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ANALYZING THE SUCCESS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORIES APPLIED TO OCCUPY WALL STREET AND THE TEA PARTY

Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Bachelor of Education

In The Department of Political Science

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<u>Introduction</u>

Two significant social movements, Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party have entered onto the political scene within the last decade, both having significantly different impacts upon the political discourse and political establishment within the United States. The question remains, however, which elements of each movement is ascribed to its corresponding success or failure? Three social movement theories: Resource Mobilization Theory, Political Process Theory, and Collective Identity Theory, better help explain the results of these movements. While none of the individual theories fully explores all the necessary elements required to explain the results of these movements, and each aids the other in exploring both movements more fully, Resource Mobilization Theory best explains each movement's progress, with a proper focus being placed upon the resources at the disposable of Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party. Each theory's effectiveness in explaining both social movements will be measured, on a 3 scale basis, in regards to both group formation and political efficacy.

Social Movement Theories

One Theory that can be used to explain the progress, or lack thereof, of a social movement is Collective Identity Theory. Unlike Resource Mobilization Theory and Political Process Theory, CIT captures the human element of social movements by stating humans are not rational actors, instead stating that their actions stem from such things as ideology, emotions, values, traditions and groups. Such shared feelings (real or not real) bring together members to support a cause due to the identity being built and constructed within the movement itself. In order for social movements to draw in people to support them, they must do three things:

convince said people that the issues they care about are important, convince them that alternatives to the current status quo (in regards to the issue they care about) is possible, and that there is a worthiness of the activists they want to mobilize. This theory can explain why Occupy Wall Street, even with a lack of significant impact upon policy, still managed to encourage such mass numbers into its movement. It can also explain the force that drew large numbers of local Tea Party chapters to form together in many states (Carty, 2012). However, it does not distinguish between the two movements, failing to explain why the collective identity of the Tea Party (which is arguably just as strong as Occupy) managed to have dramatically different results compared to Occupy.

Another theory that can be used to describe Occupy and the Tea Party is Political Process Theory. Political Process Theory focuses not on the actors themselves, but explains the impacts of social movements based upon the existence, or lack thereof, of political opportunities created within the political environment. Political context, therefore, heavily contributes to the group's choices in strategy when forming, and carrying out its progress. According to the theory, three main criteria must be met in order for a group to succeed with its efforts. First, members of a group must have an insurgent consciousness, in that members must feel deprived, mistreated, or have a grievance toward the system they are protesting against. Second, the organization must have sufficient strength in order to properly mobilize. Such strength is defined as having a strong and efficient leadership, and sufficient resources to properly mobilize. And finally, the main focus of the theory itself, political opportunities within the political system must be available in such a way that it leaves the system vulnerable to a challenge or change. Such political opportunities can be things such as electorate instability, support for organized opposition by elites, fragmentation among political elites, or decline in repression of the electorate. This theory however, while aiding to understand why the Great Recession established an opening to these movements to make an impact, fails to take into account the human elements of movements. And while it does discuss the importance of resources and organizational structure (as resource mobilization does), it does so stating the need for strong leadership, a trait that both social movements lack (Carty, 2012).

A third theory used to explain the emergence of social movements, and the success and failure of said movements, is resource mobilization theory. RMT (resource mobilization theory) views social moment participants as rational, logical beings who utilize a cost/benefit analysis to make determinations about the actions of their social movement. Primarily, the theory focuses on the acquisition and utilization of resources as a determining factor about the success or failure of a movement. Those that are able to have access to the most resources typically thrive, while those who lack access to them typically fail. Potential resources within the theory include "knowledge, money, media attention, labor, solidarity, Organizational structure, legitimacy, and support from political elites". (Carty, 2012).

One of the prime critics of this theory however is that it lacks any acknowledgement of the political context surrounding the movement at the time, nor does it realistically reflect human action, as such action is not always based upon a rational cost benefit analysis, ignoring human emotion entirely. However RMT can be used to adequately explain the success of the Tea Party to make institutional change (as it had access to a significant number of resources from its birth) and the lack of institutional change made due to Occupy Wall Street (as it lacked sufficient number of resources) (Carty, 2012). And RMT also does not (like political process theory) place a strict definition on organizational strength, allowing to apply itself to each movement more accurately.

Resource Mobilization Theory

Tea Party

Typical social movements begin with scarce resources, slowly building up their influence by building their resources over time. Such things as financial, cultural, and organizational support (crucial elements for any social movement within Resource Mobilization Theory) aid movements in spreading their message to a larger and larger audience, and potentially influencing the political environment. The Tea Party, however, had significant advantages with resource access from its birth. Financially, both big Industry's and well off individuals funded the campaign long before its birth. Culturally, the media (especially conservative media) laid out a positive image for the movement to its viewership, and advertised key events in its attempt to entice membership. In terms of the group's organization, it had a decentralized structure that was advantageous in attracted and maintaining a group of local participants. Under the lens of Resource Mobilization Theory, such advantages would explain the success of the movement.

