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Interpreting Racial Politics: Black and Mainstream Press Web Site Tea Party Coverage

Benjamin Rex LaPoe II
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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INTERPRETING RACIAL POLITICS: BLACK AND MAINSTREAM PRESS WEB SITE
TEA PARTY COVERAGE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by
Benjamin Rex LaPoe II
B.A. West Virginia University, 2003
M.S. West Virginia University, 2008
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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to understand the cultural meanings of the black and mainstream press' online interpretations of the tea party. Little research exists on the modern black press; what does exist shows that unless the story is about race, the black press mirrors the mainstream press. To my knowledge, no research exists comparing the two presses on a racial issue in an online environment. This dissertation will fill that hole. The tea party narrative was, and continues to be, an intricate story for journalists to tell. Resonant myth offers interpretative templates for journalists to use for crafting cultural meaning while mediating reality. Tracking coverage of the tea party from the group's beginning in early February of 2009 until one week after the 2012 general presidential election in November, this dissertation will examine what myths emerge, what the emergence of those myths implies about how journalists interpreted the tea party and black political empowerment, and the degree of racial implicitness in the discourse. To my knowledge, no work has coupled resonant myth with racial implicit frames while analyzing online media discourse in the mainstream *and* the black press. While many mainstream journalists either fail to recognize, or ignore all together, the racial component that the tea party poses to black solidarity, my research shows that black reporters working for the black press absolutely recognize the racial component and provide more thorough discussions than their mainstream counterpart. Historically, the black press has existed to fill holes of misrepresentation in the mainstream press; to that end, this dissertation shows, during a time when some question whether the black press are still needed and whether our society is "post-racial," this dissertation, by combining a quantitative analysis of implicit racial frames with a qualitative analysis of resonant myth, provides empirical evidence that, in terms of coverage, blacks still struggle to get their voice heard in the mainstream press.

Introduction

The artful recipe of storytelling is the defining element distinguishing modern journalism during an information age where anyone with a mobile phone can be a mass curator and builder of reality.¹ This sometimes magical process of sculpting meaning from everyday events is a foundational pillar for mainstream media. How do journalists extract intriguing, informative, and accurate stories from complex occurrences in a coherent fashion? One essential storytelling ingredient, mixed with quality educational herbs, is resonant myth. Resonant myths, used as interpretive templates, endured countless changes in storytelling platforms, the most recent being the emergence of the internet. Therefore, as scholars struggle to accurately predict what media environment will emerge in the future as a result of new technologies and a changing field, it is intuitive to explore what resonant myths, one of the few narrative devices that isn't fickle, are used by journalists on the internet as they attempt to maintain their profession and distinguish themselves from citizens who have access to the same technologies. Online content will be the focus of this dissertation because the internet is a major focus for newspapers looking to recapture their influence.

Resonant myths culturally inform journalists, helping convert episodic events into truthful, thematic narratives. Journalists, as both societal members and shapers, use lasting explanatory models (myths) that resonate with them and their audiences in order to mediate reality. Resonant myths are not inaccurate descriptions or unfounded stereotypes; instead, myths are sacred stories, sustained by archetypal figures over geographic space, time, and societies, dating back at least to the days of Homer. Journalists apply resonant myths to help build meaning in an increasingly eclectic world.² To better understand how journalists use resonant myths to tell stories and construct reality, this dissertation examines what resonant myths percolated in online

newspaper coverage of an extremely complex series of events – the emergence of the tea party during President Barack Obama’s first term – and what the resulting thematic narratives mean.

Restless Natives

February 7, 2007 marked the beginning of perhaps the most intricate modern narrative journalists have tried to construct. On that day, then Illinois Senator Barack Hussein Obama announced his intentions to run for President of the United States of America. Senator Obama emerged as a legitimate candidate, with a serious chance of becoming the first African-American president, when he won the Iowa caucus. Following that victory, race became the most salient issue in newspaper coverage of the democratic primaries.³ Obama edged out Senator Hillary Clinton and moved on to a general election against Senator John McCain. Race again emerged as a significant variable in journalists’ coverage of the election.⁴ During the general campaign, McCain, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin (McCain’s running mate), and other Republican surrogates, called Obama everything in their repertoire of negative adjectives, such as socialist, illegal immigrant, monkey, witch doctor, and terrorist. Cries of “kill him” could be heard at rallies. Even for politics, the negativity and hostility seemed excessive.

When the electorate chose Obama president on November 4, 2008 six African Americans had been U.S. Senators in history. Blacks have seen a steady increase in proportional representation at local levels, but statewide and national positions are still far from being proportionate.⁵ Even though President Obama became the first African American to reside in the Oval Office, black communities are just beginning to have their voices and perspectives heard at higher levels in the federal government.⁶

No one doubts the significance of President Obama’s election. It is highly probable, though, that many mainstream journalists struggled to interpret his election, his historic and

symbolic meaning, his policies and how they connected to the black community (if at all), and his *immediate* opposition. The modern tea party formed five weeks after President Obama's inauguration. Comprised mostly of whites, the tea party, with intense hostility, opposed virtually all policies the infant administration proposed.

To complicate President Obama's first term narrative even further, the internet emerged as a new way of life that journalists could no longer ignore or resist. Few, if any, doubt that the internet plays an important role in the intersections of race, politics, media storytelling, and the processes of governing.⁷ The construction of the tea party narrative, then, was especially crucial to a democracy hoping to escape its hypocritical history of slavery and oppression.⁸ After reelecting President Obama to a second term on November 6, 2012, scholarly questions remain about the role[s] the internet plays in engendering black political empowerment at national levels. Did President Obama's two terms accidentally coincide with our storytellers' new media adaptations? What did online news coverage of President Obama's white adversaries say about a changing media landscape and a possibly changing society? This dissertation helps answer these questions.

