Disturbance, Emotion & Change

A Quantitative Study of Tea Party Participation

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Abstract

 Descriptive statistics show that non-traditional groups, represented here by the Tea Party, participate more in politics than those who traditionally support the two major parties. It is theorized that members of the Tea Party participate more because of Barack Obama's election and his subsequent policies—they participate more, in different ways, and for different reasons. David Truman's Disturbance Theory has been applied and expanded to explain the formation and rise of the Tea Party. Two measures – fear of, and anger with Barack Obama – are used to test whether Obama has truly caused a disturbance that has motivated Tea Partiers to participate more than the average voter. Results show that fear of Barack Obama is the motivating factor for Tea Party members' participation. The statistical model, which includes politically-oriented, personality, and demographic variables, also shows major differences between Tea Partiers and non-Tea Partiers.

**Introduction**

 The election of Barack Obama and his subsequent policies have had a tremendous animating impact on American politics. Most notable is the formation of the Tea Party, a group that formed in response to Obama’s economic policies and continuation of "bailouts" that began under George W. Bush. The Occupy Wall Street movement[[1]](#footnote-1), a liberal counterpoint to the Tea Party, formed over a year later. Since 2009, these groups[[2]](#footnote-2) have been much more visible, seemingly participating more in the political process than those who traditionally support the two major parties. Obama's election, the formation of new movements, and higher-visibility participation lead to the question: is political participation changing? The approach of this study is to test whether members of non-traditional groups, represented here by the Tea Party, 1) participate more than members of traditional groups 2) participate in different ways, and 3) they participate for different reasons than members of traditional groups.

 The theory behind these questions spring from David Truman's Disturbance Theory, which claims that disturbances in the status quo cause the formation of new interest groups. The concept of "disturbance" has been extended here to include the Tea Party, which is more of a social movement than simply an interest group; however, the same base concept is believed to apply.

 The first two items listed above can be answered using basic descriptive data. The data in Figures 1 and 2, which are taken from a different dataset with a simpler participation variable, clearly show that members of non-traditional groups participate at higher levels than those from traditional groups, according to a 7-point political participation index.

**Figure 1. Comparison of Participation Levels Among Groups**

Data are taken from the American National Election Studies (ANES) Evaluation of Government and Society Survey (EGSS 4) dataset.

 Traditional groups' level of participation nearly double those of non-traditional groups at the lower end of the scale; however, the reverse is so at the high end of the scale. Likewise, as can be seen below, members of non-traditional groups participate more in each activity than do members of non-traditional groups.

**Figure 2. Comparison of Participation Activities Among Groups**

Data are taken from the American National Election Studies (ANES) Evaluation of Government and Society Survey (EGSS 4) dataset.

 To test item number three, i.e., the motivations for participation – including the theory that members of the Tea Party participate more because of the disturbance created by the election of Barack Obama – a rigorous statistical model has been created. Included in the model are variables that simulate the aforementioned theorized disturbance created by the election of Barack Obama (namely anger at Obama and fear of Obama), variables that measure personality, political belief measures (e.g. strength of ideology, strength of party identity, belief that voting is a duty), and demographic measures (e.g. race, gender, income).

 Regression results point to profound differences between Tea Party members and non-Tea Partiers and support the theory that Tea Partiers are motivated to participate in politics for different reasons than other groups. Most notable is that Tea Partiers seem to be motivated to participate by fear while non-Tea Partiers seem to be motivated by anger; however, the effect of fear seems to be much larger than the effect of anger. Together, these results support the theory posited in this paper­—that members of the Tea Party participate more, in different ways, and for different reasons.

**Participation in the Literature**

 The importance of citizen participation in a democracy is practically axiomatic (Mussen and Wyszynski, 1952; and Alesina and Giulioano, 2011; Campbell, 2013). In discussing citizen participation, Dahl (1992) claims that if democracy is to work citizens must be “competent” and they show this competence by participating. Furthermore, he wrote, these citizens are concerned with politics and seek to influence their government. On a more philosophical level, Jeffrey Green notes that political apathy renders democracy “incapable of the full flowering of its own principles” (2004).

