, his legacy for always having a strong, often controversial opinion on both political and social issues remains embedded in the political rhetoric of the modern state. Famous for both endorsing and being endorsed by prominent Republican candidates, like Ronald Reagan, Jesse Helms set the tone in North Carolina during the 1980s, which was a major period when a network of foundations, think tanks, lobbies, and political action committees, expanded across the United States, including North Carolina, under President Reagan’s leadership (Judis, 1988; Blee, 2010; Staggenborg, 2011).

Magnet Schools, Charter Schools and Ditching the Socioeconomic Diversity Policy in the Wake County, NC Public School District

It is also no secret that the Civil Rights movement greatly changed Southern politics during the 50s and 60s, but it was the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision in Topeka, Kansas that served as a major contributing factor to the awakening of the “New Right” movement, stirring up sleeping conservative political action committees, think tanks, as well as the Klan. During this period, “North Carolina had one of the most active Klans in the country” (Christensen, 2008, p. 155), in spite of its rather moderate and conditional stance in politics.

After the Brown decision of 1954 and its rejection by most of the South, instability and protests spread all over the South, including North Carolina. The sit-in movement began at Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, according to most scholars. But above all else, education has remained one of the major issues that continues to breed political controversy in the state, given the recent Wake County, NC school board decision to go back to community schools, or "neighborhood schools".

Similar to the recent Wake County decision, in September of 1956, Thomas J. Pearsall, North Carolina's House speaker, was appointed to a committee that was assigned the question of racial integration in schools, and can be credited with creating "an escape valve" for white parents who did not want their children to attend public schools, (Christenson, 2008, p.162) by lobbying for a constitutional amendment that would allow local public schools to be closed by a majority vote, while the state would provide tuition grants to help parents send kids to private schools if the public schools had been closed (Christenson, 2008). This "White Flight" period in North Carolina history, when many whites moved their children from public to private schools, now known as Charter Schools, marks the beginning of the institutionalization of the "New" conservative movement that would eventually erupt under the guise of the "Tea Party" in North Carolina, in the future. According to Tea Party propaganda gathered at a public rally on April 15th, 2011, an article in the conservative magazine, *Civitas Review*, reveals that "In 1996, North Carolina passed legislation authorizing the state's first charter schools" (2011). The article goes on to add that "when the General Assembly passed charter school legislation, advocates were hoping the state would approve a large number of charters" (2011). According to many Tea Party conservatives, "Charter schools are some of the best schools in North Carolina. According

to recent data from NCDPI, charter school academic performance is on an upward trend”
(*Civitas Review*, 2011).

The Rise of the “New Christian Right” in North Carolina

Just as the Right in the South began to “wake up” in response to the civil unrest of the late 50s and 60s, during the rise of the feminist and gay rights movements (Staggenborg, 2011), North Carolina met who would later go on to become the face and the voice of the “New” conservative movement, who would focus more on social, “wedge” issues in the state. Famous for his race-baiting and pungent remarks used to attack his adversaries, Jesse Helms became the leader of a powerful political movement that would soon be dubbed the “New Right,” or “New Christian Right,” and has been described as having a network of conservative activists across the country at his command, while his political lieutenants at home controlled the nation’s largest political action committees (Christenson, 2008). The “National Congressional Club” was the most influential organization for Helms, and according to a National Congressional Club-backed candidate, Alex Castellanos, “the [New Right] movement started in Raleigh, NC with Jesse Helms (Christenson, 2008, p. 220).” Several people in Helms’ 1980s campaign were also members of the ‘Young Americans for Freedom,’ a college group that William F. Buckley, Jr. of the National Review created to foster activism on college campuses for the conservative cause (Christenson, 2008); and Richard Viguerie, credited as a major cofounder of the “New Right” at the National level was hired by the National Congressional Club in North Carolina to help raise money for Helms’ 1978 campaign (Christenson, 2008).

A Perfect Storm: Creating the Conditions for a “Tea Party” to Emerge within North Carolina

Helms died on July 4th, 2008. After his death, North Carolina saw a series of Democratic governors, but an increase in Republican party membership from 21 percent in 1968, to 32 percent in 1998 (Christenson, 2008). To understand the shift in political party identification, it's important to also note that “by 1980 Tar Heel wage earners had narrowed the [wage] gap to 80 percent of the national average, and by 2000, state wage earners were taking home 92 percent of the national average in pay” (Christenson, 2008, p.227). This economic boom in North Carolina during the 2000s and the increase in Republican Party membership across the state were the first steps in creating a mass of like-minded individuals who would respond to the “Tea Party” call after the events of September 11th, 2001. The economic downturn in North Carolina during the war, and after the 2008 recession, combined with the migration of Blacks and other minority groups into North Carolina's suburbs during this time are all necessary factors for the Tea Party's emergence in NC. Both Schaeffer and Weyher (2011) emphasize that “restrictionist movements [like the Tea Party] have used migration or flight as part of their political repertoire” (p. 19). In fact, in May of 2010, an article from CBS news on the “white flight reversal,” describes how “America's suburbs are now more likely to be home to minorities, the poor, and a rapidly growing older population, as many younger, educated whites move to cities for jobs and shorter commutes,” specifically citing North Carolina as a “front runner” for this change (CBS News, 2010).

Given the South's history with race relations and Jim Crow segregation, these economic and migratory changes, which allowed for an influx of Blacks and other minorities into traditionally white neighborhoods in recent years made many in North Carolina feel uneasy and

threatened. These events and initial feelings of uneasiness would begin to tap into the anger many Southern whites felt during the aspiring Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s.

Chapter 2 - The Rise of the Tea Party in NC

In recent years, the Tea Party movement has become a dynamic force, which has reunited average citizens from all walks of life to join its ranks. Structurally, the movement is a multi-million dollar complex that includes for-profit corporations, non-party non-profit organizations, and political action committees at national, state and local levels. Ideologically, it takes a unique approach to interpreting history. According to Jill Lepore (2009), Harvard historian and author of *The Whites of Their Eyes*, they don't seem to understand the very history they are trying to restore. In reality, slavery did not end with the Founding Fathers, as Tea Party-backed congresswoman Michelle Bachmann suggested, Francis Fox-Piven, accomplished political science professor and author of *Challenging Authority*, is not a direct descendant of Adolf Hitler, and, the idea of dressing as Founding Fathers during the American Revolutionary period and waving the Gadsden, "Don't Tread on Me!" flag did not originate with the modern Tea Party movement. So, what gives?

North Carolina, a southern state known for its history of racism and Ku Klux Klan violence serves as a home to those "fighting mad to restore our nation to what the founding fathers had intended," a Tea Party member shouted at a February 2011 public rally in Raleigh, North Carolina. In Wake County, North Carolina, these beliefs, along with many others, fuel a movement that has managed to re-segregate a nationally-recognized school district, once praised for its efforts to tackle the socioeconomic achievement gap. It began after the election of the nation's first Black President—Barack "Hussein" Obama, just one short month after he was sworn into office. In December of 2009, "41 percent of Americans said they viewed the

movement positively,” while 81 percent of Americans felt that President Obama was “not at all” like them (Perrin, Tepper, Caren & Morris, 2011, pps. 74-75).

The Tea Party movement also remains an enigma for many scholars across the disciplines, and it is important to fill the significant gap in the literature with more questions, specifically, those targeting the social characteristics of movement supporters. Many suggest that the movement is full of white racists who feel their privileged, white status has been threatened, after the 2008 election. Conflicting media reports also peg supporters as Fox News Channel watchers, which I have found to be true. I also believe the majority of individuals who join the ranks of those “fighting mad to restore the country back to what the forefathers had intended,” are predominately middle to upper class white adults who identify as Christian Fundamentalists.

What we do know about right-wing authoritarian movements, much like the Tea Party, is that during the 1960s, the conservative movement picked up steam, eventually “transforming into the New Right in the 1970s” (Staggenborg, 2011, p. 122). First organizing in the 1960s in opposition to the Civil Rights, Feminist, Gay Rights, as well as the Environmentalist movements, the New Right began its campaign when their political influence over the United States was quite dismal (Blee, 2010; Staggenborg, 2011). The New Right also consisted of “fragmented groups of free market enthusiasts, libertarians, anticommunists, and social conservatives” who mobilized under the campaign of “[returning] America to political, economic, and moral strength,” much like the rhetoric of the modern-day Tea Party (Blee, 2010, p. 272). During the 1980s, under President Reagan’s leadership, the movement picked up new members, fusing Religious Fundamentalism with the New Right, to become the “New Christian Right” (Blee, 2010; Staggenborg, 2011).

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security report, issued on April 7th, 2009, during the 1990s, social issues like gay marriage, abortion, and gun-ownership rights mobilized many domestic rightwing terrorist and extremist groups, prompting an increase in violent acts targeting the government, banks and the infrastructure of the state (p. 4). In the 2000s, more conservative elements of the movement proved to be alive and well, as over 750 Tax Day “Tea Parties” popped up around the nation, in cities across the country, to protest government spending (Staggenborg, 2011, p. 145). Some places, the Tea Party movement across America could be a fusion of the New Right and radical factions, including the Ku Klux Klan, nationalist/patriot groups, and the neo-Nazis (Blee, 2010).

Chapter 3 - Theoretical Approach

Resource Mobilization Theory & The Tea Party Movement

In order for sociologists to “know a social movement when they see it,” in the words of Professor Robert Schaeffer, they must have some knowledge about the way symbolic interactionism, social movements, race, class and gender work together. And, in order for someone to understand how these dynamics in broader civil society affect which repertoires of experience activists choose to pull from in any given context, they must take into account the 1-characteristics of the individuals organizing in the social movement context; 2-the collective identity of the social movement organization; and, 3-stratification and structural-level institutions that manufacture meaning in broader civil society (see Gramsci 1971).

Gordon Allport defines (psychological) social psychology as “an attempt to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others” (Allport, 1968). Adding a sociological point of view, we will further note that people’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors are shaped by their social

locations and that their interactions take place in larger patterns of interaction established by culture and social institutions.

As Allport (1968) reminds us, social psychologists also want to understand how individuals think, act, and feel. Of the three social psychological concepts, identity will be discussed in detail in what follows, while the other two aspects—cognition and emotions—will undoubtedly remain topics of future discussion.

Whether we are talking about individual or collective action (all of which is “joint action”; Blumer 1969), the processes operate somewhat generically. To say that processes, like identity, work in generic ways is to say “that they occur in multiple contexts wherein social actors face similar or analogous problems” (Schwalbe et al. 2000, p. 421). Proponents of identity theory, namely Sheldon Stryker, view the concept of self as being comprised of “multiple selves” that individuals organize hierarchically (Stryker 1968, 1980, Stryker and Serpe 1994). Arguing that the most salient identities are “transsituational,” Stryker says that identity salience is “a readiness to act out an identity as a consequence of the identity’s properties as a cognitive structure or schema” (Stryker and Serpe 1994, p. 17). These schemas help individuals process information and interpret their environments (1994, p. 18). Peter J. Burke echoes this view of identity as a sort of self-meaning or self-schema, emphasizing the cognitive-interpretive aspects of self (Vryan et al. 2003, p. 377). Fundamental to identity theory is the notion that actors’ behavioral choices are shaped by this salience hierarchy. Put another way, “identities are potential competitors” in the choices individuals make about how to behave (Stryker 2000, p. 21). Empirically, Stryker and Serpe (1994) show that one’s level of commitment to a particular identity influences its salience for the person, which in turn shapes their behavior choices.

Therefore, a social movement participant's level of commitment to the movement may shape her decision to act in congruence with that identity.

Stryker criticizes many scholars for failing to see that collective or movement-related identities also exist in context with other important identities a person holds; an individual's collective identities are factored into their salience hierarchy (2000, p. 25). He says that identities are often divided up, conceptually, to suggest that individuals have identities "inside" the movement, and those "outside" the movement. Stryker argues that this "obscures the important fact that life both inside and outside a movement is social and can be expected to reflect principles operative in the social more generally. Different segments of persons' lives and activities affect one another" (p.29). In other words, it does not make sense to discuss social movements as if they are some other life-world or distinct reality. They are a part of actors' lives and therefore the identities individuals have staked on movement participation interact with all other identities they have. Stryker's theory maintains that identity salience is transsituational, meaning that the most salient identities will always be an important part of who an individual is and what behavioral choices they make regardless of varying contexts.

Snow and McAdam (2000) are interested in the processes through which personal identities and collective identities correspond with each other, "such that a movement's identity comes to function among individuals associated with the movement as a significant point of orientation and as motivational springboard to action" (p. 47). They identify two main identity work processes: identity convergence and identity construction. Identity convergence, as they see it, is when identity work avoids any cognitive dissonance (see Festinger 1957), where the collective identity of the group aligns with the individual's personal identity (pps. 47-48). On the other hand, identity construction can be understood in light of its complex process; more

specifically, this concept highlights the work that is done to align personal identities with those of the group (Snow and McAdam 2000, p. 49).

There are four sub-processes of identity construction, each of which serves its own purpose and has its own outcome. First, identity amplification refers to a change in one's identity salience hierarchy, usually involving a shifting of identities that place the movement-related identity higher. Here, the distinction between personal identity and collective identity may begin to blur, depending on how high the movement identity is on the hierarchy (2000, p. 50).

Identity consolidation refers to the adoption of a "combination" identity that otherwise seems incompatible (Snow and McAdam 2000, p. 50). The example they gave is the surge in religious psychotherapy, which has historically been incongruent, given psychotherapy's scientific and relatively godless approach to healing. A useful example of this is Wolkomir's (2001) study of two Christian support groups – one for gays and one for ex-gays – that aimed to help the members reconcile these two contradictory identities. This was done by either reinterpreting the scriptures (for gays) in order to allow the gay and Christian identities to consolidate, or by trying to absolve the sin of homosexual behavior (for ex-gays).

Identity extension involves the expansion of situational relevance, thus increasing salience (see Stryker and Serpe 1994) of one's personal identity so its reach is congruent with the movement's; the two identities – personal and collective – become indistinguishable (Snow and McAdam 2000, pps. 50-51). A clear example of identity extension is the adoption of the idea that the "personal is political". Here, individuals aim to align their personal and collective identity displays. Klatch's (2004) study of former members of Students for Democratic Society demonstrates this well: "Politics became a way of life as they breathed, ate, slept, and dreamed their beliefs" (p. 494).

Lastly, identity transformation is a process which refers to a dramatic shift in self-conception in which the continuity of previous identities is “deeply fractured” (Snow & McAdam, 2000, p. 52). When an individual is transformed through such a process, they often experience and craft a “biographical reconstruction”, in which the stories of their lives become congruent with or contingent upon their transformed identity (see Schrock 1996).

In order to be of much service to SMOs, members’ personal identities must dovetail with a movement’s collective identity (Snow & McAdam, 2000). It is important to examine the relationship between individuals’ personal and collective identity work. But it is also important to examine the identity work engaged in by social movement leaders and staunch adherents that aims to construct the participants’ identities in congruence with the movement’s goals and agendas. This can be done by examining written materials and SMO-sponsored accounts which Hunt and Benford (1994) argue “fosters morale, esprit de corps, and solidarity” (p. 496; see Blumer 1939; Fantasia 1988). Hunt and Benford (1994) suggest that the attention to the link between personal and collective identities has been subtle. In order to understand it more clearly, they examine activists’ talk to understand how identities are constructed and aligned by individuals and the group in SMOs (1994, p. 489). This is important because, as they say, “Movement identities are (re)produced and transformed via talk” (Hunt and Benford 1994, p. 511).

