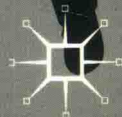


David R. Dietrich

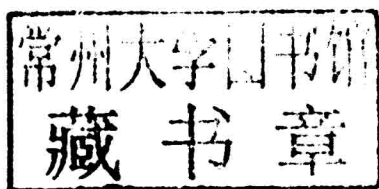
REBELLIOUS CONSERVATIVES

Social Movements in Defense of Privilege

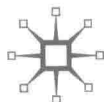


REBELLIOUS CONSERVATIVES
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN DEFENSE OF PRIVILEGE

David R. Dietrich



palgrave
macmillan



REBELLIOUS CONSERVATIVES

Copyright © David R. Dietrich, 2014.

All rights reserved.

First published in hardcover in 2014 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the World,
this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited,
registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills,
Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above
companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United
States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN: 978-1-137-43621-4

The Library of Congress has cataloged the hardcover edition as follows:

Dietrich, David R.

Rebellious conservatives : social movements in defense of privilege / by
David R. Dietrich.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-137-43620-7 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Conservatism—United States. 2. Social movements—United States.

3. Pressure groups—United States. 4. Elite (Social sciences)—United

States. 5. Political participation—United States. 6. Political culture—

United States. 7. United States—Politics and government. I. Title.

JC573.2.U6D545 2014

320.520973—dc23

2014005093

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Integra Software Services

First PALGRAVE MACMILLAN paperback edition: September 2015

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

REBELLIOUS CONSERVATIVES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Growing up in a liberal home in a community dominated by one of the most conservative public universities in the country, Texas A&M University, I struggled from an early age to understand conservative political and moral thinking. After attending Texas A&M for two years, I transferred to the much more liberal University of Texas at Austin, and the contrasts between liberal and conservative logics became even more remarkable to me. I returned for a year of graduate school at Texas A&M and had the good fortune to take courses on social movements and race with Paul Almeida and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, respectively, near the time A&M's Young Conservatives staged an anti-affirmative action demonstration. The conservative logic of these protestors eluded me. Why would young, relatively well-to-do white youth, who had obviously not been denied admission to the university due to affirmative action policies, be protesting a policy that had not negatively affected them?

From that moment, I was hooked on the topic of conservative social movements. And this was before the Tea Party! I am indebted to Paul Almeida for encouraging me to pursue this interest, pointing out the relative neglect of mainstream conservative movements in social movements literature. I owe Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, my mentor who packed me off with him to Duke, an immense debt of gratitude for developing my knowledge of race theory and methods and allowing me to extrapolate this knowledge to a dissertation study of the anti-illegal immigration movement and the antiabortion/pro-life movement. I also want to thank David Brady, Kenneth Andrews, Linda Burton, and Suzanne Shanahan for their valuable guidance of my research of these two movements.

It was in the midst of my research of the anti-illegal immigration and antiabortion/pro-life movements that the Tea Party began to get America's attention. Tea Party organizations rallied in front of state capitols throughout the United States, climaxing in massive demonstrations in the US Capitol. While I had gained insight into the rationales of the anti-illegal immigration and antiabortion/pro-life movements, the Tea Party logic was more perplexing. Tea Party protestors were disproportionately white and middle class and thereby had relatively unfettered access to the privileges of the American majority. Once again, as with the student participants in the affirmative action bake sale, I struggled to understand why these relatively privileged Americans were protesting.

After attending several rallies, I began to see similarities in the three conservative social movements. All of them were fearful of losing privileges, economic, cultural, or otherwise, because of government action, and they felt institutionalized

means of promoting their causes were insufficient. Hence, my goal in this book is to show the common logic behind these conservative movements. I am thus grateful to the members of the anti-illegal immigration, antiabortion, and Tea Party movements who graciously agreed to enlighten me about their motives. In addition, I am thankful to Texas State University, who provided me with funding to travel to Tea Party interview sites and to rallies in several states.