 Scholars have attempted to discover links between political participation and emotion (Weber, 2013) the effect of genetic variation (Fowler et al 2008) physiology (Gruszczynski et al 2013) attitudes towards risk (Kam, 2012) time, money and civic skills (Brady et al, 1995) education (Mayer, 2011) and social preferences (Dawes, 2011) just to name a very few. This large and ever growing body of literature helps illustrate the importance of understanding why some political participate and others do not. Supporting this claim further is the fact that the study of apathy (Green, 2004) and why people do *not* participate is also expanding, helping to create a “two-sided coin” approach.

 While the concern here is focused on difference between traditional and non-traditional groups, it becomes necessary to at least briefly analyze the existing participation literature. Before commencing, however, a working definition of participation should be established. This is supplied by Sidney Verba, who defines participation as “the processes by which citizens influence or control those who make major decisions affecting them” (1973). This definition assumes a reciprocal dynamic where citizens and politicians react to one another’s actions. As convoluted as this dynamic can become, Verba notes that the level of political participation helps define a society.

 For political actors (i.e. incumbents, candidates, parties, and groups) the importance of understanding why, when, and how people participate is essential to recruitment, motivation, and financial support. Understanding this allows these actors to predict participation patterns, therefore, making them more efficient in targeting their messaging. The importance of this cannot be overstated, particularly if the changes theorized here are truly occurring.

**Traditional Explanations of Participation**

 Physiological Explanations. Fowler et al discovered a link between genetics and political participation but did not test how strong the link was compared to other factors (2008). Gruszczynski et al (2012) found that those who have higher electrodermal activity are more likely to participate in politics but their findings were largely inconclusive. This study helps verify the impact of psychological factors in explaining political participation.

 Social Explanations. There are many sociological explanations for political participation. Most recently, Campbell (2013) found that the study of social networks is essential to understanding political participation. While he acknowledges the importance of the individual level of analysis, he found it “shortsighted.” Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995) found that having time, money and civic skills predicts a higher level of participation.[[3]](#footnote-3) Alesina and Giuliano (2011) found that those who are reliant upon family for subsistence are less likely to participate in politics. Contrary to the theory that disagreement about politics causes political demobilization, Pattie and Johnston (2009) found that political disagreement with others (whether in person or online) possibly has the opposite effect—making people *less* likely to participate.

 Psychological Explanations. Politics and psychology have been wed in academia since the late 1960s and the journal regarding this relatively new field, *Political Psychology*, has been published since 1980 (Sears et al, 2003). They also note that the larger field has many sub-fields: personality, behaviorist learning theories, developmental theory, incentive theories, social cognition and intergroup relations. Kam (2012) found a link between higher acceptance of risk and political participation but acknowledged that this measure springs largely from personality measures.

Personality and Participation. Although they did not have the benefit of the Five-Factor Model, or more advanced statistical techniques or statistical computing programs, Mussen and Wyszynski (1952) understood the importance that personality must have on political participation. Daniel Levinson (1958) added to this discussion by acknowledging that personality as independent as a concept and has explanatory power. Milbraith and Klein (1962) furthered the connection between personality and participation with more advanced statistical methods and conceptualization of personality. They concluded that there is indeed a connection between personality (at least their reckoning of it) and political activity.

 Having benefitted from advanced statistical methods and statistical software, more recent scholars have found further connections between personality and political participation. Mondak and Halperin (2008) found that extraversion was most highly correlated with voting and that agreeableness is negatively correlated with participation. Cooper et al (2013) examined personality's effects on registering to vote and talking to others about politics. They found that agreeableness and conscientiousness were positively related to being registered to vote and that extraversion and openness to experience were positively related to talking to others about politics. Vecchione and Caprera (2009) found that personality has an effect on participation and self-efficacy; however, in this paper, efficacy is used as a control against personality.