Unlike many other social movements, the Tea Party did not begin its growth under conditions of scarcity, slowly generating continual increased access to resources to fund its movement, beginning at a grass roots level. In fact, according to a 2013 study from the University of California San Francisco, the birth of The Tea Party was planned long before its public birth in 2009. As far back as 1980, the group had ties to the tobacco industry and other corporate interests. The intent was to push the current right wing political existence within the country more right, in order to create public opposition to legislative regulations regarding tobacco products. They did this, according to the study, through funding third party organizations such as *Citizens for a Sound Economy*, the predecessor to *Americans for Prosperity* and *Freedom Works*, in order to discredit the FDA and fight back against regulations; such organizations have been linked to the Tea Party currently. Such beliefs can be seen within the Tea Party today through their opposition to regulations of tobacco products and environmental regulations. And in fact, even before the 2009 supposed public birth of the Tea Party, traces of the movement can be found online in 2002, where the first Tea Party website was published by the organization “Citizens For a Sound Economy”, which has its funding traced from both the infamous Koch brothers and the tobacco industry (Fallin, 2013) (DeMelle 2013).

The Tea Party’s access to significant financial resources from the Koch brothers contributed to the movement’s success. The Tea Party’s direct corporate backing, which helped establish the movement, can be observed most notably through the financial contributions the Koch brothers have made in the past. The organization “Freedom works” has had consistent links to helping promote, train and organize Tea Party individuals within the movement. And this organization (previously known as Citizens for a sound economy) was established in 1984 through financial contributions of $7.9 million between the years of 1986 and 1993 by the Koch brothers (Mayer, 2010). This trend continued from the years 1998 to 2008, as Koch controlled foundations gave out $196 million to conservative causes. They utilized $50 million from Koch industries to lobby government institutions, and donated $4.8 million in contributions to political action committees (Rich, 2010). In the last decade, the organization has received $12 million from Koch family foundations. They donated such enormous amounts of financial support to the movement, not to support a grass roots movement which was growing within the American populace, but to artificially create a movement which had no public support whatsoever prior to the Koch brother's financial contributions. Bruce Bartlett, a conservative who previously worked within the national center for policy analysis, describes the situation best when he stated "the Koch brothers have been attempting to create a movement which had "all chiefs and no Indians…..[there hasn't been any actual voters] who give a crap about it]" (Mayer, 2010). And such financial contributions have led to the establishment of structural supports (such as Tea Party Patriots.com, a mobilization organization website which lists local Tea Party organizations in your local area), that have propelled the movements to success within the 2010 midterm elections (Mayer, 2010).

The Tea Party also received resources in the form of cultural support, which has significantly aided the movement in building their identity, framing their issues and mobilization of its members. In fact, according to a study by Jules Boykoff from Pacific University, the US media depicted the movement with supportive frames twice as often then "the deprecatory characterizations the activists opposed" (Boykoff, 2011). Such support came from none other than the conservative network of Fox News. Not only did the organization publically help organize Tea Party events, and encourage the membership of its audience to heavily participate within such events, but it also gave the movement a significant amount of publicity from its endless hours of airtime on the movement. Individuals such as Rush Limbaugh, Michael Savage, Glenn Beck , Sean Hannity, all those who have some of the most watch radio shows on air, spent a plethora of hours discussing the movement in a positive manner (Fetner, 2014). One perfect example of this was when Fox News anchors continually encouraged Fox News listeners to attend April 15th "FNC tax day tea party" protests, giving needed information such as: dates, locations, and websites for such events. The station also capitalized on such events to frame them in the context that they arouse in response to the Obama administrations fiscal policies (even though the movement itself claimed the events were non partisan), continually aiding the movement it its ability to target the democratic party and bridge future success in the 2010 midterm elections (Cissel, 2012).

The organizational structure within the Tea Party was a significant contribution to its grassroots success, as it not only had very low barriers for individuals to enter, but it also sustained low maintenance costs and heavily relied on local volunteers. Unlike many grassroots organizations, decentralization was a key feature, operating without any significant guidance from national organizations. Freedomworks and the Tea Party Federation attempted to act as such bodies without much success. This led to a significant number of chapters within areas (such as in South Carolina, which has more than 50 local tea parties) competing, relying upon media (such as Fox News) to sustain a consistent message. While many would see such decentralization as a hindrance upon the movement, it actually appears to be one of the movement's biggest strengths. Such a structure attracted a significant number of local participates, who not only can participate in significant roles , but see the movement as more genuine due to its local nature. It also reduces the costs of maintaining any significant paid staff, lowering economic barriers for participation (Barry, 2012).

