Chapter 3: Three-Layer Movements, Resources, and the Tea Party

Tina Fetner, McMaster University

and

Brayden G. King, Northwestern University

When Anna Kroyman, who runs a telephone sales business out of her home in Monticello, Indiana, heard about the government bailout of big business, she was fed up. She was inspired by Rick Santelli's rant from the floor of the Chicago Board of Trade opposing federal assistance to homeowners facing foreclosure. She went online to learn about the Tea Party and found TeaPartyPatriots.org, a professionally developed and maintained website of the social movement organization of the same name. The site was a source of information about local and national Tea Party organizations, and it also contained a feature that allowed Anna to enter her zip code to find a local Tea Party group. When she found that the closest group was two hours away, Tea Party Patriots taught her how to start her own group and register it with them, in case other Monticello residents wanted to join. She also made connections with other Tea Party leaders around the country and found support in their communications:

> TeaPartyPatriots.org - they are the beating heart of the movement. They started it and their website was a connection for groups all over the country to find each other. ...I looked at Tea Party Patriots and I saw nothing in my area, but I did see that groups had popped up in the very beginning, in Texas, California, other parts of the country, Florida. So, I emailed those

> group leaders that were on Tea Party Patriots to say "How did you do it? How did you get your group? How did you get people to know you were there?" And all I got was support, "Don't give up; don't give up." I said "When we get twelve members, I'm going to hold a meeting," and they said "Don't wait. If you get five people, hold a meeting. If you get three people, hold a meeting" (Anna Kroyman, telephone interview, May 13, 2011).

Anna did exactly that and became the founder of the White County Tea Party Patriots group. Anna's transition from bystander to activist was surprisingly rapid. Feeling that something needed to change, she was able to easily get information, make connections with others, start an organization and connect with a national network of similar groups. Studies of social movement emergence to date have not revealed such a smooth incorporation of individuals into activism, such a seamless transition from the emotional state of dissatisfaction to a fully mobilized state of participation in a functioning and active social movement.

What facilitated this rapid movement emergence? Three important factors were: 1) an infrastructure that allowed people to quickly identify local Tea Party organizations or to start a new group if none was available, 2) a set of powerful media allies in Fox News and conservative talk radio, which not only broadcast news about the emergent movement, but actively promoted its events and valorized its participants, and 3) wealthy entrepreneurs and corporate sponsors who provided valuable resources to the movement. Although the movement would never have gained the national prominence that it did without the support of volunteer activists, the resources and infrastructure provided by established actors, like

entrepreneurs and the media, magnified the influence of these local activists, enabling them to quickly build a powerful, national movement.

The Tea Party is unique in a number of ways, but one of the most distinctive features of the Tea Party was its rapid emergence and rise to national political power. The large amounts of resources available to the movement from its outset--indeed even before its beginning--put the Tea Party on a fast track relative to other movements scholars have observed. The Tea Party mobilized quickly, facilitated mass protest almost immediately, identified and supported candidates for local elections, and became an instantly recognized cultural and political phenomenon.

Certainly one of the factors that made this rapid emergence and rise to influence possible was the abundance of resources made available to would-be organizers like Anna. Compared to most new social movements, the Tea Party, from the very beginning, was resource-rich. As several investigative journalists have revealed, the movement had the support of wealthy individuals and corporations who have donated money to the cause, built movement infrastructure and promoted movement events and protests. We consider the challenges that corporate resources, which so few social movements have access to, might pose to a body of social movement theory that has culled its insights largely from social movements in which resources are scarce--often profoundly so. Our paper asks: are resources just resources? Does the source or the timing of resources influence a movement's political focus? Are the political interests of a movement endogenous to the resources' source? These questions, perhaps not as obvious to us when studying progressive movements, are made clear in the current era of corporate-supported

“grassroots” movements. The Tea Party is certainly the most prominent of these movements, giving us a window into the dynamics that link corporate interests and grass root activism.

Resources in Social Movements Theory

Social movement scholars have known for decades that resources are important to social movement mobilization. McCarthy and Zald's (1977) seminal work on resource mobilization theory posits that activism is akin to other tasks that involve complex coordination. Organizational strength, resources in the form of both money and personnel, and network ties are crucial to establishing and maintaining a social movement. These are also important influences, resource mobilization theory holds, for movement outcomes such as policy success. Claims of the value of resources to social movements have withstood substantial empirical analysis (for an extensive review, see McCarthy and Zald 2001).