CONTENTS

List of Figures	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
1 Understanding Conservative Protest	1
2 "This Is Our Country": Identities of Privilege	13
3 "Spiraling Downward on a Path to Anarchy": Characterizing Threats to Privilege	41
4 "Invaders," "Murderers," and "Communists": Agents of Threat	85
5 "To Reclaim Our Nation": How Conservative Protesters Want to Change America	127
6 "The 'Silent Majority' Is Silent No More": Summary and Conclusion	155
Notes	167
References	169
Index	177

FIGURES

2.1	Anti-illegal immigration protesters at the state capitol in Austin, Texas	21
2.2	Tea Party activists in costume at the Texas state capitol	31
2.3	A Tea Party protester at the Texas state capitol	37
3.1	An anti-illegal immigration protester at the state capitol in Austin, Texas	47
3.2	A Tea Party rally on September 11, 2010, in Washington, DC	70
3.3	Tea Party protesters carrying a banner in Washington, DC	76
4.1	An anti-illegal immigration rally at the state capitol in Columbia, South Carolina	87
4.2	An antiabortion/pro-life activist holds a sign at a protest in Charlotte, North Carolina	102
4.3	Tea Party activists at a rally in Washington, DC	113

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING CONSERVATIVE PROTEST

A SEA OF PROTESTORS CLAD IN RED, WHITE, AND BLUE vigorously waved signs of "DON'T TREAD ON ME," "LIBERTY! NOT TYRANNY," "INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY, NOT BIG GOVT.!", and "A LIVING CONSTITUTION IS NO CONSTITUTION" as they rallied in front of the US Capitol on September 12, 2012. Bob MacGuffie, a prominent Tea Party activist, addressed the audience:

We all know why we've come here today. We've come here because we prefer capitalism over socialism. Freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. No taxes over high taxes. Secure borders over open borders. Self-reliance over dependency. English over bilingualism. The right to bear arms over the rights of terrorists. Strength of resolve over diplomatic appeasement. And victory over defeat.

The crowd, estimated in the tens of thousands, responded with thunderous applause and began to chant, "We will remember in November! We will remember in November! WE WILL REMEMBER IN NOVEMBER! WE WILL REMEMBER IN NOVEMBER..." And indeed they did. As Tea Party rallies continued to spread around the country and Tea Partiers channeled their passions into grassroots campaigns in neighborhoods and state houses, Tea Party sympathizers swept into state and national offices. Political candidates endorsed by the Tea Party won more than 30 seats in the 2010 congressional elections (Jacobson 2011; Zernike 2010; Fox News 2010), causing a political quagmire in Congress that almost threw the nation over the "fiscal cliff" (Cohen 2012). Although the Tea Party suffered some political setbacks in the 2012 elections, its power in some states increased, as in Texas, where the Tea Party favorite Ted Cruz upset the GOP establishment candidate to win the vacated US Senate seat.

Although not as dramatically successful, two other conservative protest movements, the anti-illegal immigration movement and the antiabortion/pro-life movement, have aroused not only passionate emotion but also sometimes tremendous personal sacrifice on behalf of their causes. Riding in dusty pickups winding through

cactus and over rocky terrains at the California and Texas borders, Minutemen regaled me with stories of how they camped for weeks risking their own safety to patrol the border and intercept illegal immigrants, whose "lawless culture" threatens the American way of life. A self-proclaimed protector of our border in Arizona, a millionaire, even invested thousands of dollars in an unmanned drone to film and report "alien" crossings. And anti-illegal immigration activism certainly has not been restricted to the border. Over 1,300 miles across the country from our border with Mexico, immigration protestors at an anti-illegal immigration rally at the state capitol of South Carolina enthusiastically braved intense sun and stifling temperatures while politicians, Minutemen, and even ministers urged them to "preserve America's sovereignty." The crowd roared when a candidate for the state legislature likened illegal immigrants to termites, "who are eating at the very foundations of American liberty." Again Americans appeared to be listening. Five years after the anti-illegal immigration activities of the Minuteman Project brought national media attention to the issue of undocumented migration, restrictive anti-immigration laws were passed in the states of Arizona, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Utah, and Indiana (Archibold 2010; Immigration Policy Center 2012) and similar bills were proposed in as many as 37 other states, including Texas and California (Castillo 2011; Vogel 2011; Miller 2010).