From the inception of slavery, to the three-fifths compromise (legislation that considered slaves and free African Americans as only three-fifths of a person), to the civil war, to Jim Crow, to World War I and II, Vietnam, and civil rights, some voices have always insisted that race is not a significant consideration in the oppression of African Americans.⁹ Some scholars and opinion leaders, in that same vein of logic, have argued that the tea party narrative is devoid of any racial undercurrents.¹⁰ These voices struggle to explain race when it does emerge in the tea party narrative. For instance, one tea party pundit, on a blog, referred to black Congressman and presidential candidate Herman Cain as a runaway slave. "I keep having images of Herman Cain

barefoot, covered in sweat and mud, wearing an old patchwork shirt and hand-made burlap pants held up by a rope rather than a belt, out of breath and frantically running for his life.”¹¹

History tends to support the assertion that race is a significant factor in the tea party narrative. A dissenting group, comprised primarily of whites, typically forms following the election of the first African American to a political office.¹² The groups’ main goals, usually, are to oppose the newly elected officials’ policies and thwart their reelections.¹³ This is not to imply that all groups who oppose black officials are racists, that would be a massive oversimplification. I am interested in better understanding how all of these different components and layers fit together. How did journalists interpret the tea party and tell that story through resonant myths? How did journalists disentangle the racial undercurrents of the policies the tea party opposed, the historical precedents, President Obama’s symbolic representation, the nature of politics, and conflicts with ideology? How did journalists implicitly frame race while designing the arc of the tea party narrative, if at all?

With all those facets considered, it is clear that constructing the tea party’s anti-Obama story is/was challenging for any intuitive journalist. One of the professed requirements for journalism’s storytelling art is to interpret reality as accurately as possible. Historically, white, mainstream media have a poor record of accurately interpreting race in this country.¹⁴ For instance, Stuart Hall identified the restless native framework as a historically consistent way for mainstream journalists to cover African-American issues. Through this model, mainstream journalists portray blacks as a massive horde out to destroy white, innocent ideologies.¹⁵ The black community is usually narrated as “other,” with that other always undesirable, less than, and menacing.¹⁶

Research on how the mainstream press¹⁷ covered the inception of the tea party found that journalists cautiously debated and highlighted the possibility that race may have been a key component in a mass of whites collecting to oppose President Obama, but the mainstream newspapers never conclusively stated it.¹⁸ The initial tea party narratives inverted the restless native framework – whites were the wave of hostility seeking to demolish black ideologies.¹⁹

Following the on-air “rant” of Rick Santelli, a broadcast commentator for CNBC, tea parties began meeting in February 2009. Immediately, mainstream newspapers framed the group negatively as uneducated hooligans who may have been motivated by racial prejudice, rarely as legitimately concerned citizens voicing constructive dissent.²⁰ Mainstream newspapers continued debating the racial nature of the tea party during the health care reform debates that were highly salient in 2009.²¹ For instance, one commentary described the tea party as a group of individuals terrified by the potential financial burdens resulting from health care reform. “Forget intent... It’s so easy to lie about that...Health insurance reforms as applied to our present situation are where the scrutiny should be. I think the American people who are showing up at the town hall and tea parties realize that.”²²

Unconvinced of this interpretation, a *Palm Beach Post* reporter, highlighting the racial nature of tea party dissent, interviewed individuals on their thoughts about the tea party. The following was one response:

‘Sometimes it bothers me when the word civility comes up,’ said Brownstein, who said people on ‘the other side ... are not civil to us.’...Brownstein, who is White, said ‘White Southerners in this country are going nuts’ because of the popularity of Black figures such as Obama and Oprah Winfrey. He said he raised the issue because ‘you have to know who your enemy is.’...’The foundation of all of this is racism.’²³

Many voices existed during the debate examining the weight of the tea party’s racially-driven motivations. Initially, mainstream journalists interpreted race, ideology, and the nature of

politics during the tea party's first three months without relying on the "zero-sum" frame that is traditionally used to tell race related stories.²⁴ The coverage of the tea party was negatively framed, but not because they posed racial threats; instead, they were framed negatively because they were perceived as excessively hostile, uneducated, and Republican pawns. Mainstream newspaper coverage reflected the belief that the tea party symbolized continued conservatism discourse and that race played a minimal role in their organization.²⁵ The racial component of the tea party subsided in mainstream newspaper coverage; race was almost entirely excluded from the narrative as a possible variable. Tea partiers still were classified as extremist hooligans, but the racial nature of their polarizing perspectives rarely emerged in newspapers.²⁶ This was surprising because the 2010 midterm elections were an opportunity for mainstream journalists to interpret the tea party as a symbolic challenge to racial solidarity and black political empowerment; instead, journalists returned to historical habits and ignored the racial component of the tea party.

This could possibly mean that the previous use of the scapegoat myth was an aberration. The initial tea party narratives simultaneously highlighted suspicions of racially-driven motivations and the ideological clash between autonomy and perceived hand-outs of resource allocations designed to level a playing field that, historically, favored whites and oppressed blacks.²⁷ This was a serious historical deviation from mainstream narratives of race that nearly always presented this type of discourse as zero-sum conflicts.²⁸ Given that the mainstream press has done little, if anything, since civil rights to positively form a racial comity voice,²⁹ the answer might seem, yes, the initial mainstream tea party coverage was an aberration. This would seem to justify why the press ignored highlighting the racial component of the narrative in 2010. Or, was the coverage a positive societal marker? Has society progressed to the point that groups

motivated by or suspected of racial prejudice are no longer socially accepted voices? It is quite possible that Tali Mendelberg is correct when she theorizes that society is becoming more egalitarian, or at least desiring more social equality.³⁰ This could possibly mean that the tea party either eradicated racism from its ranks, or those elements hid themselves from identification. If Mendelberg is accurate, then it would seem logical for a more egalitarian mainstream press to emerge as well.³¹ But, how would we know if it did?