Digital tools typically allowed the decentralized movement to coordinate effectively with each other to have a significant impact early on. Primarily, Emails and Blogs served as a significantly effective form of communication among members, especially in regards to the 2010 midterm elections. Such technologies as conference calls and IPhone Tea Party apps (allowing members to receive live information aiding them in door to door canvassing for voters) were also utilized. However, probably due to the older age of most Tea Party supporters, social media was not significantly among the movement's coordination tools, as only 11% of Tea Party supporters have used Twitter or Facebook (Barry, 2012).

Occupy Wall Street

Occupy Wall Street, unlike the Tea Party, had much less access to resources at its birth in almost every category. Occupy Wall Street, due to its ideological views against big money donors, created an environment that lacked big financial backers, in lieu participatory support from activists at protests and on social media. The funds it did raise from its members came in the form of online outreach efforts, totaling much less than the backing the Tea Party amassed. In terms of cultural support, the movement only seemed to be able to recruit positive images from alternative media sources, the mainstream media (media with a much larger audience then alternative media) often portraying them in a negative light. The mainstream, unlike alternative media, also tended to only discuss the movement when violent clashes with police occurred, its coverage of the movement after such incidents dropping significantly. The decentralized organizational structure of the movement, while enticing more participation from all its members, became a significant hindrance when it prevented the movement from outlining main policy goals for the movement to strive toward. And such lacking of policy goals decreased the general public's support for the movement. Overall, Resource Mobilization Theory would properly explain the lack of progress Occupy Wall Street made due to its lack of overall resources.

Unlike the Tea Party, Occupy Wall Street did not receive supportive coverage from the mainstream media in regards to their protests. According to a study from Elon University, the mainstream media (media which has a vast audience) portrayed the movement in a negative light, faming them as lackluster, dismissive and confusing. The only positive media attention the media received was from alternative news sources, which focused on the movement's strength, and the diversity of its protesters. However, as alternative media amasses less overall viewership, the movement's gains were less significant (Cissel, 2012).

In fact, the mainstream media seemed to all but ignore the movement's protests, only choosing to cover the activity when its clashes with police got severe, and coverage dipping afterward. Such jumps in coverage can be seen on September 24th 2011 when police hit peaceful Occupy protesters with pepper spray, and on October 1st 2011, when mass arrests on the Brooklyn Bridge took place. However interestingly enough, if we analyze the same incidents on social media (such as twitter, blogs etc), and other alternative media sources, the coverage is more consistent. While we can see jumps in viewership during police clashes with protestors on social media, the coverage fails to drop off after the incidents conclusion (like what occurred with the mainstream media). The alternative media and social media seem to be the only media which presented the movement not only in a positive light, but presented such views at a consistent rate after attention grabbing incidents occurred (Delany, 2011).

Occupy Wall Street's primary mechanism for organizing its members and raising funds came from the internet, and more specifically, popular social media websites. As stated in the previous paragraph, Occupy Wall Street was all but ignored as the movement began. In fact, the top three sources from which individuals heard about Occupy were: word of mouth, the Occupy Wall Street websites, Facebook, Email and YouTube. At the end of May 2012, there were a total of 850 Facebook pages devoted to local Occupy groups with a combined total of 3.3 million likes. Similarly a Kickstarter campaign, with an original goal to raise $12,500 to buy an eight page free broadsheet called “The Occupy Wall Street”, succeeded in raising enough funds to produce 6 following editions. A live stream titled “global revolution”, which focused on the movement, succeeded in amassing tens of thousands of views worldwide. And YouTube and Reddit also served as portals to disseminate information and insight passion for the movement. However, even with vast access to the internet, the movement failed to properly sustain motivation levels among its members (Gamson, 2013).

While the Occupy Wall Street movement heavily relied on social media as a resource in its ability to organize and function, it does not seem evident that such an online community stayed interconnected long enough after the protests died out to mobilize any significant political change. Twitter activity, being among the top tools used by the movement to mobilize its members, can be examined to determine how effectively the movement sustained its coherence. At the beginning of the movement, more than 40% of sampled users dedicated an average 64% of their attention to the topic during the first 3 weeks of the protest. However, the engaged user ratio decayed to less than 5% during the last 3 months of the surveyed period. Similarly, while at the beginning of the movement, in group re-tweets and mention activities had a significant increase during the peak periods of the protest, this drastically diminished as the movement went on. It also appears in the data that there was only a small increase in domestic political communication activity during the final 12 weeks of the study. And if examined themselves, the members on Twitter appeared to already have a background of political interest in domestic policies, meaning that the movement failed to mobilize new members that had not already been interested in politics. In conclusion, this study would demonstrate that not only did members of the movement fail to sustain enough activity of its members to continue to the movement, but it failed to energize its base enough to have its member's impact the political system after its conclusion, and it failed to entice new members into its movement (Conover, 2013).