The antiabortion/pro-life movement has engendered perhaps the greatest passion, and in some cases greatest sacrifice, of these three movements. The Web sites of these activist organizations decry the "American holocaust" of aborted babies. They tell heartwarming stories about children saved by "sidewalk counselors" who convert women at the entrances to abortion centers. Other activists hold parades and rallies as they brandish heartrending signs graphically depicting aborted fetuses. During a weeklong national event of Operation Save America (OSA), I observed pro-life activists raise their hands to God as they prayed, cried, and recounted tales of protesting at the "gates of Hell," the abortion "mills." The OSA members, all pastors or their families, told me of multiple arrests for which they not only served jail time but also caused them to lose their churches. While the pro-life/antiabortion movement cannot overturn the Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade*, it has consistently whittled away at abortion rights, primarily at the state level, working to institute more and more conditions and restrictions on abortions, such as mandatory ultrasounds (Guttmacher Institute 2013). Additionally, movement participants were influential enough to bring a "Personhood" amendment (a constitutional amendment declaring life begins at conception) to a vote in the state of Mississippi, even though it did not pass (Pettus 2011).

These three conservative social movements have substantially influenced American politics and society. Indeed, they have created such rifts in American political opinion that it seems many neighbors barely speak to one another. While the United States is no stranger to social conflict, the conflict here can be perplexing to the populace because it arises not from complaints of the historically downtrodden but from those in the majority group. When we think of participants in social movements, we usually envision groups of oppressed people who have suffered longstanding discrimination and restriction of rights, such as blacks during the Civil Rights Movement. But conservative protesters do not fit this mold. In fact, they

appear to be the exact opposite, comprised of populations that have relatively greater access to benefits and privileges than many Americans. In the protest events that I attended, the audiences in all three of these movements were overwhelmingly white, often highly disproportionate to their percentages in the local, state, or national populations. Their social class makeup looked to be almost entirely middle class if appearances are an indicator. For example, many of the protestors brought their own upscale folding chairs with attached canopies for shade. There were a variety of ages represented, but carefully groomed, gray coifs prevailed. Polls of Tea Party supporters confirm these observations, showing them to be overwhelmingly white, Christian, and possessing higher average incomes and higher levels of education than most Americans (Skocpol and Williamson 2012; Montopoli 2010). But if conservative protesters are not oppressed, then why are they protesting? What are they fighting against? What are they trying to accomplish?

In this book, I argue it is the relatively privileged status of these individuals that is driving their protest. By virtue of their majority group positions, including race, class, and religion, these protesters historically have had unfettered access to a broad range of privileges, such as jobs and social services. But now these same individuals perceive these privileges to be under threat from various sources, such as immigrants who desire access to jobs in the United States, supporters of abortion who are thought to be dismantling the morality of the nation, and members of government taking actions that are purportedly antithetical to the Founding Fathers' intent to preserve our liberties. Thus, while protesters in so-called progressive movements, such as the Civil Rights Movement, fight to end their oppression and gain access to privileges that have been denied to them, conservative protesters fight to protect their existing access to privileges or to reclaim privileges that have been lost.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIVILEGE

Some may object to use of the term privilege, as it has negative connotations in contemporary American society—for example, when it is used to deride the “privileged few.” The United States is, after all, a society that supposedly strives for equality. In this case, though, I believe the term privilege is conceptually accurate and, as I show in my theoretical discussion, analytically useful. The standard dictionary definition of privilege is an advantage or right available only to a particular group or individual. My findings suggest that these conservative movements are indeed motivated by a desire to maintain the advantages they hold or once held, advantages that are or were isolated to the particular group to which they belong.

