



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Fighting ‘Socialism’

The Koch Brothers, the Tea Party, and Obamacare

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Abstract:

This dissertation presents a frame analysis of political advertisements that were produced by the right-wing billionaire Koch brothers and aimed at defeating Obamacare. It asks: How do the Koch lobby organisations Americans for Prosperity (AFP), FreedomWorks (FW), and Generation Opportunity (GO) frame Obamacare, and to what effect were these framing strategies employed?

The Koch brothers use the Tea Party movement to further their ideological interests of deregulation. They have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on elections, which was propelled by the Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizens United* ruling. The Tea Party in turn has had an enormous impact on US politics with its outpouring of anger over the past five years. Its emergence depended heavily on early Koch support and Fox News promotion. The combination of unlimited secret Koch money, extreme levels of Tea Partiers' anger, and biased propagation by Fox News made the Koch-orchestrated Tea Party movement into a powerful right-wing force on a national scale. Rejection of Obamacare served as its call to arms. It represents everything Tea Partiers fear and the Kochs oppose. The majority of Koch contributions went to television advertising campaigns produced by AFP, FW, and GO that attacked Obamacare, targeted opponents, and promoted Tea Party candidates.

This indicates a heavy reliance on television advertisements for the Kochs' fight against Obamacare. These are therefore highly significant in order to uncover the Koch mechanisms at work under the mantle of the Tea Party. This study analyses the framing strategies employed in these advertisements. Framing is a powerful conceptual tool to subconsciously influence viewers' perception of is-

sues. It can set the terms for debate and thus seemingly exclude other viewpoints. Frame analysis reveals these strategies.

The study identified four framing categories employed in Koch-produced ads targeting Obamacare: Confrontation, Emotional Sympathy, The Clowns in Washington, and Freedom and Empowerment. All categories build on emotions and eschew factual evidence. Each attacking frame approaches Obamacare from a different angle, yet has the ultimate aim to elicit viewers' anger at Obama.

The study shows that anger not only runs through the Tea Party movement but also serves as the primary emotional appeal in Koch advertisements to oppose Obamacare. The Kochs' million-dollar advertising campaigns did not prevent Obama's re-election in 2012, and the Supreme Court did not repeal Obamacare. However, the law continues to be deeply unpopular with the American public, and the Kochs employ the same framing strategies for the 2014 Midterm Elections. This suggests confidence on their side that the ads did have an impact on the public overall.

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I. Angry Citizens and Worried Billionaires

In both law and politics, I think the essential battle is the meta-battle of framing the narrative. [A battle is won by] choosing the terrain on which it will be fought.

-- Ted Cruz (R), Tea Party-supported US Senator for Texas --

Opposition to Barack Obama from the Republican side has been enormous ever since he took office in 2008. This has manifested itself in the emergence of the Tea Party movement and its continuous efforts to fight the Affordable Care Act. Both are intrinsically connected: Tea Partiers' anger aims at Obama's 'socialism', and mandatory health insurance contradicts the freedom they cherish above all else. While on the surface grassroots, the Tea Party movement is actually strongly influenced by corporate money from the right-wing billionaire Koch brothers. It also depended heavily on promotion by conservative television network Fox News during its inception stages to gain nation-wide political power. The combination of Koch money, Tea Partiers' anger, and Fox promotion turned the movement into a strong political force. The Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizen United* ruling allowed unlimited financial contributions, which gave Koch money the preeminent role in shaping the movement. The majority of this money was spent on advertising campaigns attacking Obamacare, targeting opponents, and promoting Tea Party candidates. This shows that the Kochs place enormous value on television advertisements. They are clearly highly important to them to influence mass opinion of Obamacare. This study analyses the set-up of these advertisements with the methodology of frame analysis. The aim is to uncover the strat-

egies that are employed to exert said influence on the public and in the process affect mass opinion.

The Tea Party emerged out of a rant by CNBC's Rick Santelli in February 2009 against the subsidising of homeowners' mortgages. He claimed "losers" should not be helped and demanded to have "a Chicago Tea Party in July" in protest (both CNBC, 2009). The movement grew rapidly with dozens of nation-wide rallies (Brown, Hohmann, & Bacon, 2009; Ray, 2014). From the very beginning, their opposition to Barack Obama defined Tea Partiers. They stand for an ideology of no compromises, anti-government, and pro-free markets. The movement does not have a clear leadership but consists of hundreds of autonomous local groups (Formisano, 2012). It is the explicit goal of these loose alliances to sweep away the 'socialist' Obama (Barstow, 2010), along with any amongst the Republican establishment who show moderate tendencies or willingness to compromise with Democrats (Horwitz, 2013). Tea Partiers reject those lawmakers as RINO, Republican In Name Only. The movement is characterised by an extreme level of anger (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). It achieved major successes in federal elections. In the 2010 Midterm Elections, 60 Tea Party candidates were successful in the Primaries and the General Election combined. Primary victories included huge upsets, such as Christine O'Donnell (DE, Senate), who beat GOP veteran Mike Castle but later lost to Democrat Chris Coons (MacAskill, 2010a). Success was somewhat reduced in the 2012 Presidential Elections, with only four of 16 Tea Party candidates winning their Senate elections (Gray, 2012; Tiron & Rowley,

2012). The selection of Tea Party favourite Representative Paul Ryan (WI) as Mitt Romney's running mate nonetheless provided a boost (Hunt, 2012).

While on the surface a mere social movement, the Tea Party was heavily influenced by organised money from the start (Formisano, 2012). Two of its biggest donors are organisations called Americans for Prosperity (AFP) and Freedom-Works (FW). They provided enormous logistical and financial support for several major rallies (Mann & Ornstein, 2012; Vogel & Isenstadt, 2009; Wood, 2009). AFP and FW espouse anti-government and pro-ultra-free market ideologies and are controlled by Charles and David Koch, two industrialist billionaires who run Koch Industries, which has estimated annual revenue of \$115 billion. Koch Industries is the second-largest private company in the US (Goldman, 2010), and Bloomberg estimates David and Charles at \$53.3 billion each (Bloomberg, 2014). They share a vivid antipathy towards Obama, with David calling him "a hard core socialist" (Owen, 2011) and Charles arguing he had "internalized some Marxist models" (Continetti, 2011). Their father was a founding member of the pro-ultra-free market John Birch Society (Mayer, 2010). To battle Obama's 'socialism', they run an ideological network of non-profit organisations known as the Kochtopus designed to manipulate the outcomes of political processes in their favour (Schumpeter, 2014). A major focus has been the on-going battle to repeal or defund Obamacare (Koch, 2014). In sum, the Kochs are worried about Obama's perceived 'socialist' agenda, and they strategically use the Tea Party movement to further their ideological interests of deregulation.

The Kochs' influence on the movement increased drastically with the Supreme Court's *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission* ruling on January

21st 2010. It established that Political Action Committees (PACs) not contributing directly to candidates are allowed to accept unlimited contributions from individuals and corporations (SCOTUSblog, 2010). Such non-traditional PACs are known as Super PACs. The ruling had even more far reaching effects on 501(c) organisations. These are defined as groups promoting social welfare that may partake in elections and campaigns as long as their primary activity is said welfare. Like Super PACs, they can spend unlimited funds as a result of the 2010 ruling. Unlike Super PACs, however, they do not need to disclose the identities of their donors (OpenSecrets, 2013b; Sonmez, 2010). Most Koch organisations have the legal status of 501(c)s. This decision then opened the floodgates for Koch financial influence on the Tea Party. Moreover, it allowed their organisations to do so in secrecy. As a result, the Kochtopus spent \$407 million in 2012 and has a fundraising target of \$300 million for 2014 (M. Gold, 2014a; M. Gold & Rivero, 2014; Maguire, 2014; Stone, 2014).

Obama's health care reform, the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare, was signed into law on March 23rd 2010 and represents the biggest overhaul of US federal health care since the conception of Medicaid in 1965. It aims to provide insurance to millions of uninsured Americans, as well as to address inequality by granting benefits to the poor whilst increasing premiums for the wealthy (Chaikind, Copeland, Redhead, & Staman, 2011). It includes the controversial Individual Mandate, which requires the purchase of health insurance for all Americans, and prohibits the refusal of coverage by insurance companies on the grounds of pre-existing conditions (HHS, 2010). Rejection of the law developed into a call

to arms for the political Right. Obamacare represents everything Tea Partiers fear and the Kochs oppose.

Both the Tea Party movement and the Koch brothers see Obama as their archenemy and his health care reform as the epitome of ‘socialism’. To conceal the Kochs’ involvement, their organisations funnel millions into the Tea Party to give their views the appearance of grassroots. This means that billionaire-controlled ideology is deliberately misrepresented as the view of the people in order to push a pro-ultra-free market agenda. Since 2009, three Koch organisations in particular have jumped on the Tea Party bandwagon to form a united front against Obamacare: AFP, FW, and Generation Opportunity (GO). *Citizens United* money is the key here. As the numbers in chapter II will show, these organisations’ political spending has soared as a result of the ruling, particularly in the case of AFP. As mentioned above, the vast majority of this money was used for television advertisement campaigns, which makes them enormously valuable to the Kochs’, which in turn renders them highly significant for analysis. In order to uncover the mechanisms the Kochs employ to influence mass opinion of Obamacare, I therefore intend to analyse the set-up of these ads. To that end, I have chosen frame analysis as my methodological vehicle.

Framing has the power to influence how people think of issues and what aspects of a debate they consider most important (Andsager, 2000; De Vreese, 2004, 2005; Entman, 1993; Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Frames are “mental structures that shape the way we see the world” (Lakoff, 2004, p. xv). They thus effectively shape public discussion. Moreover, while people think in the structure of frames

when they conceive of the world around them, they often do so without realising. These subconscious structures then possess the enormous potential to decisively influence mass opinion, which makes them ideal for both political strategizing and analysis.