The lack of any coherent structure and policy positions, which resulted from the structure less leadership model of the movement, significantly hindered the ability of Occupy Wall Street to have a substantial impact upon the political system. The movement itself functions as a "horizontal, autonomous, leaderless, modified-consensus-based system with roots in anarchist thought" ("Occupy Wall Street gains steam", 2016). And while we will more fully explore the structure of the movement later on in regards to its ability to elicit a sense of collective identity among participants, this type of model consistently blocked any meaningful policy positions or goals to be put forward by the movement itself. Decisions, made through the NYC general assembly, could be shot down simply for not having a unanimous agreement among all members, meaning that agreement upon one solidified plan became a significant uphill battle. ("Occupy Wall Street gains steam, 2016). Polls during the movement illustrated the public's overwhelming concern with income inequality and support for raising taxes on richer Americans. Yet due to the nature of the movement to focus on the protesting aspect of its actions, and ignoring the presentation of any meaningful solutions to these issues, public support of the movement did indeed begin to fall. On November 16th, a poll indicated the movement had lost 11 points in potential support from the public within a period of a month. (Jensen, 2011). Therefore, by ignoring policy, the movement contributed to its own demise due to public support weaning. However this does not mean the movement has made no substantial impact upon the overall political realm.

A significant victory of Occupy Wall Street was its ability to push its main agenda point, income inequality, to the front of policy discussions within the US. In fact if we examine Google search trends before and after the movement's active years, we can see a very significant difference. From 2005 to 2010, we can see that the interest in the subject of income inequality remained fairly constant. But from the years of 2010 to 2016, we can see a 10 fold increase in the amount of search interest the topic has amassed among users (Google Trends). And some notable politicians have taken advantage of this interest to continue on the discussion where Occupy Wall Street left off. Bill de Blasio championed the topic of income inequality during his campaign and mayor-ship of New York, and is proposing and promoting his own progressive agenda to combat income inequality within the country. Senator Elizabeth Warren from Massachusetts has been a constant voice combating the threats of government loyalty to big money interests and income inequality, proposing much harsher regulations upon Wall Street to prevent another financial crisis from squeezing the middle class to the benefit of Wall Street. (Taube, 2013). Most notably, Senator Bernie Sanders from Vermont has seized this interest momentum to launch his presidential campaign within the Democratic Party, championing the very ideas and language of Occupy as a centerpiece of his campaign. Going from being primarily known only in Vermont, to launching a competitive campaign against Hillary Clinton for the Democratic Nomination, he is proof that Occupy Wall Street has succeeded to push their central issue, income inequality, to the center stage of the Democratic Party, and the public's mind (RealClearPolitics, 2016).

RMT Conclusion

Resource Mobilization theory strongly supports both the group formation of the Tea Party, but it also significantly explains the group's political effectiveness. The movement's pre-planned nature by elite's decades before its official birth in 2009, along with said elites bringing significant funds to the movement's disposal, significantly contributed to the construction of the network for the movement. The positive cultural support (directed from agents like Fox News) not only directed the movements actions, helped it organize and enticed new members, but it also determined common enemies (such as the Obama administration) and ally. Such direction was significantly helpful in regards to the Tea Party's victories in the 2010 midterm election. But such theory fails to explain on the reasons behind why individuals chose to enter into the movement to begin with. For these reasons RMT receives a 2 of 3 in the category of group formation, but receives a 3/3 in political effectiveness.

RMT properly explains the reasons behind Occupy Wall Street's lack of political effectiveness, but does not properly explain the reasons behind the group's formation with such lacking resources. Occupy Wall Street lacked critical necessities to properly cause political change, such as a structured body that allowed the movement to set common goals, and resources such as media attention (which only occurred during brief interactions with police in a negative light). For these reasons, RMT receives a 3 of 3 in political effectiveness for properly explaining their lack of a political impact. However, even with such lacking resources, the body still managed to attract a large body of people, enticing said people to dedicated large periods of their time to the cause. For this reason, RMT only receives a 2 of 3 for failing to explain what attracted people to stay committed to the movement.

Collective Identity Theory

Tea Party

The Collective Identity within the Tea Party was successfully constructed not only to entice participation among its members, but better aim its membership toward avenues to achieve its policy goals (through simplification the problems, and those causing the problems). Such an identity took two major forms. Initially, the movement focused heavily on representing members as patriots, armed with “correct” interpretations of constitutional law, taking on the Washington elites, and the big money which had bought Washington out. They endorsed shrinking the federal government, lowering taxes, state rights, and eliminating the debt. Typically, the movement at early stages avoided controversial topics in order to entice new membership. However, after the midterm elections, the focus on social cohesion diminished, and instead the movement focused on distinguishing “real Americans” from “fake Americans”, especially in regards to seeing evangelical protestant values within the constitution. Minorities and the youth were contained within the “fake American” category. Policy recommendations from the group, therefore, were favored for “True Americans”.