In Hunt and Benford’s (1994) study of peace activists, identity talk served four important purposes for the activists: (1) it “concretized perceptions of social movement drama, complete with imputed identities for villains, victims, antagonists, and allies;” (2) it demonstrated individuals’ personal identities and their biographies; (3) “it imputed collective identities to the peace movement as a whole and to specific SMOs” which often demonstrated alignment with

personal identities; and (4) it aids micromobilization tasks such as recruitment (p. 493). In a similar vein, Reger (2002) shows that SMOs must construct identities for their members in order to reach movement goals. She argues that factionalism within SMOs, does not necessarily result in the group's demise as Klatch (2004, 2002, 1999) has argued. However, the SMO must accommodate the growing diversity in ideologies and identities. If they do, the movement can be sustained. The New York City chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW), Reger argues, strategically constructed accommodations for a portion of the group that was beginning to factionalize.

Although the dominant identity with NYC NOW was a "liberal feminist" one with an emphasis on legislative and policy change (what Reger calls "political feminists"), "empowerment feminists" believed that consciousness raising was also important. Both groups wanted to see society change in ways that not only liberated women, but also gave women equal rights. These factions were not antithetical, and movement organizers played on the benefits factionalism can bring. In fact, supporting two different feminist identities, NYC NOW "offer[s] potential recruits different definitions of feminism, [thus] casting a 'wider net' for continued mobilization" (p. 183).

The concepts ideology and framing have been used to mean roughly the same thing – the ideas and interpretive schemas of a movement and its members. Derived from Erving Goffman's (1974) Frame Analysis, this approach involves studying the set of meanings groups (e.g. social movements) give to situations (Goffman 1974). In other words, frames are complex sets of definitions of situations. Frame analysis is the principle cognitive theory used by social movement scholars; though it is clear that the majority of this work is theoretical, not empirical

(van Stekelenberg and Klandermans 2007). Johnston (1995), however, maps out a methodological agenda for improving empirical work in this area.

Framing is a process of constructing “shared understandings that justify, dignify, and motivate collective action” (Salman & Assies 2007, pps. 227-228). Put another way, the link between grievance and action is interpretation (Cadena-Roa 2005). Forming what Zerubavel (1997) calls “thought communities” – members think in similar ways about the problems, solutions, and rationales for action (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988, 1992; Noakes & Johnston 2005). The formation of thought communities is a dynamic process in which participants construct meaning through interaction (Snow & Benford 1988).

Frames are cognitive schemas shared by people in a social movement organization (Snow et al. 1986; Snow & Benford 1988, 1992; Noakes & Johnston 2005). Frames are used to interpret problems, formulate solutions, and justify action (Benford & Snow, 2000; Caniglia & Carmin, 2005; Johnston & Noakes, 2005). Like picture frames that work to emphasize the photograph while distracting the viewer from the wall on which it is hung, cognitive frames help individuals focus on what is important in the situation. Frames are not only cognitive, but often have emotional dimensions (e.g. Cadena-Roa, 2005) and are used strategically by social movement organizations, often through media outlets (Gamson, 1995; Westby, 2005). In short, frames are constructed to shape how people think about a problem and/or solution.

Frames that are explicitly linked to action are what Gamson (1992) calls collective action frames. The process of constructing and applying frames includes negotiation between movement leaders and participants. Frames are not, as some have suggested, static models for interpretation that movement leaders simply provide to participants (see Benford & Snow 2000; Snow & Benford 2000; Oliver & Johnston 2000). Frames are regularly challenged and revised.

In order to be effective, social movement organizations must engage in frame alignment. This process involves connecting the goals and ideas (frames) of the SMO to some target audience or audience including potential participants, the media, the government, the general public, or counter-movements (Snow et al. 1986).

Describing how frames are actively produced, Snow & Benford (1988) offer three core framing tasks used by social movements: diagnostic frames (defining the problem and attributing blame); prognostic frames (suggesting solutions); and motivational frames (“rationale for action”). Each of these framing processes occurs through interaction and requires an interactive relationship to mobilize appropriate action (Snow & Benford 1988). If a group only diagnoses problems without suggesting solutions or calls for action, nothing will get done to address the problem. Obviously, it would be quite difficult to act on solving a problem that has yet to be clearly defined. There are cases, however, where the diagnostic framing and the motivational framing do not match well. McVeigh et al. (2004), for example, show that the 1920’s Indiana Ku Klux Klan initially formed in response to economic problems, which ultimately spurred recruitment of new members. Their hateful views on Blacks, Catholics, and immigrants, however, created an exclusionary boundary that led every presidential candidate to condemn them, except for Calvin Coolidge, whose economic agenda was incongruent with their needs. The Klan endorsed him anyway, making their diagnostic framing of the economic problems inconsistent with their prognostic framing, or solutions.

There has been some dispute over the cognitive or interpretive dimensions of social movements. Scholars such as Eyerman and Jamison (1991), Johnston (1995), and Mansbridge (2001), emphasize the importance of cognitive processing that guides interpretations made by social movement participants. Other scholars, such as Benford & Snow (1992, 2000), Snow et al.

(1986), and Noakes & Johnston (2005) among others, discuss the interpretive process framing with little or no attention to its place in cognition. To be sure, they acknowledge that framing has to do with interpretation and thinking, but do not spend time unpacking theory or literature on social cognition (Fiske & Taylor, 1984) or cognitive sociology (Zerubavel 1997). Eyerman and Jamison largely criticize the existing scholarship on social movements and do this to promote a theoretical and empirical agenda of their own – one that emphasizes the cognitive dimensions of social movements, arguing that this dimension has been marginalized in the field (2001, p. 45).

Although the concepts frame and ideology are in similar ways, they are distinct terms. In an almost hostile written debate over the relationship between framing and ideology, Snow and Benford (2000) respond to the accusation that they conflate the concepts “frames” and “ideology” and thereby gloss over the political significance of “ideology” as an analytic concept (Oliver & Johnston 2000). Admitting that ideology and frames have been used interchangeably at times, they scold Oliver and Johnston for situating their critique around the noun “frame” – not the verb “framing”; doing this denies the significance of interaction in this process, they argue. They insist that they want to “bring some dynamism to a rather static conceptualization of ideology” (Snow & Benford, 2000, p. 56).

Resource Mobilization Theory & The Tea Party Movement: In Summary

Resource mobilization theory argues that “socially-connected people, rather than social isolates, are most likely to be mobilized for collective action” (Staggenborg 2011, p.17). Moreover, it argues that “movements emerge in response to increases in the resources needed to sustain collective action and the availability of organizations to coordinate the effort” (Cress & Snow, p. 137; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1988; McCarthy & Zald 1977; Oberschall 1973; Tilly, 1978). In contrast to resource mobilization theory, whereby SMOs gather material and

symbolic resources to put into action, emotional mobilization “refers to the process through which feelings are suppressed, evoked, and used in multiple contexts so as to foster and/or support activism” (Schrock et al. 2004, p. 62). Emotional resonance may reflect the emotional promises offered by social movement participation. Schrock et al. use Wolkomir’s (2001) analysis of gay and ex-gay Christian support groups as an exemplar, noting that individual’s emotional desires “can overpower cognitive incongruity” between their beliefs and the movement’s frames. Although each group framed participants’ homosexuality differently, both support groups promised emotional relief from the tension between Christian identities and gay behavior and/or gay identity.

SMOs offer three emotional benefits: (1) solidarity and authenticity; (2) self-esteem and self-efficacy; and (3) the transformation of fear into righteous anger (Schrock et al. 2004). These emotional benefits allow participants to have a place where they share a sense of purpose, feel good about themselves, and engage in activism. Their analysis “uncovers the importance of emotions in constructing frame resonance” (Schrock et al. p.76). In other words, as others have noted (Jasper 1998; Goodwin et al. 2001), there must be more than cognitive agreement to motivate someone to participate in collective action; there must also be the emotional drive and/or fulfillment in it (Schrock et al. 2004).

Color-Blind Racism & The Tea Party Movement

The creation of a citizen/non-citizen dichotomy in the United States has been influenced by the construction of racial groups (Chavez, 2008). Racial categories are time and place specific (Omi & Winant, 1987). Symbolic racism is a coherent belief system that reflects an underlying unidimensional prejudice towards blacks in the United States. These beliefs include the stereotype that blacks are morally inferior to whites, and that they violate

traditional white American values such as hard-work and independence. These beliefs may cause the subject to discriminate against blacks and to justify this discrimination as a concern for justice. Some prejudiced people do not view symbolic racism as prejudice since it is not linked directly to race but indirectly through social and political issues.

Sears and Henry characterize symbolic racism as the expression or endorsement of four specific themes or beliefs: blacks no longer face much prejudice or discrimination; the failure of blacks to progress results from their unwillingness to work hard enough; blacks are demanding too much too fast; and, blacks have gotten more than they deserve.

Symbolic racism is a form of modern racism, as it is more subtle and indirect than more overt forms of racism, such as those characterized in Jim Crow Laws. As symbolic racism develops through socialization and its processes occur without conscious awareness, an individual with symbolic racist beliefs may genuinely oppose racism and believe he/she is not racist. Symbolic racism is perhaps the most prevalent racial attitude today.

According to Bonilla-Silva (2014), most changes in whites' racial attitudes have been explained by the survey community and commentators in four, distinct ways: 1-racial optimists; 2-racial pesoptimists; 3-symbolic racists and 4-sense of group position (pps. 228-297). Racial optimists are a "group that agrees with whites' common sense on racial matters and believes the changes symbolize a profound transition in the United States (p. 228). On the other hand, racial "pesoptimists," in Bonilla-Silva's view, are "[attempts] to strike a "balanced" view and suggest that whites' racial attitudes reflect progress and resistance" (p. 250). A third paradigm Bonilla-Silva describes is the "symbolic racism" category, which, he argues, is "a blend of anti-black affect and the kind of traditional American moral values embodied in the Protestant Ethic" (p.

273). A final category Bonilla-Silva describes is the “sense of group position” frame, which he describes as “white prejudice [as it is] an ideology to defend white privilege (p. 297).

In Futrell and Simi’s 2004 study of White Power Activists, they found that “the WPM relies upon an infrastructure of free spaces to maintain activist networks and movement identity within a generally hostile context” (p. 37). Moreover, “in the WPM, indigenous-prefigurative spaces allow for the kind of network connections that help nurture strong interpersonal solidarity among small, local cadres of activists, thereby increasing participation in white power culture” (p. 37). Thus, “embedding these practices in otherwise innocuous activities (e.g., homeschooling, study groups, hikes, parties) reduces the distance between daily life and white power activism which, in turn, helps “normalize” these practices and the beliefs they articulate” (p. 38). Likewise, “transmovement prefigurative spaces create network connections that link otherwise disconnected local networks into broader webs of white power culture” (Futrell & Simi, p. 38).

Moreover, “because of socioeconomic changes that transpired in the 1950s and 1960s, a “laissez-faire” racism emerged that was fitting of the United States’ “modern, nationwide, postindustrial free labor economy and polity” (p. 297). More specifically, “laissez-faire racism encompasses an ideology that blames blacks themselves for their poorer relative economic standing, seeing it as a function of perceived cultural inferiority” (p. 297). According to Bonilla-Silva (2014), “color-blind racism emerged as a new racial ideology in the late 1960s, concomitantly with the crystallization of the “new racism” as America’s new racial structure (p. 492). Moreover, Bonilla-Silva regards “racism as a structure, that is, as a network of social relations at social, political, economic and ideological levels that shapes the life chances of the various races” (p. 751).

For this study, I draw on both Resource Mobilization Theory (1978) and that Bonilla-Silva's (2014) theory of "Color-Blind Racism" to address my proposed research questions.

Chapter 4 - Discussion of Research Question

The "Triangle Conservatives Unite!" Tea Party Group and the Evolution of the Concept of Equality of Educational Opportunity

In the 1800s, with the industrial revolution came "changes [which] occurred in both the family's function as a self-perpetuating economic unit and as a training ground" (Coleman, 1968, p.8). Moreover, "as economic organizations developed outside the household, children began to be occupationally mobile outside their families" (Coleman, 1968, p.9). As labor moved outside of the family unit, "their families became less useful as economic training grounds for their children" and it was these "changes that paved the way for public education" (Coleman, 1968, p.9). During this time, in the United States, "nearly from the beginning, the concept of educational opportunity had a special meaning which focused on equality" (Coleman, 1968, p. 11). This meaning included the following:

- (1) Providing a free education up to a given level which constituted the principal entry point to the labor force.
- (2) Providing a common curriculum for all children, regardless of background.
- (3) Partly by design and partly because of low population density, providing that children from diverse backgrounds attend the same school.
- (4) Providing equality within a given locality since local taxes provided the source of support for schools. (see Coleman, 1968, p. 11)

It was the idea during this time that there would be the same schools for students of diverse backgrounds but this was violated in the South with the "Separate but Equal Doctrine," which was a legal doctrine in United States constitutional law that justified systems of

segregation. Under this doctrine, services, facilities and public accommodations were allowed to be separated by race, on the condition that the quality of each group's public facilities was to remain equal. The phrase was derived from a Louisiana law of 1890, although the law actually used the phrase "equal but separate." Also, under the 1800s' idea of Equality of Educational Opportunity there would be equal funding for schools within a locality and schools were to be publicly funded. There was a problem with this notion of a "locality" as it was not adequately defined by the doctrine, which made it highly interpretable.

In the early 1900's the same basic principles that were in place in the 1800's remained, for the most part: "The first stage in the evolution of the concept of equality of educational opportunity was the notion that all children must be exposed to the same curriculum in the same school. A second stage in the evolution of the concept assumed that different children would have different occupational futures and that equality of opportunity required providing different curricula for each type of student. The third and fourth stages in this evolution came as a result of challenges to the basic idea of equality of educational opportunity from opposing directions." (Coleman, 1968, p. 14).

However, during the early 1900's people began understanding that not all students would go to college, and that a college curriculum was not preparing students for their occupational futures. As a result, the curriculum was diversified and differentiated in an attempt to provide equal educational opportunity for children not going to college. Coleman (1968) says the curriculum didn't change enough—so the actual result was a "watered-down college prep curriculum for some students" (p.13).

In 1954, the Brown versus Topeka Board of Education Ruling called segregated schools "unconstitutional" because they are inherently unequal and have inferior resources. This

decision added the effects of schooling to the concept. In other words, this raised attention to whether schooling was undoing, and not simply reproducing the existing social hierarchy. A key factor was the unequal effect of racial segregation, which produced feelings of inferiority among African-Americans. However, the Supreme Court decision did not mandate equivalent effects of schooling. Instead, it mandated racial integration. The broader issue of effects from which this goal was derived was left on the backburner.

From the 1960s to the present, the government survey on the topic of Equality of Educational Opportunity said that there should be equal funding for schools in a given locality. However, what constitutes a locality is still not adequately defined. Because what constitutes a locality is not adequately defined, there are disparities in school funding. Local taxes are based on property wealth, which determines how well a school will be funded. According to the current concept of educational opportunity there are to be equivalent facilities and curricula, different schools are to have the same quality and quantity of physical facilities, textbooks, supplies and lessons.