I want to find out how FW, AFP, and GO frame Obamacare in their advertisements and to what effect these framing strategies were employed. I will not focus on a particular state or candidate but entirely on the issue of Obamacare. The time period ranges from the start of the Tea Party movement in February 2009 until July 2014, when this study was conducted. Any terminology introduced by the Kochs and the Tea Party that I want to distance myself from is presented in single quotation marks; e.g. labelling Obama's policies 'socialism'.

In order to fully comprehend the interconnected workings between the Kochs, the Tea Party, Fox News, Obamacare, and the repercussions of *Citizens United*, a detailed reconstruction of the political developments since 2009 is needed in chapter II. The Kochs' involvement with the Tea Party movement and particularly their choice of advertisement framing strategies presented in chapter IV simply cannot be explained without this elaborate prelude. Everything centres on the elicitation of emotions, primarily anger. It is only through this review that the full magnitude of the deep connections between money, anger, media, and the health care reform come into view. Chapter II.a) will provide a short dissection of the most relevant segments of the Kochtopus concerning Obamacare: FW, AFP, and GO. It will also feature a short mentioning of Freedom Partners (FP), which represents the Kochs' primary financial distribution tool. FP is not used to promote

advertising campaigns, though, and will therefore not be included in the frame analysis. In chapter II.b), I will present the Tea Party's demographics and further describe the central characteristics of the movement. Chapter II.c) will bring together the significance of Tea Partiers' anger, Koch money, and Fox News as a powerful media ally. I will also comment on the predominant role money plays in US elections and the drastic consequences this has for American society. Rounding off the literature review, chapter II.d) will present major Obamacare developments as well as details on Tea Partiers' rejection of the law. The methodological background of frame analysis III follows this in chapter III. Chapter IV forms the principal part of this study. Here, I will present my detailed findings according to identified framing categories. The chapter will feature numerous advertisements by AFP, FW, and GO that stand representative for those categories. Descriptions of these ads will be combined with paraphrasings of their messages (in single quotation marks) and evaluations of the claims made. Finally, chapter V will assess the effects of Koch framing, look out onto the future of Obamacare, and comment on the importance of anger and money for the political Right.

II. An Overview of Money, Motivation, and Mobilisation

This literature review will lay the thematic groundwork for the frame analysis in chapter IV. It will describe a selected section of the Kochtopus, Tea Party demographics, the workings of money, media, and anger in the movement, as well as the cornerstones of Obamacare and data regarding Tea Partiers' rejection of the law. This information is necessary to fully comprehend the eventual framing strat-

egies employed and the political references made in the respective advertisements in chapter IV.

a) A Glimpse of the Kochtopus

This subchapter will provide an overview of the legal, structural, and financial background of four Koch organisations: Americans for Prosperity, FreedomWorks, Generation Opportunity, and Freedom Partners.

i) *Americans for Prosperity*

AFP is a political advocacy group with the status of a 501(c)(4) organisation that originated from *Citizens for a Sound Economy* (CFSE), a PAC founded by David and Charles Koch, when it split in 2004. The other resulting organisation was FW (Pilkington, 2009). Both can raise and spend unlimited funds without disclosing the identities of their donors. The same holds true for AFP's sister organisation, the AFP Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organisation with the status of a private foundation. AFP and the AFP Foundation share the same President, staff, and address, with David Koch acting as the foundation's Chairman of the Board (FactCheck, 2010).

AFP's mission is "educating citizens about economic policy and mobilizing those citizens as advocates in the public policy process". It claims to have 2.3 million activists in 50 states, 34 state chapters, and to have received donations from more than 90,000 US citizens nation-wide (both AFP, 2014a). Its main issues are given as: Health Care and Entitlements; Budget and Spending; Energy and Envi-

ronment; Taxes; Labour, Education and Pensions; Banking and Financial Services; Property Rights; and Technology (AFP, 2014d).

AFP raised \$115 million and spent \$122 million in 2012, amassing a loss of \$7 million for that year. \$83 million of this – in other words: more than two thirds – were spent on advertisements and media. AFP’s overall spending amounted to a fivefold increase of its 2010 expenditures, or, put differently, more than its yearly outgoings from 2004 to 2010 combined (Beckel, 2014; Maguire & Novak, 2013). It is expected to spend more than \$100 million over the course of 2014 (Bump, 2014; M. Gold, 2014a).

ii) *FreedomWorks*

FW is the second company that resulted from the CFSE split in 2004. As a 501(c)(4) organisation, it can conceal its donors from public release.

In 2011, the Super PAC *FreedomWorks For America* (FWFA) was founded to “empower the leaderless, decentralized community of the tea party movement as it continues its hostile takeover of the GOP establishment” (FW, 2011b). This followed the 2010 Supreme Court ruling.

The President and CEO of FW is Matt Kibbe, who previously worked as Policy Analyst at CFSE, Senior Economist at the Republican National Committee, and Director of Federal Budget Policy at the US Chamber of Commerce (FW, 2014c). He is the author of *Hostile Takeover: Resisting Centralized Government’s Stranglehold on America* (2012), a call to arms of Tea Partiers in book form, and omnipresent on FW’s online platforms.

Until recently, Dick Armev, former Republican Representative for Texas (1985-2003) and House Majority Leader (1995-2003), held the position of FW Chairman (Politico, 2014). Together with Kibbe, he authored *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto (2010)*, an organisational guide for local Tea Party chapters. Armev resigned over internal issues in December 2012 (Corn & Kroll, 2012), and his position has since been abolished.

FW claims to have 272,513 activists, 8,434 local groups, and to have held 723 nation-wide events at the time of writing (FW, 2014a).

FW's main issues are given as: Health Care Reform; Education Reform; Red Tape, Hidden Taxes and Regulation; Sound Money; Workplace Freedom; Energy and Environment; Entitlement Reform; Budget and Spending; Civil Liberties; and Fundamental Tax Reform (FW, 2014b).

FW endorsed 114 candidates for the 2010 Midterm Elections, of which 60 were successful (Andrews, Canipe, Downs, & Keating, 2010). It also endorsed eventual Texas Senator Ted Cruz in the 2012 Presidential Elections, among many others (Eckholm, 2012).

FW raised \$700,000 and spent \$600,000 in 2010. Its newly established Super PAC FWFA raised \$23.5 million and spent \$22.6 million in 2012. \$18 million of this was spent on ads attacking Democratic and promoting Republican candidates (Fischer, 2012; OpenSecrets, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c).

iii) Generation Opportunity

GO is a 501(c)(4) non-profit advocacy organisation that was founded in 2011. Its mission is to “promote economic opportunity for young Americans” who are “threatened by a government that mortgages and stifles our future for short-term political gain” (both GO, 2014a). Its main issues are given as: Health Care; Higher Education; Justice; Unemployment; Cronyism; Personal Protections; Debt Burden; and Voter Registration (GO, 2014d).

Created specifically to target the Millennium Generation, GO embarked on a vociferous campaign to persuade young Americans to opt out of enrolling in Obamacare. It made a name for itself with a series of ads featuring a character named “Creepy Uncle Sam”, which received plenty of media coverage due to its unusual audacity (Delreal, 2013; Lapidos, 2013; Reese, 2013) and will be explained in detail in chapter IV.

GO is almost entirely funded by other Koch organisations. Over its three years of existence, it received 86 per cent of its contributions from FP (see below) alone. Its 2013 budget reached a total of \$4.1 million. \$750,000 of this went to a campaign featuring two spots with “Creepy Uncle Sam” (Pickert, 2013). While numbers for its 2014 budget are not available yet, GO is believed to have spent \$2.3 million on television ads so far (Allen & Vandehei, 2013; Bottari, 2014; Novak, 2014).

While clearly not a major player in the Kochtopus concerning spending and fundraising, GO is included in this study because of its aggressive pursuit of young Americans in matters of health care. Obamacare’s economic validity depends on this demographic. If the number of young Americans enrolling is too

low, overall premiums for the population will skyrocket, essentially dooming the law (Kliff, 2013).

iv) Freedom Partners

FP is a 501(c)(6) non-profit organisation founded in 2011. Like 501(c)(4)s, it can make unlimited contributions since 2010 without the requirement to disclose its donors.

FP's "principal goal is to educate the public about the critical role played by free markets in achieving economic prosperity, societal well-being, and personal happiness". It focuses on four areas: Health Care Reform; Federal Spending; Energy Policy; and Cronyism (both FP, 2014).

FP raised \$256 million and spent \$238 million in 2012 (OpenSecrets, 2013a). Judging from these figures, FP is very likely to be the central money distribution tool among the Koch organisations, effectively funding AFP, FW, and GO (M. Gold, 2014b; Novak, 2014). It is also frequently depicted at the centre of the Kochtopus (Maguire, 2014; Schumpeter, 2014) and called "the Koch brothers' secret bank" (Allen & Vandehei, 2013).

FP only plays a negligible role in the distribution of political campaign ads, and will therefore not be part of the frame analysis in chapter IV.

In sum, these four organisations of the Kochtopus funnelled large amounts of secret money into the political process, and used the majority of this money to create and broadcast advertisement campaigns. These ads heavily promoted candidates associated with the Tea Party movement, to which I will now turn.

b) Who are the Tea Partiers?

The Tea Party had an enormous influence on the political process over the past five years. It is the aim of this subchapter to present its build-up and provide a critical analysis of its members' motivations and viewpoints.

According to Tea Partiers, big government believes people need to be looked after by redistributing the nation's wealth. "On the other hand, the Tea Party has trust in the practical genius of the American people to be responsible for making decisions" (Armey & Kibbe, 2010, p. 85). Other favourable observers claim "the whole point of this movement is that these people hate being told what to do" (Geraghty, 2011). Analysts of a more bipartisan nature agree with this last claim, but distance themselves from the aura of self-righteousness. While Tea Partiers may feel "victimized" and "dictated-to" (both Horwitz, 2013, p. 172), that does not mean they really are subjected to such social forces. In fact, the academically prevalent description of the movement is one of deep dissatisfaction based on perceived, rather than actual, injustice and betrayal (Fetner & King, 2014; Skocpol & Williamson, 2012; Van Dyke & Meyer, 2014).