The collective identity of the Tea Party focused upon the ideas of the free market, small government, constitutional principles, and the idea that its members were pushing back against the Washington “elites”. Members of the Tea Party took the 2009 bailout of Wall Street as a sign that Washington selling itself out to millionaires at the expense of the American public. In response, members formed a collective identity which saw itself as patriots fighting to take back the country, with its main issues focusing around reducing taxes, endorsing free market principals, eliminating the debt, and reducing the size of the federal government. This is reflected in many Tea Party events which encompassed “taxed enough already” chants and memorabilia. Initially after its formation, its group focused more on social cohesion of its members in attempts to entice, besides conservatives, Independents and Libertarians to join their ranks. They accomplished this through not focusing on controversial social issues that could potentially divide them (such as gay marriage, abortion etc), and instead on a collective mindset of average citizens utilizing the constitution (which they believed to be easily understood to the average citizen) to maintain their rights, freedoms, and promote the "diversity of the American populace" (Rohlinger, 2015). However this mindset, and the group's collective identity, would take a dramatic shift after the 2010 midterm elections (Rohlinger, 2015).

After the 2010 midterm elections, the Tea Party's collective identity began experiencing a dramatic shift, abandoning their past attempts to focus on social cohesion, and instead focused on defining their movement around the boundaries of "real Americans" vs "not real Americans". Part of this shift included heavily emphasizing evangelical protestant values within the movement's beliefs of the constitution. But the most significant part of this change was the shifting concerns the group placed on changing demographics within the country, and defining only a segment of said individuals as "real Americans". More specifically, the group seemed to focus heavily upon minorities (Latinos, blacks), the Youth, immigrants and Muslims as individuals who attribute un-American characteristics. Such views therefore have been the roots within their policy positions against public spending for these undeserving groups (most notably the poor), support for enhanced government spending to combat illegal immigration within the country, support for retirement benefits, and support for enhanced military spending for combating terrorism. (Rohlinger, 2015) (Skocpol 2012).

One of the key world views within the collective identity of the movement is the distinction between freeloaders and productive citizens. Public spending is only justified for those who have earned the benefits, and not those who are considered to be freeloaders. A 2012 CBS poll , for instance, stated that 62% of Tea Partiers believe Medicare and Social security are worth the costs, because they themselves believe they have earned it. This same logic translates to welfare. They believe programs like TANF to be vast support programs perpetuating a nanny state and freeloaders for most of their lives, even though such programs make up a small fraction of the budget, and have a 5 year time limit. According to a University of Washington study, those that made up these freeloading groups are blacks, Latinos, who are viewed as less hardworking, less intelligent and less trustworthy by Tea Party members. This same view correlates to immigrants who are viewed, when interviewed, as a population bringing drugs into the country and living off of government support programs (even though such groups are unauthorized to receive federal assistance). A poor economy, which has resulted in a tougher job market, has lead young people to fall within the freeloading category, as they are forced onto more support programs, and receive more education support from the government than ever before. Ignoring the current economic situation, Tea Partiers label the younger generation of having committed a moral failure for asking for such services (Skocpol, 2012).

Occupy Wall Street

The collective identity of Occupy Wall Street aided its members in simplifying complex economic issues, identifying the problems with such issues, and targeting those responsible for such issues. A significant part of the collective identity of Occupy Wall Street consisted of a static definition of morality, in which those that work should be rewarded for such work within a social contract. And construct their collective identity to oppose the “1%” in their corruption of the bodies of government. As a result, the inability of the government to aid the working class after the recession constituted a moral failure. As a result, the movement formed its organizational structure in a non-hierarchical structure in order to prevent the failings they see within the government from forming within their social movement. They promoted such a structure through the use of social media, attempting to create an all-inclusive movement. However, the nature of such an identity seemed to be the very thing that prevented their progress as a movement.

The collective identity of Occupy Wall Street, just as with the Tea Party, had been significantly influence by the economic recession of 2007-2009, and its aftermath, forming a group based primarily upon a sense of social injustice and the moral failing of society. The chants of “we are the 99%” encompass the very identity of Occupy Wall Street, an identity primarily pitted against the top 1% (percentages in regards to economic wealth) for their hand in the subprime mortgage crisis. However, they were not the only ones responsible, according to Occupy Wall Street. The movement viewed government as another responsible party, citing the evidence of the $700 billion bailout to banks, leaving the common man to pick up the tab for the damage the banks had caused upon society and the economy. Individuals occupying were a part of this damage and felt the weight of not only the economic recession that followed suit, not only in the form of job loss, but also in the form of disappearing savings as a result the stock market crashed. The social contract of being rewarded for hard work (through economic stability) and protection had failed in their eyes. As a result, the movement formed a view around the notion that big money was bailed out, and not themselves (common citizens) as a result of big money ownership of government (Selinger, 2011).