One possibility is that mainstream newspapers' coverage of the racial nature of the tea party subsided because the discourse became more implicit.³² Identified early as a group possibly motivated by race, the group's appeals became much more implicit in order to not entirely be rejected. This correlates with the formation of most groups aspiring to be social movements. During the infant stages of the movements, the groups deliberately and explicitly demonstrate and protest aggressively because they know that what bleeds leads. That is the axiom that acts of hostility and violence tend to dominate news coverage because that is what sells, and more media attention usually means more members for advocacy groups. As the group broadens its umbrella, attracting more people with different points of view, the aggressive nature of the movement sometimes dissipates as the dissenting group, now a recognizable brand, can offer constructive discursive input to more receptive ears aimed at achieving the group's goals. As the group becomes larger and more sustainable, it appeals to less polemic constituents and no longer needs to behave aggressively to attract media attention.³³

Understanding the relationships between media and protest groups "have come to be regarded, alongside resource mobilization and political opportunity processes, as a central dynamic in understanding the character" of social life in a representative democracy.³⁴ The first premise essential to exploring these relationships is that journalism is an occupation full of habits

and traditions.³⁵ The second is recognizing that protest groups and social movements tend to use these traditions to their advantage, as do political figures.³⁶ Mainstream newspapers' ritualistic reliance on objectivity grants political figures, dissenting groups, and social movements the ability to use the media as a public relations arm.³⁷ Thus, we can expect racially-coded messages in the media to become more implicit as the narrative progresses.

Countering Mainstream Newspapers – The Black Press

Resonant myth is primarily concerned with maintaining social order and upholding the status quo.³⁸ Thus, questions remain about the social order and status quo mainstream newspapers maintained while narrating the anti-Obama tea party story. It is possible that it was a sign of a more egalitarian press. Or, mainstream newspapers could have upheld the same anti-minority ideologies that defined the press organ's history of covering race.³⁹ How do we explore if the mainstream press suddenly ceased upholding white ideologies that promoted a belief that "others," nonwhites, were inferior, and began representing African Americans more accurately?

The answer requires comparing mainstream press coverage to a news institution whose mission is not regulated by the illusion of objectivity or restrained by norms and routines designed and governed by white elites, but an institution whose mission is to fill racial holes of misinformation disseminated by the mainstream press.⁴⁰ One such institution is minority media (news organizations owned by, run by, and intended for minorities); in this case, the black press specifically.⁴¹ Three criteria must be met for a newspaper to be considered part of the black press: (1) It must be owned and operated by African Americans (2) It must be intended for an African-American audience (3) It must champion causes for the African-American minority.⁴² Similarly, one may wonder what defines a mainstream newspaper. Mainstream newspapers are those that do not meet the criteria for being an organ such as the Black press. In other words, if

the press is not part of ethnic media, it is part of the mainstream media, regardless of political, partisan, or ideological leanings – white media, owned and managed by whites, and intended, for the most part, for a white audience.

“Today’s black press and its response to events...affecting the black community... has not been addressed in scholarship.”⁴³ The black press has “historically filled an advocacy role of providing a place for black voices and perspectives not represented in the mainstream media.”⁴⁴ The black press, embodying a racial advocacy function, also instructs “readers about the necessity for civil rights.”⁴⁵ This advocacy and civil rights instruction trait of the black press is not as prevalent in a mainstream press that espouses strict adherence to objectivity in its reporting. “It is not in spite of, but because of, their commitment to norms of objectivity and impartiality that [mainstream] journalists” are subservient to prevailing white ideologies.⁴⁶

Because the black press isn’t as constricted by self-imposed strategic rituals of objectivity, encompassing racial advocacy and educational responsibilities instead, one might expect coverage of race to be different in black newspapers compared to mainstream newspapers. The modest research (in terms of quantity) conducted on this subject indicates that black newspapers and mainstream newspapers interpret issues relative to the black community differently.⁴⁷

Recent research has shown the marked differences in the coverage of identical issues impacting the black community.⁴⁸ For instance, on the subject of reparations, mainstream newspapers offered two viewpoints – advocates and opponents; helpful deliberations on the subject were absent.⁴⁹ Mainstream newspapers interpreted the issue of reparations in an “us versus them” style, positioning African Americans as “other.” Black newspapers, on the other hand, offered only one viewpoint, advocacy.⁵⁰

“The black press was less likely to use comparative coverage...their coverage more often focused on the Black experience in America.”⁵¹ Mark Dolan sampled black newspaper coverage during the month after Hurricane Katrina and found that the black press criticized the mainstream press for failing to investigate the hurricane’s impact on the African-American community. Instead, mainstream media focused on the illegal actions of some New Orleans residents, mostly black, and ignored the conditions that invited such criminal behavior.⁵² Mainstream press coverage portrayed blacks as looters, while whites, conducting the same activities, were reported as innocents doing what was needed to survive.

Coverage of Supreme Court cases is another example. In decisions salient to the black community, the black press mediated the cases and rulings differently than the mainstream press.⁵³ “As an advocate for black interests, the black press focused on the implications of the ruling for minorities...and emphasized pro-affirmative action sources.”⁵⁴ While the black press’ stories also focused on the harmful impacts of some rulings, the mainstream press relied on legalistic and constitutional language that portrayed the Supreme Court as a politically neutral institution; while the black press frequently criticized justices who they perceived as negatively influencing race relations, the mainstream press refrained from criticism or praise of the judges – “choosing to quote from his concurring opinion” instead.⁵⁵

Overview

With that in mind, this dissertation seeks to understand the arc of the tea party narrative, the ways journalists for black and white newspapers interpreted the story, and what those constructions mean culturally? To help guide the exploration, this dissertation will percolate the following points: (A) the mainstream press historically has done a poor job covering race relations yet the United States elected its first African-American President in 2008; (B) a group,

the tea party, comprised mostly of whites, formed five weeks following Obama's inauguration and aggressively opposed him on all decisions and policies his administration put forth; (C) the mainstream press recognized potential racially-based motivations driving the tea party and highlighted that possibility but failed to conclusively interpret the significance of the group; (D) as the anti-Obama tea party narrative continued, racial discussions probably became implicit. The following chapters disentangle this narrative, and the accompanying questions, by comparing coverage of the tea party in mainstream newspapers to coverage of the tea party in black press newspapers.