In particular, social movement scholarship on resources has focused on the organizational infrastructure that supports and facilitates activism. Social movement organizations both emerge from and are embedded within networks that support their growth (e.g. Diani 2003). Coalitions between movements facilitate movement growth and goal attainment (Van Dyke and McCammon 2010). Andrews (2001) argued that these organizations and networks constitute a movement’s infrastructure, which supports activism by providing leadership and other needed resources. His analysis of the Mississippi civil rights movement demonstrates that movements in areas with strong movement infrastructure had a larger impact than movements in areas with weaker

infrastructures (see also Andrews 2004). Soule and King (2008) found that the kind of organizational infrastructure matters to movement survival, especially in times of economic turbulence when resources are low. Large, generalist organizations that have complex organizational abilities have a higher rate of survival during economic downturns than small, specialist movement organizations. For all of our idealistic hopes for the prosperity of mom-and-pop grassroots movements, past research clearly shows that the movements that prosper tend to have the support of complex and resource-plentiful organizations.

However, this body of work primarily focuses on social movements that emerge under conditions of scarce resources, and for good reason. Most social movements address issues of oppression, injustice, or inequality on behalf of a socially and/or economically marginalized group or social sector. In these cases, movement participants must roll up their sleeves and work to raise funds and recruit volunteers to sustain their activism. Resources from wealthy donors are not immediately available. Movement organizers usually start small and become more resource-rich after initial, incremental successes. Plentiful resources usually only come after a long period of movement gestation during which a small cadre of leaders and activists create infrastructure, allowing them to develop a core group of supporters and movement ideas (Morris and Staggenborg 2004). Resource injections are often episodic, sparked by the success of a movement event or a sudden shift in the political environment, but the majority of movements are characterized by high uncertainty and extreme fluctuation in resource availability (see Summers-Effler 2010 for vivid examples). Movement leaders continually deal with the question, where will

resources come from next?

The Tea Party, however, did not emerge under conditions of scarce resources. Although clearly not all local Tea Party organizations enjoy the benefits of resource munificence, the emergence of the Tea Party movement occurred at a time when corporations and other elites infused the right wing movement sector with resources, looking for voices to carry an agenda consistent with their private interests. As we discuss below, the Tea Party's emergence has been initially sustained by large-scale donations by corporations and wealthy individuals and by free cultural support from Fox News and other conservative media venues (Skocpol and Williamson 2012). The Tea Party was, compared to other new movements, a resource-rich movement, perhaps even one in which resources ran ahead of the grass-roots participants. This phenomenon poses an important theoretical challenge to social movement scholars: does the timing and source of resources matter to the development of a movement? Putting political ideology aside, does it matter when and how a movement is funded?

Three-layer movements

To conceptualize the role of resources and movement infrastructure in resource-rich social movements, and to connect them to other movements as well as to existing scholarship, we posit the three-layer movement, in which movement infrastructures are supported from above by donations from resource-rich donors, as well as from below by grassroots supporters and protest participants. Although the three-layer movement is by no means exclusive to the Tea Party, this movement typifies this structure and thus provides an ideal setting to examine how resources and their timing of availability may shape

movement dynamics.

We conceptualize resource-rich social movements as being composed of three layers. The bottom layer consists of grassroots activists and their participation, energy, and contributions. Above them, as social movement theory already knows, is an infrastructure of organizations and networks that coordinate activism and mobilize participants. The top layer, where it exists, is a set of well-funded supporters of the movement who contribute resources to building and maintaining the movement infrastructure and sponsoring mobilization of the grassroots. In addition to corporate and elite sponsors, the top layer also consists of the various foundations, think tanks and media organizations that provide leadership and cultural resources for a movement.

Bottom-up movements are what we think of when we imagine a truly grassroots movement: activists build networks and institutions, form a collective identity, create collective action frames, mobilize participants, and utilize elite ties when available. Poor people's movements, as described by Piven and Cloward (1977), or early labor movements typify bottom-up movements (Cornfield 1991). Bottom-up movements initially have few elite allies with deep pockets and are often engaged in political conflict with wealthy interests, and therefore rely on indigenous resources to shape the early development of their movements (Morris 1981). Other movements are primarily grassroots, but are also sustained by contributions from corporate partners or sympathetic wealthy individuals. Usually these movements initially begin through grassroots organizing and then develop business ties after they have achieved some success and recognition. One example is the lesbian and gay movement, which developed alongside lesbian and gay business ventures,

primarily in urban enclaves (Armstrong 2002). These movements often draw extensively from a middle- and professional class of supporters and have more social ties to sources of wealth.