**A Reexamination of Emotion and Participation**

 Regarding emotions and their connection to politics, George Marcus notes that traditional view is that emotions block reason and reason is necessary for meaningful participation. However, because of the advances of neuroscience, Marcus notes claims that emotion and reason are not opposites as once supposed (2003). This is important because emotion can motivate someone to do something, but it does not mean that the action will be performed while that motivating emotion still present. The contrary would infer that those driven to participate by emotion always make incorrect decisions. Marcus seemed to answer this with another study (2000) where the theory of Affective Intelligence was introduced to the discussion. This theory holds that negative emotion spurs political activity. Brader (2006) added to this notion

 In their study of governmental monitoring of citizens following 9/11, Best and Krueger's results (2011) contradicted previous research, finding that anger at the government causes higher participation. Although the connection between negative emotions had been linked with greater participation, they wanted to find which specific emotions were the cause. Through factor analysis they were able to parse out both anger and anxiety; their statistical analysis showed that anger was positively related to participation while anxiety was negatively related (page 98). Furthermore, anger proved to have more explanatory power than external efficacy, trust in government, gender, age, education, and civic engagement. Ultimately, they claim that anger leads to greater participation because it elicits courage (page 106).

 Weber (2013) had similar results, finding that anger leads to more participation while fear and sadness lead to less participation. In his experiment he found that anger increased political participation, discussion, interest, and efficacy. Conversely, fear decreased all of these. Valentino et al (2009) added to the belief that anger and fear have different effects. Though much of their study is concerned with efficacy (a concept that is controlled for in this model) their discussion of emotion and participation adds depth to this study. Their findings that anger increases internal efficacy is similar to the theory posed here—that negative emotion has spurred the creation of a social movement that has profoundly affected politics.

**Conclusion**

 The purpose of this study is not to claim that other approaches or theories are wrong, but that a new dynamic is emerging in American politics and that traditional models cannot alone explain this. Also, the purpose here is not to try to reinvent the wheel. Past approaches are still quite valid. The theory here is that a reordering of concepts is necessary in order to explain causal relationships in the new political environment. Traditional concepts that have been used to measure and predict political participation are also used here—often as controls.

 The hole that this study is attempting to fill is the idea that new phenomena and groups have not yet been studied in their relation to political participation, particularly Tea Partiers, who have had such a tremendous impact on American politics.

**Theory**

 When a change in the status quo first occurs it is difficult to determine whether it is temporary or whether a new paradigm is emerging. Only hindsight can answer that question with any certainty, but even if change *is* temporary, its effects should be understood and explained. The theory put forth here is that negative emotions caused the formation of the Tea Party and that members of that groups participate at higher levels than their "traditional" counterparts.

 This paper draws from Nownes' and Neeley's attempts to combine Truman's aforementioned Disturbance Theory with Mancur Olson's Exchange Theory. Although they claim that the two are incompatible and incomplete on their own merits, they do find utility in both. They write, "[M]any public interest group founders act in response to specific and easily identifiable events or series of events. Disturbances may not spur individuals to join groups, but they play an important role in stimulating entrepreneurial activity (1996, 139)."

 Disturbance theory holds that advancements in a society cause changes, or disturbances, that upset the status quo. In turn, groups form to either push the changes further, stop them, or stunt their impact. Exchange theory, in contrast, holds that individuals, or "entrepreneurs", create the framework of groups and then provide the leadership that is necessary to create, grow, and maintain the group. The entrepreneur gets the "power and prestige"; in exchange, members get benefits from being in the group (Nownes and Nunley, 1996).

 Despite the seeming disparity between these theories, the formation of the Tea Party illustrates how the two disparate theories can be connected. Following the election of Barack Obama in 2008, the passing of the "stimulus" package in early 2009, and the beginning of talk about a national healthcare system, several individual citizens began to organize protests. These small protests snowballed, including more people in more parts of the country. While many of these individuals had the motivation to protest and bring about governmental change, they didn't have the political knowhow or the organizational infrastructure to build a successful movement. That is when groups like FreedomWorks, founded in 1984, trained individuals and groups on how to organize and maximize their efforts. Together, individual Tea Party groups and groups like FreedomWorks were able to create a movement that has had a notable impact on American politics and it can be argued that the movement's impact is still growing.

 Although Nownes and Nunley found utility in both Truman's and Olson's theories, they did not combine them. The unification of these theories[[4]](#footnote-4), however, is crucial in understanding how the Tea Party formed, grew, and then had its profound impact on American politics. A disturbance of the status quo occurred, causing individuals and small groups to be concerned. Already-established "entrepreneurs" were there to provide organizational infrastructure and knowhow. Combined, the new movement had both the energy, size, and political knowhow to make a difference.

