

The Media's Influence Over Americans' Views of the United States Constitution
as Evidenced by the *Federalist Papers* and Editorials Written Regarding
the Modern Tea Party Movement

Kathryn Bell

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Clifford W. Kelly, Ph.D.
Thesis Chair

Homer H. Blass, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Deborah W. Huff, M.B.A.
Committee Member

James H. Nutter, D.A.
Honors Director

Date

Abstract

America has been built by a series of monumental events. The press has been there to capture them all. The American mainstream media have indeed served as the rough draft for historical textbooks. The Declaration of Independence was reprinted in many newspapers on July 5, 1776. Evidence of this fact is on display at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. The media have been a present force in all aspects of American life since colonization. One of the most unique aspects of that force is the editorial page. The editorial page played a distinctive role during the crucial time of America's formation. The editorial pages of New York City newspapers in particular served as a public forum to debate the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed United States Constitution and its system of one federalized form of government. In the end, constituents cast their vote in favor of federalism. The newspapers' sphere of influence in American society cannot be underestimated. The newspapers of today are quite different than the broadsheets of the late 18th century. The majority of the modern era's prominent major publications have a liberal bias. The best evidence of this bias can be seen by the coverage of The Tea Party (sometimes the lack of coverage) and the type of coverage the Tea Party has received. This thesis will demonstrate that the type of coverage the movement has received is indeed overwhelmingly biased. Just as the newspapers of the 18th century influenced the political course of their day, the editorial page of today is having a profound impact on the modern political dialogue. The Tea party is a political organization that appeared virtually overnight and has revolutionized the idea of "politics as usual" in Washington.

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The historical relationship that exists between the American government and American newspapers is most extraordinary. As Culver H. Smith (1977) said, "Newspapers might indeed be private business, but the information and opinion they published affected their readers and that made them a matter of public consequence" (p. 4). The editorial pages of New York City newspapers in the 18th century were used as a platform to persuade constituents of New York to ratify the Constitution by means of *The Federalist Papers*. John Adams' *Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law* also appeared on the on the editorial page, and it served as a catalyst to promote the colonists' cause for a war against England.

This thesis will examine the significance of the editorial page in terms of its influence on the America people's perspective on the Constitution. From October 1787 to May 1788 the constituents of New York read *The Federalist Papers* alongside the *Anti-Federalist Papers* and the subsequent response was New York's vote to ratify the Constitution (Bessette et.al., 2010). This thesis is not claiming that *The Federalist Papers* were the sole reason for New York's vote for the ratification of the Constitution; rather, the letters merely served as a factor in New York's vote.

Two hundred and fifty years later, little has changed in the American news media. Political activism still occurs, particularly, on the editorial page. However, instead of the political activism being used to unite the constituents, members of the liberal media elite

are being used to disparage and discredit a particular group of pro-Constitution constituents —the modern day Tea Party movement. There is no doubt the media have a significant sphere of influence on American society.

Today, many editorials are aimed at attacking the Tea Party. Founded in 2009, The Tea Party is a political organization whose goal is to see America return to Constitutionalism. The Tea Party advocates fiscal responsibility, limited government, and free market enterprise. According to the book *Mad as Hell*, the Tea Party Movement is a grassroots marvel that has been misunderstood and improperly categorized by influential persons in both the political and media spectrums (Rasmussen et al., 2010): “The hidden story of the development of The Tea Party movement is the story of blogs, online, social media, and communications that has not been fully described or explained,” (p. 5). The uniqueness of the American media has always been the story behind the story. Since the colonial era, people have been called on to take the headline news of the day and set it to print. The manner and methods by which is this achieved have changed significantly throughout the centuries; however, the practice is still in place and is as significant as ever. Reporters have been able to not only capture the headline news of the day in words, they have been there to witness both the humorous and the somber events that coincide with the major news to make sure not only the story is told, but the story behind the story is told.

The Tea Party is comprised of individuals from all walks of life and political ideologies. A July 2010 Gallup poll revealed that three percent of liberal democrats were members of the Tea Party, along with 7% percent of moderate democrats and 5% of conservative democrats. Six percent of Tea Party supporters are purely independent. 17

percent of Tea Party supporters are moderate/liberal republicans and 62% of the Tea Party is comprised with conservative republicans (Newport, 2010). Rasmussen and Schoen said:

Put another way, and to be crystal clear, the dissatisfaction in the American electorate with the established order — particularly toward Congress and toward the president, both having majority negative ratings — has led the Tea Party movement to become as potent a force as any political party in the United States. (Rasmussen et al, 2010, p. 7)

While polls do not exist to determine the sphere of influence the media have over society, they do serve as proof as to what the media has been informing the public and subsequently what the public is thinking about. The media serves as the moderator for the national dialogue. Both the Colonists and Americans of today had a decision to make — would they listen to the editorial pages' views of the Tea Party or would they ignore them? Two hundred fifty years ago colonists found themselves agreeing with the editorial age's views on the Tea Party. Today, the editorial page's bias is largely against the Tea Party, yet data proves that the majority of Americans are still taking up its cause.