The non-hierarchical structure of Occupy Wall Street also was significantly shaped by the group’s collective view of the government shortcomings. The movement faced what they saw as a government body unable to effectively respond to the needs of its people. They viewed the hierarchical centralized leadership structure inherent within the US government as a failing system, resulting in Occupy Wall Street structuring itself in a way counter to the structure that had failed them. The idea behind such an act being that concentrating power into the hands of a few in their movement will perpetuate the same systematic problems inherent within the government. This led Occupy to Structure itself into a power dispersed, non- hierarchical structure (Selinger, 2011).

One of the first major structures of this non-hierarchical group format, which heavily reflected the Occupy Wall Street's collective identity, centered primarily on social media use by participating members of Occupy Wall Street. As communication allows social movements to determine its boundaries, the internet allowed Occupy Wall Street to open its membership ranks to a vast audience (and not just a few select people in power), in order to better reinforce the idea that they represented the " 99%" , and blur the line between an the "in" group, and the "out group". This stands especially true in light of the fact that besides on the ground protestors, a significant portion of Occupy Wall Street's "members" came from social media. And any individual could join the movement by simply liking an associated Occupy Wall Street Facebook page, or following an associated Twitter account. Along the same line of thought, to continue reinforcing the notion of the group representing the " 99%" , social media associated with the Occupy Wall Street made posts in such a way that would stress inclusiveness and not identify individualistic control of the movement. An illustration of this can be seen on the Occupy LSX Facebook page. The group's unofficial guidelines state that administrators of the accounts "consider followers as occupiers, so avoid using too much "we" and "you". Occupy is open and we need to make followers feel like they are a part of it" (Kavada, 2016).

While the online portion of the movement played a significant role in communication, and representing inclusiveness among its membership, the nature of online accounts was counter to the very ideas that the movement was trying to present. The significant issues that came along with online accounts came to be that the control of such accounts is restricted to one direct owner or a handful of administrators, thus creating problems with Occupy's attempt to avoid hierarchical structures. One such example, associated with the main Occupy Wall Street twitter handle "@occupywallstreetNYC", is when administrators were the ones to officially determine who may and may not join the official account as administrator, and that said individuals tweets could only be released with approval from the administrator membership. Such limitations created many instances of internal conflicts among many members about the owners of such accounts, frequently questioning if such owners truly represented the ideals of the movement. Such a conflict can be viewed during the first month of Occupy London where one administrator actually deleted all other administrators from the Facebook page "Occupy LSX". Another example can be witnessed when the main Occupy Wall Street twitter account "@occupywallst" was hacked by the original creator of the account, a women named Justine, who proceeded to tell her own story and her views in regards to the Occupy Wall Street Movement. Occupy members were quick to criticize her for making comments that suggested she potentially created the movement, and for breaching the rules of Occupy for using the organizations social media account for her own personal gain. (Kavada, 2016).

The collective identity of the Occupy Wall Street can also be observed accurately in the physical structure of the movement, its activities, and the manner in which such things are conducted. The Primary method of decision making for Occupy Wall Street was open assemblies comprised of direct participants of occupations. Such assemblies could only pass any proposed decision upon reaching a unanimous consensus among all participants. This process primarily served to reinforce the idea of inclusiveness among participants, ensuring equal participation among all members of all classes. This also reinforced the idea that Occupy had no fixed identity, and that the movement was a direct creation of the will of the participants. This method of decision making led to the creation of numerous primary documents that served as the foundational texts for the movement. One such example is "*The Principals of Solitary of Occupy Wall Street*", which is one such foundational text that is considered to contain the main values and demands of Occupy Wall Street. However even such foundational documents were not considered to be a static representation of the movement, and vulnerable to the idea of the movement having no fixed identity. All texts produced by the movement were considered to be ":living documents" with no fixed identity , always susceptible to the potentially swaying will of the people (Kavada, 2016).

One of the most significant pillars of Occupy Wall Street's message is how it defines morality, a definition which Occupiers believe should be the guiding standard which directs government action. Occupiers align themselves with a moral definition encompassing honesty, cooperation, personal responsibility and humility. Such a definition considers the pursuit of power and prestige, and economic success for its sake to be immoral, and that only those who do so for the betterment of the group can be considered to be moral. Occupy uses this definition to attribute immorality to the actions of both politicians and Wall Street executives. (Forgey 2015).

Occupy Wall Street's collective identity describes both the corruption within the government (perpetuated by the significant amount of money present within the institution) and the immorality which results from such corruption as the main culprits in which the movement is seeking to fix. Wall Street executives who pay large sums of money into government to corrupt politicians in order for said officials to pass legislation that would be advantageous to those donors. They use the Wall Street bailout of the federal government as a prime example of this corruption. The banks who they view as causing the crashed were bailed out through the TARP legislation, while the ordinary citizen was left to deal with the recessions impacts. According to the movement, the government actions leading up to the crash (its lack of regulating leading to the event), and its inability to aid citizens during a time of record high unemployment, skyrocketing debt, and a housing market crash shows that the government does not promote the collective good (and thus is immoral.) (Forgey 2015).