Tea Partiers claim to be the 'silent majority' (Armey & Kibbe, 2010; O'Hara, 2010). Recent polls, however, give evidence to the contrary: Tea Party support overall has declined from 30 per cent in 2010 to 24 per cent in 2014, and even plunged 20 per cent among Republicans to a current level of 41 per cent (Gallup, 2014b).

Demographically speaking, Tea Partiers are not the excluded or disadvantaged but rather better educated, wealthy, white, middle class, and mostly male

Americans who have not been hit hardest by the recession but are hostile towards government nonetheless (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012; Van Dyke & Meyer, 2014). Polls verify this: 66 per cent of Tea Partiers have received at least some college education, 55 per cent earn more than \$50,000 per year, 79 per cent are white, and 55 per cent are men (Gallup, 2014a). While these numbers are somewhat in proximity to the demographics of the overall population, significant differences appear along the lines of political orientation: 49 per cent of Tea Partiers identify themselves as Republican, compared to 28 per cent overall, and 8 per cent as Democrats, as opposed to 32 per cent overall. This lends credibility to Tea Partiers' claim that very conservative Republicans form a major part of the Tea Party movement (Rasmussen & Schoen, 2011). The Independent rate is essentially equal, with 43 per cent of Tea Partiers and 40 per cent overall (Gallup, 2014a). This, however, does not mean that the Tea Party represents a refuge for frustrated Independents in the political centre. Those 43 per cent of Tea Partiers might define themselves as Independents, yet in reality are far away from the political centre. The vast majority are located even further down the scale towards the political Right than the GOP (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). Their rejection of both the GOP and the Democrats may be very truthful indeed, but it represents a fallacy to label these individuals Independents, as some Tea Partiers do (Foley, 2012; O'Hara, 2010). Independents traditionally occupy the middle ground between the Democrats and the GOP, not the sector to the GOP's far Right. A demographic the Tea Party does attract, however, are enraged political newcomers (Fetner & King, 2014; Horwitz, 2013). Obama's election in 2008 and his progressive agenda caused extreme surges of anger in federal politics, rallying up politically apathetic

citizens (Scher & Berlet, 2014; Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). Blaming the GOP establishment for the failure to prevent an Obama presidency, these angry individuals took to the Tea Party as their safe haven: 53 per cent of Tea Partiers state they are angry at the government, 88 per cent severely disapprove of Obama, and more than three quarters do not think Obama shares the values of most Americans (CBSNews/NYT, 2010a).

Tea Partiers knowledge of political processes is often out of touch with factual reality: Rasmussen & Schoen quote a Tea Partier in 2011 saying, “I’m a little worried that the Democrats (...) can basically pass anything they want, any bill or anything else that they want to put through there [Congress]” (Rasmussen & Schoen, 2011, p. 81), failing to realise that a 60-vote majority in the Senate is needed to overcome Filibuster, which the Democrats did not have in 2011. In fact, being un-elite and even ignorant of policy-making skills has become a badge of credit for Tea Party candidates. Values count more than political skills, and all that is needed to serve in politics are strong conviction and determination not to compromise (Horwitz, 2013).

Tea Partiers are significantly more conservative on social issues than the general public. 53 per cent of Tea Partiers consider *Roe vs. Wade* a bad decision, compared to 34 per cent of Americans overall. 40 per cent of Tea Partiers oppose same-sex marriage; only 30 per cent of the general population do so (CBSNews/NYT, 2010a). Studies have also identified a substantial overlap between membership in the Tea Party and in the religious Right (CBSNews/NYT, 2010b; Skocpol & Williamson, 2012).

The movement is not generally opposed to public spending, just to public spending for the undeserving and the ‘losers’ of society. Tea Partiers consider themselves “the productive sector of society” (Scher & Berlet, 2014, p. 99) who deserve to reap the benefits after having worked hard. This explains why the number of Tea Partiers supporting Social Security and Medicare and their accompanying taxes is surprisingly high: 62 per cent think the benefits from these governments programs are worth the costs for taxpayers because they fairly reward upstanding citizens. That stands in opposition to ‘freeloaders’, i.e. the poor. 73 per cent of Tea Partiers think government benefits to the poor encourage them to remain poor (CBSNews/NYT, 2010a).

Central to the movement is “a demand for restoration, all folded into a romanticization of an imagined past” (Van Dyke & Meyer, 2014, p. 5). This is exemplified by Tea Partiers’ worshipping of the constitution. For them, it is “simply the best organizational chart for running a society ever created” (Armey & Kibbe, 2010, p. 80). The document is seen as accessible in its exact wording as it was 240 years ago, which overlooks that what held true in the 1770s might not automatically apply to the complex, globalised world of the 21st century in its every word. Tea Partiers also seldom realise that some of their positions mirror Anti-Federalist positions, i.e. the very people their cherished Founders were fighting in order to create the United States (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012), such as the complete unwillingness to compromise.

Debates regarding any form of true political philosophy in its widest sense between adherents of wealth redistribution and opponents of big government are

hard to judge, if not impossible. Philosophies possess the intrinsic characteristic of being somewhat removed from evidence-based analysis. In this light, the fear and anxiety about a changing world experienced by Tea Partiers is perfectly legitimate, as is their taking action to stand up for their beliefs. The grounds for those beliefs and the precise political reactions they trigger, however, are troublesome. Many Tea Partiers base their beliefs on myths, factoids, lies, and romanticised better past times: Smart people are not to be trusted; Obama is a socialist (CBSNews/NYT, 2010a); Obamacare contains death panels (Enten, 2013); and the Constitution would make everything better. They claim that all Americans reject Democrats and Republicans (Rasmussen & Schoen, 2011). An astonishing 84 per cent of Tea Partiers believe their views reflect the views of most Americans. By comparison, only 25 per cent of overall Americans actually feel this way (CBSNews/NYT, 2010a).

This self-delusion and the immersion in disproven beliefs lead Tea Partiers to campaign and vote for right-wing conservative candidates who aggressively push for policies that “primarily serve the interests of corporate capitalism and the very wealthy” (Horwitz, 2013, p. 200). Effectively, Tea Partiers support candidates with policies that only benefit the very rich, not Tea Partiers themselves.

As I will now demonstrate in subchapter c), this is the reason why the billionaire Koch brothers continue to throw their organisational weight behind the movement. Its phoenix-like rise in the political sphere cannot be attributed to the Kochs’ involvement alone, though. The TV network Fox News also bears responsibility for this development as it heavily played the role of promoter. In the pro-

cess, the Kochs became the Tea Party's shadow orchestrators through their corporate financial power, aided by the enormous influence of money since *Citizens United*.

c) When Anger Met Organised Money and Mass Media

I will start out with a look at the purported grassroots nature of the Tea Party, then turn to the importance of Fox News in the movement's inception stages, and finally criticise the effects of dominant money in US politics.

Tea Party supporters claim the movement is grassroots that spread on its own through social networking sites (Foley, 2012; O'Hara, 2010; Rasmussen & Schoen, 2011). Others label it essentially bottom-up grassroots but with some donor influence (Reichley, 2011; Scher & Berlet, 2014). On the other side of the spectrum, the Tea Party is said to be top-down astroturf but with grassroots parts (Fetner & King, 2014; Skocpol & Williamson, 2012; Van Dyke & Meyer, 2014). The term astroturf here refers to the practice of masking a message to give it the appearance of grassroots. For several reasons, which will follow, I consider the Tea Party overall astroturf and top-down but incorporating grassroots aspects in its early stages.

The original anger over Obama's 'socialism' came from grassroots. There is no evidence that either AFP or FW told American citizens to become angry so they could benefit from a grassroots label. There is a section of the American population that genuinely feared for their way of life. Tea Party sympathisers like Foley and O'Hara overlook, however, that FW and AFP were instrumental in

making the movement into the force it is today. The numbers presented in chapter II.a) show that AFP's 2012 spending figures amounted to more than its expenditures from 2004 to 2010 combined. Why was AFP so comparatively idle before 2010, but then became active? The answer is simple: Civil hostility towards Obama emerged in the name of the Tea Party. Before 2010, there was no one to fund on that magnitude. The Kochs used this opportunity to wed their interests of deregulation with grassroots labels on the grounds of despising Obama, thereby claiming intimate ties to 'the will of the people' (Fetner & King, 2014; Scher & Berlet, 2014; Skocpol & Williamson, 2012; Van Dyke & Meyer, 2014). The influence of FW in particular cannot be overlooked: FW was the main sponsor of the *March on Capitol Hill* on September 12th 2010 (Travis, 2010) and its CEO and Chairman published a book labelled *Tea Party manifesto* (Armev & Kibbe, 2010). It contains the *FreedomWorks Grassroots Activism Toolkit*, which provides detailed information on how to set up a chapter and who to contact in newspaper and TV station editing rooms, among many others. All taken together, this clearly demonstrates the in-depth connections between the Koch brothers and the Tea Party.