This thesis will focus on the media's (most specifically the editorial page) impact and influence on society's approval of both the Constitution and constitutionalism and will use the example of media coverage of the modern Tea Party movement, In correlation with coverage of *The Federalist Papers* of the 18th century to demonstrate the media's impact on society's approval (or lack thereof) of government.

The Founding Fathers sought independence after their rights as Englishmen were consistently violated by King George III. Thus it should come as little surprise that more

than 250 years later Americans would unite together to express the same anger and frustration as the colonists did when their Constitutional rights as Americans were violated. When Americans study the Revolutionary War, the majority of people find themselves agreeing that the Colonists rights as Englishmen were being violated and that public outcry was perfectly acceptable. Yet, those same Americans who believe this are being told by the media that the action taken by the members of the Tea Party is unacceptable when in all actuality it is simply a mirror of behaviors. The collection of work that embodies American thought was brought to the people first not by a book or pamphlet, but as an editorial in a local newspaper. Since the beginning of the American press, the public has looked to the media as the premier outlet by which to gather their information regarding matters of government and politics.

Federalist Papers authors Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay were highly educated, rational men. The arguments made in *The Federalist Papers* are strengthened by the fact that Hamilton and Madison were present at the writing and framing of the United States Constitution. The three men were concerned with crafting a form of government that would simultaneously promote the well being of America's citizens and stability for society. The impact of *The Federalist Papers* as a series of editorials has lasted for more than two centuries. *The Federalist Papers* is the skeleton of the American Republic. Throughout American legal history judges and legal commentators have referred to the 85 essays in efforts to ascertain the framers original meaning of the Constitution.

The Federalist Papers offered a clear outline and explanation of the new form of government the founders were proposing. James Madison wrote the following words on November 30, 1787 in *The New York Packet* Federalist 14:

The error which limits republican government to a narrow district has been unfolded and refuted in preceding papers. I remark here only that it seems to owe its rise and prevalence chiefly to the confounding of a republic with a democracy, applying to the former reasonings drawn from the nature of the latter. (Madison, 1787, Avalon Project)

The remainder of this thesis will focus on the purpose and research methods as well as further analysis of the Tea Party and the editorial pages of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

Purpose and Research Methods

This thesis proposes that there exists a negative correlation between the editorial pages of the 18th century and the editorial pages of today. More specifically, this thesis will focus upon today's American newspaper editorials on the Tea Party movement as a demonstration of their consistent anti-Constitution perspective. The stance stands in historic contrast to the editorials of the 18th century editorials that largely endorsed the constitutionalism of *The Federalist Papers*. This negative correlation exists because in both circumstances, the editorial page is being used to influence society's view of the Constitution and constitutionalism. The research method that this thesis will include is qualitative analysis of editorials found within *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* from January of 2009 to October of 2010. The New York Times and The Washington Post were chosen as the basis of the research for this academic thesis due to

their standing as superior national publications. The dates were chosen because they mark the ten-month period prior to the 2010 midterm election.

This thesis will also attempt to show through the model of content analysis that the content printed on the editorial page is incredibly influential to society's view of the Constitution. During the birth of the United States of America, the editorial page was used to support the ratification of the Constitution. Today, it is being used to vilify members of the Tea Party who hold the Constitution in high regard.

Literature Review

The American Revolution not only brought about change in the government, but it also brought about changes in how the news media operates: "With the writing of the new Constitution in 1787 came political parties and the partisan press. Editorials began to appear as distinct forms. Each newspaper was committed to a political party" (Rystrom, 2003, p. 9). "During the Colonial era and the period immediately after the Revolutionary War, little effort was made to separate opinion from news. Both appeared intertwined in the columns of the press. Newspapers openly claimed they were partisan voices" (Rystrom, 2003, p. 9).

Thus *The Federalist Papers* were the most elongated and comprehensive defense written in support of the proposed Constitution. *The Federalist Papers* are a series of 85 essays, which were penned by Hamilton, Madison and Jay as a defense to the United States Constitution, which had been drafted in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The first of *The Federalist Papers*, "*The Federalist No. 1*" appeared in the *New York Independent Journal* on October 27, 1787 (McClellan, 2000). Hamilton authored 52 essays, Madison authored 28 and Jay authored five. They were penned under the pseudonym "Publius"

(Bessette et al., 2011). The pseudonym “Publius” is significant because it was in honor of Publius Valerius Publicola. He was a Roman Consul and was one of the authors and defenders of the Roman Republic, upon which the American government was closely modeled. His name meant “friend of the people” (Parini, 2010). The Federalist Papers originally appeared in four New York newspapers. They later appeared in newspapers and periodicals in Pennsylvania and Virginia as well as various other New England states.