The Tea Party, as far as we can tell, is a top-down movement, in which a top layer of business corporations and wealthy donors used their resources to construct the necessary movement infrastructure used to mobilize grassroots participants. The Tea Party's access to resources is substantial and was present from the first moments of movement emergence. Few movements have such a resource-rich top layer during their formation period, probably because the interests of corporations and the very wealthy are mostly addressed outside the realm of social movements. These resource-rich movements may emerge when there are blockages to direct influence of polity insiders or, such as in the Tea Party, when the movement's goals are election-based and therefore require the mobilization of a large number of people to engage in activism (e.g., vote for a particular candidate). In addition, as can be seen in the case of corporate-sponsored grassroots organizing (Walker 2008, 2010), businesses may inject resources into a movement in order to promote their private interests in a less transparent form than direct lobbying. When wealthy actors seek to influence the political process directly, through lobbying or traditional public relations, they risk destroying the credibility of their argument as the general public may see their attempts as blatantly self-interested. By using social movements as vehicles, business corporations and wealthy individuals can influence public opinion, electoral victories, and legislative action without losing credibility.

So, to what extent can resource mobilization theory simply be applied to top-down

movements like the Tea Party? To what extent does resource abundance matter to social movements? How does the relationship between rich donors and grassroots activists affect movement goals? How does the abundance of resources affect collective action frames, collective identity, and movement strategy? Is resource abundance sufficient to produce desired outcomes? Below, we examine the Tea Party as one example of how an infusion of top-down resources influences mobilization and movement outcomes and compare it to other movements that have benefited from top-down resources during their emergence. Just as important, we consider the extent to which the existence of three-layer movements challenges existing theory on movements and resources.

Tea Party Resources

As Skocpol and Williamson (2012) carefully document, several resource-rich organizations had a hand in the emergence and mobilization of the Tea Party movement. They demonstrate that even before the emergence of the Tea Party, several "highly ideological right-wing billionaires" (p. 102) who want the Republican Party to shift to the libertarian extreme and have a long record of lobbying, supporting think tanks and funding institutions, saw an opportunity for mass mobilization on the right when the Tea Party began to emerge. Skocpol and Williamson's account is consistent with the writing of a number of investigative journalists. For example, Jane Mayer's (2010) exposé of corporate funding in the New Yorker follows the Koch brothers' development of right-wing think tanks and lobbying organizations through the establishment of FreedomWorks, which sponsored the creation of the Tea Party Patriots. Chris Good's (2010) work in *The Atlantic* and Andrew Goldman's (2010) piece in *New York Magazine* provide additional

information about the complexity of the political influence of the apparatus created by the Koch brothers and key Republican insiders such as Dick Armey. While we may not have a comprehensive understanding of all the resources available to the Tea Party, we are confident that these accounts are sufficient to establish our premise that this was a well-funded movement even before activists began protesting. Given that, we wish to consider the mechanisms through which these various "top-layer" providers of movement resources provided support to the Tea Party movement.

Facilitating Grassroots Mobilization

Although some have accused the Tea Party of being an "astroturf" movement, there is a sector of this movement that is genuinely grassroots. The biggest organization to mobilize mass participation is Tea Party Patriots, a network of local, grassroots social movement organizations. The group is organized around a website that contains a search engine through which individuals can enter their zip code to learn about local social movement organizations in their area. This web-based search engine has been an important mechanism for mobilization, encouraging participants to join local groups or to start new ones when no one else had. Tea Party Patriots also hosts a weekly internet conference call to set the organization's agenda, plan events, and provide support across local social movement organizations. Journalists have claimed that the group's emergence was sponsored by FreedomWorks, the 501(c)(4) organization funded by the Koch Brothers and run by Republican strategist Dick Armey (Buetler 2009, Fang 2009). FreedomWorks has at times denied this connection, but the group did admit that it had received a $1,000,000 donation from an anonymous source to distribute among local Tea Party organizations in

advance of the 2010 midterm elections (Khan 2010). Other news accounts have disclosed emails between Tea Party Patriots and FreedomWorks (Good 2009, Roth 2009a).

Although Tea Party chapters are indeed founded by local activists who run their organizations independently, their activism has been greatly facilitated by the technical mechanisms established by FreedomWorks. The social network built through the TeaPartyPatriots.org website is populated with grassroots members, but the capacity to build this social network was created with resources provided from above. By avoiding the appearance of being funded directly by corporate sponsors, Tea Party organizations are able to maintain grassroots involvement while still benefitting from a well established infrastructure supported by corporate sponsors.

Astroturf Organizations

Some Tea Party organizations benefit from more direct connections to wealthy supporters. Members of organizations affiliated with the Tea Party Patriots, in fact, have publicly criticized other organizations for being GOP-controlled "astroturf" organizations. For example, the Tea Party Express was founded by a political action committee (PAC), the Our Country Deserves Better PAC, in 2009. Its primary activism has been a series of bus tours of the United States, holding rallies in cities along the stops and supporting Tea Party candidates. The group has purchased advertising to support the election efforts of candidates: over $200,000 for Delaware's Christine O'Donnell and over $500,000 for Alaska's Joe Miller, who was elected to the U.S. Senate (Beckel 2010). However, most of the money raised by the Tea Party Express appears to go back to the coffers of its PAC's founders, a Republican consulting firm, Russo, Marsh, and Rogers, which received over

$850,000 over the period from July through November 2009 (Roth 2009b).