 To test the notion of a disturbance, the variables that separately measure anger at Barack Obama and fear of Barack Obama are included. Inclusion of these follows the previous literature that finds the connection between negative emotion and political participation. There seems to be a consensus that anger inspires participation. Therefore, it is hypothesized that anger at Barack Obama will have a positive effect on participation of Tea Party members. It is more difficult to predict this variable for those who are not in the Tea Party; however, many of the remaining respondents are Republicans, independents, and liberals or Democrats who were upset with Barack Obama, perhaps for not going far enough. Therefore, it is also hypothesized that anger at Barack Obama will have a positive impact on the non-Tea Party group.

 Fear of Obama is more difficult to predict than anger because it has often been found to decrease participation. Also, this measure provided by the ANES is unclear as to whether it is fear of Obama himself or fear of the effects of his agenda. For those not in the Tea Party, it is hypothesized that fear will have no effect on those who are not members of the Tea Party.

 Put more succinctly:

*H1: Anger at Obama will have a positive effect on political participation of members of the Tea Party*

*H2: Anger at Obama will have a positive effect on political participation of the non-Tea Party population*

*H3: Fear of Obama will have a negative effect on political participation of members of the Tea Party*

*H4: Fear of Obama will have no effect on political participation of the non-Tea Party population*

 Personality and Participation. Personality traits, particularly those found in the "Big Five" model, have long been shown to have a relationship with political beliefs and activity. However, the theory here is that politics are changing and that factors that have previously explained political participation may not explain participation of Tea Party members. It is therefore hypothesized that the trait of Extraversion will have no effect on Tea Party participation, but will have a positive effect on those who are not in the Tea Party. Since the trait of Conscientiousness is connected to political conservatism (Gerber et al, 2011) it hypothesized that it will have a positive effect on Tea Party members' participation, but will have no effect on those who are not in the Tea Party. Since the trait of Openness is connected to political liberalism (Gerber et al, 2011), it is hypothesized that it will have no effect on either group tested here. Since the Tea Party is a protest group, it is hypothesized that the trait of Agreeableness will have no effect on either group. Lastly, the trait of Neuroticism isn't associated with political activity, but it is connected to negative emotions including anger and fear. Therefore it is hypothesized that Neuroticism will have a positive effect on Tea Party participation and no effect on those not in the Tea Party.

 Put more succinctly:

*H5: Extraversion will have no effect on political participation of members of the Tea Party*

*H6: Extraversion will have a positive effect on political participation of the non-Tea Party population*

*H7: Conscientiousness will have a positive effect on political participation of members of the Tea Party*

*H8: Conscientiousness will have no effect on political participation of the non-Tea Party population*

*H9: Openness will have no effect on either group*

*H10: Agreeableness will have no effect on either group*

*H11: Neuroticism will have a positive effect on political participation of members of the Tea Party*

*H12: Neuroticism will have no effect on political participation of the non-Tea Party population*

 Political Control Measures. The line between interest or attitude and activity can sometimes be quite thin. For interests of this study, measures that do not fit within Sidney Verba's definition of participation – that it is “the processes by which citizens influence or control those who make major decisions affecting them” – are used as control variables because things like political interest and belief that voting is a duty can sometimes be mistaken as political activity.[[5]](#footnote-5) The argument for their use as control variables lies within the fact that they are not actions, per se, but are attitudes that can motivate political activity. Use of these as controls can also assign variance to its proper place rather than over-inflating research measures or being added to the error.

 Measures of political interest have traditionally been used in participation index variables[[6]](#footnote-6) but have been excluded from this participation index because these activities do not influence decision makers. Moreover, the theory posited here is that members of a new social movement are more rigorous in their political activity than merely listening to the radio or reading about politics. The other variables of this type include strength of political ideology, strength of party identification, respondent's belief that their family's economic situation has gotten worse in the past year, and a measure for external efficacy.