Our founding fathers went to battle for a federalist form of government on a printed page. Men took sides and wrote passionately in support for either federalism or anti-federalism. The editorial page of the 18th century was the place where this battle over ideologies was fought. This is a crucial part of America’s history, which has often been overlooked. Donald Lutz (1988), author of *Origins of American Constitutionalism* said, “Our high opinion of this man [James Madison] has to sour when we read his contributions to *The Federalist*” pp. 137. Our founding fathers seemed to know they were both laboring over and fighting for a document that would become known as the crescendo of all human civilization.

James Warren, former Speaker of the House of Representatives and advocate for federalism in the *Massachusetts Sentinel* said:

In a free State like this, and under such circumstances, every individual must be anxious at the approach of an event, which will entail happiness or misery, not only on himself, his family and the community, but also on his and their posterity: — He has therefore a *right* to address you, and your patriotism will prompt you to consider seriously, whatever shall be offered on the subject with reason and

candour, and be worthy of your attention. (Harding, 1970, pp. 130)

A second Constitutional convention was needed because the Articles of Confederation failed miserably as a system of government. It was originally thought that the founding fathers were going to amend the Articles of Confederation, but once in convention they decided to begin anew and thus the United States Constitution was born. The United States Constitution was the first written constitution in human history; The document has survived more than two centuries. America has flourished since the adoption of the document as the law of the land. America has long been considered the greatest nation in the world. The adoption of the United States Constitution would not have been guaranteed without *The Federalist Papers*.

Newspapers in New York were not the only newspapers printing letters and essays arguing in favor of a constitutionally federated republic. Almost one month into the Constitutional Convention, Philadelphia newspapers printed a letter from a citizen who signed his name "Harrington." Harrington was a staunch supporter of federalism and wrote, "We must, either form an efficient government for ourselves, suited in every respect to our exigencies and interests, or we must submit to have one imposed upon us by accident or usurpation...We are on the brink of precipice" (Peters, p.p. 2, 1987).

The approval rate of the Constitution and groups who support constitutionalism rests, in part, in the hands of the editorial board. Parini (2010) said:

The idea of a representative democracy energized the men who framed the Constitution, and Publius reflects this excitement. There is at times almost a giddy boldness in the prose. Hamilton in particular writes with a nerve rarely encountered in political essays of this kind, rightly sensing the unique historical

moment he occupied. He was, after all, present at the birth of a republic, the first modern government to attempt to put into action the principles of Enlightenment thought. (pp. 34-35)

The giddy boldness of which Parini speaks is evidenced by the quote below from Alexander Hamilton in Federalist No. 1. From the excerpt it is evident that Hamilton wrote with a passionate persuasion that both expressed the urgency of the day and the understanding of what a lack of a federalist form of government would mean for America's future.

On October 27, 1787, Alexander Hamilton said in Federalist No. 1:

THE UTILITY OF THE UNION TO YOUR POLITICAL PROSPERITY
THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE PRESENT CONFEDERATION TO
PRESERVE THAT UNION THE NECESSITY OF A GOVERNMENT
AT LEAST EQUALLY ENERGETIC WITH THE ONE PROPOSED,
TO THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS OBJECT THE CONFORMITY OF
THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTION TO THE TRUE PRINCIPLES OF
REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT ITS ANALOGY TO YOUR OWN
STATE CONSTITUTION and lastly, THE ADDITIONAL SECURITY
WHICH ITS ADOPTION WILL AFFORD TO THE PRESERVATION
OF THAT SPECIES OF GOVERNMENT, TO LIBERTY, AND TO
PROPERTY. (Hamilton, Avalon project at Yale University, p. 1)

With the adoption of the Constitution public virtue would reign supreme over the old order of superstition and privilege. Citizens would check themselves, and in doing so they would accept a fragile system of mixed government, which boasted a carefully

outlined separation of powers (Parini, 2010). Parini quoted Hamilton concerning this important point:

Hamilton argued that “it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force.” (Parini, 2010, p. 35)

There exists the tendency to not view *The Federalist Papers* as a series of editorials. An editorial is written by the editor of a newspaper, a columnist or an opinion reporter and is written for the purpose of persuading the readership. It can be argued that “letters to the editor” are editorials. *The Federalist Papers* were essentially “letters to the editor” written by three distinguished founding fathers. Thomas Jefferson (1788) referred to them as, “the best commentary on the principles of government which ever was written.” (p.11) Isaac Kramnick (1987) described the longevity of *The Federalist Papers* in a most eloquent manner: “Nor would the luster wear off those eighty five papers.” (p.11). Clinton Rossiter echoed Jefferson when he said: “[*The Federalist Papers* is] the most important work in political science that has ever been written, or is likely to be ever be written, in the United that has ever been written, or is likely to be ever be written, in the United that has ever been written, or is likely to be ever be written, in the United States. It is indeed the one product of the American mind that is rightly counted among the classics of political theory” (p. 11).