Chapter one discusses black political empowerment, implicit racial frames, resonant myth, the black press, and how the mainstream press has covered African Americans. The chapter ends with formal hypotheses and research questions. Chapter two, data measurement and analysis, outlines how I conducted my research. Because this dissertation is interested in two related areas, resonant myth (a typically qualitative approach that seeks to decipher meaning from cultural symbols) and implicit racial frames (a typically quantitative approach that quantifies and examines those frames), the research design will be a content analysis that uses both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques. Appendices will follow that contain the coding designs. Chapter three describes the data set and tests my hypotheses about racially implicit frames in tea party stories throughout President Obama's first term. Chapter four critically analyzes the texts through a resonant myth conceptual lens. Chapter five discusses the findings and interprets the significance of the findings. This chapter outlines the implications for journalists as I better understand how black and white newspapers converted the same episodic events into different thematic narratives.

Chapter One - Literature Review

“The press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates.”⁵⁶ A variety of forces impact this process, such as indexing, sourcing, norms and routines, profit, government regulations, and technology.⁵⁷ While all of these factors are significant, this dissertation examines the storytelling process through a cultural lens. This dissertation is significant because framing studies show that thematic stories have longer lasting effects than episodic stories;⁵⁸ thus, understanding how journalists convert episodic events into thematic narratives is important. To my knowledge, little or no research exists investigating resonant myth *and* implicit racial frames in the black press or on the black press and new media. This dissertation fills that void.

Journalists, through storytelling, are part of an interpretative community that helps shape, build, and reflect cultural reality.⁵⁹ There are many research designs that exist to explore journalism storytelling and interpreting. Dietram Scheufele provided the most parsimonious model for examining media content and deciphering their relationships with society.⁶⁰ The four-cell typology places media frames and individual frames on the X axis. The Y axis is comprised of two ways of viewing media content: as independent variables (media content causes individual cognition in certain ways) and as dependent variables (media content is the result of individual cognition). Because this dissertation is interested in deciphering what the end product implies culturally, resonant myth is in the cell that considers media frames to be dependent variables, with society being the independent variable.

Resonant Myth

Resonant myth couples two media analysis concepts, cultural resonance and myth. Cultural resonance is the argument that journalists produce texts that echo with society's

ideologies.⁶¹ Myth is the concept that journalists use interpretative mythological templates reliant on archetypes that have existed in societies across space and time since the days of Homer to mediate a tenuous, subjective, socially constructed reality.⁶² Thus, resonant myth is the concept that proposes journalists, in deciphering a complex reality, use interpretative templates (myth) that resonate with the society that they are interpreting (resonance). “As both a part of their culture and as storytellers for that culture, journalists construct stories through narrative conventions [myth] that are culturally resonant for themselves and for their audiences.”⁶³

Resonant myth explains the embedded meanings and undercurrents of “communication-as-culture” texts.⁶⁴ Because scholars posit that news aspires to reflect reality through frames⁶⁵ “that emphasize certain facts while suppressing others” and consequently “promote certain political and moral evaluations while hindering others,” then, media frames “must *resonate* with what writers and readers take to be real and important.”⁶⁶ Resonance symbolizes an artifact of significance that evokes, or amplifies, a strong emotion or association.⁶⁷ Because media texts are part of an associated, sharing, fellowship among members of society whose voices participate in creating culture, resonant myth perspectives provide insight into what values and beliefs society construct as essential.⁶⁸ This is important because “ultimately, what is really at stake – for presidential candidates and protest groups...is what the news said” and “the language of news is what matters.”⁶⁹ Exploring *how* these cultural frames are constructed within language can provide a nuanced perspective into the holographic pictures of society’s race relations via politically-oriented communication and the press.⁷⁰

On resonant myth, Jack Lule wrote:

Myth is not unreality. Myth is not a false belief. Myth is not an untrue tale...myth is...a sacred, societal story that draws from archetypal figures and forms to offer

exemplary models for human life...Myths...play crucial social roles...It sees myth – and...news – as an important way a society expresses its prevailing ideals, ideologies, values and beliefs.⁷¹

Lule identified seven master myths: the victim, the scapegoat, the hero, the good mother, the trickster, the other world, and the flood. The victim sacrifices, usually without consent, a great deal and endures the tragedy in an almost heroic like way. This myth is used most often when confronting death, extreme tragedies, and loss. The use of the scapegoat is normally used as an attempt to degrade a political leader, narrated as very combustible, who is perceived as extreme. The figure is used as an example of what happens to leaders and dissenters when they deviate too greatly from society's norms. On the scapegoat:

If news is only a dispassionate observer and reporter of political events, coverage of radical groups...should be interesting but relatively straightforward. The political protest should provide some debatable issues for a story. The passion should contribute some provocative emotion. The conflict should make for dramatic narratives. Radical thinkers should make for thoughtful news. If news is myth, [if a group is a scapegoat], however, coverage of radical groups should be much more combustible and complex.⁷²

The hero is the most used and enduring myth. The figure personifies culture's core values and beliefs, frequently in the face of overwhelming challenges that normally would cause a figure to abandon his or her values. The hero is humble, initiates a quest, wins battle decisively, and returns as triumphant.⁷³ The good mother is a figure of nurturing virtue, kindness, and generosity. This maternal figure is always willing to sacrifice for the good of her children as she "oversees the passage from this life to the next."⁷⁴

The trickster is a very complex figure that is blatantly mocked and narrated as a "crude and lewd moralist" that serves as a "model illustrating the necessity for societal rules."⁷⁵ This figure is similar to the scapegoat because it highlights why rules are necessary and what happens when those rules aren't obeyed. However, unlike the scapegoat, whose fall happens during a climatic event, the trickster's undoing is in a continual state of ruin.