 While there are no formal hypotheses regarding these measures, it is believed that they will all have some level of effect on Tea Partiers' participation, except, perhaps, strength of party identification as a large reason for the Tea Party's existence is the belief that the Republican Party has failed to represent their interests.

 Demographics and Participation. Basic demographic variables have also been found to have strong connections to political activity. Included in this model are age group, which is believed to have a positive relationship with the Tea Party (in other words, Tea Partiers are seen as being older than the average voter); income group; race, controlling for whites; gender, controlling for females; and education. There are no positive hypotheses regarding these variables but they are included because past models have shown that they have impacted political participation.

**Data and Methods**

 The statistical model used here is designed, not only to compare political participation of Tea Party members to members of traditional groups, but to test whether the notion of disturbance stands up statistically. Data for this study are drawn from the American National Elections Study's 2012 Time Series Study.[[7]](#footnote-7)

 The dependent variable for this model is a summation of sixteen participatory activities. These are dichotomized variables accounting for whether the respondent (1) voted in the 2012 House election (2) voted in the 2012 primaries, (3) tried to convince another person to vote for a specific candidate, (4) attended a political rally, (5) displayed political material (whether by wearing it or displayed on a vehicle or home), (6) worked for a political campaign, or (7) donated either to a political party or (8) an interest group (9) attended a city or school board meeting (10) signed an internet-based petition (11) signed a physical petition (12) gave money to an organization (13) called a radio or TV show about a political issue (14) posted a message on a political message board (15) wrote a letter to the editor about a political issue (16) or contacted their representative in Congress. Altogether there are 17 possible outcomes. The variable was transformed by taking the log and square root of the variable but neither transformation improved the distribution. Cronbach's Alpha for this variable was .76.

 Disturbance Theory Measures. The theory that the election of Barack Obama has caused a disturbance in American politics is tested by two variables: anger with Barack Obama (1=yes, 0=no) and fear of Barack Obama(1=yes, 0=no).

 Personality Measures. As discussed in the literature review section, personality traits have been used in previous participation models. They are included in this model to test whether these measures will have different effects on the participation of a new actor. The Five-Factor Model traits of openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism were tested. The table below displays these five measures and descriptions of each.

**Table 1. The Five Dimensions of Personality**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Dimension | High scorers are... | Low scorers are... |
| *Extraversion* | Outgoing, enthusiastic | Aloof, quiet |
| *Neuroticism* | Prone to stress and worry | Emotionally stable |
| *Conscientiousness* | Organized, self-directed | Spontaneous, careless |
| *Agreeableness* | Trusting, empathetic | Uncooperative, hostile |
| *Openness* | Creative, imaginative | Practical, conventional |

*Source:* Daniel Nettle, *Personality: What Makes You the Way You Are*, 29.

 The ANES Time Series dataset utilized the Ten Item Personality Index (TIPI) to measure personality. Though this is a very minimalist method, it has been shown to be reliable. Erhart et al found that the TIPI was comparable to the much more complex and robust IPIP-FFM (2009). Gosling et al note that the TIPI is an acceptable substitute when time and resources are limited (2003). In the case of the ANES study, there are so many other variables being considered that anything more than the TIPI could have potentially reduced the number of responses.

 In the TIPI, respondents are instructed to grade how well two particular words describe them. Each of the five traits are measured in their positive and negative aspects (e.g., they measure both extraversion and introversion) with separate variables. Responses range from "Extremely Poorly," scored as 1, to "Extremely Well" scored as 7. The table below displays these traits and the words that respondents graded themselves on.

 Demographic Measures. The model includes measures of race (controlling for whites), gender (controlling for females), age (13 categories ranging from '17-20' to '75 or older'), education (highest level of education; 5 categories ranging from less than high school '1' to graduate degree '5' ), total household income (28 categories ranging from less than $5,000 '1' to more than $250,000 '28').