Newspaper Circulation

In any academic discussion regarding the influence of newspapers it is of the

utmost importance to consider their respective circulation. A newspaper's circulation is the best indicator of the scope of its influence. Since colonization, Americans have been a people eager to both produce and consume news material. America would not be America if it were a land void of newspapers. It is evident that our Founding Fathers had a firm grasp of this principle; hence freedom, of the press being included in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and the use of the colonial press to keep citizens abreast of the decisions being made in Congress as well as using them as a place to publish documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution along with the Bill of Rights.

Circulation at The New York Times is approximately to 1.4 million copies, for the Sunday edition. Weekday circulation is significantly less during weekdays, approximately to 950,000 (Plambeck 2010). In 2008, The Washington Post was ranked seventh in overall circulation with average daily circulation of 673,180, 2008 (*Washington Times*, 2010).

Examples of Media Bias against the Tea Party

Two hundred fifty years ago the American press played an influential role in the formation of the nation's government. Today the influence of the mainstream news media still contributes significantly to the national political dialogue. On the surface, it seems as if little has changed. However, once the editorial page was used to argue in favor of a constitutional federated republic, but today the editorial page of national publications such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are used to disparaged and discredit the pro-Constitution Tea Party movement. The media's influence over the national political dialogue has indeed come full circle, but in a backwards manner.

The introduction to the book, *Mad As Hell* by Scott Rasmussen and Douglas Schoen, contained strong evidence for Americans' support of the Tea Party. At first glance this is surprising, but it is only because the bias against the organization has streamed from the news media in a steady flow of critical commentary. The editorials found in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* prove otherwise. The bias against the Tea Party is not just found on the editorial pages of newspapers, bias against the Tea Party can also be found in during the broadcast of morning and evening news programs of the major news networks NBC, ABC and CBS. Rasmussen and Schoen (2010) said:

We will show that the Tea Party movement has recorded its highest levels of support in early: with 28 percent in an April 2010 Gallup Poll calling themselves in support of the movement, and with an April 2010 Rasmussen Reports poll showing that on major issues, more Americans (48 percent) agree with the Tea Party movement on major issues than with the President of the United States. (Rasmussen et al., 2010 p. 7)

April 2010 was eight months prior to the 2010 midterm election. What is so significant about this quote is that almost 50 percent of Americans agreed with Tea Party movement eight months prior to the election. This signifies the grassroots movement momentum changes on Capital Hill. Rasmussen and Schoen further stated:

Think about it. More people said in April 2010 that they felt closer to a movement that did not exist slightly more than a year before, than they did to the President of the United States, whose election was historic of both national and international significance. Think of the implications of that for our politics and our country. (Rasmussen et al., 2010, p. 7)

Current Media Analysis

For the purpose of this thesis, Rich Noyes of the Media Research Center was interviewed. His study entitled *The Tea Party Travesty* was the basis for a great deal of the research in the book *Mad as Hell*. Rich Noyes of the Media Research Center conducted a study entitled, *TV's Tea party Travesty How ABC, CBS, and NBC Have Dismissed and Disparaged the Tea Party Movement*. Noyes is the Media Research Center 's Director of Research. Although this study is based off of coverage taken from the major news networks, the qualifying data is enough to provide validity to the claim that media coverage against the Tea Party is negatively biased. Noyes said, "The Tea Party movement began in 2009, in response to the unprecedented expansion of government by President Barack Obama and congressional liberals, a massive increase in spending that will create economy-crushing fiscal burdens for future generations of taxpayers" (personal communication, 2011). Since the Tea Party's origin Noyes has followed the media's coverage of the organization, which lead to his study of major network coverage of the movement.

Perhaps the most widely recognized business principle in America is the old adage, "Time is money." A prime example of this is major news networks. The "big three" is comprised of ABC, NBC and CBS. Collectively, the major networks produce an average of more than 3,000 hours of national news programming annually. The 3,000 hours is subsequently broken down into tens of thousands of reports, interviews, and news desk segments (Noyes, 2010). Owners of NBC, ABC and CBS have complete control over the content they air. Networks make decisions daily about who and what will receive air time and how much of that air time individuals or groups will receive. When

asked, “if there one network that is more biased against the Tea Party than any other?”

Noyes replied:

We haven't really explored a network-by-network comparison. We have examples of media hostility to the Tea Party from all of the broadcast networks, plus CNN and MSNBC. Certainly MSNBC is the most full-throated in its coverage of the Tea Party, but NBC seems no more anti-Tea Party than its other broadcast competitors. (R. Noyes, personal communication, 2011)

Major networks greeted the onset of the Tea Party with avoidance. During the 2009 calendar year the major networks combined featured a mere total of 19 stories on the Tea Party (Noyes, 2010). 48 news segments gave mention to the Tea Party movement, which brought the total to 67 news items at minimum acknowledged the Tea Party Movement. The media attention for the movement largely resulted from rallies that were held. However, there is a significant discrepancy between the amount of coverage the Tea Party received and the amount that liberal rallies received. Events such as the anti 2nd Amendment- “Million Mom March” in 2000 received 41 broadcast network reports the day of the march. This does not include the twelve positive pre-demonstration with organizers and participants alike (Noyes, 2010).