Unlike the Tea Party Patriots, a network of groups locally organized by independent activists, the Tea Party Express has close ties to the Republican Party, is organized hierarchically and makes its strategic decisions from a small group of powerful leaders with deep pockets. When it holds rallies to appeal to mass audiences, it is not so much about mobilizing mass participants as raising funds to direct either to candidates or to the founders of the group. The Tea Party Express, inasmuch as it represents the masses at all, has the qualities of synthetic grassroots organizing characteristic of astroturf organizations (Lyon and Maxwell 2004).

Other organizations claim to be activist, but seem to be more oriented to generating revenue. For example, the Tea Party Nation, founded in 2009 by Judson Phillips of Tennessee, hosts a social networking site for conservative activists and sponsored the 2010 National Tea Party Convention, at which Sarah Palin was the keynote speaker (Vogel 2009). The convention supported the Tea Party movement by hosting workshops for training leaders of local organizations. The group was criticized by other Tea Party activists for charging over $500 attendance fees and for paying $100,000 to Ms. Palin. In the controversy, the fact that this organization was not a non-profit group emerged (Zernike 2010). These actions led many supporters of the Tea Party to distance themselves from this group.

Cultural Support

Perhaps the most important top-layer resource made available to Tea Party activists has been the conservative media's support for the Tea Party's cultural efforts: identity

building, issue framing, mobilization of participants and communication to mass audiences. For example, Fox News took a leadership role in publicizing Tea Party events. This role extended beyond mere reporting of the news as they organized Tax Day Tea Party events branded with their logo and hosted by their on-air personalities. They made direct pleas to their viewers to attend Tea Party events and to join the movement (Hananoki 2009). Fox News covered the Tea Party on its news programs, as well as giving the movement extensive attention on its opinion shows, such as *Fox & Friends*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, *Hannity*, *America Live with Megyn Kelly* and before its cancellation, *Glenn Beck.* As Fox News has an audience share that dwarfs other television news sources in the United States, the work they did to publicize and support the Tea Party reached a mass audience that other fledgling (or even established) social movements could never dream of (see, for example, Andrews and Caren 2010, Amenta, et al. 2009, Sobieraj 2011 on news coverage of protests).

Fox News is not the only cultural outlet actively supporting the Tea Party movement, however. Conservative talk radio personalities like Rush Limbaugh, Michael Savage, Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity, the most widely listened to radio hosts in the country, have spent countless hours discussing their support of the Tea Party to their listeners (Skocpol and Williamson 2012). Writers on conservative blogs, newspaper columns and political monographs including Michelle Malkin and Anne Coulter have argued in support of the Tea Party online and in print, as well as by appearing as pundits on television and radio venues. Other print venues such as the *Wall Street Journal* have provided space for opinion pieces supporting the social movement (e.g., Noonan 2010,

Williams 2010). While some of this media support may stem from the movement winning the support of allies, much as Lipsky (1968) argued most powerless movements do, the Tea Party movement from the beginning (from the moment Rick Santelli mobilized people to take action during his rant on CNBC) has had a powerful advocacy partner in conservative media.

There are primarily three types of support that large amounts of resources provided to the early activism of the Tea Party: 1) the building of organizational apparatus/structure (including the organization of Tea Party events to mobilize supporters--e.g., Tax Day protests), 2) the elections of Tea Party candidates in the midterm elections, and 3) the cultural promotion of Tea Party events and protestors in large-scale media outlets. These sources of funds not only provided start-up money but also created channels through which efficient fundraising could occur. According to Skocpol and Williamson (2012), these resources also serve a number of additional functions to support the Tea Party movement. For example, big funders offer training to grassroots organizers, they sponsor speakers who will provide programming at local Tea Party meetings, they host social networks for grassroots activists and they sponsor the large national gatherings that Tea Party activists can attend.

Movements with top-down resources

Rather than being entirely unique, the Tea Party movement's links to wealthy funders seems to be following a historical trend in neoconservative politics. Looking at other movements that have benefitted from ties to business interests or wealthy elites may give us a greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing top-down

movements and, in particular, the Tea Party movement. Businesses have a recent history of funding movements that promote ideologies or policies that align with their private interests. Typically, corporations promote nonprofit organizations indirectly by funding foundations and charities through their philanthropic endeavors (Galaskiewicz 1997, Guthrie 2010), with some of these funds finding their way to activist organizations (McQuarrie 2010). While some corporate funding falls under the label of "corporate social responsibility," there is also a link between corporate outreach and their promotion of specific political agendas. This link became more pronounced in the 1970s and 80s. Prior to this time, corporate giving was largely seen as charitable and intended to produce social goods. However, in the 1970s and 80s a sea change in corporate funding of foundations and charities took place, spurred in part by the rise of the neoconservative movement and the redirecting of resources to foundations and nonprofit organizations that were aligned with this movement.