However, as Kozol (1991) notes, there are still schools that have low resources, outdated textbooks, no ovens for cooking food, no locker rooms, and too many children in too many classes. According to the concept of Equality of Educational Opportunity, there should also be an equivalent general morale among students, faculty and staff, meaning that schools should not vary markedly in terms of general levels of stress, depression, conflict, or in teachers' enthusiasm, energy or quality. However, as Kozol (1991) reminds us, there are kids in some schools who feel they are being short-handed; for example, sometimes a school district will choose a new football stadium over the necessary resources to learn.

A fourth mandate of the concept of Equality of Education Opportunity posits that schools should not primarily teach one race or another. A fifth states that schools should not be primarily one class or another. And finally, a sixth mandate states that schools should assist in undoing some of the effects of the stratification system, meaning that a school should not reproduce the existing social hierarchy.

Color-Blind Racism in Public Schools

According to Bonilla-Silva (2014), “the history of black-white education in this country is one of substantive inequities maintained through public institutions, and, as a consequence of resegregation, during the decade of the 1990s, “U.S. schools were more segregated in the 2000-2001 year than in 1970” (p. 956). Moreover, “although scholars have documented the narrowing of the gap in the quantity of education attained by blacks and whites, little has been said about the persisting gap in the quality of education received” (p. 956). According to the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, a trend beginning in 1986 leaned toward the re-segregation of U.S. schools. As a consequence, most inner city minority schools, in sharp contrast to white suburban schools, lack decent buildings, are overcrowded, have outdated equipment—if they have equipment at all—do not have enough textbooks for their students, lack library resources, and new technology, and pay their teaching and administrative staff less, which produces, despite exceptions, a low level of morale (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 977).

The Klan and Public Education

According to McVeigh (2009), “Klan leaders took pains to present their movement as one composed of individuals who were well educated and highly regarded in their communities, and they often ridiculed their enemies for their lack of educational credentials” (p. 115). But more importantly, “movement leaders frequently identified public education as the most pressing

issue requiring the Klan's attention" (p. 115). Often enough, McVeigh found that "the Klan's rhetoric creates the image of an educational system in crisis; [in fact], movement leaders frequently commented on high rates of illiteracy, poor attendance in schools, poorly funded schools, and underpaid teachers as problems in need of immediate attention" (pps. 115-116). In other words, to the Klan, "as long as a majority of Black Americans were confined to positions as sharecroppers, subsistence farmers, or laborers in rural locales, there were few opportunities to secure a quality education for their children" (p. 117).

Overall, "Klan leaders viewed secularism, as well as Catholicism, as a threat to the public schools" (McVeigh, p. 131). The Klan countered this argument by arguing that "Christian spirituality was a key ingredient in a superior educational experience" (McVeigh, p. 131). Even Kathleen Blee, in her study of the Klan, found that "racist groups can be dangerously disingenuous in the solutions they proclaim to white problems with African Americans; some insist publicly that they advocate only racial separation, not supremacism" (p. 81).

The Lily-White Schoolhouse

In the post-Brown period in the South, many state legislatures launched a virulent campaign against desegregation in public schools. Many states strived to "restrict desegregation in the Upper South" while they avoided the issue of integration in the Deep South, but regardless, public schools were put in the spotlight like never before (McMillen, p. 264). In fact, "in every state but one, the extent of allegiance could be measured by the statutes permitting or requiring the closure of public schools as a 'last resort'" (McMillen, p. 264). The fact of the matter was that many states enjoyed segregation, whites confined to their "lily-white schoolhouses" while Blacks occupied "others," and in order to protect the public schools as a

“sacred white space,” many states throughout the South devised what was known as “the pupil placement law” (p. 268).

Although this law would vary from state to state, “this device usually established elaborate criteria ‘other than race’ as the basis for assigning students to particular schools” (McMillen, p. 268). In fact, “in every southern state compulsory attendance laws were either amended or repealed, and so called ‘freedom of choice’ provisions were enacted in each to prevent children of one race from being ‘forced’ to attend schools with those of another” (McMillen, p. 268).

In every southern state except North Carolina and Texas, “resolutions of interposition were universally adopted on the specious theory that by interposing its ‘sovereignty’ between its citizens and the federal government, a state could nullify the effects of a federal [law] within its own boundaries” (McMillen, p. 268). As it turns out “every [southern] state but North Carolina adopted laws designed either to curb or hinder the activities of the [NAACP] organization, during this period in history” (McMillen, p. 268).

Because of the South’s history with race relations and Ku Klux Klan violence in North Carolina around the issue of public education, for the purposes of this study I want to pose the following questions: How is Tea Party “craziness,” in terms of conducting covert, secret, clandestine activities functional for the local 9/12 project group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!”? How is symbolic racism used as a framing device by the Tea Party, as a social movement, around public education in North Carolina?

Chapter 5 - Methodology

The Original Methodology for examining “Men and Women of the Tea Party Movement in North Carolina”

For my original project, I planned to interview twenty North Carolina Tea Party members using an informal approach. I also planned to observe the group at public rallies and small group meetings by utilizing a participant observation approach, which I was still able to do, to some extent. I have used my notes and “notes on notes” for a portion of the current study, focusing on the Tea Party Movement’s involvement with the Wake County School board decision to ditch the Socioeconomic Diversity Policy in favor of one that would go back to neighborhood schools. Overall, the objective of my original study was to better understand the adult, public experiences of both men and women in the Tea Party Movement in the Southeastern United States.

Overcoming Methodological Problems in the Field

My original plan was to investigate gender patterns in the modern-day Tea Party Movement in North Carolina. However, when I made contact with the organizer of the group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!,” I was denied access to the group because I had been deemed a “spy” and a “feminnazi.” Somehow the group found out that one of my cousins had run on the Democratic ticket during the 2013 North Carolina Senate Race. I tried to assure the organizer and group through many email exchanges that my research was separate from his campaign and I would uphold and maintain the ethics to which I had layed out for the organizer in my initial email, but it was to no avail. I now knew my place to them and unfortunately, had to reconfigure my entire research plan and research question as a result.

Discussion of “New” Methodological Approach

In order to capture Tea Party member and civil society attitudes toward the Wake County Board of Education’s decision to scrap the old, nationally-recognized socioeconomic diversity policy in favor of one that much resembled the 1960s neighborhood/community schools policy, I use a case study approach to look at how the Tea Party Social Movement deals with race, with regard to the Wake County School Board decision to go back to neighborhood/community schools. A case study is a descriptive, exploratory or explanatory analysis of a person, group or event. A critical case is defined as having strategic importance in relation to the general problem. A critical case allows the following type of generalization, ‘If it is valid for this case, it is valid for all (or many) cases.’ In its negative form, the generalization would be, ‘If it is not valid for this case, then it is not valid for any (or only few) cases.’

The case study is also effective for generalizing using the type of test that Karl Popper called falsification, which forms part of critical reflexivity. Falsification is one of the most rigorous tests to which a scientific proposition can be subjected: if just one observation does not fit with the proposition it is considered not valid generally and must therefore be either revised or rejected. Popper himself used the now famous example of, "All swans are white," and proposed that just one observation of a single black swan would falsify this proposition and in this way have general significance and stimulate further investigations and theory-building. The case study is well suited for identifying "black swans" because of its in-depth approach: what appears to be "white" often turns out on closer examination to be "black."

a) Data Collection Techniques

For my “new” method, I draw on contemporary archival data from three main sources. I analyze conservative news articles gathered from Tea Party rallies and events. I also analyze

approximately 65 News and Observer (N&O) newspaper clippings from the “Main” section, the “Editorial” section,” the “Triangle & State” section, as well as the “Triangle and Company” section during a three year period, March 1, 2009 through March 1, 2012. The News and Observer source is considered “moderate” but tends to lean Democratic. I also accompany my contemporary archival data with notes and “notes on notes” from a few informal conversations I was able to have with NC Tea Party members at public rallies. I also draw on materials gathered from these public rallies to make conclusions about the group and its involvement with the Wake County School Board decisions.

The History of the News and Observer (N&O) Paper

The News & Observer traces its roots to The Sentinel, which was founded in 1865. That paper was eventually absorbed by The Observer, which then merged with The News in 1880 to form The News & Observer. In 1894, Josephus Daniels bought The News & Observer at a property auction with the purpose of using the paper to support the state Democratic Party; 70 prominent North Carolina Democrats donated money for the auction. Daniels became the editor.

Prior to the pivotal election of 1898 *The News and Observer* was instrumental in encouraging white supremacist attitudes. In editorials, the paper advocated the use of violence and intimidation to control black voters. A study by the Wilmington Race Riot Commission states that the Wilmington Race Riot "was not a spontaneous event, but was directed by white businessmen and Democratic leaders." It further states that "Daniels was involved in the Democrats' 1898 campaign from the beginning, working with Furnifold McLendel Simmons and other party leaders to formulate strategy. Daniels wrote later that 'The News and Observer was the printed voice of the campaign.'"

Daniels later said he regretted his tactics, and supported a number of progressive causes, like public education, anti-child-labor laws, and banning alcohol. In 1948, Daniels died and was replaced by his four sons. His son Jonathan edited the paper, and his son Frank was the president and publisher. In the 1950s, The News & Observer consolidated its position, buying The Raleigh Times and moving into a new headquarters at 215 S. McDowell St. in Raleigh, where it remains.

In 1968, the Daniels family hired Claude Sitton, who had been a correspondent for The New York Times and later an editor there. Serving as the editorial director of the paper, he promoted The News & Observer as a government watchdog and moved the news of the paper away from the personal and partisan stances it had taken under Josephus Daniels. However, its editorials were still often aligned with the Democratic Party. Triangle conservatives often call the paper "the Nuisance and Disturber."

Chapter 6 - The Wake County School Board Story

Wake County, North Carolina School Demographics

The Wake County Public School System is a public school district located in Wake County, North Carolina. With 149,528 students enrolled in 169 schools as of the 2012-2013 academic year, it is the largest public school district in North Carolina and the 16th largest district in the United States.

The district has become notable for its integration efforts. Schools in the system are integrated based on the income levels reported by families on applications for federally subsidized school lunches, with the goal of having a maximum ratio of 40% low-income students at any one school. Consequently, thousands of suburban students are bused to magnet schools in poorer areas—and likewise, low-income students to suburban schools—to help maintain this income balance. Magnet schools are characterized as being public schools that specialize in a

particular area, such as science or the arts, to encourage desegregation by drawing students from multiple neighborhoods and districts to the same school. Professor Gerald Grant of Syracuse University used Wake County as a metaphor of hope in his 2009 book Hope and Despair in the American City: Why There Are No Bad Schools in Raleigh. Grant says, "The research is very clear that having the right mix of kids socioeconomically, as Wake County does, has enormous benefits for poor kids without hurting rich kids." According to U.S. News and World Report, in 2005, 63.8% of low-income students in Wake County passed the state's end of high school exams, which was significantly higher than surrounding counties that do not have similar integration policies.

The county's residents are divided in their support for the system's integration program due, partially, to some of the means of achieving that integration, such as long bus rides for many students and a lack of neighborhood schools. Despite improved integration, test results among poorer students continue to lag: for the 2007-2008 school year, only 18% of the district's schools met the adequate yearly progress goals of the No Child Left Behind Act, with only 71 percent passing state standardized tests. Due to the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling restricting the use of race in assigning students, Wake has been cited as a model for how other school systems can still maintain diversity in enrollment.

In the effort to maintain economic diversity and keep up with rapid growth in its student population, Wake routinely reassigns thousands of students each year to different schools. Many parents object to this annual shuffle. For the 2008-09 school year, for example, the school district stated that it would reassign around 6,464 students in order to meet a new system-wide policy designed to help schools in the same geographic area achieve similar economic demographics. This wave of changes required the reassignment of many low-income students to schools that

have a greater proportion of higher-income students. In February 2009, the school board approved a plan that would move 24,654 students to different schools over the next three years. The newly elected board gained a 5:4 Republican majority and was successful in overturning the integration policy that had been operating in Wake County for years. The board, however, has recently tried to avoid naming schools after nearby subdivisions because such names may lead some residents to believe that the school is the "neighborhood school." Unlike earlier times, schools are no longer named after people, which has proven to be controversial in the past.

Making Headlines Again Over Ditching the Nationally-Acclaimed Socioeconomic Diversity Policy

National controversy arose in 2010 over the 5-4 decision of the Wake County School Board in March to switch from the socioeconomic diversification policy it had followed for a decade to a system that focused on neighborhood schools. The prior plan, under which the public schools of the county were to "have no more than 40 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch" was set aside for concerns over long student bus rides. But immediately raised comments among the public and the NAACP that the outcome of the shift would be to "resegregate" schools. The decision led to protests spearheaded by the state NAACP chapter, with arrests in June and July, and to the resignation of the superintendent of Wake County schools. The NAACP made a civil rights complaint with the office of the United States Department of Education, which began an investigation into the matter. The complaint also prompted one national accreditation agency based in Georgia, AdvancED, to evaluate the schools to see if the decision would impact the school's accreditation standing.

In January 2011, the Washington Post featured a story on the controversy. After the Washington Post story, the Washington Post and the Associated Press were provided a letter by United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, in which he wrote that it was "troubling to

see North Carolina's Wake County school board take steps to reverse a long-standing policy to promote racial diversity in its schools" and "urge[d] school boards across America to fully consider the consequences before taking such action." The situation was also parodied on The Colbert Report. According to the Washington Post and several other sources, the decision has been backed by prominent members of the Tea Party movement.

Some strides have been made toward a compromise in Wake County between proponents and critics of the old integration plan. Michael Alves, an education consultant with 30 years of experience designing and implementing choice-based student assignment plans in districts across the United States, has developed an "integration by achievement" plan for Wake County. Integration by achievement will assign students to schools based on their previous achievements on standardized state test scores. Schools will have 70% of its students' scores at or above the proficient level while the remaining 30% scores below the proficient level. The plan stipulates that once a child is placed in a school, he or she cannot be reassigned during their time in that school. The Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, the area's largest business membership organization, has suggested this plan to the Wake County school board.

According to News and Observer editor, Steve Ford, "Americans for Progress and the Tea Party movement are like hand and glove." A few days later, the News and Observer featured a story on the Wake County School Board, where they note that Daniel Coleman, president of the Raleigh-Wake County Citizens Association, sent an email about the "busing-for-socioeconomic-diversity policy" to his group. More specifically, the email states "that the busing-for-socioeconomic-diversity policy (which so many are fighting so hard to restore, according to News and Observer Editor Barry Saunders) has not been a panacea to the education woes afflicting many poor minority children." According to the statement by Coleman, "they are

not only failing, but the scores are the lowest of all scores,” he wrote. Coleman goes on to say that “we have to ask ourselves, where is the benefit of an assignment policy based on economic diversity when the end result produces the worst test scores in the system?” Calla Wright of the group, Coalition of Concerned Citizens for African American children, accuses Coleman of being “out of touch” and, worse, of wishing “to condemn our most vulnerable children to a second-class education.” Coleman responds to her accusation by saying, “Fiddlesticks.”

These exchanges from the two groups should be viewed in the context of the preliminary zoning maps, drawn up by Tea Party endorsed Wake County Board member, John Tedesco, who is an adamant supporter of going back to neighborhood schools. According to the preliminary zoning maps, “Enloe/Southeast Raleigh is 4 percent white, 68 percent free and reduced-price lunch, 46.7 percent passing, while Apex is 72 percent white, 11 percent free and reduced-price lunch, and 89 percent passing.” Peter V. Andrews of Louisburg, NC, former chairman of the Raleigh Human Resources and Human Relations Committee, Vice Chairman of the Raleigh Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, Chairman of the North Raleigh Task Force and Life member of the NAACP, in an editorial to the News and Observer on September 4th, 2010, asks, “what kind of level playing field is that?”