The other world is used as a way society views foreign lands. Two models exist, the land of delight and a land of barbarians. The land of delights narrates a distant society as a type of utopia; the utopic land is used as a way of expressing discontent with societal issues at home. The land of barbarians is a narrative of the distant society as immensely inferior to home, populated with savages out to devour “good” ideologies. This is a way to express relative peace at home. The flood is a myth of disaster. The story is one of devastation inflicted upon society by the universe. Society is helpless against forces that crush it for reasons unknown to them and out of their control.⁷⁶

All of these myths have inverses as well. For every hero there is a villain; for every good mother there is a bad mother; for every scapegoat there is a model citizen; for every other world there is a familiar world; for every flood there is a drought. The myths Lule identified are not the only ones. For instance, Stuart Hall highlighted the restless native myth that is a model typically used by mainstream journalists that portrays African Americans as a massive, hostile horde out desiring to consume whites. Christopher Campbell discussed the myth of assimilation that is a framework where the only way the “others,” blacks, can function in society is to behave like whites even though they will never be treated as equals.⁷⁷ What myths journalists use to tell their stories tell us what ideologies they believe resonate with society; what myths they choose not to use, tells us what norms and values they interpret to be less important.⁷⁸ By examining what myths journalists use to narrate certain events, we can understand the language used to convert those events into broader cultural themes.

History, and a lacking knowledge of history, is one critical component undergirding language used to interpret race. “Even though it was abolished over a century ago, slavery has left a lasting legacy – a legacy evident in racism, economic inequality, and the social and

economic underdevelopment of large parts of the” United States.⁷⁹ Race related events have been the most difficult stories for mainstream journalists to translate into thematic narratives in part because mainstream journalism typically ignores the history tethered to issues they cover. If the interpretative community known as journalism does take on the coloration of its society and government, and if mainstream journalism has failed to accurately cover race – instead upholding white ideologies and ignoring minorities or framing them negatively – how then do we explain President Barack Obama’s two terms? It is quite possible that media effects are not nearly as powerful as framing scholars believe. It is also possible that the majority of American society is not as egalitarian as some would like to think.

Race, Politics, and Implicit Frames

In 1990, Raphael Sonenshein wrote: “While black office-holding has steadily increased at the local level, statewide successes have been few and far between.”⁸⁰ He posed the question of whether blacks would ever proportionally represent themselves at state or national political levels. Given the difficulty blacks have faced attaining national political positions,⁸¹ then, the significance of President Obama’s 2008 and 2012 victories cannot be overstated. During the 2008 campaign, he tried to avoid running as a “race” candidate, at least explicitly in the presence of national audiences.⁸² Yet, mainstream newspapers made race the most salient issue once he won the Iowa Primary.⁸³

Political racial solidarity, uniformly voicing and representing the group’s interests, is considered one of the most potent ways to fight discrimination and gain full equality in the United States.⁸⁴ When Sonenshein asked, “can black candidates win statewide elections,” Edward Brooke of Massachusetts was the only African American elected to the Senate during that century; Douglas Wilder of Virginia became the first African-American governor in 1989.⁸⁵

Historically, countless barriers restricted African Americans' opportunities to represent themselves in the United States' representative democracy.⁸⁶ While African Americans were, and still are, underrepresented proportionally at the national and state levels, they have begun seeing some progress – most notably, the election of mayors in urban areas.⁸⁷ This may partially explain mainstream media's poor historical record of covering minorities. Because of indexing, the idea "that journalists tend to calibrate the range of viewpoints in the news to reflect the balance of power,"⁸⁸ it could be expected for the mainstream press to articulate a white point of view. However, President Obama's election to the most powerful political office in the world could change that dynamic. Coupling racial solidarity and indexing, I hypothesize that the black press will be more indexed to the current government than the mainstream press.

Indexing is connected to the notion that media are a political institution that not only depends on the other three branches of the United States government for content, but are also a necessary establishment for the government to function efficiently.⁸⁹ An institution must encompass social patterns that embody procedures, assumptions, and routines occurring and enduring over space and time in a fashion to supervise a societal sector.⁹⁰ In order to be a political institution, the media personify the following components: (1) an indirect approach where media seek to influence policy, (2) observable action that is (3) purposive and (4) unified.⁹¹

Editorials are one channel through which media directly seek to influence policy; however, the majority of content is indirect and most easily observable through media's routine of objectivity. "It is not in spite of, but because of, their commitment to norms of objectivity and impartiality that journalists are nowadays important political actors."⁹² Indexing posits that official source citation doesn't lead to official source bias because the officials cited are not

hegemonic in their persuasion.⁹³ Media, adhering to the ritual of objectivity, condense complex policies into only two, often polemic, views.⁹⁴ Unlike observable editorials, the norm of objectivity is an indirect venue of shaping political policy because only two views are presented.

“The publicity provided by the news media can offer key assistance to officials.”⁹⁵ The news media influence not only public opinion, but official opinion as well. David Price’s 1978 study of the House Commerce Committee found that a highly visible issue in the press resulted in a highly responsive legislature.⁹⁶ Media functioning as a political institution is clearly an observable action; media influence opinions of not only the electorate, but of other political actors (namely government officials) as well.⁹⁷

But, is this observable action purposive? It is critical, at this point, to clearly define “purposive.” The notion of the media purposively seeking to influence public policy does not mean a “consciously intended” act. Media do not always consciously deliberate on how to influence public policy; rather, purposive implies their influence derives from functional aspects – like the strategic ritual of objectivity. For instance, the Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester study of an oil spill in 1969 concluded that “one dimension of power can be construed as the ability to have one’s account become the perceived reality of others.”⁹⁸ The functional ability of media to construct reality inadvertently attracts political actors who wish to not only use the media as a vehicle for transmitting their opinions, but also as a hub for collecting information to inform their own opinions. Media are purposive about their objectivity which presents only two sides due to journalistic norms of aspired neutrality.⁹⁹

Finally, are media sufficiently unified enough to consider the press a political institution? Media fragmentation and the emergence of the internet initially implies that no, media are far from unified. However, media fragmentation has actually produced condensed collaboration.¹⁰⁰

Media seek and report the same stories – thus, seeking the same officials and political actors. Fewer and fewer voices are actually heard in a fragmented environment.¹⁰¹ Thus, media can be viewed as a unified political institution because media fragmentation has led to a smaller variety of narratives and these stories are frequently told only through two viewpoints – implicating a unified voice.