Bias comes in multiple forms. One of the most common forms of bias is bias by omission. One more than one occasion, the Tea Party has been a victim of bias by omission. “In contrast, none of the three major Tea Party rallies in 2009 was built up in advance by network publicity, and the networks never deigned to deliver a single evening news story at a time to the cause,” (Noyes, 2010, pp.3). The lack of coverage is not the only indicator of bias; results of the study found that the media promoted the

movement as one that is inherently racist. The accusations of being a racist movement came into being after the September 12, 2009 Tea Party Rallies; the networks suggested the Tea Party was an extreme or racist movement.

Supporters of President Obama are now saying that it paints a picture of an opposition driven, in part, by a “refusal to accept a black President” (Noyes, 2010, p.2). The example the media using the loaded term ‘racist’ is a prime example of the media bias against the Tea Party. The study also found that the term ‘racist’ is not the only negative word used by the media to describe members of the Tea Party; terms such as ‘extremists’ and ‘out of control marauders’ were also used. In the study Rich Noyes (2011) said, “While the broadcast networks seldom delved into the juvenile name-calling and open hostility evident at the liberal cable networks, their coverage of the Tea Party’s first year reflected a similar mindset of elitists condescension and dismissiveness” (p. 3).

The Tea Party’s first significant political victory was Scott Brown’s Senate victory (Noyes, 2010, p.2). His election to office was directly correlated to the efforts of the movement. The November 2010 midterm elections showed the Tea Party was a political force to be reckoned with. They did not win all of the electoral battles in Congress and the Senate but they won enough to take control of the House for Republicans. The Tea Party played a crucial role in the 2010 November mid term elections. Its efforts are largely responsible for the GOP taking control of Congress. The loss of the control of the Senate was marginal, with significant gains in GOP seats being filled in the Senate.

When Rich Noyes was asked, “In the aftermath of the midterm elections, what were the big three networks reaction of the Tea Party pulling off such political gains?”

Favorable or Unfavorable?" Noyes (2011) responded:

Prior to the midterm elections, the networks emphasized the Democratic talking point of Tea Party "extremism" — for example, ABC's Christiane Amanpour (October 17 This Week) "People are looking at the Tea Party and saying this is not conservatism as we knew it, but it's extreme." But after the election, the networks largely credited the Tea Party with generating the enthusiasm for the Republican House victories. The new media worry about the Tea Party was about governance, i.e., would the new congressman affiliated with the Tea Party be sophisticated enough to operate within a governing majority. CBS's Harry Smith worried to Ann Coulter on Election Day (November 2 The Early Show): "There'll be a routine vote, for instance, to increase the debt ceiling and the Tea Party guys are going to say, 'Over my dead body,' and the government comes to a screeching halt. Then what happens?" NBC's Tom Brokaw (January 26 Today) saw "a real divide in the party...a two-front war" for Republicans." (Noyes, personal communication).

This is a continuation of the media elite's disdainful attitude toward the Tea Party that we documented starting in 2009, that somehow the activists in this movement are uniquely unsuited to compromise, or are more likely to be a destructive influence on parties or governing institutions. They used to suggest the Tea Party would not be able to hold together to function as an effective political force, then suggested the candidates were not savvy enough to win. (R. Noyes, personal communication, 2011)

The Relentless Attack of the Modern Editorial Page

A specific example of an editorial attacking the Tea Party is Tea-ing Up the Constitution by Adam Liptak of *The New York Times* published on March 13, 2010. In his editorial Liptak (2010) wrote, "The content of the movement's understanding of the Constitution is not always easy to nail down, and it is almost always arguable" (p. 1). Liptak's words are indicative of his bias of the Tea Party's view of Constitutionalism.

The aforementioned examples are a mere glimpse of the editorials regarding the Tea Party. A Lexis Nexis search of the phrase "Tea Party Editorials" yielded 175 articles for *The Washington Post*, 170 articles for *The New York Times* and 32 abstracts from *The Wall Street Journal*. A Google search of the phrase "Media Bias against Tea Party" yielded 800,000 results in 0.20 seconds. For my thesis I will demonstrate through content analysis that editorials that the Washington Post, the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal are biased against the Tea Party and the media's bias is having an effect on American's views of the Tea Party. The approval rate of the Constitution and groups who support constitutionalism rests, in part, in the hands of the editorial board.

Unforgettable Isolated Incidence of Bias against Tea Party

On Saturday January 8, 2011 a gunman opened fire outside a Safeway grocery store shopping centered outside of Tucson, Arizona. In addition from the average Saturday morning grocery shoppers there was another group present at the shopping center. United States Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords (D) was hosting a "Congress on your Corner" event for her constituency (p. 1). The alleged gunman later identified as 22-year-old Jared Lee Loughner opened fire into the crowd. After the horrific ordeal was over 19 people had been shot, six of them fatally.