Regarding the issue of Charter Schools in North Carolina, in an article in the Indy Week on January 25th, 2012, writer Bob Geary puts “charter schools under the microscope,” literally (p. 1). He notes that “some Charter schools, in North Carolina, are public schools and receive money from the taxpayers, but each is governed by its own board of directors, selected not elected. The schools are nonprofit organizations, but they often hire a for-profit management company to be in charge” (p. 2). He also notes that the direction that North Carolina is going in is “hard to tell, as North Carolina plunges headlong into the charter school business following the

passage of Senate Bill 8 by the Republican-led General Assembly,” eliminating the cap of 100 such schools, allowing now for an unlimited number (p. 2). He also adds that “watching the newly created N.C. Public Charter School Advisory Council in action in recent weeks, the only thing that’s clear is that the standards for approval or rejection of a charter application are unclear or non-existent” (p. 2). Geary interviews John Betterton, who chairs the advisory council, and he had the following to say regarding the subject matter:

“You’ll know a good application when you see it.

And as a matter of fact, according to an article in the *News and Observer* (N&O), on September 9th, 2010, “Republican School Board Chairman Ron Margiotta served as a board member for the Thales Academy in Apex until the panel was dissolved last month.” Bob Luddy, a major proponent of Private Schools in North Carolina founded the three Thales academies that operate within Wake County’s domain. Luddy also happens to be the largest donor to the majority on the Wake County School Board and to groups that support it. Luddy, who founded the three private Thales Academies plans to open high schools for Science and Technology in Rolesville and Apex, areas of Wake County that are predominately white and upper-middle class, with a much lower percentage of students on free and reduced price lunch when compared to the situation in Southeast Raleigh.



Rev. William Barber of the NC Chapter of the NAACP Ron Margiotta, Chairman of Wake County School Board
Source: News and Observer, 2010

According to a September 7th, 2010 article in the *News and Observer*, “Barber, the 47 year old head of the state NAACP and a Wayne County resident, thrust himself into the debate over Wake Schools because he feared a step away from the system’s diversity policy would be a giant leap back toward the days of separate and unequal education.” He has been hauled away twice for disrupting business and refusing to leave school property. The picture to the left depicts the Reverend William Barber, President of the North Carolina Chapter of the NAACP being arrested at a Wake County School Board meeting, while the picture to the right depicts Wake County School Board Chairman, Ron Margiotta, being escorted out of the school board meeting in 2010. Overall, Ron Margiotta and the Reverend William Barber have emerged as the two public faces debating the direction of Wake County public schools. Margiotta is the leader of a 5-4 school board majority, where Republicans are in favor over Democrats.

What is perhaps most bizarre in the case of the Wake County Republican School Board majority ditching the socioeconomic diversity policy in favor of one that would resemble neighborhood schools is that it was a nationally-recognized model for other schools in the nation to follow, and Margiotta’s own survey showed the large majority of Wake parents were happy with their children’s schools before the board ditched the socioeconomic diversity policy.

Chapter 7 - Analysis/Findings

Social Media, Internet Technology and the Tea Party in NC

The internet is still a relatively new place for individuals to engage with political media. However, the interactive nature may further mask inequality in the democratic system in the United States. People who believe they make a difference in the online forum may be less likely to question inequality in the creation and reinforcement of policies. What is more, while groups

may or may not have a direct impact on specific policies, their ability to generate and support right-wing race and gender ideology reinforces these beliefs as legitimate. In addition, their ability to meet others who share these beliefs slows change toward equality in the long run.

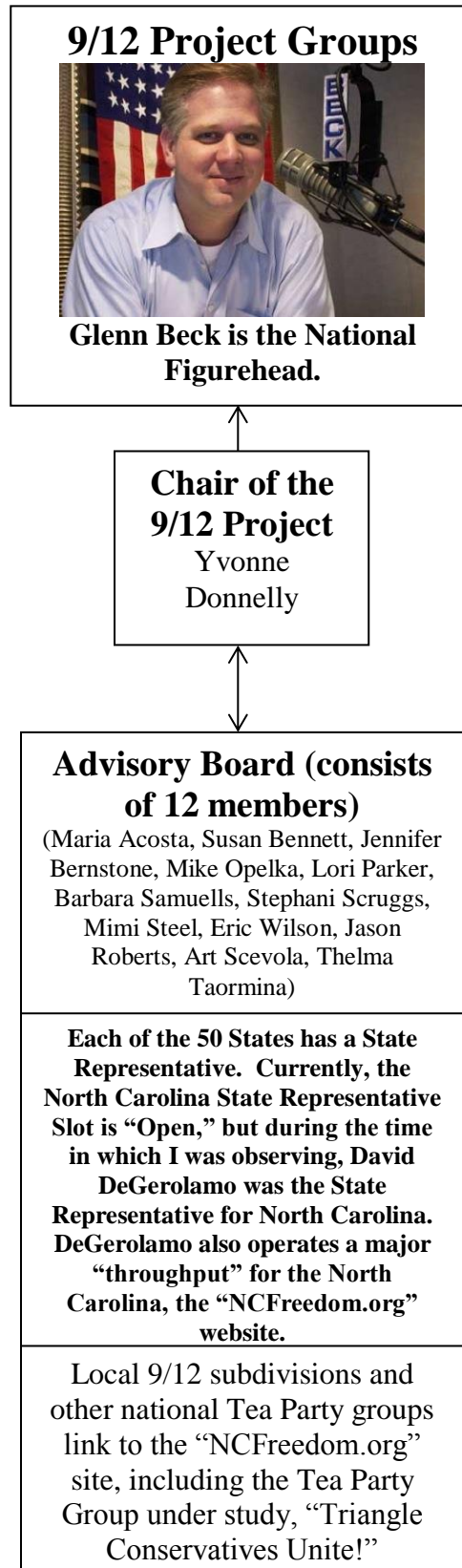
I have not met the majority of people in the sample that I studied, but I believe that the individuals in the online forum and many of the leaders of the Tea Party organization sincerely think they are not racist and certainly do not want to be so. While some of the organizations I studied have been directly linked to white supremacists, it is my feeling that these are a small minority. Della Fave (2008) argues that proletarian whites are as much a product of the ideology emerging from global capitalism as are racial minorities. If we acknowledge that attitudes and behaviors among poor minorities are adaptations to their structural conditions, we must also acknowledge that poor whites similarly adapt to their respective social location. Most working class and poor whites do not think to challenge the larger inequality structure, because they have not been introduced to alternatives to capitalism. Instead, they turn to politicians to fix employment problems during times of economic depression. In this way, poor whites settle for protecting the privileges they do have in the short-run instead of risking these privileges to gain more equality in the long-run (Della Fave 2008).

Adams and Roscigno (2005) argue that websites are an important medium for social movement organizations to disseminate their missions and frames to an audience without being filtered by the media. Since Tea Party groups are often charged with being bigots and racists, these organizations need to control their own representations. As vehicles for mobilization, websites may be especially critical for these “controversial” organizations. Further, unlike pamphlets and other printed materials, people from all over the world can access the information without having prior ties with the organization. Movements that were once local or

regional can become internationalized. The presentation of the organization becomes important in terms of gaining sympathetic viewers, possible volunteers, and monetary donations. If the Tea Party organizations are trying to appeal to a wide audience, they might tone down the extremist nature of the content. Other types of Tea Party Movement organizations may present a more extreme front in order to attract radical members who are dissatisfied with more mainstream groups.

The Public View: The Organizational Structure of the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” Tea Party Group

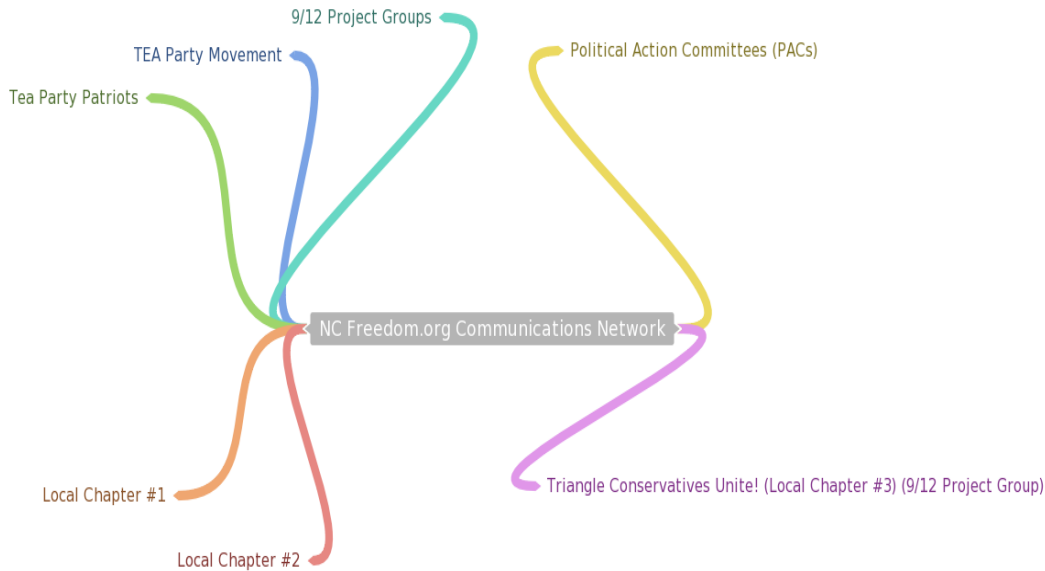
Figure 1



Although there is no “official” hierarchy in the Tea Party, Figure 1 shows that at least one of the seven national organizational networks at the core of the Tea Party movement does play a central role. Its name is the 9/12-project group, which means the day after 9/11/2001 when our country was attacked by Muslim extremists. It operates as a non-profit corporation that has applied for, but not yet received, its 501(c)(3) status, making all their current donations not yet tax deductible. The majority of the 9/12 group under study consists of white men and women, their ages ranging from 30-80, with the majority of movement actors in their 40s and 50s. There are some minority populations represented within the group, including Black and Asian men and women, but they are very rare. Using ‘job type’ as a measure of socioeconomic status, most of the movement actors fit in the middle-upper class category. At the local level, the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” subdivision works by consensus, not by orders from a hierarchy, and, it is here at the local level where the core of the movement exists and it continues to operate as a decentralized subdivision within what appears to be an even larger decentralized movement.

Figure 2

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The “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” subdivision/sub-communications network organization uses the phrase, “For Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Happiness!” adopted the nine principles and twelve values of the national 9/12-project group, and uses the slogan “We Surround Them.” As noted, these goals can also be found on the link to Glenn Beck’s website, www.glennbeck.com, from their “meetup.com” site. These nine principles formally stated on their <www.triangleconservativesunite.com> “meetup.com” site are as follows: (1) America is good; (2) I believe in God and he is the center of my life; (3) I must always try to be a more honest person than I was yesterday; (4) The family is sacred. My spouse and I are the ultimate authority, not the government; (5) If you break the law you pay the penalty; (6) I have a right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, but there is no guarantee of equal results; (7) I work hard for what I have and I will share it with who I want to. The government can’t force me to be

charitable; (8) It's not un-American for me to disagree with authority or to share my personal opinion; (9) the government works for me. I do not answer to them, they answer to me. Just beneath the last principle outlined on the website, it goes on to say that "if you agree with at least seven of those principles, then you are not alone" and should join the group. The twelve values are not explicitly stated on the main page of their "meetup.com" site, but are outlined in the discussion board tab and on the link to Glenn Beck's website.

On April 21st 2009, local Tea Party group, "Triangle Conservatives Unite!" replaced its two leadership team positions with Apex, North Carolina native, Laura Long, as "organizer" and her sister, Julie Griffin, as "co-organizer." It was also then when the group joined the ranks of those "fighting mad" for governmental emphasis on the nine goals and twelve values. The group operates out of the Triangle area and has 1,580 members from many counties in the region, including: Durham, Chatham, Harnett, Johnston, Lee, Orange, and Wake. However, members do not all share the same degree of commitment. They do not necessarily participate in the same manner, though they still manage to get their message, mission, and principles out into the public sphere.

With a group of its size, the "Triangle Conservatives Unite!" encounter many problems that must be resolved in order to ensure its sustainability as a social movement organization. In an attempt to coordinate successfully the organization's problems of technological barriers, meaning their limited online "free spaces" they use to communicate effectively with one another, their large size, and complexity, organizers at the state, local and KTM levels rely on their "meetup.com" site to effectively communicate with all members via blogs, discussions, and other social media networks, such as Facebook. Because it is difficult to get all different Tea Party groups "on the same page," organizers create and operate a variety of social networking

sites, including Facebook, Ning!, and meetup.com, as “permeable membranes,” allowing information to cross subdivisions and pass through each group freely. What is particularly interesting about the Tea Party group sites I have been monitoring is the lightning speed by which information actually flows through these intra-social networks. Members are constantly posting and reposting conservative news and propaganda they have received from homogenous Internet sites, which significantly restricts the knowledge base of the Tea Party movement. The rapid rate at which this information travels via the internet furthers the movement’s reach, where Tea Party groups can be found constantly mutating.

The “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” Online Forums

One way that some organizations include current members and website visitors in a virtual interaction is through the use of online forums. In online forums, participants have the option to remain anonymous. Forum participants choose their “aliases,” “avatars” or pictures serving as symbolic representations of themselves when they post in the forum. In a recent review of online ethnographies, Garcia et al. (2009) conclude that it is unclear whether or not the anonymous nature of the forum and the physical distance among participants actually changes how forum participants respond to others’ comments, and if so, in what ways. One of the central tenants of symbolic interactionism is that we adjust our actions based on our perceptions of how others view us and how we would like them to respond (see Cooley, 1902). Our ability to create the intended response in another person is limited by our ability to gauge the other person’s reaction, our relative power in the interaction and the props we have to work with (Goffman, 1959). What remains unclear is if internet interactions have different effects on the actions of individuals than face-to-face interactions.

While forums often have rules for engagement (e.g. no swearing) and moderators

(individuals who decide whether the post violates the rules), sometimes organizations post disclaimers stating that the views of the users are not necessarily the views of the organization. Some participants may feel that they have more freedom to say what they think when responding anonymously to others' posts. For example, the following dialogue was posted in response to an article in an online Tea Party Movement source, called the "TPMMuckraker:"

"they might want to think about what is going to happen when they are in the minority in society."

"They already are thinking about that, which is the ENTIRE reason for the 2-year freakout shitshow we've been watching. Keep in mind how much these people rely on projection in order to (mis)understand the world around themselves. They are vengeful, bigotted asshats...ergo...they believe that's the treatment they will receive if darky takes over...and they got their first big dose of reality that the demographic shift is imminent and inevitable when President Darky took the reins. So much of what the GOP and Teatards have been saying and doing can be understood through their underlying fear, anger and desperation about the shifting demography of our country...that...well...actually...all of it can be understood that way...plain and simple."-Sniffit

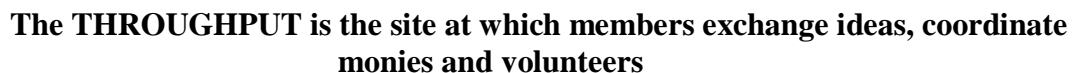
Other participants, unlike "Sniffit," may be more guarded and edit their comments before posting them, since the posts are saved and logged on a public website. Similar to conversations within groups in public, outsiders may hear, or in this case, overhear parts of the conversation.