In 1980, then Vice President Walter Mondale said he would rather possess the power to be on the nightly news than the power to exercise a veto.¹⁰² Despite vast changes in the media environment, the press can still be viewed as a political institution. Media indirectly and purposively seek to influence public policies through an inadvertent unified voice. Vast empirical evidence exists supporting the observability of media's role(s) in public policy authorship.¹⁰³ Because media political actions are indirect, observable, purposive, and unified, one can consider the press a political institution – thus, encompassing social patterns embodying procedures, assumptions, and routines that occur and endure over space and time in a fashion to supervise society.

Academics frequently debate the root causes contributing to black achievement at local levels but struggle at state and national levels, the more powerful positions. Some scholars argue that the answer is simple - demographics based on visual markers, most notably skin color.¹⁰⁴ In urban areas, African Americans comprise a substantial portion of the electorate. At state or national elections, that proportion isn't as overwhelming; the traditional axiom is that a voting district needs to be at least comprised of 65% African Americans for a black candidate to even consider possibly winning an election.¹⁰⁵ Whites, historically reluctant to vote for African

Americans, comprise larger portions of the electorate at national and state levels than they do at the local, urban areas.¹⁰⁶ Thus, race seems to be highly correlated with the electability of African-American candidates.¹⁰⁷

Of course, exceptions always exist. For instance, Kansas City, Missouri's fifth district was comprised of 20% African Americans when Alan Wheat became the district's first black representative in 1982; Katie Hall won in the first district of Indiana, a 71% white constituency, during that same year.¹⁰⁸ It does appear that gradual progress is occurring; but, it still seems that race is a key variable to black political empowerment.

Thus, a vital question regarding President Obama is whether he is an exception to the rule, or part of gradual egalitarian progress. If he is part of gradual progress, the question is not, then, whether black candidates can win national or state elections, but *how* they win elections and reelections at those levels. On November 6, 2012, President Obama was reelected in a surprising fashion. Most political pundits predicted a very tight electoral race. With an unemployment rate that had hovered around 9% of his presidency, dipping to 7.9% just before the election, President Obama was the first president since FDR to win reelection in that type of economic climate. Governor Romney won more than 61% of the white vote, a proportion that historically was always enough to win the presidency. Traditional political wisdom would not have predicted President Obama's reelection. Obviously, something is changing; the question is what.

As a rule, African-American representatives usually win reelection;¹⁰⁹ but, for the representatives who don't, white dissenting voices, such as the tea party, are significant variables correlated with their loss.¹¹⁰ President Obama's reelection defies scholars who argue that other

variables, such as context and the nature of politics, are more highly correlated with the election of African-American candidates than race.¹¹¹ Given the context, President Obama should have been a one term president.

Research suggests that political environment was the more important variable during the 2008 election.¹¹² The pertinent context was the previous administration and the economy. Scholars argue that President Obama's race had little to do with his election. Instead, George W. Bush, President Obama's predecessor, had done such a poor job and angered the public so much that the U.S. electorate would have voted for a Democrat, regardless of the candidate's color and/or gender.¹¹³

However, during the 2008 general campaign, the polling numbers leading up to the general election were relatively close. Maybe the public wasn't so livid with Republicans that they were willing to vote for an African American named Barack Hussein Obama, a name that opened the door for many negative attacks during the campaign. Then, the economy collapsed and McCain admitted that financial knowledge wasn't his expertise. President Obama's lead widened and this context eventually contributed highly to his election.¹¹⁴

Other scholars disagree, in part.¹¹⁵ They posit that race, or at least President Obama's historic symbolic power in terms of racial representation, was the more salient variable. This position admits that context is correlated with the electability of an African-American candidate; however, in Obama's case, they argue that the campaign he ran, one that was acutely aware of race and how to effectively and implicitly frame race contributed more highly to his election than the "rejecting-Republicans-economy" context.¹¹⁶ President Obama's campaign was highly cognizant of race and organized his campaign around appealing to African Americans while not priming white voters.¹¹⁷

Prior to McIlwain and Caliendo's study, the majority of the racial implicit framing literature focused on how white candidates appealed to race, implicitly, to motivate white voters away from black candidates or white candidates tied to issues associated with the African-American community.¹¹⁸ The research demonstrated that race appeals, made by white and black candidates alike, do prime voters and influence their voting behavior; however, their findings were not consistent with previous literature.¹¹⁹ They found that when an African-American candidate deployed an appeal to race, it actually lowered support for that candidate among black voters and increased support among white voters. The researchers also found that race appeals by a white candidate made had no significant impact on deterring white voters away from a black candidate.

These findings would seem, on the surface, to be evidence suggesting that racial priming isn't strongly correlated with the electability of an African-American candidate – possibly inferring that context is more salient; one significant finding contradicts the latter. In the control groups, where no implicit race appeals were made, the participants perceived that the candidates appealed to race. African Americans perceived that the white candidate made an implicit race appeal against the black candidate, increasing their support for the black candidate. White participants perceived the African-American candidate to make an implicit race appeal when there was none, increasing their support for the white candidate. More formally: (1) in the manipulation group, when a white candidate did make a race appeal, support among white and African-American voters for the white candidate dropped (2) when an African-American candidate in the manipulation group did use a race appeal, support among white and African-Americans for the African-American candidate dropped (3) in the control group, when the white candidate did *not* use an appeal, the African-American candidates perceived that he did and their

support for the African-American candidate rose (4) in the control group, when the African-American candidate did *not* use an appeal, the white voters perceived that he did, raising their support for the white candidate. They perceived racial appeals when there were none. This implies that in a biracial contest, race is in the minds of the voters regardless of whether the candidates appeal to race, suggesting that race ideologies are very deeply embedded and highly salient in individuals' minds.¹²⁰

Operationalizing implicit racial frames has been the more difficult task for scholars. First, a racial frame must be implicit to prime white voters.¹²¹ Priming is the theory that an implicit message in the news activates previously dormant racial attitudes – usually triggering whites to negatively perceive political candidates, white and black alike.¹²² Why must such messages be implicit? In a society that increasingly desires to be more egalitarian, racially explicit messages that oppose values aimed at full equality for all individuals are easily identified and rejected.¹²³ Thus, for a message to activate racially-prejudiced actions, it must not be identified as racial – it must be implicit.¹²⁴