Irving Kristol (1977), one of the leading early voices of neoconservatism, argued forcefully in the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal* that businesses ought to be selective in which forms of philanthropy they pursue:

> When you give away your own money, you can be as foolish, as arbitrary, as whimsical as you like. But when you give away your stockholders' money, your philanthropy must serve the longer-term interests of the corporation. *Corporate philanthropy should not be, cannot be, disinterested*" (emphasis added, 1977: 18).

Kristol echoed Milton Friedman's (1970) earlier admonition that businesses did not

have “social responsibilities” except to create a profit. Other forms of philanthropy or corporate giving went against the shareholder mandate to create wealth. This mantra was repeatedly voiced by neoconservative critics who believed the business community was indirectly supporting the liberal agenda when they donated funds to social causes merely to improve the public good. They envisioned a new agenda of corporate giving that would direct resources – and thereby qualify them for corporate tax credits – to foundations possessing “an ethos of antiregulatory, anti-bureaucratic entrepreneurship as the basis of a reconfigured, decidedly more market friendly and antistatist” agenda (O’Connor 2010: 125).

Although corporations at that time were still prevented from funding direct forms of political advocacy, this shift in attitude led to the proliferation of corporate givers funding nonprofits with conservative leanings that could be persuaded to promote policies and ideas aligned with their own private interests. Two of the most visible foundations, the John M. Olin Foundation and Federalist Society, began to actively promote the law and economics movement – the organized push to change the tenor of academic debate and to promote market (and conservative) friendly scholarship in law schools (Teles 2009). Of course, funders of this movement, which notably included the Coors family, intended to change more than just how law was theorized by scholars; ultimately, conservative donors and activists hoped to create a cadre of legal professionals that would replace the liberal elite they perceived had a hold over the judicial system. The result of this movement was to create a school of thought, gradually adopted by prestigious law reviews and law school sponsors, that would become the home of the most conservative lawyers and judges in the

generation to come (e.g., Antonin Scalia was the first faculty adviser for the University of Chicago's chapter of the Federalist Society). The movement not only helped conservative activists to form a more-or-less pro-market ideology, in part because of the increasing concentration of law and economics scholars in elite law schools (Manne 2005), but it also created the organizational and social infrastructure that would form the spine of the market-facing legal community. Future SEC regulators, federal judges, and Justice Department administrators would come from that community.

The legal sphere was not the only part of society to be affected by the shifting of corporate funds to conservative-leaning nonprofits. The Bradley Foundation, the Capital Research Center, the Heritage Foundation, and other nonprofit think tanks and watchdog groups benefited (O'Connor 2010). However, perhaps a more lasting legacy of shift in funding was to move even traditionally liberal foundations, like the Brookings Institute, more to the right. Although many of these foundations were ideologically predisposed to favor free market policies, corporate resources also made them easily susceptible to seeing things the way their corporate sponsors saw them. Foundations' promotion of particular policy solutions was suddenly more vulnerable to corporate influence.

More deceptive and insidious than funding foundations has been the corporate practice of directly funding grassroots campaigns. Since the early 1970s, corporations have become increasingly involved in funding grassroots lobbying campaigns, groups made to look like grassroots movement activists but that are primarily or solely funded by corporations. Walker (2009) argues that this trend has had a major impact on civil society in the US and not in entirely positive ways. Although corporate funding of grassroots

activity has almost certainly increased participation, more generally, it has increased the civic sector's dependence on corporate resources, thereby weakening social capital and the development of civic skills. Moreover, Walker (2012) argues that the main purpose of these corporate efforts is to gain some control over their stakeholders and to align public opinion with their corporate interests. Thus, these campaigns are specifically engineered to shape public opinion to support corporate-friendly policies (e.g., lower corporate taxes). Thus, firms that use more direct lobbying, that have in-house public affairs offices, and that have already donated significant funds to Republican PACS – i.e., the most politically engaged firms – are the most likely to engage in grassroots lobbying.

Foundation funding and corporate sponsored grassroots activism are both indirect means to influence policy and electoral outcomes; however, in the past businesses have been prevented from direct sponsorship or campaigning of a candidate by strict campaign laws. However, the 2010 Supreme Court decision, Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission, further changed the nature of corporate sponsored political activity. The case ruled that Citizens United, a nonprofit political advocacy organization, could legally show a political advertisement criticizing then presidential candidate Hilary Clinton thirty days before the election. While the ruling might have been implemented as a mere rebuttal of campaign reform, the Court instead interpreted the law generally to apply to First Amendment rights held by all citizens, including those of the corporate variety. Thus, business corporations were given new leeway in exercising their free speech by engaging in direct political advocacy. The timing, of course, perfectly coincided with the rise of the Tea Party. Under this new liberalization of corporate free speech, businesses now have

unfettered freedom to fund activism.