The data given in subchapter b) show that Tea Partiers overall are not very concerned with deregulation, contrary to the Koch brothers. In turn, neither AFP nor FW have shown any engagement for social conservative issues, which are of high importance to Tea Partiers. Then how did the movement come to be orchestrated by these billionaire industrialists with differing priorities? This gradually developed through continuous, subtle manipulation on the local level. AFP and FW regularly send speakers to present their organisations' ideas in connection

with issues that are sure to appeal to local Tea Party chapters. Skocpol & Williamson tell the story of Tom Jenney, Arizona State Director for AFP, who filled his speech with Christian references popular with his audience. He called some of Obama's benefits bills "stealing bills" and connected them with the eighth commandment "Thou shalt not steal", thereby equalling opposition to aide programs for the poor with morally correct obedience to God (both Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p. 39). Another strategy is to simply stay vague. Tea Partiers are not against Medicare, but AFP has the explicit goal of completely defunding it. The way to get around this apparent contradiction is to focus on 'the need to slash spending', rather than naming specific policy plans. This message appeals to Tea Party audiences – they overwhelmingly support radical spending cuts (CBSNews/NYT, 2010a) – and still allows AFP to force through specific policies when the opportunity arises in Washington (Fetner & King, 2014). The aim for AFP and FW is to focus on what unites them with Tea Partiers: their rejection of Obama. A similar unification strategy also applies to the Kochs' and Tea Partiers' fight against the GOP establishment. Both want a GOP based on the principle of 'true' fiscal conservatism, rather than electability (Hacker & Pierson, 2010). For Tea Partiers, this means more perceived influence on Washington. For the Kochs, however, it means controlling the GOP agenda and forcing the entire political balance to the Right (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012).

Overall then, long-standing top-down ideological organisations funded by Koch money seized people's genuine anger and fears to present themselves as new and bottom-up to gather a much more prominent place on the mainstream agenda. Neither FW nor AFP created the first local Tea Party chapters in early

2009, but the movement became big through corporate money and, very importantly, Fox News.

For the vast majority of scholars, Fox News was as crucial as Koch money in making the Tea Party spread as fast as it did. Glenn Beck, of whom 59 per cent of Tea Partiers think favourably (CBSNews/NYT, 2010a), frequently broadcast direct pleas to attend Tea Party events and promoted its websites (Van Dyke & Meyer, 2014). With 25 per cent of Americans regularly watching Fox News (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012), this helped reach a nation-wide audience (Fetner & King, 2014; Horwitz, 2013; Mann & Ornstein, 2012). Fox News immediately picked up Santelli's rant in February 2009 and showed over 107 promotions of Tea Party rallies between April 6th and April 14th 2009 (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). 63 per cent of Tea Partiers identify Fox News as their main source of political TV news, with 47 per cent citing the TV as their main source of Tea Party information (CBSNews/NYT, 2010a), which shows the importance of the network for the movement.

In the end, there are three important factors for the political ascent of the Tea Party: (1) angry, conservative grassroots citizens in local chapters; (2) funding by ultra-free-market advocacy groups; and (3) a powerful media ally in Fox News (Fetner & King, 2014; Kabaservice, 2012; Skocpol & Williamson, 2012).

Funding in particular has become a prerequisite for electoral victory. Obama's 2008 campaign was the first to break the barrier of \$1 billion in contributions (Vogel & Berman, 2012). Over the past decades, the richest of the rich have accumulated enormous wealth, while the majority stagnated (Collins, 2012).

This is not the invisible hand of the free market at work but political processes deliberately aiding this development, under both Democrats and Republicans (Mann & Ornstein, 2012). This has caused such economic inequality that only a very small number of people with extraordinary financial means have the possibility to assert their influence on American politics. Frank calls this selected group the inhabitants of “Billionaireville” (Frank, 2007, p. 12). On the surface, America still embodies the American Dream, where anyone can make it to the top. Beneath that, however, there are deep ravines between the rich and the rest. Ordinary citizens no longer get a shot at making it to the top when they work hard and play by the rules (Frank, 2007). Persistent belief in this myth overlooks the powerful role of organised money in US society. It is very much trickle-up economics, rather than trickle-down (Hacker & Pierson, 2010). *Citizens United* made things exponentially worse (Mann & Ornstein, 2012). This is evidenced by the huge spending increases of the Kochtopus on the Right as well as a recent document by the Left, in which the Democracy Alliance makes recommendations for the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars in the 2014 Midterm Elections to beat back the Kochs (DA, 2014). American politics has become a financial arms race of secret money on both sides. This led Obama himself to publicly castigate AFP for its deliberately opaque operations (Obama, 2010b), to which AFP responded with an advertisement attacking him in turn (see chapter IV.a.iii).

Obama’s election in 2008 has proven a call to arms for eventual Tea Partiers. The epitome of their rejection of his policies is his health care reform. Subchapter

d) will now present a brief overview of its development, followed by a summary of Tea Party opposition to it.

d) Opposition to Obamacare

Obama had to fight for his health care reform from the very beginning in 2009, and this battle did not stop when it was signed into law in 2010. Tea Party and general opposition to the law remain high to the present day.

Obama announced his health care reform intentions in February 2009 (Obama, 2009). His plans included a state-controlled public health insurance option and the individual mandate. The latter requires that all citizens for whom insurance is affordable purchase coverage or pay a penalty. This was originally an idea by Newt Gingrich and later Mitt Romney (Butler & Haislmaier, 1989; Roy, 2012). Obama thus actively sought to form a bipartisan basis for his plan. Republicans, however, decided to oppose Obama's plan in order to doom his presidency (Chait, 2009; Hacker & Pierson, 2010; Hulse & Nagourney, 2010). The place to implement this blocking strategy was the Senate, where the refusal of all Republican Senators required all Democrats and Independents to fall in line to reach the necessary 60 votes.

Two bills were drafted in the Senate and in the House, with only the latter including a public option (Dunham, 2010). Proponents aimed to merge both bills and have Congress pass it again, in order to save the public option. Those plans had to be abandoned when the Democrats lost their 60-seat majority in the Senate

on January 19th 2010, when Republican Scott Brown replaced the late Ted Kennedy in a Massachusetts special election (MacAskill, 2010b).

On February 22nd, Obama unveiled his health care proposal, based almost entirely on the Senate bill (Obama, 2010a). This bill had already passed the Senate and was thus unaffected by the loss of the 60-seat majority. The Democrat-controlled House passed this proposal on March 21st and Obama signed it into law two days later (Stolberg & Pear, 2010). Republicans introduced legislation to repeal it the same day (Aro & Mooney, 2010).

With the Republicans taking control of the House in the 2010 Midterm Elections, the House has voted 54 times to repeal Obamacare since January 2011 (O'Keefe, 2014). Those efforts proved futile because the Democrats retained control of the Senate. The Republican side filed various lawsuits, which resulted in conflicting verdicts. In the end, the Supreme Court agreed to decide matters in the case *National Federation of Independent Business vs. Sebelius*. On June 28th 2012, it ruled the individual mandate constitutional (Liptak, 2012). As a significant restriction, it declared states could not be forced to participate in Obamacare's Medicaid expansion (Edquist et al., 2012). This ruling opened the door to shift the fight against Obamacare onto the states (Stolberg, 2013). At the time of writing, 21 states opted out of Medicare (KaiserFamilyFoundation, 2014). If a state chooses this path, its poorest citizens are ineligible for federal tax credits. Since the individual mandate still requires them to purchase health insurance, however, they are forced to do so at extortionate rates (Kliff, 2012; Pear, 2013).

In October 2013, the government was forced to shut down after Congress failed to reach an agreement to fund federal agencies (Montgomery & Kane,

2013). The Republican majority in the House refused to provide said funding without the inclusion of defunding measures for major Obamacare provisions that were scheduled to come into effect on January 1st 2014, among them the individual mandate (HHS, 2010). The Senate refused to pass this bill, which caused the shutdown, and 800,000 government employees were furloughed. The House eventually gave in on October 16th (Cohen, Botelho, & Yan, 2013).

Simultaneously to the shutdown, the first open enrolment phase started on the online market place, www.healthcare.gov. It encountered significant technical obstacles with repeated website crashes (Christensen, 2014). These were eventually resolved. As of May 2014, more than 8 million people had enrolled in these exchanges, with 28 per cent of those being in the 18 to 34 age bracket (Cheney & Haberkorn, 2014).

During the political battles, Obama repeatedly reassured the public that they could keep their insurance plans. This turned out to be false, and thousands received cancellation notices. Public outrage followed, and PolitiFact called it the “Lie of the Year” (Holan, 2013). Obama eventually apologised (Todd, 2013).

The general public is not in favour of Obamacare. 54.4 per cent disapprove of the law (RealClearPolitics, 2014). Among Tea Partiers, however, an enormous 93 per cent reject it (CBSNews/NYT, 2010b). Somewhat confusingly, the majority of them are in favour of some of its core components, such as the requirement for health insurance companies to cover people regardless of existing medical conditions. However, they vigorously oppose the individual mandate: 85 per cent think

the government should not require all Americans to have health insurance (CBSNews/NYT, 2010a).

Tea Party sympathisers argue they are not opposed to health care reform per se, just to this particular one. Reasons given for this include Obama pushing his partisan reform hastily through Congress, liberals wanting to enforce a health care system detached from the market (both O'Hara, 2010), and Obama hiding the costs of the individual mandate in his plans (Foley, 2012). None of these claims are valid: Obama based his plans on blueprints by Gingrich and Romney, which makes them bipartisan. There were never any plans in Obamacare to abolish the free market and erect universal state health care (Chaikind et al., 2011). The costs of the individual mandate for citizens were not hidden in the reform plans but formed the central aspect that paid for the reform on the basis of wealth redistribution (HHS, 2010).

The Tea Party fight against Obamacare will continue nonetheless: The Supreme Court decided on June 30th 2014 that corporations can hold religious objections which allow them to opt out of the new health law requirement to cover contraceptives for women (Somashekhar, 2014). While this decision is considered peripheral, another legal battle has the potential to severely hollow out Obamacare: A federal court of appeals ruled on July 22nd 2014 that the insurance subsidies given to millions of Americans are illegal in states that chose not to set up their own market place and instead used the federal www.healthcare.gov, only to be contradicted hours later by a separate court ruling in a different case. These rulings would affect roughly 4.7 million people who have received subsidies in 36 states (Somashekhar & Goldstein, 2014). The magnitude of a potential abolish-

ment of these subsidies would therefore have devastating consequences for Obamacare. Once more, then, it looks like its future will be decided in the halls of the Supreme Court.