Others may point out the fact that many social movements, both progressive and conservative, seek to secure particular advantages for their constituents. The Civil Rights Movement, for example, sought to end legal discrimination and secure equal pay and consideration for jobs, while the gay rights movement seeks recognition of gay marriages, among other issues. These movements would not be said to be seeking privilege, however, as these movements seek rights available to others but denied to them. Their goal is not for *only* them to have the right to marriage or a job, but to have the same rights as the majority of the nation. Conservative movements, in contrast, appear to work not toward inclusiveness but toward exclusivity. That is,

movements like the anti-illegal immigration movement seek to exclude others, such as undocumented migrants, from the rights and privileges of the majority, such as those of citizenship.

This goal of excluding individuals or groups from particular privileges, however, runs counter to American notions of equality. If one cannot have access to the same advantages and resources as another because of the group to which one belongs, there is little hope for equality. While many conservatives will argue that it is equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome, that is or should be the goal, the fact remains that restricting privileges often restricts opportunities, thereby perpetuating social inequality. This is why, as I demonstrate in this book, conservative movements seek to justify their reasons for excluding particular groups by defining those with whom they do not want to share particular privileges as unworthy. In many cases, conservative movements will define their causes as moral imperatives to defend sacred precepts that are threatened by the undeserving. This book demonstrates how these conservative movements define themselves as "true" Americans and Christians, moral defenders of the nation against those who seek to subvert and desecrate the culture and values of the United States.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Terms like conservative, right wing, and conservative movement are thrown about liberally (no pun intended) in both academic discourse and the media, and it is often left to the reader to divine their precise meanings. Given the lack of specificity surrounding these terms in popular discourse, it is important to set forth particular definitions here and to explain precisely what this book does and does not cover. This book specifically addresses the world of conservative social movements. Therefore, we need to know precisely what is meant by the terms "conservative" and "social movement." Social movements are distinct from other kinds of movements, such as political movements, in that social movements involve repeated public displays of collective action by people acting outside of officially sanctioned channels to bring about social change (Tilly 1999). These actions may include street protests, picketing, marches, sit-ins, as well as things like letter-writing campaigns, boycotts, and so forth. Social movements are distinguished from political movements, therefore, by using means other than institutionalized political channels to pursue their goals. This does not mean that social movements cannot also attempt to act through official channels, but social movements will always include some activities that occur in a noninstitutional setting. As such, I will not look at conservative organizations that engage solely in political activities, including much of what has been termed the conservative movement, which is primarily a political movement.

While the definition of a social movement is relatively straightforward, the definition of conservative is much murkier. The traditional definition of political conservatism involves wanting to preserve what exists, the status quo, or to bring back what has existed, the status quo ante (Quinton 1995; Heywood 2007; Lo 1982). Traditionalist conservatives in the United States lean heavily toward the maintenance of existing cultural and moral order (Klatch 1987, 1994). However, this definition is insufficient to describe the full range of conservative thought and activity in

contemporary America. What is popularly known as conservative in America today is actually a combination of traditionalist conservatism and what is referred to as "the Right" (Quinton 1995). While traditionalist conservatives generally seek to preserve existing political, social, and cultural orientations, those of the Right actually seek change based upon libertarian ideals. The core idea of libertarianism is to maximize individual rights, including laissez-faire ideals of economics and a desire for as small a government as possible (Heywood 2007). While scholars emphasize the separation between the formal definition of political conservatism and the libertarian ideals of the Right, as a practical matter traditionalist conservatives and libertarians have long been political allies in both North America and Europe (Quinton 1995; Klatch 1994). Therefore, I propose the following definition: conservatism includes the ideas belonging both to traditionalist conservatives, who work to preserve the existing social or moral order or to restore a preexisting order, as well as the ideas of libertarian conservatism, which seek to maximize individual liberty, with an emphasis on laissez-faire economic policies.