Although there is no guarantee that movement activists, including the Tea Party, will unilaterally side with their corporate sponsors on every issue (and, in fact, the crisis over Congress's raising of the debt ceiling indicates that sometimes they do not), the examples cited above suggest that corporations intend to co-opt movement activists to serve their interests. While corporate leaders may share a similar political ideology with these activists, this ideological resonance is secondary to the political interests of the firm in determining why and how they seek to fund movements. Businesses and wealthy individuals have followed the advice of Irving Kristol in using their nonprofit funding to assist organizations and movements that they believe will push candidates and policies that serve their own private interests. The Tea Party movement, in this light, is an ideal candidate for corporate funding. The Tea Party, emerging shortly after the election of President Obama and a significant weakening of traditional Republican PACs and interest groups, was perfectly suited as a vessel for the promotion of corporate interests.

The availability of top-down resources facilitated the emergence of the Tea Party by helping activists to quickly build an organizational infrastructure that made it easy to recruit participants in the movement, find organizations near them, and coordinate, organize, and participate in protest activities. It is clear that a large pool of material and cultural resources was directed to supporting Tea Party movement emergence, though it is not known exactly how large that pool was. Unlike most fledgling movements, the Tea Party had a very robust set of start-up funds instantly available upon movement emergence. The infrastructure built by corporate and individual donations quickly and

nimbly connected like-minded individuals, brought them together with others in their geographic area, directed them to existing organizations, and informed them about upcoming protest activities. This organizational infrastructure also trained future Tea Party leaders and gave interested individuals information on how to start a local organization if one did not yet exist. It provided abundant, free advertising of Tea Party-sponsored protests and events. To use the language of rational choice theory, this quickly constructed infrastructure removed the usual barriers to mobilization by substantially reducing the cost of participation for interested individuals. An important question for social movement scholars is, what impact has the availability of top-down resources had on the movement's ideology and goals? Does the injection of top-down resources during the movement's origin affect its long-term viability?

Theorizing the consequences of top-down resource mobilization

Our conceptualization of a three-layer movement offers a twist to our understanding of movement's relationships with and dependence on resources. Extending resource mobilization theory's basic idea that much movement activity can be explained by their access to resources, this conceptualization pushes us to consider the source of resources as an important determinant of a movement's trajectory and outcomes. Movements that build their resources from the bottom-up face different challenges and opportunities than those that are injected with resources from the top-down. In this section we consider how movements that originate with a dependence on top-down resources may differ from other social movements. We discuss these implications for the Tea Party movement specifically and for social movement theory more generally.

Sequencing of movement emergence

Big-money movements call for social movement theorists to reconsider our understandings of the sequence of movement emergence. Social movement theory's current assumptions about the work of building a movement, framing issues, developing collective identities, and charting out strategic action may be out of sync with a top-down movement's ability to quickly mobilize grassroots bases, even before movement participants have settled on a coherent set of issue frames or strategic goals. Does the presence of large-scale resources obviate the need to carefully prepare for mobilization? As discussed above, it may be possible to form and mobilize a relatively large movement before a cadre of leadership develops.

Similarly, top-down movements may experience different rates of decline than bottom-up movements. Having grown to depend on resources from wealthy donors early on, these movements may be especially susceptible to failure when the political environment changes and their agenda no longer becomes central to the advancement of their wealthy sponsors' interests. Dependence on corporate resources or other sources of wealth may inhibit their ability to develop strong social capital and ties to the community that would sustain the movement through setbacks (Walker 2009). The lack of a well-developed grassroots base may increase the vulnerability of these movements to an early demise. One of the intriguing puzzles of the Tea Party phenomenon is whether a movement that was so heavily influenced by top-down resources during its formation can maintain coherence and unity as the movement grows and whether it will ever be able to completely wean itself from those resources to form a truly grassroots movement.

Although it is too early to forecast the fate of the Tea Party movement, one journalist's qualitative sampling of Tea Party protests suggests that attendance has declined significantly since their peak in 2010, and some cities that once had a strong Tea Party presence no longer exhibit much party activity (Seitz-Wald 2011). Sociologist Theda Skocpol suggests that by the spring of 2012, the number of Tea Party groups had fallen by 40 percent from its peak (Arrillaga 2012). Evidence of the movement's decline is consistent with the hypothesis that top-down movements fluctuate more in strength and participation and are more susceptible to failure.