One of the fatalities was a nine-year-old little girl named Cristina Taylor-Greene. Greene was born on September 11, 2001. John M. Roll, a federal district court judge was also fatally shot. Roll was 63 years old (CNN Wire Staff, 2011). Congresswoman Giffords was shot through the head. Her situation was critical but she survived the ordeal. Journalists and major networks immediately jumped to the conclusion that because the shooting occurred at a political event held by a Democratic Congresswoman that the violent actions must inherently be a result of an angry Tea-Partier as opposed to a madman.

In the days after the shooting the following editorial appeared in *The New York Times*: "It is facile and mistaken to attribute this particular madman's act directly to Republicans or Tea Party members. But it is legitimate to hold Republicans and particularly their most virulent supporters in the media responsible for the gale of anger that has produced the vast majority of these threats, setting the nation on edge. Many on the right have exploited the arguments of division, reaping political power by demonizing immigrants, or welfare recipients, or bureaucrats. They seem to have persuaded many Americans that the government is not just misguided, but the enemy of the people," New York Times Editorial taken from *The Wall Street Journal*. The editorial did not have a byline (*New York Times*, 2011).

The Tucson, Arizona Safeway massacre was a tragedy. Out of the original tragedy of the massacre a new tragedy has emerged; media outlets have taken this tragedy as an opportunity to not only disparage and discredit the Tea Party Movement but to blame the movement for the deaths of six innocent people. While it seems inconceivable that media outlets would do such a thing the abhorrent truth remains. If there was any doubt that

media bias against the Tea Party existed prior to the Tucson, Arizona tragedy, all doubt has been removed.

When Rich Noyes was asked, "How have you seen the Tea Party Travesty played out during the Arizona shootings?" Rich Noyes Responded:

The early phase of coverage of the Arizona shooting attempted to link the crime with the broader political trend of the Tea Party, Sarah Palin and the intense debate over ObamaCare. This faded after the first several days, but did include some fairly sleazy assertions from journalists that the Tea Party's conduct could have motivated the killer. And NBC's Kelly O'Donnell, the morning after the shooting (January 9 Today) also made the connection: "Giffords, a conservative Democrat, was concerned about heated rhetoric from the Tea Party. (R. Noyes, personal communication, 2011)

Noyes' use of the phrase "sleazy assertions could not be farther from the truth. Especially considering the fact that the gunman, Jared Loughner was apprehended the same day of the shootings. It was evident that Loughner was a madman. Mentally unstable individuals do not usually have the Tea Party's agendas as the foremost thought in their mind. It is interesting to note that the mainstream media insinuated a link between Loughner and the Tea Party, yet they refuse to admit that it was their own agenda setting that led to the widespread public belief that The Tea Party had something to do with the tragic shooting.

The media would, rightly, use their privileged position to combat such a baseless charge if it were leveled against a mainstream liberal group. But journalists were among those making the link between the shooting and the Tea Party in the first days after the

shooting, and never really gave voice to the idea that this was a wholly indecent and exploitative reaction to the tragedy. It underscores the low regard the MSM (main stream media) has for the Tea Party as a legitimate force within American politics (R. Noyes, personal communication, 2011).

The bias against the Tea Party from the mainstream media was so profound that when I asked Rich Noyes, what is the most significant piece of the mainstream's bias that you have observed against the Tea Party he said:

The attempt to associate the Tea Party with the Tucson shooting is one of the worst spectacles I've seen in nearly 25 years of monitoring the media. The accusations of Tea Party racism in 2009-2010 were also highly offensive, but could at least be justified by isolated signs found at Tea Party events (but extrapolating the charge to encompass the entire movement was wildly incorrect). The linkage of the Tea Party with the mass murderer in Tucson was wholly indecent and something that should be a case study for future journalism students — a case study in how an inflammatory, baseless charge can be repeated so often by our supposedly best media organizations. (R. Noyes, personal communication, 2011)

Noyes, a two-decade veteran of monitoring the liberal dominated mainstream media claimed that the Arizona tragedy would make an excellent “case-study” for future journalism students. The bias was so significant and left such a mark on the American public as to the “facts” of the day Noyes recommended that student journalists of the undergraduate level study it. There is not a more profound way to discuss the volume of bias against the Tea Party than for an expert to say a study on the subject should be a vital

part of the journalism department's curriculum.

Perhaps one of the most damning pieces of bias in the Arizona shootings was the New York Times blog post which was later turned into an editorial by Paul Krugman.