This rounds off my literature review. As I mentioned above, I consider this chapter indispensable to grasp the nature of the framing strategies and the political references made in the respective advertisements I will present in chapter IV. I will now turn to the principal part of this dissertation. In chapter III, I will explain the workings of frame analysis and provide the key structure for my study. Chapter IV will feature the detailed presentation and analysis of the identified framing categories.

III. Frame Analysis – Setting the Terms for Debate

Frames are broader interpretive schemas (Goffman, 1974), categories for information processing (Lakoff, 1996), and descriptions of the world that affects viewers' interpretations of it. They are subconscious processes that are tremendously influential in determining people's outlook on the world (Lakoff, 2004; Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). In other words: People think in the structure of frames when they try to conceive of the world, but primarily without realising that they do so. Being meta processes, frames and their structures are not easy to access. Their identification requires in-depth analysis. Any mediated perspective on the world, be that TV, newspapers, radio, or personal reports, inevitably involves framing, deliberate or unintentional (Carpini, 2005; Entman, 2005). Since people are usually not aware of these forces, framing measures possess the power to shape people's perceptions in an almost undetected manner. This makes it highly

useful for political campaigning, where the ability to highlight favoured aspects while neglecting disliked others is considered the most fundamental of communication skills (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005a). In politics, then, framing represents the quest for “a central organizing idea” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 3). Effective framing can set the terms for the debate surrounding an issue and “promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (Entman, 2004, p. 5) by providing or withholding context.

Since political communication happens almost exclusively through news media, politicians and interest groups compete for media attention to define the political space with their frames to influence mass opinion (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005b). The playing field, though, is far from level. Frames put forth by dominant players with large organisational and financial resources often “crowd out other players’ frames” (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005a, p. 7). Like every other political player, each institution and their sponsored frames stand in competition with other, often mutually exclusive, frames endorsed by other organisations.

Besides being tacit, frames are also “resistant to resolution by appeal to facts or reasoned argumentation” because the conflicting parties “determine what counts as a fact and what arguments are taken to be relevant and compelling” (both Schön & Rein, 1994, p. 23). Conflicting parties each provide their own structural frame that spans the bridge from the original policy proposal to behaviour recommendations. This normative leap is presented as the most natural and logical conclusion to the data presented, and it is only within these specific frames that each conflicting party assesses the validity of arguments. These frames are designed to radiate an aura of naturalness, or obviousness, that clearly defines

what aspects of an issue need fixing (Entman, 2004). The end products of such framing measures are behaviour recommendations to the public, most frequently consisting of election endorsements or rejections. Since frames do not appear out of thin air but are always socially constructed by someone, they can conversely be deconstructed through detailed political analysis. It is the task of frame analysis to identify the specific bridge, or normative leap, that various political players have constructed with their frames in order to arrive at their behaviour recommendations. This is best described with an example:

George W. Bush introduced his tax cuts in 2001 as ‘tax reliefs’ (Hacker & Pierson, 2005). The term ‘relief’ immediately framed the original taxes as an ailment that had been inflicted upon the American people (Lakoff, 2004). Ailments by definition are bad and need to be removed. It is thus impossible within the confinements of this frame to argue in favour of taxes. After all, who in their right mind would choose to keep an ailment? If Bush’s frame is accepted unquestioned, it sets terms for debate that make it impossible for opponents of tax cuts to argue against them. If, however, the validity of the frame itself is questioned, the picture is a different one. Taxes then no longer ‘naturally’ appear as a suffering, but could be described as the government ensuring a just and fair society. In this light, it is the tax cuts, not the taxes, which are detrimental to the nation’s well-being. In each case, these frames are based on differing concepts of political philosophy – taxes are either seen as good or bad for society. Political philosophies are by definition highly unfalsifiable, and frame analysis therefore cannot determine which is accurate. What it can do, however, is uncover the tacit framing strategies that are used. In other words: Frame analysis cannot decide whether Bush’s framing strat-

egy was correct or not, but it can reveal that Bush employed the ‘ailments’ frame in the first place to subconsciously influence people’s perception of tax cuts. Frame analysis thus does not concern support for or opposition to a certain policy, but looks at the strategic way this support or opposition is expressed to subconsciously influence mass opinion.

I will conduct precisely such an analysis. The subjects of my study are three political players with enormous organisational and financial resources on the political Right that are controlled by the Koch brothers and have close ties to the Tea Party movement: FreedomWorks, Americans for Prosperity, and Generation Opportunity. The policy issue I will focus on is Obamacare since this issue has been at the centre of Tea Party and Koch activism. I ask the question: How do FW, AFP, and GO frame Obamacare, and to what effect were these framing strategies employed? I aim to answer this question by looking at the TV advertisements that FW, AFP, and GO aired in the time period from the start of the Tea Party movement in February 2009 until July 2014, when this study was conducted. I have chosen these ads as the basis for analysis since all three organisations spent the majority of their fundraising on ad campaigns targeting opponents and promoting Tea Party candidates. They thus clearly rely heavily on them to bring across their messages, and they do so by subconsciously setting the terms for debate through a variety of frames. It is my aim to disentangle this web of frames in their ads, which is designed to create public opposition to Obamacare. Thus, content for this analysis are all the ads FW, AFP, and GO created that are relevant to the issue of Obamacare. Relevant here is defined as mentioning or referring to the expressions “Obamacare”, “health care”, or “Affordable Care Act”. I will not be concerned

with the differences between PACs, Super PACs, and 501(c)s here, since these legal statuses do not have an effect on ad content. All TV ads are archived and freely accessible on the organisations' YouTube channels. Ads that had been amended in minor details were counted as one ad for statistical purposes.

With the methodological basis explained, I will now present the findings of my analysis. These will first feature statistical data and then the various identified framing categories.

IV. The Koch Framing of Obamacare

I have identified four framing categories in the advertisements by AFP, FW, and GO. AFP here boasts the largest number of ads, both overall and regarding Obamacare. As the numbers below show, over 61 per cent of AFP's ads have a relevance to Obamacare, compared to 31 per cent of FW's ads. Their ads are not limited to a particular demographic. GO has a different approach, aiming entirely at young adults. Since Obama needs this group for his health care reform to succeed, the majority – 59 per cent – of GO's ads concern Obamacare.

<i>Number of ads on respective YouTube channels, regardless of issue</i>		
AFP	FW	GO
159	108	17
		Total: 284

<i>Of those 284, number of Obamacare-related ads</i>		
AFP	FW	GO
97	33	10
Total: 140		

<i>Of those 140, number of ads according to identified framing groups</i>											
Confrontation			Emotional Sympathy			The Clowns in Washington			Freedom & Empowerment		
AFP	FW	GO	AFP	FW	GO	AFP	FW	GO	AFP	FW	GO
30	24	6	51	1	0	5	4	4	11	4	0
Total: 60			Total: 52			Total: 13			Total: 15		

Many ads feature appeals to contact various candidates, with the same ads being used in multiple states. Those appeals are not relevant for this study. The time the respective ads were aired is not relevant either, nor is the status of Representative or Senator for the respective lawmakers, seeing as it is the overall framing approach that I investigate, rather than particular elections.

I coined the identified framing categories Confrontation, Emotional Sympathy, The Clowns in Washington, and Freedom and Empowerment. AFP and FW are present in all categories, with AFP focusing on Emotional Sympathy and FW concentrating on Confrontation. GO steered clear of Emotional Sympathy and Freedom, focusing entirely on Confrontation and Clowns.

Overall, a clear divide is noticeable: With 60 and 52 ads, respectively, Confrontation and Emotional Sympathy serve as the primary attacking frames towards ‘the enemy’ Obama, with Clowns providing an angle of ridicule. Freedom is employed as a supplement frame to showcase the opposite, i.e. good, upstanding politicians like Ted Cruz.

Music is a central framing aspect in every single ad. Dozens of variations of thriller, cartoon, drama, horror, and apocalypse music themes corroborate the messages conveyed.

I will now present my findings according to identified framing categories, starting with Confrontation. All the ads in the following chapters were selected because they most lucidly represent their respective framing categories. They can be found in the references. As before, in the effort to distance myself from Koch terminology, I will paraphrase the respective ads’ messages in single quotation marks at the beginning of each subchapter. Direct quotations from the ads will be given in double quotation marks.

a) Confrontation

With all three organisations producing several ads in this category, Confrontation forms the most salient assault on Obama and his health care reform. It is characterised by thriller music, apocalyptic ambiance, assertions of conspiracy, and allegedly dooming invasion.

i) Conspiracy with Evil Liars

‘Obama betrayed the American people by telling them they could keep their current doctors and plans under Obamacare (see chapter II.d)). He is the enemy who needs to be confronted.’

Several ads show Obama stating versions of his ‘lie of the year’. The most prominent one (AFP, 2014i) features chants of “Obama, Obama”, presumably taken from a campaign speech, and dramatic thriller music. The screen cuts to the words “Now the truth”, followed by Obama in an interview saying, “They might end up having to switch doctors”. The video is rewound like an old VHS tape and replayed three times, each time with a zoom-in on Obama’s face and accompanying musical punches. The ad ends with “The lie of the year” on the screen set to a black-and-white picture of Obama looking sternly down from a podium, his forefinger pointing at the viewer and people chanting his name in the background (pictured below). The music slowly fades. The shady VHS layout gives the ad a sense of conspiracy, as if this footage of Obama had been taken in secrecy and is only now made public, revealing Obama’s true character. This is reinforced by the dramatic musical punches the American public knows from Hollywood blockbusters in which the true nature of the villain is exposed. The American people here are the hero, and Obama is the bad guy with followers who blindly obey him and chant his name. The aim of the tape rewinding is to present Obama as unwilling to admit he lied. Dozens of other ads focus on other candidates for offices and rely on their association with the ‘evil’ Obama to depict them as ‘enemies’, too.