The Willie Horton advertisement is one of the first implicit racial frames scholars examined.¹²⁵ During the 1988 presidential election, George Bush, a Republican, disseminated an attack ad on Michael Dukakis, a Democrat that is believed to have motivated white voters to view Dukakis negatively on racial grounds.¹²⁶ This was accomplished by appealing to their racial stereotypes of African Americans as criminals, which is how the mainstream media frequently covered them.¹²⁷ By tying Dukakis to an African-American criminal, Bush was successful in priming racial stereotypes.¹²⁸

On implicit racial frames, Tali Mendelberg wrote:

What exactly is the difference between implicit and explicit messages? First, consider what makes an appeal racial. By my definition, a racial appeal is explicit

if it uses racial nouns or adjectives to endorse white prerogatives, to express anti-black sentiment, to represent racial stereotypes, or to portray a threat from African Americans...Implicit racial appeals convey the same message as explicit racial appeals, but they replace the racial nouns and adjectives with more oblique references to race.¹²⁹

For most scholars, this definition of implicitness was, though an exceedingly valuable contribution at the time, somewhat vague. To empirically examine implicit racial frames in media coverage, a more succinct operationalization stated that an implicit racial frame consisted of a picture of the candidate, a reference to his/her race, and a reference to the race of his/her constituents.¹³⁰ Through experiments, research shows that implicit racial frames do impact the electability of a candidate.¹³¹ Research also shows that African-American candidates compelled to use counter-stereotypes are successful in dampening racial priming. Other scholars have contributed to this rather robust extant literature.¹³²

Acknowledging that race does play a part in the electability of African-American and, frequently, white Democrats, some scholars argue that the nature of politics and how candidates use media, not connected to race, for their campaigns is still the driving force.¹³³ For instance, Kathleen Jamieson, citing numerous campaigns, argues that even when race is not an issue, such as between two white candidates or between two Republican candidates, campaigns are intensely negative; candidates constantly attack the other's character and prime voter behavior tied to issues, such as religion, political party, character, family values, and taxes.¹³⁴ Misinformation and destroying an opponent's credibility are the essential nature of politics.¹³⁵

Some scholars argue that the issues typically associated with African Americans are what motivate voters, not race in general.¹³⁶ It should be noted here that when I refer to black interests I do not mean to imply that the African-American community is monolithic. It is not. However, certain issues do exist that disproportionately and negatively impact the African-American

community, such as crime, poverty, education, drug use, unemployment, legal defense, and health care.¹³⁷ It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine *why* these issues negatively impact the African-American community, but it is an important point to highlight and consider. American society is founded on the idea that individuals, if they apply themselves, can succeed.¹³⁸ Historically, concerning African Americans, this fundamental American principle was not true because too many institutional barriers prohibited them from approaching, let alone fulfilling, their American dream.¹³⁹ Thus, when whites, unable or unwilling to empathize with a history of institutionalized obstruction, read information about programs designed to compensate for centuries of slavery and subjugation, they view the beneficiaries unfairly, as handouts, contradicting white ideology of the American dream; they also misperceive an allegation of intent.¹⁴⁰ These perceptions and issues hurt the African-American community, regardless of whether the policies are intentionally designed to negatively impact blacks. This, in part, explains why programs such as affirmative action, welfare and issues such as crime and poverty that disproportionately impact the African-American community tend to prime whites.

Another argument posits that the type of campaigns black candidates run influences their electability, not their race or the coverage of them.¹⁴¹ For instance, some scholars argue that the solution to increasing African-American representation is racial gerrymandering districts. Carol Swain disagrees and asserts that the end solution of that practice dictates that African Americans will be regulated to contests between two, or more, African-American candidates only; they'll never attain the experience needed to run against a white candidate at state or national levels. This was highlighted during the reconstruction era when African-American officials weren't fully aware of all the policies and procedures – knowledge very pertinent for a politician to effectively represent his or her constituents.¹⁴²

This lack of experience can negatively impact how a candidate runs for reelection – a critical period because when a black candidate is the first African-American to run in that district, black constituencies vote in huge numbers during the initial election but those numbers dwindle during the reelection campaign.¹⁴³ That is why building coalitions with the white constituency, or at least appeasing fears of severe resource allocation, is so important during that first term. If blacks can and do build those coalitions, then their reelection campaign becomes slightly easier because they don't have to expend as much resources to appease fear.¹⁴⁴ Thus, Swain argues that racial gerrymandering shouldn't exist so that African Americans can run against white candidates at local levels that will prepare them better at state and national levels.¹⁴⁵ President Obama's first term serves as an ideal opportunity to examine how the press covered coalition building and how, if at all, race was incorporated into that narrative.

A substantial amount of research examines media representations of race and how President Obama used appeals in his campaign.¹⁴⁶ How does an African-American candidate use a race appeal in a national election when the majority of the electorate is white and his opponent is white? The answer is connected to the term "racial solidarity."¹⁴⁷ The notion here is the long-standing position that political empowerment is the way to combat oppression, gain equality, and solve the issues confronting the African-American community. Historically, since whites have been reluctant to vote for African Americans, this meant that the African-American community needed to act as a solidified unit and vote for African-American candidates overwhelmingly when they emerged. This translated into a race authenticity appeal - the notion that an African American candidate appealed to his or her race to convince constituents that the black candidate was "authentic" and running to fight for solidified causes.¹⁴⁸

On a national stage, presenting oneself as an authentic African American can be tenuous territory for a candidate to negotiate in the United States. The fear is that by using race authenticity appeals, black candidates will negatively prime white voters because highlighting race positions those candidates as “other.”¹⁴⁹ President Obama effectively achieved this goal by his use of amplified first person plural pronouns.¹⁵⁰ When in front of a national stage, such as on television, a debate, or in front of a group of mostly whites, he went one step beyond using the phrases “us” or “we,” which are typically used to authenticate one to the in-group. He included phrases such as, “the entire nation is in this together...regardless of sex, class, or race” quite frequently. This served two purposes. It appealed to his African-American audience’s solidarity, authenticity function, but it also dampened potential priming in his white audience by convincing them that he was part of their group also, one of them.¹⁵¹