In traditional social movement rallies, protest leaders can engage those present in activities and rituals meant to evoke emotions and group belonging. Mayo(1990) uses the Nazi political rally as an example. He argues that the Nazi political rallies were staged with music, flags, and other symbols to instill a feeling of awe or a "mystical sense of greatness" towards the Third Reich. What is more, "with appropriate stimulation from selected charismatic actors, the crowd becomes an action-oriented mass rather than a listening body comprised of autonomous individuals" (Mayo 1990, p. 357). However, the forum members are not physically in a single

location and cannot engage in audience activities in the same way. They are in a virtual space, where they choose names and visuals that orchestrate a group dynamic.

Examining the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” Tea Party Group Online

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” Tea Party group is one of many groups at the grassroots level in North Carolina that interconnects with a larger communications network at the state level, the “NCFreedom.org” site/network—which serves as a de facto structure that attempts to reconcile the movement’s organizational complexity issues, as shown in Figure 1 above. Along with the need to connect Tea Party divisions within North Carolina, the organization’s size poses a more complex problem, and, like most social networks, the larger the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” group becomes, the more apparent the need for some sort of technological coordination. However, this issue is quite challenging, given that all 1,580 members “change face” over time as new members join and former members leave the group, requiring veteran members to “catch new members up to speed” with their agenda. The “NCFreedom.org” site/network was founded by David DeGerolamo, the state appointed representative for the 9/12-project group, and only paid Tea Party coordinator I’ve encountered thus far. The network serves as an intermediary or coordinating source for 9/12 project groups in the state of North Carolina. It also helps to integrate Tea Party Patriot groups, Tea Party movement groups, and political action committees (PACs) with the movement, as a whole.

[illegible]

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radio/media airtime for their group's activities. These processes are cyclical, in that their outputs regenerate new and existing inputs to help keep the group thriving. Also, both ideas and implementation travel up and down the division of labor of this subdivision.

First, ideas are generated through the subdivision's processes; then, they travel upward through the state level throughput, "NCFreedom.org," into national organizational networks, as well as to local, state, and federal legislators via conference calls that are held weekly with local Tea Party organizers. After this upward process occurs, these national organizational networks and local, state, and federal legislators pass down information, tools, and ideas through the state-level throughput, "NCFreedom.org." This information, ultimately, flows back downward into the "Triangle Conservatives Unite!" local subdivision, where the process begins, yet again, while, simultaneously, helping local Tea Party groups coordinate to combat problems on the local level.

"Triangle Conservatives Unite!" Coming Undone: An Analysis of their Private Kitchen Table Meetups (KTMs)

After over thirty hours spent analyzing the above coordination needs at the local level, I began to notice that a "micro" set of control issues manifests at the "Kitchen Table Meetup" level of analysis, where members of the "Triangle Conservatives Unite!" network factionalize themselves even further by geographic region. These "KTMs" are commonly known as "local activist groups" and are spread across towns and cities within the Triangle. These groups invite speakers to come and present ideas to reinforce the group's conservative ideology to members in groups usually of ten or twelve Tea Party members. Because of the face-to-face interaction that goes on at this level in the attempt to reach a consensus on presented issues, conflict often arises among individuals. For instance, at these KTM meetups there's a tendency for "alpha

personality types to emerge,” one North Raleigh Tea Party member professes—“we say we are a consensus in its purest form, but, in my opinion, that’s entirely impossible—there’s always going to be a need for someone to step up and assume leadership.” These “alpha” personalities contradict their goals of “limited government” and “decentralized authority” that the North Raleigh KTM group organizes itself around.

Social Control Practices

At both the KTM and “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” levels of analysis, social control practices can also be observed. At the North Raleigh KTM meeting I attended, it was obvious that by simply being physically visible to one another was a form of social control in and of itself, where the KTM organizer would moderate the flow of conversation, making sure the group remained on topic. While this was more apparent, it seemed there were also more informal social control practices at work via symbolic interactionism; for example, group members would elicit a “nod” if agreeing upon an issue, but would be quick to give a look of dissent if the conversations were becoming too lengthy and unproductive. It is at the KTM level where the group’s goal of “sharing” knowledge promotes sort of an ethic of giving, where the emphasis is on problem solving and “getting on the same page.” At the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” sub-communicational level, a similar form of social control can be observed in the message board feature, considering that members “police” each other, but in a less structured setting than at the KTM level. For example, when discussing issues like healthcare reform, group members “call one another out” for radical comments that do not go along with those of the group. For example, one member was accused of being “too liberal,” thus “radical” when he suggested that the group consider Obama’s healthcare policy. Also, on occasion, there have been group members who have been kicked off the communications network for their

consistently “radical” comments. Because members are not physically visible to one another, I have also noticed that group members have more of a tendency to speak freely and, occasionally, with more crass, because each member is not held accountable to the same degree as they are in the KTM small group setting.

The Tea Party’s Cultural Control Practices

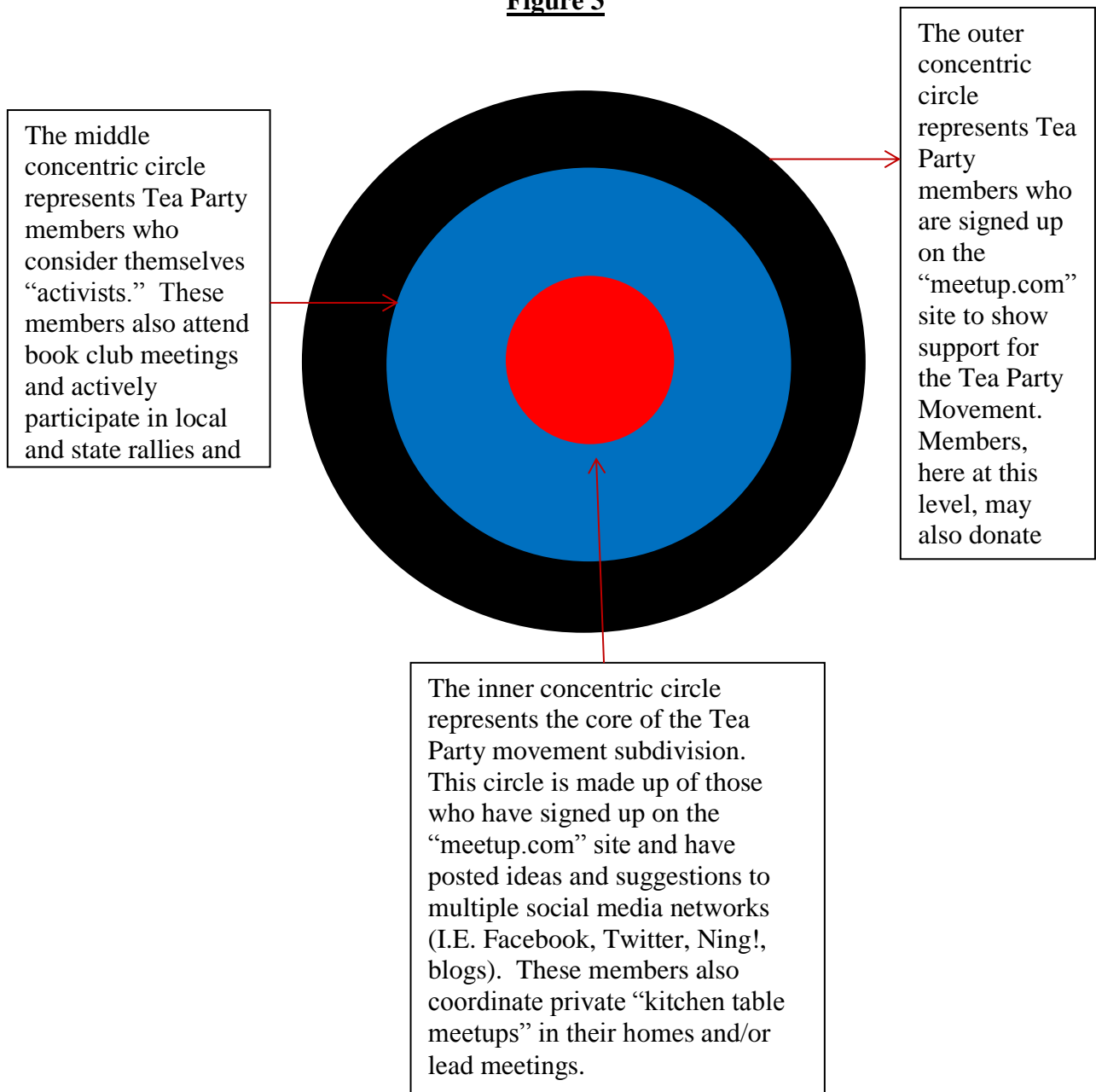
While social control is implemented at various levels of the group, cultural control is also prevalent at all events at the local level I have observed thus far. For example, before coming together as a group in an attempt to reach a consensus on issues at the KTMs, all group members stand around a table and salute the American flag. I have noticed that the American flag is present not only at each KTM meeting, but also at each rally and group event. The group also “speaks the same language,” using words like “treason,” “betrayal,” and “forefathers” to reinforce their goal of “restoring constitutional originalism” that, in their historical imaginations, existed back in the days of the American Revolution. According to Benedict Anderson (2006), author of *Imagined Communities*, “nations inspire a profound self-sacrificing love,” and it seems that language is a key component to the Tea Party’s historical imagination (p. 141). It serves as a way for the group to describe its object, by using a vocabulary of kinship and home, symbolic of a place they are naturally tied to (Anderson, p. 147). In terms of “speaking the language,” the group also identifies with conservative, Christian ideology, constantly alluding to passages in the Christian bible to legitimate their actions.

There is also always at least one member at each public rally who dresses as a past revolutionary figure; for example, Paul Revere, whom I spoke with at a counter-protest of the labor union solidarity strike back in February of this year. Essentially, clothing modeled after the American Revolutionary period, along with the group’s language and American flag rituals

reinforces what they believe they stand for. Not only do these group aspects give them a sense of solidarity, but they also teach the public their message, which, for them, arises out of their version of American history.

The Tea Party's Areas of Conflict & Uncertainty

Figure 3



Like any social movement organization, there are aspects of the “Triangle Conservatives Unite! (TCU)” environment that are subject to both certainty as well as uncertainty. Various inputs the group is certain they will receive include: the information and ideas that flow directly from the national 9/12 group hierarchical structure into the local group, as well as materials received from the national group office, such as flyer templates, “How to Write a Bill” templates, and an annually updated “citizens action handbook” that informs Tea Party members how to create blogs, post news sites onto Facebook and maneuver on the “meetup.com” site. However, the uncertain aspects of the group’s environment are much more apparent. As Figure 3 indicates, the number of deskilled volunteers constituting a key input and output remains uncertain for the group, much like the demand for “citizen action,” which is based on the political party in power over the state government at a given time and how well that party is doing with advancing Tea Party goals. For example, I have noticed that group participation at kitchen table meetings (KTM) and public events and rallies has tapered off in recent months because the Tea Party believes they can trust the Republican Party to “follow through with their proposed agenda,” as one North Raleigh KTM member put it. This considerable lack of member attendance not only affects “citizen action” efforts, but also, the amount of donation money the organization receives, ensuring its survival. When attendance is lacking, there is also a considerable lack of ideas that flow through the small group meetings and the “meetup.com” communications site, affecting the influence of “citizen action.” Also, the number of competitors, like the “MoveOn.org: Democracy in Action” organization, remains an aspect of their environment that proves uncertain for the group because new bills and legislation are constantly being proposed by congress. In my experience, the number of competitors the local Tea Party group has, such as

the “Moveon.org” organization, really depends on how well each side is doing in terms of advancing policy and their own agendas within the North Carolina legislature.

There are several key factors that would explain the uncertain aspects of the group’s environment. Perhaps the most noteworthy factor in explaining the lack of membership attendance at various events, meetings, and rallies has to do with the recent shift from a Democratic to a Republican majority in North Carolina, since 2010 when Art Pope helped purge the North Carolina House and Senate of Democrats through his hefty Republican campaign donations. This has significantly affected membership, especially after January and February 2013 when new, Republican members were sworn into office and had remained there for at least a month or so. In a conversation at the recent April 15th Tax Day Tea Party, several group members stated that “[they] have noticed that policy makers have, for the most part, supported platforms that were ‘Tea Party worthy.’” In addition to statements of this nature at public rallies, members have also noted things in KTM meetings like “we are moving in the direction that we want,” which might cause many members to lose passion and fire in their efforts to be a “true” patriot since direct action may not be perceived as necessary.

Another explanation for the lack of membership attendance relates to the fact that the group has increased in size since I have been following them. Back in January, the group consisted of a total of 1,518 members and now they claim 1,580 members. This jump could lead many who are “tired from work and life’s responsibilities,” as one group member put it, to develop that mentality that “someone else will do what needs to be done.” Another interesting component worth discussing deals with the prevalence of “alpha personality types” who continue to dominate at small, KTM meetings and in public settings. For example, I have noticed these “alpha” members receiving invitations to be keynote speakers at public rallies, recently.

Considering that this group's public message speaks of decentralization abroad, it seems as though this constant, central group that monopolizes conversation and attention—both privately and publicly—works against the group only slightly and at certain times. For example, it affects membership specifically during “incubator periods,” the period of dormancy in the movement when movement actors feel they have accomplished their goals.

The Tea Party's Methods for Overcoming Uncertainty

To adapt to such environmental uncertainty, the social movement organization implements key strategies and calls upon “key strategists.” For one, I have noticed that middle managers like Laura Long and David DeGerolamo operate as boundary specialists for the broader, national 9/12 movement, by spanning the environment to evaluate the need for necessary alliances and simply to spy on the competition. As an illustration, about six months back, I received an email from Long that was sent out to all TCU members concerning a recent alliance with Freedomworks—another national Tea Party group. Since this alliance in mid-March, group numbers on the “meetup.com” website have significantly increased. By driving up membership numbers on the website, the local Tea Party can create the illusion of ever increasing membership to outsiders and competitors, yet, hopefully, sustain actual participation behind closed doors and in the public sphere.

To veteran members of the local group the increase in membership numbers could be perceived as more joining the ranks of those “fighting mad” for “what the founding fathers would have wanted,” which could translate into more active participation at KTMs and public events in the future. This could also serve as a means to disband the “alpha” personality types that seem to dominate both settings, which could also be affecting member participation. DeGerolamo also operates as a boundary spanner, but in a different sense. For example,

DeGerolamo attends “MoveOn.org” organizational meetings that take place locally in Garner, NC to gauge necessary Tea Party “citizen action” and appropriately warn fellow Tea Party members of protests held by competitors, like the Moveon.org union support rally that I attended back in February.