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Obama and his political friends are presented as liars. Black-and-white close-ups, the suspicious VHS look, Hollywood blockbuster resemblances, and rapid repetitions of statements all call up these associations. Obama lies to prevent the American people from finding out the alleged truth: ‘Under Obamacare, the people will suffer.’ AFP claims that the American people will not tolerate such behaviour any more.

According to the New York Times, mentioning just the cancellation of policies represents a selective truth. People did have their original policies cancelled but were apparently offered better policies instead, rather than just getting kicked out, as the ads imply (NYT, 2014). Nonetheless, it seems accurate to call Obama’s statements a lie, or at least an intentionally broad, sweeping statement to conceal portions of the truth: People apparently were able to keep their plan if that plan had not changed once enrolment had begun, on the basis of a so-called Grandfather Clause which allowed insurance providers to refine their plans without dropping out. This clause, however, contained severe restrictions, causing the cancella-

tions. Although these amounted to only two per cent of the overall population, Obama's definite statements then were, at best, misleading (Blake, 2013). Accusations of deliberately obfuscating Obamacare details to ease its passage thus are legitimate, particularly seeing as Obama's apology came late in 2013 (H. Gold, 2013).

ii) *Invasion, Control, and Domination*

'The government is coming to get you. Look out and beware.' This subcategory introduces a very unusual character: *The Exam* (GO, 2013c) features "Creepy Uncle Sam", a Halloween-type, masked character, which I briefly mentioned above and is pictured below. In this ad, a nurse and a doctor coldly treat a young female patient, who has just signed up to Obamacare. After remarking that the patient's vitals are fine, the doctor initiates an exam and leaves the room, with the patient in a gynaecologist's chair. Creepy emerges between her legs, to which she shrieks in response. The viewer sees this scene in several close-ups and through the glass in the door, all of which is reminiscent of horror films. White letters then announce, "Don't let government play doctor, opt out of Obamacare", which is followed by a close-up of Creepy opening a creaking speculum (also pictured below).



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Essentially the same ad also exists with a male patient, whom Creepy wants to give a prostate exam by snapping on a rubber glove (GO, 2013d).

Both ads picture a patient's purported life under Obamacare: 'Doctors are unfriendly, the treatment is cold and mechanical, and the government is in charge. Even worse, it performs completely unnecessary exams. After all, both doctors pronounce the patients healthy, so why would you need them? The government is by nature intrusive and spies on you to collect information.' The dark lighting, Creepy's disproportionately big masked head, the cheap plastic chairs, the outdated medical equipment, and the uneasy music give the ad an overall tense impression.

The horror-theme is continued with *Halloween Horror 2013* (GO, 2013a). Whilst watching at movie at home, a fake Obamacare commercial annoys a young man named Chad. No matter how many times he tries to change the channel, the same man keeps appearing, urging him to "Act now, and we'll double your prices, for free!" and to "Become part of the system, Chad – one big happy system!" in

an increasingly aggressive tone. Shrieking violin notes and manic laughter in the background enhance the feeling of drama. After Chad has unplugged his TV, it turns itself back on. His phone buzzes, he gets several email alerts, and the doorbell rings. With the violin music at its height, Chad opens and Creepy stands there, begging for money.

Just like *The Exam* and *The Glove*, *Halloween Horror 2013* sends one clear message: ‘Do not let the government into your life, because it will know your every move. Do not let it come to this and opt out of Obamacare.’

Naturally, bureaucrats examining patients and haunting citizens have very little to do with Obamacare. The aim of these ads is not to depict factual truths, but to stir up emotions. Unless viewers actively question the ads’ messages, they may easily be left with outrage directed at reckless government that is elicited by false implications.

iii) Apocalypse, Doomsday, and War

‘The time has come, and the enemy is here. The fate of the nation will be decided in the war against Obama and his health care law.’

The most salient ad in this subcategory starts with Obama’s public AFP criticism set to thriller music (see subchapter II.c)) (AFP, 2010). The narrator reads, “Obama. He promised change, but instead he brought us more government, more taxes and more debt”. The camera zooms in on Obama’s blurred, black-and-white face. Again, the look of an old VHS cassette tape is invoked. The narrator claims Obama is now desperate and on the attack (pictured below), and asks, “Who is he afraid of? Americans for Prosperity? People like you?”. The music reaches climax

while Obama continues his statement. “While President Obama attacks grassroots activists like AFP, his big special interest allies spend millions helping his big government agenda.” The narrator urges people to keep working and the ad ends with a cut-out of Obama set to a darkened background and the narrator announcing, “November is coming”, referring to the 2010 Midterm Elections.



Obama criticises AFP to be secretive and opaque, and AFP in turn responds by calling Obama a hypocrite who harnesses the power of organised money for his health care reform and who is terrified by the power of the people. The thriller music frames Obama as the villain of a Hollywood blockbuster. Resemblances to the popular TV show *Game of Thrones* and its catch phrase “Winter is coming” at the very end are not by accident. They only substantiate Obama’s depiction as the Hollywood bad guy. Obama is in black-and-white in menacing poses, whereas AFP’s grassroots people are cheerful and in colour. Flickering screens and VHS layouts once more invoke conspiracy associations. In truth, Obama did not receive

large contributions from the health care lobby, and big money really does control AFP.

The ‘doomsday fight’ frame continues in two longer ads, likening resistance to Obamacare to the Hollywood films *Atlas Shrugged* (FW, 2011a, 2012a), where government ministers attempt to take over the economy on the pretence of wealth distribution. War framing also occurs in the ads surrounding the Supreme Court decision. Aired a few days before the ruling, FW called for an end to Obamacare amidst a flurry of pictures of the judges, Obama, and Pelosi; all set to dramatic thriller music and heavy bass punches (FW, 2012b). When the law had been upheld, the images and the music remained the same, as did the war rhetoric: “A miscarriage of justice”; “Our fight is only beginning”; and “Our rights & our constitution, in jeopardy” (FW, 2012d).

‘Hollywood, lies, conspiracy, despair, invasion, powerlessness, the enemy, a nation under attack: America stands at the brink of destruction by the government. The villain Obama wants to control every aspect of your lives. It is up to the American people to prevent the apocalypse.’ AFP, FW, and GO deliberately try to conjure up anger to defeat Obamacare. In truth, however, there is no invasion, no conspiracy, and no doomsday. The next category is Emotional Sympathy.

b) Emotional Sympathy

Statistical data above show that this category is entirely dominated by AFP advertisements. It represents a different approach than Confrontation. Instead of thriller music, soft piano notes play in the background. Instead of calls to arms, it

features calls for help. In subchapter a), the American people were depicted as fighters battling evil. Here, they are supposedly suffering victims who appeal to viewers' emotions. All ads are told from the victims' perspectives.

i) Cold and Heartless Government

'Government is impersonal and distant. People become mere numbers on machines. Bureaucrats operate mechanically and do not understand the needs of the people.'

AFP created multiple ads telling personal stories of insurance cancellations by letter without prior warning. In the most salient one, narrators read out some of these letters (AFP, 2014g). It shows various people checking their mailboxes. Set to soft piano music, the narrators read versions of: "Your family plan is no longer available under the Affordable Care Act". While cheerful when going out to get the mail, the people depicted look forlorn once they have opened the letter. At the end, the viewer sees the perspective from inside a mailbox being opened (pictured below). The woman pauses for a moment and looks pensively at the solitary letter in the box, as if she knows what misery it will bring, then takes it out.



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The ‘cold, heartless letter’ theme is continued in ads with severely ill patients, such as Emily with Lupus and Julie with Leukaemia. Both had their policies cancelled and worry about their health, which is set to soft piano music (AFP, 2014c, 2014e). Other ads claim that people’s fates will no longer matter and a bureaucratic system will allegedly take over, reducing people to numbers on screens (AFP, 2013g). These ads assert that bureaucrats are now in charge of people’s health care and therefore their lives – “Never knew a bureaucrat that had my best interest at heart” (AFP, 2012d). In ads targeting specific candidates, AFP often uses sound bites to cast them in an alien light, such as Representative Nick Rahall (WV) saying, “It may be in their best interest in long term to be cancelled” (AFP, 2014f).

The ads in this subcategory are characterised by a ‘Before & Now’ approach: ‘Before Obamacare, things were good. Sick people got the doctors they wanted, and these were the best. Now under Obamacare, patients cannot get the doctors they want. The ones they can get are inferior. Instead of concern for patients’ feelings, there is a wordy letter.’

The ads exploit viewers' natural sympathies for the fates of people like Julie in order to create a mythical version of a pre-Obamacare time where everyone was always treated wonderfully. In reality, Julie's insurance company was allowed to raise its premiums without regulations before Obamacare. She then would have been unable to switch insurance providers, since other companies would have excluded her from coverage due to pre-existing conditions. That would very likely have caused her significant financial problems. Obamacare made all these methods illegal. These ads also suggest that a bureaucratic system replaces personal connections, when in fact, one bureaucratic system simply replaces an older one. The US health care system was not free of bureaucracy before, yet this is implied. All these allegations eventually combine to form the impression of a bad system, which candidates like Rahall support for purely political reasons.

ii) Worries and Fear

'We cannot trust the government. They do not know what they are doing. What will it all mean for my family and me?'

Julie and Renay are two worried mothers who talk about their children who have been severely ill from an early age on (AFP, 2013a, 2013d). The ads show images of their children in hospital (pictured below) set to soft piano music. Both mothers praise the medical care they received. These experiences caused them to pay more attention now, and they have questions: "We can't pick our own doctor?"; "Can I really trust the folks in Washington with my family's health care?". Both insist they deserve answers.



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A family doctor in her sun-lit office attending to a child also has questions she wants answered (AFP, 2013e): She wants to walk the extra mile for her patients, but is concerned whether the government will now be “in the middle of things” and stop her from actually helping people. She also worries “what will happen to my patients if I have to close my practice?”. This is set to soft piano music and pictures of her talking to families.