Infrastructure development

Despite our concerns about the long-term viability of top-down movements, the emergence of the Tea Party provides no doubt that these movements can proliferate rapidly and efficiently develop widespread support and participation. While social movement theory understands clearly that organizations and movement infrastructures support collective action, for the most part little attention is paid to how this infrastructure is built. Rather, most scholarship takes for granted that organizational infrastructure is pre-existing and indigenous to the communities in which they form (Morris 1981). Reliance on local, indigenous resources may not be as necessary as was once true.

With new technologies, like the Internet and social media, social movements can build infrastructures very quickly, establish networks, organize communication and facilitate protest events at a much lower cost than was true in the past (Earl and Kimport 2011). If we were to consider only the Tea Party's online infrastructure as a resource, we might jump to the conclusion that this was the most important transformation that allowed

them to quickly mobilize tens of thousands of participants in a national reform movement. But in reality, social movements vary in their effectiveness in using web technology to mobilize participation and spread their perspectives. In the case of the Tea Party movement, it seems to be the combination of the availability of technology and a strong supportive infrastructure developed through top-down resources that made local organizers so effective in creating a community of activists. Without top-down resources an effective online social network might not have emerged when and how it did, but perhaps more important than this, without the extremely active support of conservative media outlets who blasted the Tea Party's message into millions of American homes, it is unlikely that most participants would have ever found their way to the websites. In this sense, the conservative media opened the opportunity for online activism to become an effective outlet for the Tea Party.

Cultural processes

One of the central tenets of social movement theory is that the process of constructing a collective identity that defines activists and connects them to their social change goals is a necessary step in movement emergence. However, the Tea Party has offered an interesting counter-example in which collective identities that have long been used to signal connection with national interests--labels such as American, patriot, and of course the term Tea Party itself--have been marshaled to bring identity coherence to a heterogeneous group of activists. Moreover, the labels have been used to draw a sharp boundary between Tea Party insiders and the outsiders who support government programs and policies. That the protestors have adopted the claim to the identity "real Americans"

and named the government itself as an outsider to American identity is a puzzle worth social movement theory's attention.

Rather than point to the corporate donations that built movement infrastructure in this case, however, the likely source of this collective identity coup is the cultural support provided by television news and talk-radio. Fox News in particular has been explicitly supportive of the Tea Party protests (Hananoki 2009). The 24-hour news cycle has provided cultural support in unprecedented amounts. Whereas most social movements must hold "endless meetings" to hash out collective identities and manage problems of boundary maintenance (Polletta 2002), the Tea Party has held its meetings virtually through celebrity opinion-makers such as Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity, as well as a stream of pundits, politicians, and Tea Party activists, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The financial value of this cultural support is astronomical, and we argue that it should be included in the calculation of top-down resources supporting this activism. But the question for social movement theory is whether this cultural support created a process for collective identity building that is unlike that of resource-scarce social movements, or whether the process was the same, but just accelerated by these cultural resources.

Agenda and outcomes

By imagining a social movement as having three layers—grassroots resources, infrastructure and organizational resources, and resources from corporate and wealthy donors --we can consider how the scale of resources might affect the pattern of movement emergence. For example, it raises questions about the relationship between wealthy or corporate donors and grassroots participants. Do grassroots supporters of big-money

movements, to a greater extent than traditional movements with scarce resources, play a substantively different role in establishing the political goals of the movement, or in determining the strategic plan for social change?

This dynamic is especially important and impactful when a movement gets funding from a wealthy source early in its existence before movement leaders have had a chance to formulate a coherent set of objectives. In short, corporate sponsors may be able to co-opt a movement before it ever has a chance to decide what it is or what it seeks to accomplish. A movement's dependence on resources undoubtedly makes them more likely to succumb to the will and influence of the powerful actors that fund their activities (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, Jenkins and Perrow 1977, Piven and Cloward 1977). Typically movements are co-opted following a successful tactic, which tends to lead to de-radicalization, but movements that originate with a dependence on top-down resources may already be sufficiently captured by these interests that they are never able to develop goals outside of the specific agenda set by their wealthy donors. Although movement activists may be ideologically motivated to pursue a radical agenda of government reform, their ability to push for reforms that go against the interests of their corporate funders may be limited.