 Control Measures. Political ideology is accounted for by a seven-point, self-reported ideology variable (strong liberal to strong conservative) recoded to represent strong ideological leanings: strong liberal and strong conservative responses are coded as 3, while no ideological leanings is scored as zero. Party identification is likewise accounted for, where strong Democrat and strong Republican are coded as being the same (no party ID is 0; strong party ID is 3). Political interest is also controlled for because it and political participation are theoretically highly correlated as those more interested in politics are more likely to participate. This variable is based on the response to "How often do you pay attention to politics and elections?" Coding was reversed to measure for higher interest has a higher value: "Always" is coded as 4 while "Never" is coded as zero. Efficacy is measured by a response to the statement "[It] makes a difference who one votes for." The response "Voting won't make any difference" is scored as 1; the response " Voting can make a big difference" is scored as 5. The variable that measures the respondents' family financial outlook is a response to the question "[Is your financial situation] better or worse off than 1 year ago?" An answer of "much worse" equals five, while "much better" equals one. This is included to show how a person's family's financial situation affected their participation in politics. Belief that voting is a duty rather than a choice is included as a control. Duty and choice are on opposite ends of a 7-point variable where belief that voting is a duty equals 7 and belief that it is a choice equals 1.

 The Equation for this model is:

Participation = α + BANGER(XANGER) + BFEAR(XFEAR) + BOPEN(XOPEN) + BCONS(XCONS) + BAGREE(XAGREE) + BEXTRA(XEXTRA) + BNEUR(XNEUR) + BINC(XINC) + BEDUC(XEDUC) + BWHITE(XWHITE) + BFEM(XFEM) + BAGE(XAGE) + BPARTY(XPARTY) + BIDEO(XIDEO) + BDUTY(XDUTY) + BFAMFUT(XFAMFUT) + BEFFIC(XEFFIC) + BINTEREST(XINTEREST) + e

**Results**

 Robust OLS regression was used to test the statistical model against three populations: Tea Partiers only, those not in the Tea Party, and both combined. The robust command was used to help correct for heteroskedasticity. The disparate populations were isolated using Stata's "keep if" command, first isolating those who support the Tea Party, then those who do not, then finally running the model including Tea Partiers and non-Tea Partiers.

 Tea Party. The hypotheses regarding the two disturbance variables (Anger at Obama and Fear of Obama) were proven to be incorrect. It was hypothesized that anger would have a positive effect while fear would have a negative effect. Anger proved to not significantly affect Tea Partiers' political participation while fear was both statistically and substantively significant. was also significantly related to the participation of Tea Party members (p < .001) and had a substantive effect.

**Table 4. Robust OLS Regression Coefficients of Political Participation of Three Populations**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Measures | Tea Partiers | Non Tea Partiers | All Respondents | Range |
| ***Disturbance Measures*** |
| Anger at Obama | -.286(.334) | .294\*\*\*.092 | .248\*\*(.086) | 0-1 |
| Fear of Obama | .931\*\*\*(.249) | -.082(.102) | .225\*\*(.092) | 0-1 |
| ***Personality Measures*** |
| Extraversion | .032(.072) | .078\*\*\*(.025) | .066\*\*(.024) | 1-7 |
| Conscientiousness | -.112(.106) | -.142\*(.034) | -.124\*\*\*(.033) | 1-7 |
| Openness | .177\*\*(.071) | .139\*\*\*(.029) | .148\*\*\*(.027) | 1-7 |
| Agreeableness | -.016(.083) | .070\*(.031) | .043(.029) | 1-7 |
| Neuroticism | .003(.057) | .011(.023) | .010(.021) | 1-7 |
| ***Political Control Measures*** |
| Strength of Party ID | .111(.097) | .158\*\*\*(.038) | .160\*\*\*(.035) | 0-3 |
| Strength of Ideology | .240\*(.122) | .196\*\*\*(.045) | .229\*\*\*(.040) | 0-3 |
| Political Interest | .870\*\*\*(.095) | .673\*\*\*(.036) | .727\*\*\*(.034) | 0-4 |
| Voting is Duty | .157\*\*\*(.043) | .113\*\*\*(.016) | .128\*\*\*(.015) | 1-7 |
| Efficacy | .147\*(.080) | .189\*\*\*(.029) | .179\*\*\*(.028) | 1-5 |
| Family Econ Situation | .075(.094) | -.022(.033) | .006(.031) | 0-1 |
| ***Demographic Measures*** |
| White | .001(.335) | -.239\*\*(.098) | -.192\*(.091) | 0-1 |
| Female | .105(.197) | -.005(.076) | .020(.070) | 0-1 |
| Income | .007(.014) | .019\*\*\*(.005) | .019\*\*\*(.005) | 1-28 |
| Age | -.024(.032) | .078\*\*\*(.012) | .059\*\*\*(.011) | 1-13 |
| Education | .155\*(.076) | .324\*\*\*(.036) | .297\*\*\*(.033) | 1-5 |
| Constant | -1.426(.932) | -2.398\*\*\*(.332) | -2.444\*\*\*(.312) |  |
| *N**F**Prob F**R2* | 79117.03.000.23 | 372072.47.000.28 | 465997.56.000.28 | \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001 |