This subcategory is used to sow doubts in people’s minds, or to nurture fear and uncertainty that may already be present. It is not a coincidence that the ads star female protagonists. Women are widely considered to be the key-decision makers concerning family health care (KaiserFamilyFoundation, 2011). Thus, the ads project all mothers as health care experts. That, however, is a fallacy. Mothers may do the majority of everyday family health care handling, but not every single American mother therefore automatically becomes an authority on health care policy. That depends on her knowledge of Obamacare, not solely on her speaking as a mother. Along the same lines, the doctor’s worries might be accurate or not.

She might be a well-informed or a badly-informed doctor. The fate of her patients in case of a practice shutdown has little to do with Obamacare. The reform does not foreclose doctors' offices. AFP here showcases sweeping allegations to further government mistrust.

iii) Disappointment and Sadness

'We trusted them, and they have let us down. Please do not make things worse for us.'

In a very unusual ad, three former Obama voters report that they regret their 2008 decision (AFP, 2012b). They allegedly voted without reluctance because Obama presented himself as something different. In the end, he did not deliver what he promised, although "he did get his health care through, but at what cost?". This ad is particularly powerful because it does not feature people who naturally oppose Obama but former supporters who turned their back on him. For them, hope and change turned out to be empty promises. It is also noticeable that none of them attack Obama's personal integrity or values. On the contrary, they stick to the political level – Maria: "I think he's a great person. I don't feel he is the right leader for our country though" (pictured below). All three are presented as rational, thoughtful people who were disappointed by an elite politician who did not practice what he preached. Soft piano music is playing throughout.



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In another ad, AFP showcases a solitary white woman talking in front of a white screen, with the camera slowly zooming in while she is speaking (AFP, 2013b): “People don’t like political ads; I don’t like them either. But health care isn’t about politics; it’s about people. It’s not about a website that doesn’t work; it’s not about poll numbers, or approval ratings. It’s about people.” She claims there are millions who have lost their coverage and pay more for less, and concludes, “Obamacare doesn’t work. It just doesn’t work”. She speaks very softly and pleadingly. Occasional single piano notes can be heard in the background.

The message here is clear: ‘We, AFP, do not want to score political points. All we care about are people. You are hurting, and we want to help you. We know Obamacare is bad for America. So let us, together, appeal to Washington.’

This subcategory showcases Americans who are disappointed in Obama and his health care law. These people do not feel anger, but allegedly genuine sadness. Even former Obama supporters, who would normally be considered enemies, have now realised that his health care reform is bad for America. Like the soft-

spoken woman in the second ad, they feel people's pain and supposedly only want what is best for the people.

AFP tries to connect to the calmer, more pensive section of the American public here. Just as AFP claims to speak for the angry people in subchapter a) above, it presents itself as the voice of the sad people here. In these ads, AFP asserts to represent people from the other side of the political aisle as well as generally apolitical citizens. If the data I collected in chapters II.b) and c) is anything to go by, however, AFP and with it the Tea Party movement are not a safe haven for apolitical observers and former Democrats, and they do not represent the American people, but the interests of the Koch brothers. These ads imply the opposite.

In its efforts to connect with the American public through emotional appeals, AFP relies on three different demographics: the suffering, the worried, and the sad. Allegedly, they suffer by the hands of mechanical bureaucrats, worry about their children, and feel sad for people's misery. Interestingly enough, the ultimate aim is again the elicitation of anger, like in *Confrontation*. *Emotional Sympathy* simply approaches it indirectly through empathetic emotions for the victims that are then intended to turn into outrage against the purported culprit, the one who caused all this pain: Obama. Dissected, all claims made in the ads represent sweeping allegations that are removed from fact-based evidence. The next category is *The Clowns in Washington*.

c) The Clowns in Washington

This category stands out from the others due to its unusual audacity. While aggressive images and emotional story telling might arguably be somewhat commonly used advertising strategies, the category The Clowns in Washington represents a highly unusual framing choice. GO transforms the figure of Uncle Sam, previously a representative of a patriotic call for war duty, into a complacent clown.

‘They play games with our lives. They are freaks who want to take us for a ride.’ This is the category where the GO approach around Creepy Uncle Sam comes into full swing. In *Not a Game* (GO, 2013b), the camera slowly turns in a hospital room, and a young female narrator says, “Was it the botched roll-out [buzzing noise]? Or was it because the website kept crashing [double buzzing noise]? Why did our generation decide to opt out of Obamacare? Because we haven’t lost our f[buzzing noise]ing minds. We don’t want to pay an arm and a leg for a doomed government program. (...) So, sorry, politicians, our health care is not a game”. While she is speaking, Creepy comes into view, with his back to the screen. When he turns around, the viewer can see that he is playing the board game *Operation* and is really bad at it, hence the buzzing noises. Finally, he shakes the board upside-down so all the remaining pieces fall out. The ad uses the same music as *Glove* and *Exam*, and the message is clear: ‘Obamacare is as bad for the American people as Creepy is at playing *Operation*. Obamacare wants to mess with young people’s lives, but we can see through that and say no.’ A more satirical ad entitled *Still Waiting* (GO, 2014b) mocks Obama’s appearance on *Be-*

tween Two Ferns, a popular online fake comedy talk (FunnyOrDie, 2014). It shows Creepy sitting on a replica of the set, with elevator music playing and white letters that read, “We’re still waiting ... for health care reform that doesn’t screw us”. Again, the message is clear: ‘Obama can act as cool as he wants on a hip show to get us to sign up to his website – we see through his masquerade and will not fall for it.’ Obama’s appearance on the show was generally met with approval in the media (Toney, 2014).

The most satirical ad, though, is *Obamacare Care-nival* (GO, 2014c). It likens Obamacare to a terrible circus act that mocks its customers. The ad features, among many others, a creaking funfair van with “Propagambulance” written in reverse on the front, vendors gleefully selling mayonnaise as ice-cream, surgeries being decided by throwing knives at a spinning wheel, and a red-nosed clown in a doctor’s coat checking a young woman’s blood pressure (pictured below). Three old white men in suits throw a ball at a target labelled “Dropped coverage”, which causes her to fall into a barrel of water labelled “High-risk pool” and prompts malicious laughter. Throughout the ad, a megaphone announcer advertises Obamacare, “Come one, come all! You over there, witness a miracle of humanity!”. Young people are at first intrigued by the spectacle, but in the end walk away when Creepy celebrates the ‘success’ of the fair with confetti and fanfares.



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Each image in this ad is of course related to Obamacare: ‘The broken van represents the broken system. Everybody has to take part in Obamacare and the fun-fair. Obamacare does not deliver what it promises – i.e. the mayonnaise being sold as ice cream. Examinations degenerate into a farce – i.e. the clown taking the woman’s blood pressure – and young people pay the bills for the rich – i.e. the men in suits causing the woman to drop into the “High-risk pool”. Yet the government continues to praise the law’s brilliance – i.e. Creepy’s celebration in the end.’

Despite its lurid design, this ad does include one valid claim. The public has been somewhat deceived by Obama’s sweeping statements that they could keep their plans, which turned out not to be true. All other assertions, however, are not based on facts. Obamacare was not a broken vehicle from the start, but was hollowed out by Republican lawsuits (see chapter II.d)). The government does not provide inferior health care services to the people. Bureaucrats – i.e. clowns – do

not take over patient examinations. Young people do not pay the tab for the rich – the opposite would be the case in a full implementation of Obamacare.

In sum, Obama did not turn health care into a “freak show”, as the final screen claims. GO did, by creating the character of Creepy Uncle Sam and choosing stultifying music. It is important to note that, once more, this category aims to elicit anger towards Obama in viewers. Like Emotional Sympathy, it does so indirectly, here through initial derision. Just as watching people’s suffering easily creates outrage towards those who have caused them this pain, observing Creepy’s conceited behaviour can quickly lead to resentment of Creepy, i.e. the government, for acting this way in the first place. The last category is Freedom and Empowerment.

d) Freedom and Empowerment

This is the only category that focuses on positives, rather than negatives. It showcases the alleged good life if politicians who oppose Obama were in charge of government.

‘There are shining beacons of hope who have looked out for us in the past – Ronald Reagan – and today – Ted Cruz.’ In the fight of good versus evil, Obama plays the part of evil (see subchapter a)). His heroic counterpart is presented in Ronald Reagan. In two very similar ads, Reagan praises America as “mankind’s best hope” and calls on people to “trust that American spirit”. Obama, on the other hand, states, “We’ve been a little bit lazy, I think, over the last couple of decades”.

Obama is depicted in black-and-white, with heavy musical punches and footage of people fighting at demonstrations. Reagan is presented in colour, with fanfares, American flags flying in the wind (pictured below), cheering women and children, and cowboys herding cattle. Reagan urges Americans to believe in prosperity through freedom: “After all, why shouldn’t we believe that? We are Americans” (AFP, 2012a, 2012c).



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The modern day hopes to step in his footsteps purportedly rest on Ted Cruz and the Tea Party movement. He is presented with heroic serenades set to sun-lit pictures of children blowing dandelions and waving the American flag (FW, 2012e).

There are dozens of these ads for various Tea Party candidates in addition to Cruz. All of them share certain features: inspiring music; sunlight; smiling candidates at rallies; candidates with their families; citizens thanking them for their opposition to Obamacare and their devotion to the Constitution; and generally imag-

es of prosperity: flowers blooming, steel workers drilling etc. (AFP, 2013c, 2013f, 2014b, 2014h; FW, 2014d).

Finally, FW provides an insight into its happy family (FW, 2012c). To the piano theme music of *Forrest Gump*, citizens talk about their experiences visiting FW headquarters: “We’re all family”. The ad ends with a still shot of a smiling Matt Kibbe at the back of a meeting.