I also place one more qualifier on my focus in that I look at mainstream conservative social movements as opposed to extremist or far-right movements, such as the Ku Klux Klan. This is an important distinction, as movements that fall into these categories have the potential to differ dramatically from each other, most notably in terms of tactics (with extremist and far-right groups sometimes engaging in violent and/or terrorist tactics) but also potentially in terms of membership and goals. My research is specifically concerned with mainstream conservative movements that do not sanction violent activities.

WHY STUDY CONSERVATIVE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS?

Conservative movements present challenges to existing ways of thinking about social movements. Most social movement research has centered on so-called progressive movements, like the Civil Rights Movement (Blee 2007; Pichardo 1997; Jasper 1997), and makes inherent assumptions within their theoretical models that do not necessarily hold for conservative movements. Political process theory (McAdam 1982), for instance, assumes that social movements are progressive in nature. That is, an oppressed population, which has been denied rights historically, seeks to change society to secure these rights. According to political process theory, these groups must gather resources, develop "cognitive liberation"—an ideological framework that defines their situation as unjust and able to be remedied through protest—and wait for the political situation to create opportunities for protest to be successful.

However, as discussed earlier, conservative protesters do not seem to be oppressed populations but rather are privileged populations. This raises several questions. How can cognitive liberation come about if there is no long-standing oppression? How can one define one's problems as being caused by the existing social structure if the existing social structure has historically provided advantages to one's group? Why has conservative protest only really begun to gain traction now, in the first part of the twenty-first century? Certainly the ascendancy of conservative politics over the past several decades has provided political opportunities that could favor conservative protest, but why now, at this particular juncture? Why was there not a large wave of

conservative protest during the height of conservative power in the Reagan years, for example? What is more, with conservatives increasingly capturing political office, why would protesters not simply try to work through the existing political system, one that has become more and more amenable to conservative demands due to more conservatives in political office? Why resort to protest with all the effort and risks that it entails?

Other social movement scholars have approached the study of protest from a more culturalist bent, as opposed to the structural focus of theories like political process theory. However, these theories, too, often involve assumptions regarding the nature of protesters. Mary Bernstein's (1997) theory of identity formation, for instance, describes the different ways in which movements can use identity to further their goals, including using identity to empower individuals and encourage them to protest and using identity in a strategic sense to change the definitions of stigmatized identity within the broader culture. But this, again, assumes that protesters are a subordinated or oppressed population, where the goal of social movement activity is to alleviate this oppression or force recognition of new identities. She argues that identity can be used to critique the dominant culture, but how would this work for conservative protesters when they appear to be members of the dominant culture?

With this implicit focus on progressive movements, it is little wonder conservative social movements have been largely neglected by social movement scholars (Blee 2007; Pichardo 1997; Jasper 1997). The research that has been done on conservative social movements mostly has concentrated on extremist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (Blee 2007; Klandermans and Mayer 2009; Pred 2000; Ezekiel 1995; Koopmans and Olzak 2004), and the applicability of their findings to more mainstream conservative movements, like the Tea Party, is unclear. Others have treated conservative protest as countermovements, that is, movements that emerge in direct response to progressive protest (Pichardo 1997; Dixon 2010b). While the interactions of movements and countermovements are certainly important aspects of social movement activity, examining conservative movements solely through the lens of countermovements fundamentally treats conservative movements as purely reactionary, emerging only in response to progressive movements. This approach may obscure independent reasons for conservative movement emergence unrelated to a particular progressive movement.

This book addresses these issues within the field of social movements. I seek to determine what underlying motivations or factors drive mainstream conservative protest by using a theoretical model that does not include assumptions regarding the nature of the protesters. This model expands upon the work of Rory McVeigh and his theory of power devaluation, one of the rare social movement theories that directly address conservative movements, to examine issues of motivation, identity, and ideology. In his examination of the Ku Klux Klan, McVeigh (2009: 32) proposes a theoretical framework for examining what he terms right-wing movements, defined as "a social movement that acts on behalf of relatively advantaged groups with the goal of preserving, restoring, and expanding the rights and privileges of its members and constituents." These movements will emerge, he argues, when the political or economic power or status of certain groups, such as white, native-born

Protestant Americans, becomes devalued, or weakened. However, we cannot assume that all conservative movements are necessarily attempting to preserve, restore, or expand their privileges. This is more properly an empirical question.