I have also noticed that the local Tea Party adapts to uncertainty by bringing the uncertainty inside. For instance, at North Raleigh KTM small group meetings, members of the Republican Party Executive Committee, Tea Party supported politicians, Heritage Foundation members, organizers of local TCU divisions based out of geographic regions other than North Raleigh, as well as John Birch Society members are all present. Combining groups with similar principles and goals not only gives the movement more legitimacy to a broader audience, but it also eliminates uncertainty because all local conservative groups attend the same meetings, and are currently advancing agendas that meet the needs of each locality within North Carolina. This leads me to believe that the TCU group has also entered into formal arrangements with other organizations in the same field—the John Birch Society and Heritage Foundation—to coordinate competition and to interlock as an even larger group to advance similar goals. To advance these similar goals, as mentioned previously, the TCU has changed the throughput, “meetup.com” site, so that it could withstand the uncertainty of membership attendance.

Factionalizing by geographic region also further promotes goals by geographic region, matching decision making to the environmental requirements, while also evading any type of shut down from those higher up. Again, Reger (2002) shows that Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) must construct identities for their members in order to reach movement goals. She argues that factionalism within SMOs, does not necessarily result in the group’s demise as Klatch (2004, 2002, 1999) has argued. However, the SMO must accommodate the

growing diversity in ideologies and identities. If they do, the movement can be sustained. In the case of the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” local Tea Party group, factionalizing by geographic serves them quite well, given that they have a strong subcommunications network, “NCFreedom.org” site, as well as key movement strategists to keep the goals of the local 9/12 project group aligned with the national goals of the 9/12 project group, led by Glenn Beck. I have also witnessed several local, Republican politicians, representative of the North Raleigh district, actually speak to the North Raleigh KTM, alerting Tea Party members here of the issues passing through the NC House and Senate that are pertinent to their district, as well as to the Tea Party cause, on the broad scale.

An Analysis of Popular News Sources

In this section of my analysis, I draw on contemporary archival data from one main sources. I analyze conservative news articles gathered from Tea Party rallies and events. I also analyze approximately 65 News and Observer (N&O) newspaper clippings from the “Main” section, the “Editorial” section,” the “Triangle & State” section, as well as the “Triangle and Company” section during a three year period, three year period, March 1, 2009 through March 1, 2012. I chose to analyze the News and Observer newspaper because the source is considered “moderate” but tends to lean Democratic. I also chose this source because the newspaper is a major source of information for people in the state. I also accompany my contemporary archival data with notes and “notes on notes” from a few informal conversations I was able to have with NC Tea Party members at public rallies. I also draw on materials gathered from these public rallies to make conclusions about the group and its involvement with the Wake County School Board decisions.

Theoretical Framework

When analyzing the news sources, I draw on Bonilla-Silva's (2014) theory of Color-Blind Racism. According to Bonilla-Silva (2014), "color-blind racism emerged as a new racial ideology in the late 1960s, concomitantly with the crystallization of a 'new racism' as America's new racial structure" (p. 492). In other words, Bonilla-Silva regards racism as a structure, that is, "as a network of social relations at social, political, economic and ideological levels that shapes the life chances of the various races" (p. 751). The elements that comprise this new racial structure are: increasingly covert nature of racial discourse and racial practices; the avoidance of racial terminology and the ever-growing claim by whites that they experience "reverse racism"; the elaboration of a racial agenda over political matters the eschews direct racial references; the invisibility of most mechanisms to reproduce racial inequality; and finally, the rearticulation of some racial practices characteristic of the Jim Crow period of race relations (Bonilla-Silva, p. 752).

For Bonilla-Silva, the "Tea Party" is one that exhibits "vulgar explicit racism "now in vogue" (p. 772). He goes on to add, while "racial regimes may change, [the] transformation is never complete and remnants of the old-fashioned Jim Crow racism are clearly resurgent" (p. 772). In the case of the local 9/12 project group, "Triangle Conservatives Unite!," I would have to agree with Bonilla-Silva, partially, in his assessment. The racism that I found in the vignettes, in my study, is both symbolic and color-blind. It wasn't always symbolic, however. When the pressure is on, the individuals in my study became more and more overtly racist.

Bonilla-Silva (2014) lays out four primary "Color-Blind Racist Frames." I categorize my data from the News & Observer by these four "Color-Blind Racist Frames," and find all four at work in my case study.

Color Blind Racism Frames

According to Bonilla-Silva (2014), “the central component of any dominant racial ideology is its frames or set paths for interpreting information” (p. 941). Moreover, the four main frameworks, for Bonilla-Silva are: abstract liberalism; naturalization; cultural racism; and minimization of racism. All four frames are at work in my case study of the local 9/12 project group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!.”

Abstract Liberalism

According to Bonilla-Silva, abstract liberalism first involves the concept “liberalism,” which he argues, is at the core of modernity and has a set of distinctive features, namely, individualism, universalism, egalitarianism and meliorism, which is the idea that people and institutions can be improved (p. 1941). Moreover, abstract liberalism involves “using ideas associated with political liberalism, for example, equal opportunity, the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy as well as economic liberalism, which encompasses both the concepts of “choice” and “individualism” in an abstract manner to explain racial matters” (p. 1986).

Public Schools

Throughout my content analysis of newspaper articles and Tea Party movement sources, the majority of citizens and Tea Party activists drew on abstract liberal frames, bringing up concepts like “choice” and “convenience” to explain their convictions to journalists. For example, on March 10th, 2009 Todd Oxholm, a former Wake County School Board member, wrote an editorial in the *News and Observer*. Todd had the following to say:

“Parents want their children to attend schools closest to their homes (for convenience), have great teachers (for learning) and go with their friends (for happiness)”-Todd Oxholm, former Wake County School Board member

Approximately one month earlier, Sharon Starks, a member of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District was interviewed by the *News and Observer*. Her comments appeared on the Main page of the paper. She had the following to say regarding the Wake County School Board's proposed switch to neighborhood schools:

"Families now feel more connected going to schools in their community," Sharon Starks, a member of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system's equity committee, "the fear of student reassignment has lessened."

In an October 24th, 2010 article in the *News and Observer*, Steve Ford, contributing Editor to the Newspaper had the following to say about the student assignment plan drawn up by John Tedesco, a Tea Party favorite who serves on the Wake County School Board:

"After ditching diversity as an assignment factor, it launched an effort to divide the county into attendance zones. Families would choose schools in their zones and wouldn't face the prospect of being sent farther away"-Steve Ford, editor of the News & Observer, Raleigh, NC

Tea party members and members of the community also raised the issue of "long bus rides" as a reason for doing away with the socioeconomic diversity policy in favor of one that would resemble neighborhood schools. In an editorial written to the *News and Observer*, a citizen of Raleigh, North Carolina, a city within Wake County, North Carolina, had the following to say about the issue:

"Do not, though, forget that the populace put them (majority of school board members) in this position for a reason. The residents of this county are tired of a liberal administration teaching values that are foreign to the mainstream and busing our children all over the county to achieve their liberal goals. Last November (2010), the voters of Wake County sent a message that this must stop"-William Newton, Raleigh, NC

In this case, "busing" is used as an abstract mechanism for social control. His reasoning simply ignores the broader context that some students are bused from poorer areas because they receive a better chance at a formal education in areas that are more affluent, as the NAACP of North

Carolina argues.

Charter Schools

When discussing charter schools as an answer to the Wake County public school problem Francis De Luca, president of the Art Pope-funded Conservative think-tank, Civitas Institute of Raleigh, NC, points out the following in the March 2011 issue of the magazine, Civitas Review, a resource I obtained at the April 15th, 2011 Tax Day Tea Party Rally in Raleigh, North Carolina:

“The latest polling from June 2008 on tax credits shows 64 percent of voters support it to the 24 percent of voters who oppose it. The last time we asked about vouchers was in December 2009, when voters supported vouchers by a margin of 67 percent to 23 percent. So no matter what course the Legislature takes on this Issue, the voters are in support of increasing choice for parents when it comes to education.”

Here again, this notion of “choice” implies that all Wake County parents will “choose” among equal and fair options for their children. But what happens if too many parents “choose” the same school for their children, making one school overcapacity while another in a poorer, less affluent district remains empty? This notion of “choice” is not really as equitable as Republican lawmakers make it seem. Bowles and Gintis (1976) point out that a “correspondence principle” is at work in America’s schools (p. 232). More specifically, they argue that “the educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system, we believe, through a structural correspondence between its social relations and those of production” (p. 233). Thus, “these differences in the social relationships among and within schools, in part, reflect both the social backgrounds of the student body and their likely future economic positions. Thus blacks and other minorities are concentrated in schools whose repressive, arbitrary, generally chaotic internal order, coercive authority structures, and minimal possibilities for advancement mirror the characteristics of inferior job situations” (p. 233).

In fact, many parents may “choose” based on heavily biased statistics or misinformation, which could affect their child’s future career trajectory substantially. Bob Luebke of the Conservative think-tank, Civitas Institute in Raleigh, NC, has a similar answer as his colleague, Francis De Luca. Bob Luebke, in the March 2011 edition of the “Civitas Review,” a Tea Party source I gathered at the April 15th, 2011 Tax Day Tea Party Rally, had the following to say regarding the issue of Charter Schools in North Carolina:

“If we’re committed to giving all our kids the best education possible, lawmakers should vote to remove the cap and expand educational opportunities for students and parents. When they do so, they will help reduce the number of sad faces at the CDS lottery in Leland and at charter schools across North Carolina.”

But is it fair to be gambling with our children’s education by means of a lottery? In a state that rests within the heart of the Bible belt, is this notion not contradictory to your overall goal of expanding charter schools within the state, to help give parents a “choice”? Luebke had the following to say in a March 2011 edition of the Conservative magazine, Civitas Review, which I obtained at the April 15th, 2011 Tax Day Tea Party rally in Raleigh, North Carolina:

“Charter schools enjoyed freedom from certain rules and regulations that applied to traditional public schools. In addition, charters were to improve student learning, encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods and provide parents and students with expanded educational choices”-Bob Luebke

In the March 2011 issue of the “Civitas Review,” Luebke goes on to add:

“While North Carolina continues its quest to secure Race to the Top funds, sadly the actions of lawmakers undermine these efforts and deny thousands of children the opportunity to attend better schools”-Bob Luebke

Yet again, these notions imply that Charter Schools are the only way to receive a “better” education, through “better,” more closely monitored local boards, rather than a panel of experts, making decisions about Wake County childrens’ futures. In fact, Bob Luddy, another big

proponent of Charter Schools in North Carolina has said that “his schools have all the students they need.” Again, this implies that Charter School officials and administrators can very selectively control or “cap” which students they want versus those they don’t want by these very subtle tactics.

Overcrowding in Public Schools

The notion of “overcrowding” has also been used as a discriminatory tactic. According to a January 21, 2011 article in Newsweek, a “liberal news source” that was handed to me at an April 15th, 2011 Tea Party rally by a Tea Party member, serves as an example of “what’s wrong with America” according to the Tea Party member. Author Dallas Woodhouse, a North Carolina Coordinator for the Americans for Prosperity Tea Party group had the following to say regarding the Wake County Public School controversy:

“They complain that students in outlying areas could not attend schools with rich academic programs unless they traveled far afield, that overcrowding in suburban school districts was causing them to switch to a year-round schedule, and that sending kids to faraway schools stifles parental involvement. Any segregation that results from returning to geographic alignment of schools, they say, is incidental. The idea that we are resegregating the schools is ludicrous,” says Woodhouse. Segregation was done at the point of a gun”-Dallas Woodhouse, Americans for Prosperity, North Carolina Coordinator

According to Campbell, child of civil rights activists, who became the first black student to attend a white Raleigh city school in 1960 (Goldsmith, N&O staff writer), “the dismantling of Wake County’s diversity policy is “old wine in new bottles,” or a repackaging of the same sentiment that closed white schoolhouse doors to black children for decades.” And I would have to agree with Campbell’s belief, in the case of the local 9/12 “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” Tea Party group. According to the majority of articles, these organizations such as the NAACP

and Wake County School Board are the same, however new organizations that began to rise up in 1989 have given “new money,” which equals more influence.

I argue that while North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms left no individual person to be his predecessor, instead, he helped leave a bigger “red state” organizational legacy, bigger and more powerful than any single organization that the state has ever seen. His name is Art Pope, and in 1989, politics in the state began to change rather quietly, but the scale of change would be great.

Mobilizing Resources for the “Tea Party” Cause: The Rise of the Art Pope Empire

In 1989, Art Pope, former NC House member and candidate for lieutenant governor began groups by the names of “Real Jobs NC,” a 527 nonprofit group, Civitas Action Inc., a Raleigh think tank “action” arm of the John William Pope Civitas Institute. He also helped start the John Locke Foundation, the North Carolina Institute for Constitutional Law, and is one of four board members who sits on the Koch Brothers’ national group, “Americans for Prosperity.”

His influence over North Carolina politics in recent years, during the period when North Carolina saw a rise of democratic governors and unfortunate government scandals in these administrations, which only gave Pope more ammunition to explode onto the political scene in the state, particularly in 2010 when he helped funnel money into Republican campaigns to purge the House and Senate of all remaining Democrats. In fact, during the week of Labor Day, 2010, Art Pope organized an “attack bus tour,” which made its way through towns where there was a Democratic congressman. The bus rode through Rockingham, Laurinburg, Raeford and Fayetteville on one day, then on the following day, rode through Clinton, Dunn, Nashville, Louisburg and Henderson, North Carolina. The “attack bus tour” was organized by the North Carolina Chapter of the “Americans for Prosperity” National Tea Party group founded by the

Koch Brothers. In fact, according to several articles, one in particular by News and Observer editor Steve Ford, Art Pope gave a total of \$15,015 to the North Carolina Republican party back in 2010 to help elect the conservative Wake County School Board majority that decided to ditch the socioeconomic diversity policy in favor of one that would resemble neighborhood schools by creating 16 zones in the county that were to be drawn up by Tedesco, a major proponent of community schools.

In an editorial of the News and Observer on September 4th, 2010, Peter V. Andrews, former Chairman of the Raleigh Human Resources and Human Relations Committee, Vice Chairman of the Raleigh Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, Chairman of the North Raleigh Task Force and a life member of the NAACP had the following to say regarding the Wake County School Board Republican Majority:

“I agree with NC NAACP President William Barber that discarding the diversity policy will lead to defacto segregation and a return to the situation that existed before the merger of city and county schools”-Peter V. Andrews, Louisburg

In a Progressive newspaper, Workers World, published on April 21st, 2010, John Catalinotto had the following to say about the issue:

“The Tea Party invited Wake County School Board member John Tedesco to speak. Tedesco is known for pushing a policy that amounts to a resegregation of Raleigh’s public schools. He thanked the crowd, whom he credited as the people who got the school board majority elected to challenge Raleigh’s diversity policy. His collaboration with the Tea Party exposes the racist ideology of the school board majority and reinforces that of the Tea Party” –John Catalinotto, Workers World

As these narratives suggest, it seems that the people and the organizations, for the most part, are the same, with the exception of the new organizations and Tea Party movement that adds flair to the same, tired, old message of “resegregation,” “neighborhood schools,” “community schools,”

and “integration” that was felt during the civil rights period in North Carolina during the height of the 1960s. When asking the Reverend William Barber, President of the North Carolina Chapter of the NAACP what he thinks of the issue, in a News and Observer article, published on September 7th, 2010, he had the following to say:

“Neighborhood Schools is code for segregated schools,” Barber said. “That’s what that means”-NAACP

“If they (the Wake County School Board) were concerned about test scores and Improving education for all children,” Barber said, why wouldn’t they have a Plan first that you could look at and see if it really was going to make it better?”- Rev. William Barber, President of the NC NAACP

And Margiotta, chairman of the Wake County School Board’s response to the above statements by Barber, in a News and Observer article, published on September 7th, 2010:

“We’ll have a plan in place by 2011. We wanted to end the diversity policy. We no longer wanted people bused.”