The aim of these ads is to present Reagan, Cruz, and generally Tea Party candidates as embodiments of American values. They are depicted as down-to-earth politicians who believe in the exceptionalism of the American people, whereas Obama is said to be hostile. He is presented in black-and-white because his ideology will doom America. Sunlight, patriotic flag-waving, cheering children, and beautiful music represent the happiness of the Reagan days. Cowboys herding bulls and steel workers drilling embody the American can-do spirit, which can supposedly overcome all obstacles on the road to freedom. Citizens allegedly smile when they meet these candidates because they look out for the people, rather than their political allies. In the last ad, FW presents itself as the facilitator for this return to the golden Reagan days. Like Matt Kibbe in the last shot, they purportedly do not want to take central stage but only care about the people. Even the CEO and President is supposedly happy to stand in the back in his own headquarters and just listen.

While shots like the one of Kibbe and the herding cowboy make for great advertising material due to their alleged happiness and freedom, they are also meaningless. Kibbe can stand at the back of the rally one day and be the focus of a

demonstration on the next. The cowboy can herd his bulls under a President Obama, just like he does under a President Reagan. Once more, it is all about the emotions that are conjured through these pictures and the music. Contrary to the other categories, though, Freedom and Empowerment does not aim to elicit anger, directly or indirectly. It showcases what are purportedly the ‘good people’. The claims that are made are removed from evidence-based analysis nonetheless.

This rounds off the presentation of my findings. I will now briefly summarise them, connect them with the insights provided in the literature review in chapter II, comment on the effectiveness of the Koch framing strategies, emphasise the importance of anger in these strategies, and look out onto the future of Obamacare, Koch involvement in the Tea Party, and the dominance of money in US politics in general.

V. Framing Effects and the Future of Obamacare

I wanted to find out how FW, AFP, and GO frame Obamacare in their advertisements and to what effect these framing strategies were employed. These organisations use four different frames to present Obamacare: Confrontation, Emotional Sympathy, The Clowns in Washington, and Freedom and Empowerment. ‘Obama is a liar, his government plans an invasion, and the American people must respond by going to war’ (Confrontation). ‘Government is heartless, bureaucrats in charge are frightening, and Obama let the American people down’ (Emotional Sympathy). ‘Government is irresponsible and plays games with people’s lives’ (Clowns). ‘There are still good politicians left, and these are the Tea Party candi-

dates' (Freedom). With the exception of Freedom, each frame approaches Obamacare from a different angle, yet has the ultimate aim to stir up anger: Confrontation forms the front of attack. It is designed to inflame tensions. Emotional Sympathy attempts to conjure up feelings of compassion and sadness. Rather than getting people to oppose Obama directly out of anger, the ads here appeal to people's solidarity with the alleged victims of Obamacare first, and aim to elicit outrage later. The category Clowns provides sarcastic ridicule to connect with young Americans. While the initial focus lies on creating derision, the ultimate aim is again to make viewers angry at Obama's behaviour. Elicitation of anger forms the cornerstone of all advertisements in Confrontation, Emotional Sympathy, and Clowns.

None of them focus on evidence. The ads aim to reinforce mistrust in government, exploit viewers' natural sympathies, tell fairy tales of the wonderful US health care before Obama, nurture fear and uncertainty, misrepresent normal citizens as experts, and equal Tea Party candidates with happiness. Almost all of their assertions lack factual evidence and consist of sweeping allegations and empty images. Heroic pictures of Cruz prove very little. Bureaucrats do not take over examinations. Under Obamacare, the young do not pay the tab for the rich. Health care services will not all of a sudden degenerate. Health care is only a "freak show" because GO labels it so and created Creepy Uncle Sam. Apolitical observers and former Democrats do not form a major part of Obamacare opponents. People's worries about the law are not automatically justified. Mothers are not automatically health care experts. Obama did not speak out against grassroots citizens but confronted the billionaire Koch brothers.

There is only one valid claim in these ads: Obama did deceive the public with his assertions that they could keep their plans. This is used in all categories depicting ‘the enemy’: Confrontation, Emotional Sympathy, and Clowns. The situation surrounding these cancellations, however, is not as clear-cut as presented. AFP omits that all ‘victims’ in Emotional Sympathy were offered policies of equal value instead, for instance.

Music is essential for the atmosphere in every ad. These selections, though, are as artificial as the creation of Creepy Uncle Sam. GO made health care into a “freak show” with this character, just like AFP created apocalyptic scenarios with thriller music and an ambiance of sadness with soft piano music.

The framing categories I have presented were employed to attack Obama’s ‘socialist’ health care reform. This was never an altercation to determine whether Obamacare is good for the American people. It was an ideological battle fought with the weapons of emotions, not facts. None of the ads mention that millions of previously uninsured Americans benefit from Obamacare. For the Koch organisations, the question was never whether, as a whole, the economic and social advantages of the law outweighed its disadvantages. That would represent a pragmatic approach. The Kochs embody an ideological approach based on one principle: Government regulation is wrong. They use their money to promote this principle. *Citizens United* allows them to do so in unlimited terms and, in the case of 501(c)s, in secrecy. I strongly believe the ruling had devastating effects concerning the influence of money in politics. Political campaigning needs to be transparent and regulated in order to serve its democratic function. *Citizens United* abol-

ished both and effectively declared elections a contest of money. The ruling is a catastrophic decision that negated any hopes for the American Dream. The Kochs, though, only follow those rules, as do big donors on the Left, for example George Soros. They are entitled to do so. What makes them stand out so negatively, however, is the scale of their lack of transparency. FWFA, for instance, has to disclose its donors. But what good is that if one of its major contributors is FP, which in turn can keep its donors secret? The Kochs' activities are designed to be opaque to make it almost impossible to follow the trail of money. The same applies to their hijacking of the Tea Party. They continue to make every effort to disguise their big money involvement with the 'genuine grassroots' label. That constitutes a deliberate misrepresentation to deceive the American people, and that is something the Kochs are definitely not entitled to do.

Like the Tea Party, the Koch advertisements build on sweeping allegations and feature anger as their prime component. Anger runs like a golden thread through both the movement and the Kochs' ads. As I have shown, Tea Party anger led to the election of obstructionist politicians who reject policies in favour of principles. In my opinion, it is irresponsible to outright refuse any policy-making efforts in a two-party system. The US system is built on the very idea of political compromise. It collapses when one side ceases to take part. The GOP in the Senate repeatedly rejected any form of cooperation, which eventually culminated in the 2013 shutdown, where they took the entire nation hostage because of their principled opposition to Obamacare. These political games have serious consequences for the American people, as evidenced by the shutdown furloughings.

Was the Kochs' fight against Obamacare effective? It is hard to say. Tea Party support has declined, yet the movement continues to stage major upsets, such as House Majority Leader Eric Cantor's loss in the 2014 Virginia primaries (Martin, 2014). The Kochs' anti-Obama agenda suffered a major blow with his re-election in 2012. They also did not succeed in repealing Obamacare, but the focus here merely shifted onto the battlefield of defunding. The *Sebelius* ruling that made Medicare expansion optional for states has hollowed out the law. The current legal attacks on the federal market exchanges (see chapter II.d)) could inflict further massive damage. The legal points of attack regarding the law's slow, internal economic destruction seem aplenty.

It is impossible to tell precisely how much influence, direct or indirect, the Koch TV advertisements had on the public's voting behaviour. I have shown that the framing categories were designed to elicit reactions of anger, with the exception of Freedom. Whether a large proportion of the US public actually did react with outrage as a result of these ads is a completely different issue. Overall, I believe that the framing categories I have identified did have an impact on the public approval ratings of Obamacare. The GO ads did not stop 8 million young Americans to enrol in it, but the majority of the public continue to disapprove of the law, with currently 54.4 per cent opposing it (RealClearPolitics, 2014). The Kochs' continued use of the same framing categories in their 2014 ads to shape the outcome of the upcoming Midterm Elections is an indicator of their confidence in this approach. Ted Cruz' conviction that the framing of the narrative represents the crucial battlefield in politics (see chapter I) rings true in this light. Koch influence on the Tea Party remains strong in 2014. It will be the subject of further studies to follow their on-going in-

volvement in the political process in general and the movement in particular. As an overturn of the *Citizens United* ruling seems very unlikely, I would consider it a huge surprise if the Kochs reduced their financial contributions to fight Obamacare in the years to come, particularly regarding the Presidential Elections in 2016. Considering the importance of Fox News for the early stages of the Tea Party movement, it would also be interesting for further research to analyse how the network itself framed the movement in 2009 and 2010, together with its depiction five years later. If the firing of the movement's main promoter Glenn Beck in 2011 (Fung, 2013) is any indication, Fox News may possibly have gradually turned away from the Tea Party.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that my selection of advertising spots as the data for analysis does not constitute the Kochtopus' entire set of political communication; far from it. FW's YouTube channel alone features hours of Matt Kibbe appearing on network TV, not to mention any printed or radio material that has not been part of this study. Along the same lines, AFP, FW, GO, and FP themselves only represent a small part of the Kochtopus, albeit the one that is most focused on Obamacare. This study of a mere four organisations of course cannot offer anywhere near a complete picture of the Koch network with its hundreds of organisations.

Despite these limitations, however, my analysis provides tremendous insights into the workings of the political Right. I have shown that the Tea Party, the Koch brothers, and Fox News are deeply connected. I have also demonstrated that the Kochs operate entirely out of ideological motivations, rather than evidence-based

facts. These motivations are transferred into emotional appeals to the public in their advertising campaigns, which ultimately all aim at stirring up public anger at Obamacare. Evidence and factual references played almost no role at all. I have shown that one of the major contributors to the political Right secretly manipulates the Tea Party movement to gain fake grassroots credit, and that the Tea Party itself builds on mythical romanticisation and erroneous beliefs. Finally, I have emphasised the disastrous consequences of *Citizens United* for the functioning of democracy. I therefore hope that my study contributes to the on-going efforts to analyse the extremeness of the political Right's opposition to Obama in general and his health care reform in particular.

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