We can take the example of another top-down movement, the religious right, as a lesson in the efficacy of this form of movement. Over its 30-year history, the religious right in the United States has built a tremendous infrastructure for activism, connecting churches with activist organizations, reshaping the policy agenda of the Republican Party, and influencing electoral outcomes at federal, state and local levels (see, for example, Fetner 2008). It has also influenced policy outcomes to some extent, such as in placing

limits on access to abortion and preventing the implementation of federal anti-discrimination protections for lesbians and gay men (Werum and Winders 2001). In this movement, large pools of resources were amassed from the grassroots, either as mail-in donations to movement organizations through direct-mail solicitations, as donations to local churches, or as donations and profits of the media empires created by televangelists and evangelical radio broadcasters (Diamond 1995). To the extent that mega-churches, media empires, and wealthy donors contributed to this movement, this would certainly be considered a substantial top-layer of big-money resources, akin to the Tea Party. However, with the exception of elite allies like Republican insider Paul Weyrich that nurtured the emergence of the movement, the movement's emergence was, as far as we can tell, a product of grassroots support for socially conservative political activism. In the Tea Party, the top-down resources fostered the emergence of the movement itself.

In the Tea Party, we already can see some early measures of the impact that this new movement has had on the political landscape. For example, the 2010 midterm elections were certainly influenced by Tea Party activism, with several Tea Party candidates elected to office. Tea Party activism has also held sway in the Republican party, as party leaders such as Ohio Senator John Boehner make clear that the Republican agenda includes the small-government preferences of the Tea Party. In the House, Wisconsin Representative Paul Ryan's rise to Republican stardom and the 2012 vice-presidential nomination was on the wings of his budget proposal that included severe cuts to cherished social programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

Many of the issues around which the Tea Party is most mobilized are also those

important to particular corporate sponsors. By channeling the movement's attention to particular policy issues and providing the means to organize around certain policy issues, wealthy funders may be influencing the goals and tactics of the movement. For example, in the fall of 2010 the coal industry's lobbying group, the Federation for American Coal, Energy, and Security, paid for buses, hotels, and other accommodations to bring 1,500 West Virginians to Washington D.C. to participate in a Tea Party rally to protest federal regulation of mountaintop removal mining.[1] The coal industry is not the only group to organize Tea Party rallies to support their specific policy goals. The Center for Responsive Politics reported that the health insurance industry became the biggest donor to the Tea Party in 2010, using the party to organize protests against the Democrat sponsored health reform act. During their campaign against health reform, health professional groups donated $2.7 million to the Tea Party Caucus alone. One consequence of this injection of resources was to create a tighter coupling of the insurance industry's efforts to defeat

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[1] The details of the protest and its relationship to the coal industry lobbying group can be found at http://www.commondreams.org/view/2010/09/15-4 (accessed: July 22, 2011). A press release from the lobbying group can be found at http://kycoalblog.org/2010/09/14/appalachian-coal-communities-to-rally-at-capitol/ (accessed: July 22, 2011).

health reform and the Tea Party's policy focus.[2]

Of course, there has been some backlash among Tea Party grassroots organizers who resent corporate intrusion. A *Washington Post* article from September, 2010 reported that an effort to hold a national Tea Party convention in Nevada that summer fell apart because local activists would not support what they saw to be an overly-commercialized event (Gardner 2010). The founder of the Nevada Patriots said about the failed convention, "They were trying to come in not so much to gather with the local people but to really just put on an event that maybe didn't have a good intention to begin with. It looked like a commercial event, and it just never really gained traction because the local tea party leaders here didn't get behind it."

Policy depends on how you define an agenda, and in terms of the Tea Party, the agenda is not clear or altogether explicit. In particular, the agendas of grassroots supporters and wealthy donors do not necessarily match, making for a muddy, confusing agenda that is not clearly articulated and contains self-contradictions. For example, it is reasonable to assume that the policies of wealthy, corporate donors include reduced taxes on the wealthy and deregulation of the industries of these various corporations, especially the energy

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[2] Details about the Center for Responsive Politics's analysis can be found at the following websites: http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uuid=7396EF48-9D3E-D830-C4BA8BF98C47C321 and http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2010/07/members-of-tea-party-caucus-major-r.html (accessed: July 22, 2011).

industry. However, grassroots supporters looking for smaller government and debt reduction may push their elected representatives to pursue fiscal policies that endanger the health of the business sector, as we saw happen when Tea Party legislators in the House of Representatives nearly sabotaged Congressional efforts to raise the debt ceiling. It remains to be seen whether the policy "wins" for the wealthy will undermine the Tea Party's grassroots support or whether some ideological “wins” among grassroots supporters will cause their corporate sponsors to become less enthusiastic about supporting the Tea Party in the future.

Taken together, these questions show that social movement scholarship should pay greater attention to resource-rich social movements like the Tea Party. The Tea Party shows us that top-down resources from corporations or wealthy donors can potentially affect the sequencing of movement emergence (and possibly decline), the development of movement infrastructure, the cultural processes of collective identity formation and issue framing, as well as the agenda-setting and outcomes of the social movements they support. The Tea Party can be seen as one of several movements that represent elite interests, and as such they pose some new questions that social movement scholarship, which has focused on bottom-up movement emergence, has not yet had to address.

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