Krugman's editorial is found below:

A Democratic Congresswoman has been shot in the head; another dozen were also shot. We don't have proof yet that this was political, but the odds are that it was. She's been the target of violence before. And for those wondering why a Blue Dog Democrat, the kind Republicans might be able to work with, might be a target, the answer is that she's a Democrat who survived what was otherwise a GOP sweep in Arizona, precisely because the Republicans nominated a Tea Party activist. (Her father says that "the whole Tea Party" was her enemy.) And yes, she was on Sarah Palin's infamous "crosshairs" list. (Krugman, 2011, p. 1) Just yesterday, Ezra Klein remarked that opposition to health reform was getting scary. Actually, it's been scary for quite a while, in a way that already reminded many of us of the climate that preceded the Oklahoma City bombing. (p. 1)

Krugman's aforementioned words are harsh, but none are as harsh as what he says in the final paragraph of his editorial. He claims that the Tea Party has created a climate of hate and the Tucson, Arizona tragedy is a direct product of the climate of hate:

You know that Republicans will yell about the evils of partisanship whenever anyone tries to make a connection between the rhetoric of Beck, Limbaugh, etc. and the violence I fear we're going to see in the months and years ahead. But violent acts are what happen when you create a climate of hate. And it's long past time for the GOP's leaders to take a stand against the hate-mongers. (Krugman,

2011, p. 1)

Journalists, whether they went through formal training in an undergraduate curriculum or whether they learned from on-the-job experience, are told from the beginning of their careers to seek accuracy above anything else. Accuracy is to be the standard, not the goal. Making assumptions and setting assumptions to print, airwaves and online media is not acceptable. Krugman (2011) made a sweeping assumption in the second sentence of his first paragraph: "We do not have proof yet that this was political, but odds are that it was," Krugman is using the power of the written word to persuade his readership of something that is blatantly false. He then had the audacity to liken opposition to President Obama's Health Care legislation to the climate of opposition that preceded the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombings. Prior to September 11, 2011 the Oklahoma City Bombing was the biggest terrorist attack on American soil.

Essentially, Krugman is likening Tea Party activists to terrorists. The most interesting part of his comparison is that the Tea Party has not inspired or caused on single act of violence since its origin in 2009. No acts of violence have been recorded at any of the hundreds of the Tea Party events that have taken place across the country. The final piece of bias in Kruger's piece was his statement, "But violent acts happen when you create a climate of hate."

Thus Krugman implied that the Tea Party was creating a climate of hate. This is simply not the case. Tea Partiers are angry about the status quo in Washington. They are angry about big government. They are angry that their grandchildren already have amassed significant debt. They are angry about being forced to purchase health care from the federal government. There is lots of anger; however, anger is not automatically

equated to hate. One must wonder what Congressman Giffords thinks of the mainstream media's arbitrarily passing the blame void of any proof to Tea Partiers. Krugman's blog appeared less than two hours after the news of the shooting broke, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

Examples of Bias from New York Times and Washington Post Editorials

New York Times Columnist Kate Zernike began a column on the subject of the Tea Party pleasantly, but Zernike's prejudice begins to show. Zernike even refers to the work of Tea Party leaders as "noise." Kate Zernike (2010) said:

But as much as the Tea Party allowed the Republicans to win in enthusiasm, it will still have a relatively small caucus in the House and the Senate. With control of Congress split Republicans will have to go to work with Democrats to get things done. Tea Party lawmakers who refuse to go along may find that they have become irrelevant — certainly not the goal of all the noise and passion of the last two years. (p. 1)

The bias in this piece was not blatantly false information, rather condescending remarks about the success of the Tea Party movement. Eighty-nine GOP Congressmen were elected in November's elections. This is hardly something to glance at negatively. The success of the elected can be largely attributed to the grassroots movement.

Donald F. Kettl wrote an editorial entitled 'Inheritors of 1776?' that appeared in *The Washington Post*. Kettl began his editorial with a valid question, and one that is extremely pertinent to this thesis:

On this Fourth of July weekend, we celebrate Adams, Jefferson and other rebels who dared to challenge the established political order. Putting your

own political preferences aside, how do you think the leaders of the American Revolution would view the leaders of today's "Tea Party"? (Kettl, 2010, p. 1)

Kettl continued his editorial by analyzing the task that was before the forefathers and the objective of modern tea partiers:

The Tea Party is upset by the size of government; the founders were concerned not about the size of government but about its scope. The founders created a constitution -- rule of law -- that put limits on government leaders and on the power of the majority; many in the Tea Party seem to favor rule by majority. The Tea Party is focused on outcome; the founders were focused on process. (Kettl, 2010, p. 1)

Donald F. Kettl is correct in that the founders were concerned with the process, and the Tea Party is concerned with the outcome, but that is only because the founders had to start a process from scratch. They had to rely on the words great thinkers and philosophers of the past (namely the period of the Enlightenment) and their own intelligence to create a form of government the world had never seen. Modern Tea Party members have the process; their goal is to ensure that the outcome lines up with the process that our founders would have wanted.