Yet again, “busing” and “ending the diversity policy” are brought up as reasons that have more coded, implied meanings, as discussed in detail earlier.

Naturalization

Bonilla-Silva (2014) argues that naturalization is a frame that allows whites to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences (p. 1986). For example, consider the following excerpt from a conversation with an NC Tea Party member: At an Anti-union Tea Party rally, in Downtown Raleigh, North Carolina, in February of 2011, the following dialogue was exchanged:

Tea Party Member #1: There was a teacher who actually toyed with the notion of Socialism in his class one time. Failed every single member of his class, as a result.

Me: Really? I hadn’t heard that before.

Tea Party Member #2: Oh, yeah. This guy took the class and gave them a test.

the really hardworking students got “A’s,” the group who didn’t work as hard and who were inherently less intelligent got “C’s” and “D’s.” So, as Socialism would have it, the teacher took all the students’ grades and averaged them together and they all got “B’s.” It wasn’t fair to the “A” students. So, the students all started arguing and the teacher just failed them all because they couldn’t come to any agreement.

As these narratives suggest, this Tea Party member demonized any alternative ideology other than Capitalism while implying that hard workers are exploited and that others are undeserving of any assistance, as Socialism would have it. This particular Tea Party member implied that the “C”s and “D”s” group was “inherently less intelligent,” implying this inequality is something that occurs “naturally,” as Bonilla-Silva’s (2014) naturalization frame implies. Before taking this analysis any further, it is also important to note that so far, my Tea Party group has had the tendency to equate “Socialism” with “Communism,” almost as umbrella terms. Currently, I am unaware of their reasoning for this, yet, my inclinations tell me that the Red Scare during both periods of American history play a large role in this, considering there were two separate “scares.” In Tea Party reality, the group as a collective entity may recognize both as equally dangerous to their status.

In only one other case I found that the “Naturalization” frame was used when discussing the Wake County School Board decision to resegregate schools. In a January 21st, 2011 article in Newsweek that I obtained at the April 15th, 2011 Tax Day Tea Party Rally, Dallas Woodhouse, a North Carolina Coordinator for the North Carolina Chapter of Americans for Prosperity had the following to say:

“Some areas are whiter and some areas are a little more colored [in Wake County]. That’s the society we live in, Dallas Woodhouse, Americans For Prosperity, North Carolina Coordinator, says. “It’s not the job of the school board to fix people’s housing patterns.”

As this narrative suggests, some areas in North Carolina are “just this way” and “it’s not the

school board's job" to fix outlying problems like housing patterns. This suggests that change is unlikely and "just occurs," or is this way because "that's just the way it is," it's natural.

Cultural Racism

Bonilla-Silva (2014) argues that cultural racism is "a frame that relies on culturally-based arguments such as "Mexicans do not put much emphasis on education" or "blacks have too many babies" to explain the standing of minorities in society (p. 1986). Through my content analysis of News and Observer articles, Workers World, Indy Weekly and Tea Party materials gained from public rallies, I found multiple cases of cultural racism at work. In a Tea Party resource called "TPMMuckraker, Jillian Rayfield had the following to say on January 14th, 2011:

"The Washington Post reports that the school board has declared that they will 'say no to the social engineers! And abolish a policy that aimed to prevent schools in the area from becoming segregated by race or class"-Jillian Rayfield, TPMMuckraker

In the comments section of the article, a person using the screenname, "Sniffit," had the following to say in response to the article on January 14th, 2011:

"They (the Wake County School Board) are already thinking about that, which is the ENTIRE reason for the 2-year freakout shitshow we've been watching. Keep in mind how much these people rely on projection in order to (mis)understand the world around themselves. They are vengeful, bigotted asshats...ergo...they believe that's the treatment they will receive if darky takes over...and they got their first big dose of reality that the demographic shift is imminent and inevitable when President Darky took the reins. So much of what the GOP and Teatards have been saying and doing can be understood through their underlying fear, anger and desperation about the shifting demography of our country that...well...actually...all of it can be understood that way...plain and simple"-a person by the screenname "Sniffit"

In the same comments section of the January 14th, 2011 article in the Tea Party resource, TPM Muckraker, a person using the screenname "thad_anderson" had the following to say regarding the Wake County School Board decision:

"Well, before anyone paints this is some classic example of white Southern

racism, it's worth pointing out that 3 of the 4 new conservative board members, Tedesco, Goldman, and board chair Margiotta, are transplants from New York or New Jersey. I'm not saying that like it's a bad thing—as a Raleigh native growing up in the '80s and 90's, and graduate of integrated schools within the Wake County Public School System, many of my best friends growing up were transplants whose families moved down from the Northeast to work for IBM or Glaxo (there are so many transplants in the Raleigh suburb of Cary, that residents jokingly refer to it as Containment Area for Relocated Yankees"—a person by the screenname "thad_and erson"

And a person using the screenname "MikeE" had the following to say regarding the Wake County School Board decision in the January 14th, 2011 article in the Tea Party resource, TPM Muckraker:

"One of the GOP board members even showed a conscience and withdrew her vote because of her constituents asking her 'what are you gonna do with THOSE students' instead of them showing concern about their own children's education"—a person by the screenname "MikeE"

Clearly, these narratives are indicative of some serious cultural "othering" of the black population under question, in Wake County, NC. And when NAACP president filed a complaint to have the school board policy reviewed by an outside institution called "AdvancED," I found the following culturally-racist sentiment in the local newspaper, News & Observer, on September 26th, 2010:

"The review [by AdvancED] is not based on problems with the quality of education Wake County students receive. No, it's based on a request from the Reverend William Barber, President of the North Carolina NAACP, that AdvancED come in and strong-arm, sorry, I mean investigate why the school Board is not doing what he wants"—Bob Jenkins, Fuquay-Varina, NC

Here, after the NAACP filed the complaint with AdvancED, Barber was accused of "strong-arming" the situation, which brings up imagery of black male violence that is overtly racist. And in the same issue of the News and Observer, on September 26th, 2010 an editorial written by Melissa Mitchell of Raleigh, NC, says:

"This [AdvancED] appears to be a bully group that has been brought in by

the Rev. William Barber, President of the state NAACP, who does not even live in Wake County.”

Here again, when a racial minority group, such as the NAACP, questions the predominately White, conservative board, he is a part of a “bully group” that only wants to cause trouble, which is clearly culturally racist in Bonilla-Silva (2014)’s eyes. However, the most striking example of culturally racist language that I found is in the September 6th, 2010 article in the News and Observer:

Margiotta to Barber: *“here comes the animals out of their cages,” referring to the NAACP*

The above dialogue was exchanged when the Reverend William Barber was placed in jail because he was protesting at a Wake County School Board meeting. Ben Jealous of the National NAACP later went on to call for Margiotta, Wake County School Board chairman’s resignation, after such a pungent and unfair remark. To date, Margiotta still sits on the Wake County School Board.

Minimization of Racism

Bonilla-Silva (2014) argues that the minimization of racism frame is one that suggests discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life chances. For example, one might suggest that “it’s better now than in the past” or one may recognize that “there is discrimination, but there are plenty of jobs out there” for everyone (2009). In a September 7th, 2010 article in the News and Observer, Ron Margiotta, Chairman of the Wake County School Board, had the following to say regarding the issue of re-segregating schools:

“I think it’s paranoia,” Marigotta, Wake County School Board Chairman said. “We don’t have discrimination here and it’s not coming back.” In fact, I experienced discrimination because my last name ended in a vowel,” Margiotta said.

Here in particular, the Reverend William Barber, president of the state chapter of the NAACP’s

Concerns are minimized to being the product of “paranoia,” a “thing of the past.” I will give Margiotta some credit for at least recognizing that discrimination did happen in the past, however. In a September 21st, 2010 News and Observer article, John Drescher, editor of the Newspaper had the following to say regarding the Wake County School Board issue:

“In implying that neighborhood school supporters are racist, Barber alienated many good people who are sincere in their convictions,” –John Drescher, editor

Here again Barber’s concerns are minimized to something “other” than racism and instead Barber is put in the position where Drescher is “blaming the victim” of racism, so to speak. In a September 25th, 2010 editorial in the News and Observer, a Cary, North Carolina citizen, Ruby Vandervelde, had the following to say regarding the Wake County School Board decision:

“Bill’s (Rev. William Barber, NAACP) time would be better used fulfilling his vows: spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ (he is a Reverend after all), changing young people’s lives with God’s message for us all. Families would be restored and strengthened, fathers would stay home with their families and, as a result, grades would improve. We just can’t use our financial condition as a reason not to train and discipline our children. My parents didn’t”-Ruby Vandervelde, Cary, NC

Here, Ruby made a rather flagrant statement in saying that Barber’s time should be inside of an Institution, like the church, rather than advocating for equality, for students of color, in the Wake County public school system. Similar to Ruby’s account, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” lead Coordinator, Laura Long, expressed similar convictions by drawing on the “minimization of racism” frame in her arguments. Long had the following to say in a January 21st, 2011 thread on the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” message board feature:

“Despite all of the name-calling and the remarks about racism, it is our duty to make sure that the system that is put into place in our county works for the students. This is not about anything else, just making sure that the students of Wake County are receiving a sound education, in all of our schools.” “The last school board did not provide the residents of this community with any measures to see if their busing policies were effective”-Laura Long, Triangle Conservatives Unite! Tea Party Coordinator, NC

And in a September 7th, 2010 article in the News and Observer, Staff Writer, Anne Blythe, had the following to say regarding the issue of Wake County Schools:

“Margiotta brusquely dismisses accusations that neighborhood schools will mean a return to segregation. The country, he says, with a black president in the White House, will never revert to a time when people were divided by their skin color. Race, he contends, is no longer an issue”-Blythe, N&O staff writer

In the same September 7th, 2010 article in the News and Observer, Ron Margiotta, Chairman of the Wake County School Board, had the following to say regarding the Wake County School board agenda:

“We’re not talking about segregation, Margiotta said. I don’t see that here. It’s never coming back. Race is not an issue as far as I’m concerned. What Rev. Barber is doing is a distraction”-Margiotta, Wake County School Board Chairman

In a November 2009 thread on the “Triangle Conservatives Unite’s” message board feature on their “meetup.com” site, the following information was passed along to the group by the organizer, Laura Long, and fellow Tea Party member Ed Stiles, President of the Greater Garner Republican Club in Wake County, North Carolina:

“I am passing along this email because I believe that our school board, and in Particular, John Tedesco, has been the subject of unwarranted insults and slander. I think that we should support him and the school board. A show of many patriots would be much appreciated:

“Dear folks, I just got through watching the coverage of tonight’s school Board meeting, and I, for one, am feeling a combination of disgust and determination. I am angry because of the accusations of racism against John Tedesco, subtle as they may be, never cease to stop. Supporters of the status quo have shown a complete lack of civility in this entire debate, even to the point of threatening John Tedesco’s livelihood. It is time for those of us who wish to John well to stand up for him, and do it in a very public way. Please join me tomorrow night at 5:00 PM at the Garner High School. Bring some of your friends that feel the way you do, that are fed up with our values being deliberately misrepresented and attacked. Look forward to seeing you tomorrow

night!!!”-Ed Stiles, President, Greater Garner Republican Club

As these narratives suggest, clearly, NC Tea Partiers as well as some in the general populace are minimizing the broader issue at hand and implying that racism, in the case of Wake County schools, no longer exists, in spite of contradictory evidence that suggests otherwise. Clearly, the “minimization of racism” frame was used to a degree by both Tea Party members and the general public alike, but to a lesser extent than was the “abstract liberalism” frame.

Behind Closed Doors: Close Encounters with the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” Local Tea Party Group

When I first encountered that local Tea Party back in the spring of 2011, I had no idea just how much they disliked ‘the likes of me.’ But of course, it wasn’t “me” personally; instead, it was what I represented to them as an “outsider” or “spy,” someone contrary to their groups’ goals. At a closed door kitchen table meeting on February 22nd, 2011, I began to understand more about my status as an “outsider” as I also began to learn about “Sustainable Development” and how it “has infiltrated over 600 communities,” according to a Tea Party member. I was utterly dumbfounded.

Tea Party Member #1: The United Nations is spreading its communist agenda through our federally-funded school system, geared toward Sustainable Development. How does it make you all feel to know that your kids will be saluting the Communist flag one day soon if we don’t do something about it? We’ve got to back Tedesco in his campaign for returning our children to what our Founding Fathers had intended.

Tea Party Member #2: We have been. We will see the vote on Charter School Reform in the next few days.

Tea Party Member #3: I have always been against Charter Schools because they Originated in the Soviet Union. The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America by Charlotte Iserbyt is an excellent read and she explains it all in her “whistleblowing” stories.

Tea Party Member #4: Yeah, but at least with Charter Schools, we can shut ’em

down, when necessary.

After witnessing this very conversation first-hand, I decided I would check things out for myself. At the close of the meeting, members gave me a website, www.freedomadvocates.org, to visit, and encouraged me to “find the facts out for myself,” as the tea party meeting coordinator relayed one of Glenn Beck’s most revered phrases as I was walking to my car that night. And so, I did. Among all the propaganda and conspiracy theory ramblings, I came across a PDF file entitled, “The Dan Smoot Report.” One of its most striking lines reads: “We can, and *must*, give our heritage and save our civilization” (Dan Smoot Report, 1970). I spent hours on this site going through file after file until I found a shocking correlation between the legislative measures implemented recently in Wake County and what was in the specific “report.”

From Wake County Public Education to Higher Education: An Uncertain Future

In a classroom discussion led by Professor Rick Della Fave in the spring of 2011, he challenged the class to think carefully about what the Wisconsin labor union decisions would mean for future Democratic campaigns. There is no doubt that labor unions are under attack to make it harder for the Democrats to take back their overall majority, but, it is my belief that this issue is rooted much deeper within the early 1970s when “secular humanism” was targeted, accused of instilling the youth with “such evils as sex education, Marxism, and evolution” (Wolraich, 2010). In fact, in North Carolina, Senator Jesse Helms adamantly opposed the creation of the Department of Education as well as the nomination of “secular humanist,” Shirley Hufstedler, because she served on the board of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies. In Helm’s words, “secular humanists are taking over schools, our society, and our institutions at every level.” Later, his sentiments, along with others, propelled individuals to hunt secular humanists in nonprofit organizations such as the National Education Association (Wolraich,

2010). To further support my points, consider the following excerpt from a Wake County Tea Party reading list:

“The education lobby—especially the National Education Association—has heavy responsibility not only for the tremendous costs, but also for the costly failure of public Education in the United States” (Dan Smoot Report, 1970).

And, their answer to the perceived problem within the group’s readings:

“The only sensible solution is to abolish compulsory tax-supported schools. With the money thus saved, the people can build their own competitive, private schools” (Dan Smoot Report, 1970).

“Solution—the following government agencies which control local education must be abolished: U.S. Department of Education, its laboratories and centers, and all federally funded state departments of education. Also, legislation must be passed prohibiting outside meddling in state or local education matters by corporations and tax-exempt foundations. Such legislation would prevent international, national or corporate entities from administering attitudinal assessments and collecting private data on students, their families, educators and/or members of small businesses” (Iserbyt, 2010).