These results led to a deeper investigation of the numbers. The fear and anger variables are somewhat highly correlated (r = .57) so it was determined to remove the fear variable from the model to see if anger would then be significantly related to Tea Partiers' participation. This proved to not be the case, however; therefore, the conclusion is that fear is the motivating factor behind Tea Partiers' participation.

 Of the personality measures, only Openness was significant in measuring Tea Partiers' participation. This is surprising because previous research has shown that higher scores on this trait are more often politically liberal. It is somewhat surprising that Conscientiousness was not significantly related to Tea Partiers' participation as nearly 60% of those who claim support for the Tea Party claim to be either conservative or extremely conservative. That said, strength of ideology was significantly related to Tea Partiers' participation.

 As hypothesized, strength of party identification was not significant for Tea Partiers. This is important because it supports the notion that the Tea Party is a breakaway movement from the Republican Party. Crosstab data show that only 53% of Tea Partiers self-identify as Republicans or strong Republicans. Also as hypothesized, political interest, belief that voting is a duty and efficacy were all significantly and positively related to Tea Partiers' participation. Political interest had a strong substantive effect – those most interested in politics have over three more units of participation – but effects of belief that voting is a duty and efficacy were relatively small.

 Among the demographic measures, only education was significantly related to Tea Partiers' participation; however, the substantive effects are quite small, especially when compared to the coefficients for this variable among the other groups. Neither age, race nor gender had a significant effect on Tea Partiers' participation; this is somewhat surprising as the stereotype of Tea Partiers is that they are mostly old, white males.

 Non-Tea Party. In contrast to Tea Partiers, this group is motivated by anger rather than fear. Also different than the Tea Party group is the fact that four personality variables are significantly related to this population's participation, including Openness, which was also significant for Tea Partiers. Why personality played such a larger part in determining non-Tea Partiers' participation is unknown, but it is the contrast with Tea Partiers that is interesting. Variance, or effect, is spread across many of the independent measures among the non-Tea Party population; conversely, the variance among Tea Partiers is much more concentrated, particularly in the fear variable.

 Of the political control variables, all were significantly related to this population's participation levels except for the belief that the family's economic situation is worse than the year before. The variables that were statistically significant were also substantively significant.

Belief that voting is a duty is less among these respondents but feelings of efficacy are stronger. The most notable difference is the effect of strength of party identification.

 All of the demographic variables besides gender were statistically significant. Race was negatively related to the participation of this population. Age, income and education were all both statistically and substantively significant for participation.

 The control group, comprised of all of the respondents in the dataset, more closely mirrors the non-Tea Party population. Both disturbance variables are significant and Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Openness are all significant for the overall population. It is interesting, though not overly surprising, that variables that are significant in the control group are insignificant when these populations are separated. This points to leveraging by one group or the other among the different variables. Perhaps the most notable result in the control group regression is the fact that both anger and fear are statistically significant.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

 This paper began with three main propositions: that members of non-traditional groups, represented here by the Tea Party, participate at higher levels, in more ways, and for different reasons. The first two claims are supported with descriptive data that was presented in Figures 1 and 2. Regression results seem to support the third proposition – not because the fear and anger variables were only significant in the test of Tea Partiers' participation, but to the levels at which they affect participation.

 The most important takeaway is the finding that the negative emotion of fear is the motivating factor for Tea Party participation. Prior research has shown that negative emotions can have a chilling effect on participation. As was noted earlier, Best and Krueger found that anger can motivate participation while fear can hamper it. The findings here contradict these findings. Figure 3 below illustrates the effect that fear has on these populations.