To address the question of the motivations of conservative movements, we must look beyond social movement theory to find a theoretical framework that will allow us to address the following question: Is a particular conservative movement motivated by a desire to maintain or restore privileges? To answer this question, I turn to race theory, specifically Blumer's (1958) theory of group position. Blumer theorizes that racial prejudice is not a matter of self-interest or some other individual psychological trait, but based on the preservation of group privilege. Specifically, he states that members of the dominant racial group define themselves in contrast to the subordinate racial group as a method of justifying the privileges and advantages granted to the dominant race. Racial prejudice, then, is a mechanism by which members of the dominant racial group seek to maintain their racial privilege. However, I do not claim that all conservative movements are based primarily upon race or are inherently racist. Rather, I join with other scholars who have taken Blumer's basic idea of the maintenance of group privilege and expanded it into areas other than race, such as sexual orientation (Bernstein 2004; Bernstein, Kostelac, and Gaarder 2003), regional identity (Dixon 2010a), and nativism (Fry 2007). This last application of Blumer to the issue of nativism is particularly relevant for this research, as issues of nativism have frequently been cited as motivations behind anti-immigration movements in the United States for centuries (Schrag 2010; Tatalovich 1995; Jacobson 2008; Bahdad 2005; Navarro 2009; Knobel 1996). I contend that group position can be abstracted to apply to any situation in which a group may be attempting to maintain privileges, and Blumer's theory provides us with the analytical framework to study this process.

While group position theory can help us determine if a conservative movement group is attempting to maintain or restore privilege, the question remains: How do we conceptualize privilege? I turn to Bourdieu's conceptualization of capital as a way to systematically categorize and examine privilege. He defines capital as any type of social advantage a person may possess, from money to education to the prestige associated with a particular identity, that can be used to gain further advantage. That is, just as traditional monetary capital is invested to gain more money, other types of capital, for example education, can similarly be used to gain advantages such as a better job, from which you would obtain money that could then be used to gain other advantages such as prestigious memberships in social clubs, which, in turn, grant prestige and access to social networks that enable one to gain even more money or prestige. Using Bourdieu's conceptualization of capital, we are able to decompose the concept of privilege into discrete concepts that can be used to analyze the various claims made by conservative social movements.

By extrapolating and synthesizing aspects of these three social theories, we can create a theoretical framework that allows us to better analyze these movements and how their members interpret the world around them in a way that drives them to protest. Consequently, this book will help to bring us a step closer to being able to understand not just a single conservative protest or movement but the underlying features that drive mainstream conservative protest today.

RESEARCH APPROACH

To get at the underlying motivations of conservative social movements generally, it is necessary to examine not just one but multiple conservative movements. To this end, I chose to look at three movements: the anti-illegal immigration movement, the antiabortion/pro-life movement, and the Tea Party. While these movements are similar in that they are all contemporary, mainstream, nationally distributed movements, they each have different histories and focus on different issues and goals.

Immigration has been a point of contention in American politics since even before the founding of the nation (Nevins 2010), but anti-illegal immigration activism has increased dramatically in the past 15 years or so. The most well-known contemporary anti-illegal immigration group, the Minuteman Project, was founded in Arizona in 2004 (Hayden 2010; Laufer 2004). The primary activity of the Minutemen was conducting civilian patrols of the US-Mexico border so as to identify and report to law enforcement instances of undocumented migrants crossing into the United States. The Minuteman Project eventually fractured and partially disbanded, but there are many other state and local anti-illegal immigration groups active across the nation (Buchanan and Holthouse 2005), particularly in areas that only recently have experienced a large influx of Latino migrants, as in the South (Durand, Massey, and Capoferro 2005). These groups police day-laborer sites frequented by undocumented migrants and engage in more traditional protest activities, such as rallies and protests at state capitals (Chacon and Davis 2006).