My initial response after reading these statements that Wake County Tea Party members seemed to support was one of anger, considering that I felt threatened and absolutely helpless with regard to possibly combating these notions. Yet, my very reactions to these messages I was hearing and reading brought me to a new awareness of my own: I realized that it is only logical to assume that Tea Party members respond to messages they perceive as threatening, much like I had. As Sociologist Arlene Stein (2001) reminds us, emotions do possess logic, and movements give shape and public voice to those emotions.

The “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” Local Tea Party Group: In Summary

Currently, I argue that it is not “shame” which explains Tea Party members’ reactions when interacting with me, instead, they are better understood as a collective group response to a heightened fear, which creates a sense of paranoia in small group settings like those I have been attending. It is this fear that requires one of two natural group responses: fight or flight. When

both “fighting” and “flighting” have been exhausted with little or no satisfactory result, a group becomes angry; then, in some cases, this anger accelerates to hate—as we have seen through the example of Klan violence during the Civil Rights Movement. Thus, fears such as a “communist takeover in America” or “Sustainable Development brainwashing the minds of the American youth” are indeed real in my Tea Party group’s own objective reality, which generates rational responses to a well-defined and perceived threat to their status group. This type of analysis seems to have remained latent in prior research on conservative, Christian groups, from what I have been reading. What is more, it is my belief that these fears have been used as political ammunition for “rallying troops” into the Tea Party Movement, yet, have been disguised as “wedge issues” that have quite the complicated history, as discussed earlier.

As the term, “secular humanism,” changed to “progressive,” courtesy of former FOX political pundit, Glenn Beck, the religious rights’ targets realigned, focusing on the world of education. Playing on preconceived fears that a percentage of America felt following the Red Scare period in 1920, and again in the period between 1947 and 1957, led some “Right-wingers” to believe that America would fall into a Communist coalition where concentration camps would be set up for “Nazi enemies” (Lepore, 2009). Take the attacks on political science professor, Francis Fox-Piven, as an example. She and her late husband, and well-known criminologist, Richard Cloward, wrote a book back in the 1960s, which encouraged those who qualified for welfare benefits to lobby for their rights to receive them. Now, according the Beck and local tea partiers, she is “heading up a communist regime in America, which will lead to the overthrow of Capitalism.” As a result of Beck’s conspiratorial rants, she has received death threats at 80+ years of age. I fear that this type of rhetoric will lead to similar targets within academic departments in North Carolina if some sort of intervention is not put into place. I also believe

that if it does come to North Carolina, the reactions and threats may be much more severe, given the South's history with race relations and Klan violence.

Chapter 8 - Conclusion

Social Media, Online Forums and Newspaper Articles Surrounding the Local “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” Tea Party Group and the Wake County School Board

In conclusion, I argue that the local Tea Party group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!,” as a social movement, is a form of joint action. By participating in movement activities including protest, recruitment, framing, emotional resonance, and identity work, and the social construction of gender, social movement participants and leaders recreate the movement both in public, private and online. The process of social movements, therefore, is a generic one. Whichever process or set of processes described here, they operate generically, across situations and groups. To understand how social movement participants think, act, and feel, we must first acknowledge that the processes within movements are not all that distinct from everyday social life.

While Adams and Rosigno (2005) study social movement framing via the web, their analysis focuses largely on definitions, symbols, and mission statements. My analysis shows how the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” creates a website that evokes emotions. Further, the online forum is a place where emotions are labeled, and are encouraged or discouraged by social movement actors. I argue that the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” Tea Party group's website reinforces emotional reactions that draw from and support the organization's framing of minority threat within the Wake County Public School System.

News articles report on the Wake County School decision rather dramatically, showing pictures of the Reverend William Barber of the NAACP being hauled off to jail, while Ron

Margiotta, Chairman of the Wake County Board of Education angrily fights through the angry mob of protestors when coming out of a Wake County School Board meeting. This presentation of information through newspaper articles suggests not only empirical credibility, but also a type of emotional presentation. The local Tea Party group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” website operators only post negative and seemingly irrational articles largely indicative of extreme paranoia and irrationality, but also suggestive of a moral or emotional political stance which somehow works well for the group, in terms of advancing policy and recruiting like-minded “patriots.”

However, people have traditionally dichotomized facts and rationality from emotions and irrationality. By utilizing newspapers, the local Tea Party group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” “meetup.com” website gives the impression that the information provided is objective. For example, in the period following the Wake County, North Carolina Tea Party’s victory with re-segregating public school districts, their next target seemed to move toward the unions in North Carolina. In the meeting minutes of one of the tea party’s closed-door sessions I attended, the group described the SEIU as “[being] affiliated with criminal organizations and known Marxists and embezzlers;” their solution, “condemn the SEANC-SEIU affiliation and demand the dissolution of this affiliation.” For Tea Party members, these data suggests that not only are unions reinforcing the progressive agenda within public school districts, but they are also brainwashing the minds of our college students.

Consider another excerpt from the Wake County, NC Tea Party’s reading list:

“The National Education Association has sponsored and recommended many Sociology textbooks which have poisoned the minds of high school and college Students throughout the land” (Dan Smoot Report, 1970).

Clearly, these beliefs suggest that while public schools have been indoctrinating the youth with these communist ideals, area universities have been slowly but surely mobilizing a mass of rebellious, college students who have been modeled into individual personalities “to conform to a facilitated group adaptable to change” (Iserbyt, 2010). Thus, for them, it has been “research experiments and writings on group development and human engineering [in university settings] by various transformational Marxists [which have created] a blueprint for the ‘re-education’ or brainwashing of the masses, and subsequent transformation of America” (Iserbyt, 2010). These beliefs that the local Tea Party group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” put forth are clearly irrational and lack foundation in reality. However, “craziness” works for them through the use of “scientific facts,” numbers, and covert propaganda from the 1970s which, quite frankly, scares them enough to continue to act certifiably crazy in both the public and private realm, to advance the Republican Party in North Carolina’s agenda. This finding is consistent with research on actors in other social movements. For example, Groves (2001) shows how members of an animal rights movement purposely attempt to disassociate themselves from “emotional” activists who simply love dogs and act irrationally. They argue that the way to convince others is through science and facts, just like the local Tea Party group does. Thus, in the case of the “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” local Tea Party group, the lack of emotional expression on the main website is consistent with what we would expect from an organization that is attempting to appear legitimate through a reliance on rationality, logic, and facts. However, “craziness” does seem to work for them in both the public and private realms, as demonstrated.

Money Talks through the “Tea Party” in North Carolina

While necessary factors alone do not account for why North Carolina is increasingly becoming a “Red State,” when fused with a giant political scheme, conjured up by two

movement entrepreneurs named Arthur Pope and John Hood, this interplay gives sufficient cause for the Tea Party's emergence and influence in North Carolina politics, in recent years. After analyzing the local Tea Party Social Movement Organization, "Triangle Conservatives Unite!" as well as local newspaper articles, I believe that Resource Mobilization Theory can explain the new aspects of the same old re-segregation arguments that have re-surfaced from the 1960s in North Carolina. Resource mobilization theory argues that "socially-connected people [like Art Pope], rather than social isolates, are most likely to be mobilized for collective action" (Staggenborg 2011, p.17). Moreover, it argues that "movements emerge in response to increases in the resources needed to sustain collective action and the availability of organizations to coordinate the effort" (Cress & Snow, p. 137; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1988; McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Oberschall, 1973; Tilly, 1978).

Groups like "Real Jobs NC," a 527 nonprofit group, Civitas Action Inc., a Raleigh think tank "action" arm of the John William Pope Civitas Institute, the John Locke Foundation, the North Carolina Institute for Constitutional Law, and "Americans for Prosperity" give greater monetary and emotional resources to a mass of like-minded conservative citizens like the Tea Party, to help advocate for exclusion within the Wake County Public School District. In other words, these groups help Tea Party members give legitimacy to an antiquated belief system based on exclusion and "separate but equal" school facilities. We know from prior research that although we have progressed since the 1960s in many ways, groups who have a large enough stake in public policy will do whatever it takes to keep themselves and their children from ending up too far on the bottom.

And as it turns out, Art Pope's father was a good friend of Jesse Helms. Art Pope can be described as Helms' conservative descendant, following Helms' footsteps very closely. Back in

2004, Art Pope entered the political scene with his family fortune in hand, while his goal was to “purge Republican moderates from the General Assembly [by pouring] his company’s money into an independent group that, during the primary season, ran ads attacking [Democratic candidates]” (Mayer, 2011, p.98). The Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission Supreme Court decision back in January of 2010 allowed campaign contributors, like Art Pope, to donate unlimited amounts of money to Republican campaigns by filtering them through businesses. Pope’s Variety Wholesalers company in Raleigh, North Carolina continues to serve as an intermediate for the conservative cause; and, according to an article in the October 10, 2011 edition of the New Yorker, Art Pope was instrumental in both funding and creating independent political groups—Real Jobs NC and Civitas Action (Mayer, 2011), that provide substantial funding for the Tea Party group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!.” He also serves as one of the four directors of Americans for Prosperity, the Koch Brothers’ national Tea party group (Mayer, 2011).

In 2003, the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy (another Pope-funded organization) broke off from the Locke Foundation, and in 2007, Pope set up another conservative think tank, the John W. Pope Civitas Institute, “which monitors state policy, promotes conservative solutions, and trains people to run for office” (Mayer, 2011, p.99). Pope’s counterpart, John Hood, president of the John Locke Foundation, another conservative think tank, described both his and Pope’s efforts as “[setting] up an answer to what [they] saw as the liberal establishment. The conservatives thought the liberals had the universities, so [they] had to balance that with think tanks” (Mayer, 2011, p. 99).

Their influence over North Carolina politics is astounding, and the majority of the issues they’ve donated money toward have passed through the North Carolina legislature, including “no

new taxes, lifting the cap on charter schools, cutting spending, as well as dozens of small-ticket items” (Mayer, 2011, p.100). In 2010, Pope was connected with the Wake County school board decision to re-segregate schools; more specifically, he was accused of single-handedly engineering the decision by filtering money into the local Tea Party and making donations to conservative board member campaigns (Mayer, 2011). While both Pope and the Koch Brothers’ contributions to the Tea Party movement seem altruistic, when considering how much stake each have in the matter, in terms of their industries and wealth, it becomes clear that both are only concerned themselves and their own interests. In other words, much like the Koch Brothers, Pope has manufactured “a network, combining a family fortune, the resources of a large private company, and family-funded policy organizations” (Mayer, 2011, p. 93) to advance his own agenda in North Carolina.

A major finding worth noting is that the local Tea Party group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” was not always a “9/12 project group.” In fact, the group was actually founded on December 2nd, 2005 as a purely “conservative meetup” according to the “meetup.com” website. Some time in between 2005 and present day, the local Tea Party group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” began to adopt the national 9/12 group’s mission statement and principles. Further research is required to assess this phenomenon. We know from prior research that although we have progressed since the 1960s in many ways, groups who have a large enough stake in public policy will do whatever it takes to keep themselves and their children from ending up to far on the bottom.

Linking the Local “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” 9/12 group with the National Tea Party Movement Across America

With Bush on his way out of the White House, the Pope network would become increasingly important in 2008. During that year, the United States ushered in the nation’s first

Black President, Barack “Hussein” Obama, fully flaring up the underlying anger many White North Carolinians felt during the Ku Klux Klan days of the Civil Rights Movement, which had been building during both the recession and minority migratory period surrounding his election. But it wasn’t until Black President Obama began introducing the notion of universal health care, when the “alarm sounded” for many like-minded, fearful North Carolinians who had also fallen into the “Red Scare” mindset, especially after Rick Santelli’s rant on the stock exchange, causing Tea Parties to emerge across the state, because, in their reality, universal health care translated into the dreaded “S” word of the 1940s—Socialism. In this sense, the Raleigh, NC Tea Party not only saw the President for his race, but his rhetoric largely reminded them of a “Communist/Socialist dictator who must be stopped,” quoted an NC Tea Party member. Conveniently, both Art Pope and John Hood were there waiting for the call to organize, and while tension kept building, leading up to the movement’s emergence, they continued to funnel money and resources into their network of political action committees, think tanks, and foundations that would help get the movement up-and-running in the state.

A Review of “Color Blind Racism” within the local “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” Tea Party Group

A substantial part of the literature examining racial threat has focused on white/black relations. Economic insecurity, in particular, has been linked to heightened tension between racial groups. Blalock (1967) argues that it is during times of economic insecurity that violence and other restrictive policies are enacted by the dominant group in order to maintain their privilege. Beck and Tolnay (1990) show that during the 1882-1930 time period, lynchings of Blacks increased when the price was deflated. This finding was mediated by increases in cotton production. In this sense, white farmers’ insecurity over economic returns from their crops served as an impetus for lynchings and other forms of racial violence. Blalock’s (1967)

proposition is supported in recent research showing that racial threat is a key catalyst for the formation of white supremacists, militias, and hate groups (Dyer, 1997; McVeigh, 2004; Van Dyke & Soule, 2002). Here the research tends to support the hypothesis that white prejudice increases with the size of the Black population (Dixon, 2006).

While overt racism could be found, particularly in the comments section of the Tea Party Movement Resource, TPMuckraker, overall, I found support for Bonilla-Silva's (2014) theory of "Color Blind Racism" in the newspaper articles I reviewed. A majority of the articles fit under the "Abstract Liberalism" frame, which "involves using ideas associated with political liberalism, for example, equal opportunity." (p. 1986). The abstract liberalism frame also captures "the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy and economic liberalism," (p.1986). The second frame Bonilla-Silva (2014) reviews is the "naturalization" frame, which he regards as "a frame that allows whites to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences" (p.1986). I only found two cases where naturalization fit. A third frame Bonilla-Silva (2014) discusses is the "cultural racism" frame, which he describes as "a frame that relies on culturally based arguments" to arrive at heavily biased conclusions (p.1986). I found many examples of this particular framework when examining the newspaper articles. A fourth and final frame Bonilla-Silva (2014) describes is the "minimization of racism" frame, which is a "frame that suggests discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities' life chances" (p. 2009). I found a few examples of this in the newspaper articles I analyzed, as well. I would have to agree with Bonilla-Silva, partially, in his assessment. The racism that I found in the vignettes, in my study, is both symbolic and color-blind. Again, it wasn't always symbolic, however. When the pressure is on, the individuals in my study became more and more overtly racist.

The Limitations of the Case Study Approach to Examining the Local Tea Party Group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!”

The limitations of the Case Study approach involve the issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability. As Hamel (1993) observes, "the case study has basically been faulted for its lack of representativeness...and its lack of rigor in the collection, construction, and analysis of the empirical materials" that give rise to this study (p.23). This lack of rigor is linked to the problem of bias, introduced by the subjectivity of the researcher and others involved in the case.

While the local Tea Party group, “Triangle Conservatives Unite!” continues to operate within an even broader social movement in North Carolina, again, this is only one group within the entire movement itself. It is necessary to examine groups, particularly outside of the South, to compare findings and denote differences. The arguments in this paper are not generalizable to the entire Tea Party movement on the broad scale, but it is my hope that this paper has highlighted the importance of considering the movement from the perspective of geographical regions within the United States. Given the historical tension in the South due to race relations during the slave days, it is neither irresponsible nor inaccurate to argue that these tensions still exist and affect the political landscape of the entire country, especially when a social movement erupts within its domain.

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