One of the sources Kettl included in his editorial was Kathryn Kolbert. Kolbert is a public-interest lawyer and journalist. She also serves as the director of the Athena Center for Leadership Studies at Barnard College. Kolbert's writing provides a clear indication that she is among those who believe that the Tea Party is inherently sexist and racist. Kolbert said, "While I consider the many of tea party's members' views

anachronistic, naive and out of touch with both the needs and views of most Americans, the Founding Fathers would be comfortable with some of their most discriminatory views” (Kettl, 2010, p. 1). Kolbert also said:

Unfortunately, the founders lived in an age that permitted slavery, an age when women had no legal rights and could not vote, own property or sign contracts. Although the founders' constitutional framework for our nation was brilliant in most respects —particularly their notion of separation of powers and explicit protection for individual liberties in the Bill of Rights — the founders' vision was limited by its failure to include women and people of color in the protections afforded white, male property owners. Thankfully, our nation's respect for and understanding of the meaning of equality have grown and changed and, with the addition of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, set forth a more inclusive set of constitutional protections. I wish the tea party's attitudes on issues of race and gender would similarly progress. (Kettl, 2010, p. 1)

While Kolbert’s historical facts are accurate the past remains unchangeable. Kolbert’s bias against the organization is blatantly evident with her statement. It is important to note that Congresswoman Michele Bachmann (R-MN) is a staunch Tea Party rendering Kolbert’s claim of sexism null and void. Bob Parks is a black gentleman who is the author of ‘Black and Right’ a blog for conservative black individuals. He is also a member of the Tea Party. These are merely two specific examples of how the Tea Party movement has transcended sex and race. The liberal media claims that it is merely a “good old boys” club that is owned and operated by the middle class. The Tea Party is not about who people are, but rather where people are from. It is an organization

based on staunch patriotism, not of ignorance or hate.

Amy Gardner (2010), a staff writer for *The Washington Post* said in an editorial prior to the 2010 midterm election:

Taken together, the many arms of the Tea Party movement have, in an impressively short time, grown into a potent and disruptive political force. It proved, in a series of stunning victories in Republican primaries across the nation, that it can mobilize volunteers, raise money (at least \$60 million this year), end political careers and begin new ones. All without any formal structure or central leadership. (Gardner, 2010, p. 1)

Gardner's claims in this editorial could not be farther from the truth. The evidence of the Tea Party's sophisticated organization is quite evident. The events orchestrated by the Tea Party such as the political rallies they host require the utmost organization and attention to detail. If the Tea Party lacked central organization these events (which take place nationwide would not occur). In the same editorial Gardner (2010) said:

From its beginnings on the afternoon of Feb. 19, 2009, the Tea Party has been difficult for many Americans to understand. That day, CNBC commentator Rick Santelli, standing on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, unleashed a ferocious, hair-on-fire rant against President Obama's economic policies. He said he was going to hold a "Chicago Tea Party to protest" Obama's efforts to rescue defaulting homeowners. (p. 1)

Gardner referred to statements made by Rick Santelli as a 'rant' and further described said rant as ferocious. Gardner also used the loaded term 'rescue' to describe President Obama's economic policy. Her choice of terminology made it obvious where

she stood on the mortgage bailout. Her statements gave readers the impression that she was aghast that anyone could ever fathom supporting conservative fiscal economic policy.

Kat Zernike used Lisa McGirr, a professor of history at Harvard and the author of "Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right," as an expert source in her editorial. McGirr claims that the Tea Party uses a type of code to talk about social values. A specific example of this is, when they [Tea Partiers] emphasize a return to the strict meaning of the Constitution, they interpret that as a return to a Christian foundation. "When they talk about returning to the values of the Founding Fathers," McGirr said, "they are talking about life as a social issue" (Zernike, 2010, p. 1).

The idea that Tea Partiers talk in code is simply absurd. Although American is at a political crossroads, this is the United States of America where all people, regardless of political persuasion, have the right to free speech. The way McGirr would have people see it one would assume this is communist China where people are forced to monitor their political discussion for fear they are being watched by members of the Red Guard.

Conclusion

There is enough evidence to suggest that the mainstream media has a negative bias against the movement. Liberal media elites have said as much in their own words. News analysts and researchers such as Rich Noyes have proved it. Although they were never historically considered editorials, the persuasion set forth in *The Federalist Papers* played a crucial role in the founding of our nation. Our nation is now at a delicate crossroads. The sheer volume of essays in *The Federalist* proves that with enough effort by the editorial page and given enough time, the readership would be persuaded. Today,

the technology that is at the hands of journalists is unbelievable. News can be sent faster and farther than ever before with an exponential increase in volume. Hundred of thousands of editorials, television broadcasts, radio broadcasts, and on blogs have been written or produced surrounding The Tea Party, much of that has been written or produced by liberal media outlets. The editorial page's influence is indeed significant and it has come full circle in its intentions of preserving the federalist form of government from the editorial pages of the 18th century.

The media has the power to provide fair and balanced information to the public but the media elites have chosen not to. The 2010 midterm elections forced the mainstream media to realize that the Tea Party was a formidable force. Bias against the Tea Party was evident prior to the Tucson, Arizona Safeway shooting but after the editorials emerged from *The New York Times* there was no room for doubt. The evidence suggesting that there is bias against the Tea Party is insurmountable. The choice is left to the average citizen to sort through the bias and find the truth. An interesting truth which has emerged through the scholarly research media analysts and historians is that the approval rate of the Constitution and groups who support constitutionalism rests, in part, in the hands of the editorial board.

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