CIT Conclusion

Collective Identity Theory is able to explain elements of the group formation process in both Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party. Both movements were properly able to construct an identity that would allow members to easily recognize both the “enemies” and the “solutions” for their goals. However, it was unable to explain why one ideology was stronger in attracting members then another. For these reasons, Collective Identity Theory receives a 2/3 in group formation. The theory severely lacks in explaining, however, which factors of a group identity would more strongly effect a group’s political effectiveness. For this reason, it receives a 1/3 in political efficacy.

Political Process Theory

Background Information:

One of the central political opportunities that both Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party took advantage of to springboard its success is the economic insecurities within an ever shrinking middle class within the US. And such an economic circumstance is not one that has been recently developing. Starting around 1979, wage stagnation began effecting the vast majority of American workers. This trend is occurring even in the face of economic growth within the country overall. Real GDP growth, according to the economic policy institute, has grown 149 percent, and net productivity of workers overall has increased 64 percent over this time frame. In other words, the vast majority of Americans are working harder, producing more, while simultaneously seeing their wages decline (when accounting for overall inflation) since 1979. 2014 marked a 35 year continuation of this trend, with the country's economic grains during the time primarily going to members of upper economic classes (Gould, 2015). This has resulted in income inequality levels reaching historic peaks within the country, nearing peak levels that were established prior to the great depression in the 1930s (Stone, 2015).

This trend of economic insecurity among then exacerbated even further when the 2007 great recession occurred as a result of the subprime mortgage crisis. According the Us Bureau of Labor Statistics, this spiked unemployment from roughly below 5 percent in 2007 to a peak of 10 percent months into 2008. Long term unemployment went from below 2% in 2007, peaking at 4.4 percent within 2009. In fact, such a decline in employment was more rapid, according to the Bureau, then the last 7 prior recessions in recent decades. For example, 47 months after the start of the 1973 recession, employment was 7% higher than at the start. However 47 months after the start of the 2007 recession, employment was 4% lower than when the recession began, suggesting not only worse employment rate declines, but also a slower recovery comparatively (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

The recovery of the recession that has taken place thus far, has been vastly bias in favor of top wage earners. From the beginning of the recession to 2014, top wage earners are the only economic group that higher real wages from before the start of the recession. Such wage earners, those within the 95th percentile of wages, saw a positive 2.2% increase in wages, leaving every other percentile in negative standing. In regards to wages by educational attainment, the greatest real wage loss from 2013 to 2014 were by those who had college or advance degrees, this suggests the lacking education is not a factor in explaining declining wages (Gould, 2015). And while the current employment rate sits at 4.7 percent in 2016, a significant portion of US counties has failed to reach pre – recession economic levels. In fact, according to a 2015 report by the National Associations of Counties, a whopping 93% of counties in the US have yet to fully recover from the impacts of the great recession even 8 years after its beginning. Only 7 % of countries, 214 of 3,069, have managed to fully recover to prerecession levels. The report predicts that many counties may never fully recover from the recession. They cite this as major reason why many Americans, especially those within both the Occupy and Tea Party movements, do not feel has if the shrinking unemployment rate has reached them (National Association of Counties, 2015).

Occupy Wall Street

Political Process Theory properly elaborates the political opportunity in which occupy Wall Street was able to entice most of its membership from. The great recession followed by continuing worsening economic conditions for the middle class prompted many individuals to recognize the economic message of Occupy Wall Street as representative of their economic circumstances. Within the Occupy movement, particularly young newly graduated students joined the movement, newly entering into the suffering job market, fresh with student debt heard the call of the movement. The election of Obama (which many protesters felt did not produce their desired change) and world protests like the Arab Springs, encouraged protesters to take an alternate avenue for creating change, as their skepticism of traditional establishment mechanisms for change increased.

For Occupy Wall Street, the Great Recession provided the window to capture the attention of a vast majority of US citizens, as both the protesters and the public faced the same economic hardship exacerbated by the downturn. The actively involved group of Occupy Wall Street was the under 30 age group, of which 80% had a bachelor's degree or higher (76% of all protesters have such education). Among this group, over half of respondents reported to carrying over 1000 in student debt, and 29.4% of all respondents report to having been laid off within the last five years. Over ¼ of respondents reported being under employed, working less than 35 hours per week, and most likely as a result of this, eviction rates for these young individuals were significantly higher than those of the older activists. And what of the high education rates? According to a survey of graduates between the years 2006-2011, 60% report not using their degree in their current position, 40% said their job was completely unrelated to their major, and 24% said they were earning a lot less then they had previously expected (Milkman, 2013).