The antiabortion/pro-life movement is one of the largest contemporary conservative movements and has been ongoing in its current form for nearly 40 years. The latest wave of large-scale antiabortion/pro-life mobilization began shortly before the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision, which legalized abortion (Jacoby 1998; Munson 2008). Initially led by members of the Roman Catholic Church, an influx of Protestant fundamentalist participants in the 1970s dramatized abortion, comparing it to the Holocaust and using terms like genocide, baby killing, and culture of death to describe the impact of abortion on American culture (Blanchard 1994; Doan 2007; Kaplan 1995). The mid-1980s saw the emergence of "rescues," in which protesters would block access to abortion clinics (Grant 1991; Ginsburg 1998). Operation Rescue, founded in 1986 spearheaded a national campaign of rescues, but the passage of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act in 1994 dramatically increased the legal liability for such tactics (Johnson 1999). Nevertheless, while most antiabortion/pro-life protesters today do not blockade clinics, they still attempt to dissuade women from having abortions by protest tactics such as rallies, picketing, sidewalk counseling, and vigils outside the clinics (Doan 2007).

Finally, the Tea Party is the most recent movement I examine, having only come about within the past few years, most notably following Rick Santelli's televised criticism of government fiscal policy in 2009 where he called for a new tea party, such as that held in Boston during the American Revolution, to protest such policies (Skocpol and Williamson 2012). The contemporary Tea Party consists of a handful of national organizations, including the Tea Party Patriots, FreedomWorks, and Tea Party Express, as well as numerous local and regional groups who may or may not align themselves with a national organization. Tea Party organizations initially

engaged in both highly visible large-scale national protest rallies as well as smaller state and local protest activity, although more recently they have eschewed protests in favor of grassroots political action primarily at the state and local level (Arrillaga 2012).

Given the importance of local as well as state and national protest activity in these movements, I collected data at all three levels. To gain both breadth and depth of knowledge about these movements, I researched all the national organizations in each movement and, within selected states, local and state organizations. Based upon their degrees of political activism related to the issues of the movements, I focused on six states in my state and local analysis: Texas, North Carolina, California, Arizona, South Carolina, and Georgia.

To get a comprehensive picture of the ideologies of the movements, I approached them from multiple perspectives involving a combination of analysis of movement Web sites, interviews with key participants, and direct observation of rallies and protests. Between 2008 and 2012, I analyzed over 1,100 unique articles and postings from movement Web sites, conducted interviews with 90 participants,¹ and attended 12 rallies and protest events. My goal in this analysis was to gain, as much as possible, a comprehensive view of the broad array of issues, opinions, and arguments used by the movements.

ON CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The purpose of this book is to neither evaluate the merits of the arguments put forth by these movements nor pass judgment on their tactics or goals. I also do not attempt to evaluate the accuracy of the claims made by the movements or their participants. To truly understand how conservative movements operate, we must understand how these organizations and protesters conceptualize their own arguments, which is one of the primary tasks of this project. At the same time, however, I want to understand the underlying motivations behind these arguments and the consequences of particular lines of reasoning on the broader society should these movements succeed in their goals. My purpose in this is not to ascribe motive where none exists or put words into the mouths of my respondents. Rather, I rely upon existing sociological research to try to understand what is left unsaid in the text of Web pages, speeches, and responses of interview subjects.

While this research finds evidence that these movements have an underlying goal of maintaining or preserving privilege, this is not to suggest that these movements are being disingenuous in their public stances. My experiences during the interview process suggest these activists are sincere and forthright in their opinions and judgments of the purported dangers they feel are threatening the nation. For example, in one interview the respondent was nearly in tears when describing his first experience with the issue of abortion. While it is possible that these respondents and organizations are not being truthful, I found no evidence of this. And, indeed, it is not necessary for these organizations to deceive for my findings to hold. I do not suggest that maintaining or restoring privilege is the only goal of these movements or necessarily an explicit goal. Rather, the evidence suggests that it is an underlying goal of many organizations within these movements.