**Figure 3. Effects of Fear of Obama on Groups**

 Data were run in the CLARIFY[[8]](#footnote-8) program. The two groups (Tea Partiers and non-Tea Partiers) were isolated using Stata's "keep if" command and the fear variable was alternately set for 1 and 0 for both groups with all other variables in the model set at their mean. It was found that fear caused Tea Partiers to participate in one additional activity. Conversely, fear caused non-Tea Partiers to slightly decline in their participation.

 This contradiction in findings about fear leads to a question: does the ANES variable actually measure fear or could the results be construed to mean something else. The question as stated in the codebook is "Think about [Barack Obama]. Has [Barack Obama]—because of the kind of person he is or because of something he has done, ever made you feel: AFRAID?" Crosstabs of other variables show what Tea Partiers think of Barack Obama—what he is or what he's done.

**Figure 4. Groups' Beliefs of Obama Characteristics**

 As figure 4 illustrates, Tea Partiers generally do not have positive views of Barack Obama. Over 40% of Tea Partiers think that he is a Muslim compared to just over 15% of non-Tea Partiers. Less than 20% of Tea Partiers think that he is moral (compared to over 50% of non-Tea Partiers) and less than 15% of Tea Partiers think that he is honest (compared to over 50% of non-Tea Partiers). Another telling statistic is the fact that over 80% of Tea Partiers think that Barack Obama is either extremely or very liberal; this points to the idea that this group thinks that Obama is an extremist. Lastly, crosstabs were run to test Tea Party views of Obama's race: just over 7% of Tea Partiers voted for Mitt Romney because Barack Obama is an African American; compare this to over 4% of non-Tea Partiers. This shows some enmity towards Barack Obama because of his race, but overall this is quite small.

 Finding differences between these groups is encouraging and creates the impetus for further research into these questions. Of the 18 variables that were used, only six were significant among both groups. This fact also supports the notion that members of the Tea Party participate in politics for different reasons. Both of these facts provide the impetus to take this research further. Among that research will be the testing of the Occupy Movement. This was not performed here for two reasons: first, explicit measures for support of this movement were not available in this dataset; second, the desire here was to establish the theory of disturbance and the responses thereto.

 There were limitations, however, and future research of these questions will seek to answer them. First, there are always better ways to measure concepts. Also, there are always variables that can be added or subtracted that will better simulate the question at hand and that will be a future consideration. That said, it is believed that the index created to represent participation is logically sound; however, creating a factor for participation might be a better way to go. A factor of participation would potentially function with OLS better; otherwise, use of ologit might be more appropriate to test this model.

 No matter which statistical methods or models are used, it will continue to be vital to test these questions and study these non-traditional groups' and their participation activity because they, particularly the Tea Party, will likely have a profound effect on our politics, and as we all know, participation is the very lifeblood of democracy. Anything that brings change to this must first be understood and then explained.

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1. Though this movement and others have also impacted American politics, the focus of this paper is on the Tea Party; subsequently, the Tea Party will be used to test the theory posited here. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Heretofore referred to as "non-traditional" groups in contrast to "traditional" groups, which are defined as groups comprised of people who participate in politics through the context of the Republican and Democratic parties. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Though their study attempted to explain participation outside of socioeconomic status (SES), they acknowledge a correlation between their measures (time, money, civic skills) and SES. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This theory, still being developed, is currently tentatively referred to as "Confluence Theory". [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The relationship between self-reported political interest and the participation index used here is .44; the relationship between voting is a duty and participation is .26. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Nancy E. McGlen's "Impact of Parenthood on Political Participation," *Western Political Quarterly* Vol. 33 No. 3, 1980: 297-313. She included variables of "follow campaign on the radio, read about the campaign in any newspaper. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Data collection started in September 2012 and continued into January 2013. Face-to-face interviews were supplemented by interview responses. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Tomz, Michael, Jason Wittenberg, and Gary King. 2003. CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results. Journal of Statistical Software. Copy at http://j.mp/k3k0rx. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)