Such statistics are significant because they demonstrate not only why the movement had so many supporters of its agenda, as they experienced the same economic hardships as many of its supporters, but it also demonstrates intensified skepticism of the political establishment after the election of Obama and global protests such as the Arab springs broke out. A significant portion of the Occupy protesters actively participated within the election of Barak Obama in 2008, hoping that it would be an effective avenue for social change. In fact, over 40% of protestors contributed time or money in the 08 campaign. However, after what the protesters felt was a lack of significant social change, enthusiasm for Obama and the political establishment as an avenue for such change decreased significantly. This can be demonstrated through the fact that only 27% of protesters actively participated within the reelection of Obama in 2012, a drop of 13%. And many events such as the Arab springs occurring at the time were key inspirations to the protesters, making them feel as if they were a part of a global movement for positive change. They cited Al Gore to summarize their position, stating "its time for an American Spring" (Milkman, 2013). The 2011 Wisconsin protests, a protest to defend collective bargaining rights and oppose budget cuts, according to many Occupy protesters, was evidence that an Arab Spring like protests was possible within the US (Milkman, 2013).

Tea Party

Political Process Theory properly elaborates how the political opportunity of the great recession abled the movement to collect its membership. Specifically, the economic responses by the government to the Great Recession, the TARP and the Stimulus Package, confirmed for members the economic message of bloated government and the need to decrease the federal debt and federal spending. And along with worsening economic conditions, such a message would even further entice membership in the hopes of lobbying the government to only spend money to improve the economic conditions for "real Americans". But along with this opportunity, the vast disapproval for Congress, by the public, also became an additional opportunity for the movement. Such disapproval, and lack of productivity among the members, created an opportunity for Tea Party candidates to steal support from the two major parties.

The Tea Party political opportunity, as a result of the Great Recession came in the form of the financial bailouts made by both the Bush and the Obama administration, and the election of the first African American President. Under Bush Jr, $700 Million dollars was spender under the TARP program, and $787 Billion was spend under the Obama administration in a stimulus package. Such spending actually initiated the existence of the Tea Party movement, backing its outspoken rhetoric of a bloated government spending beyond its means, and spending such funds to support the financial elite and not the common person. And with the economic situation of the vast majority of Americans worsening over the last 40 years, and getting even worse with the Great Recession, there was great appeal from the public to join the Tea Party movement. (Palmer, 2011).And with the election of the first African American president in 2008, racial tensions within the country were on the rise within the political right, driving the incentive even more to join a movement to decrease financial spending on support programs going to “non-Americans” (especially within an economic recession).

The high disapproval numbers for congress and the two major parties created another political opportunity for the Tea Party, potentially allowing it to break into the US congress. According to a 2011 New York Times/CBS poll, Congress had a disapproval rating of 82%, the highest figure since the New York Times had received since it first began tracking the figure (Cooper, 2015). This coming roughly at the same time as record high number of people (40% at the time, the figure much higher at 46% now), were registering as independents and abandoning the two major parties due to low approval ratings (JONES, 2009). This going along with the fact that after the 2012 midterm elections, the Legislature and the Executive was divided along party lines, gridlock among the two parties had the potential to cause such high un-favorability figures that the Tea Party could potentially steal support from the Republican Party and Independents (Palmer, 2011). Grid lock during the time was so bad at the time that the 112th congress was labeled the least productive in history (Cillizza, 2013). However, it appears that this potential was squandered by the Tea Party as it pushed for the government shutdown in 2013. This was especially troublesome for the Tea Party since, when polled, a majority of its supporters disagreed with the move, throwing overall public support for The Tea Party to barley a quarter of the public (Balz, 2013). This missed opportunity could reasonably explain both the progress, and the limited progress of the movement thus far.

PPT Conclusion

Political Process theory adequate explains the circumstances that drove both Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party into the political scene. The Great Recession allowed Occupy Street to make the long-term worsening economic conditions for the middle class center stage for its protest, using other major world protests like the Arab Spring and the Wisconsin protests as motivation for its members. The Tea Party used the reactionary bailouts from the Federal Government, the election of the first African American President, and the divided and unpopular current government to drive its ideology of small government. However, its success was limited due to the public's blaming of the Tea Party for its actions in the government shut down. Political Process Theory adequately explains how political opportunities not only contribute to group formation, but also to its political efficacy. However, for failing to distinguish a comparative methodology to explain why some opportunities promoted both group formation and group efficacy more with some groups more than the other, in both categories, Political Process Theory receives a 2/3.

Theory Selection Conclusion

Due to its ability to more adequately explain both the success and lack of success for both Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party, and its ability to demonstrate how each movement was able to form its membership to peak levels, Resource Mobilization Theory receives the highest score among the three theories. Political Process Theory scores the second highest ranking. It demonstrates the necessity to analyze how political circumstance can provide groups with windows to mobilize their ideology into the political and public mainstream. However it does lack a meaningful way to explain why some groups were able to capitalize more on such opportunities than others. Finally, Collective Identity Theory scored the lowest among the three theories. While it does properly explain how social movements can create a culture within themselves that promotes group formation, it fails to explain how some cultures are more superior to others in producing effective results. To have the most comprehensive explanations of the successes and failures of social movements, it would be ideal to use a combination of the three social movement theories.

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