In front of an audience comprised mostly of African Americans, President Obama used the phrases “us” and “we” more frequently than a “national we” phrase and discussed issues pertinent to the African-American community. When in front of a white audience, he avoided the African-American issues; he didn’t want to be perceived as an African-American candidate to whites, but he did when in front of African Americans.¹⁵² Clearly, priming, implicit racial frames, and a candidate’s campaign are very intimately connected.¹⁵³

What is the media’s relationship with racial priming? Research shows that people have been evolutionarily-engineered to stereotype.¹⁵⁴ Individuals are programmed to immediately look at someone who appears different and judge whether the individual intends to inflict harm and whether the person possesses the ability to competently inflict harm. Because the world has so much stimuli in it that one could not ever attempt to entirely process, our brains take shortcuts known as stereotypes in order to judge whether harm exists.¹⁵⁵

With that in mind, we know that, historically, traditional media perpetuated and reinforced negative stereotypes of people of color.¹⁵⁶ Most Americans inform their mental shortcuts of out-group members based on what they learn in the media since they typically are not in contact with out-group members on a frequent basis.¹⁵⁷ If racism is placed on a continuum, with racial comity on one end and explicit racism on the other, most Americans are in the middle; they don't centrally process race on a day-to-day, frequent basis.¹⁵⁸ Thus, the images of African Americans in the media are instrumental in forming racial stereotypes and ideologies¹⁵⁹ because (1) media are a central space where race stereotypes are developed and (2) media content triggers thoughts about race that would have not occurred if race had not been introduced. Presenting one word referencing race motivates whites to view African-American candidates negatively.¹⁶⁰ As soon as race is involved in the mainstream press, whites think negatively about African Americans.¹⁶¹

Mainstream Press' Representations of Race

How has the mainstream press, an institution supposedly dedicated to presenting an accurate a picture of reality (or at least as close to truth as possible), historically portrayed African Americans and race? Concisely put, the mainstream press has a long history of inaccurately demonizing African Americans. The trend can be traced as far back to the colonial period.¹⁶² Early communications frequently portrayed African-American slaves as barbaric beings who were not human; most communications highlighted slave rebellions and were usually accompanied by white panic and retaliation.¹⁶³ It should be noted here that during this time African Americans were not the only non-whites to be covered this way; American Indians were portrayed as savages as well with extermination frequently posited as the solution for dealing

with the “Indian problem.”¹⁶⁴ Even at the very genesis of this country’s founding, anyone who was not white was portrayed as other, with that other being much less desirable and often a threat to social harmony.¹⁶⁵

Justifications were always given for the treatments of nonwhites. “Like every other human being who takes gross advantage of a weaker person, they found justifications for their actions.”¹⁶⁶ One justification for the slave trade was that the “heathen” Africans were pagans and forcing them to leave Africa and expose them to Christianity was in their best interest.¹⁶⁷ Some defended the slave trade by arguing that Africans were primitive savages and saving them from their “brutish conditions” in Africa was a courtesy; these justifications denied, or at least attempted to deny, that race was a significant component.¹⁶⁸ Thus started the progression of stereotypes that portrayed African Americans first “as savages, then as property, later as enemies, and then as strangers,”¹⁶⁹ but nearly always as other.

This trend continued up to and after the Civil War, when institutional racism was challenged and purportedly outlawed. Prior to this period, African Americans were either ignored or portrayed negatively as dangerous threats.¹⁷⁰ Leading up to the Civil War, a period known as the antebellum period, some of the earliest abolitionists included Charles Osborn, Elihu Embree, William Swain, Benjamin Lundy, and William Lloyd Garrison.¹⁷¹ Garrison, founding the *Liberator* newspaper on January 1, 1831, is probably the best-known early abolitionist and advocated for immediate emancipation. Regarding African-American representation in the mainstream press, this period proved to be a deviation from the norm because it advocated for issues pertinent to the black community, unlike the majority of mainstream press coverage that either ignored blacks or cast them in a negative light.¹⁷²

Overall, the mainstream press routinely portrays African Americans through a restless native framework.¹⁷³ This myth framework portrays African Americans as “restless natives” organized in a homogenous mass setting out to devour white ideologies. “Popular culture is still full today of countless savage and restless ‘natives,’ and sound-tracks constantly repeat the threatening sound of drumming in the night, the hint of primitive rites and cults.”¹⁷⁴ This restless native framework emerged during President Obama’s first term in coverage of the tea party.¹⁷⁵ “These ‘natives’ always move as an anonymous collective mass – in tribes or hordes... And against them is always counter posed the isolated White figure, alone ‘out there,’ confronting his Destiny or shouldering his Burden in the ‘heart of darkness.’”¹⁷⁶ During the health care reform debates of 2009, the isolated figure combating the horde was, instead, President Obama, not a white man.¹⁷⁷ The restless native framework was inverted.

What does this mean? From one perspective, it could be a positive social marker; instead of ignoring or vilifying African Americans, the mainstream press was negatively framing those that were challenging black political empowerment. From another perspective, it could be a negative social marker; thousands, if not millions, of whites did aggregate to aggressively oppose the first African-American president. Or, maybe it means very little at all. This could be a mainstream press aberration akin to the Antebellum or civil rights period; even though the mainstream press returned to its routine after those periods, those two moments in history were extremely important in trying to correct previous racial injustices, similar to the significance of President Obama’s first term.

Thus, even if mainstream newspapers continue misrepresenting African Americans, it is quite probable that the struggle between President Obama and his adversaries marks a historical moment for black political empowerment. The task, then, is examining the press’ role in this

conflict because “the media are not only a powerful source of ideas about race. They are also one place where these ideas are articulated, worked on, transformed and elaborated.”¹⁷⁸

Typically, during moments of struggle where race is a significant variable, the mainstream press interprets the deliberation as a zero-sum contest where one side wins everything and the other side loses everything.¹⁷⁹ “Interpret” is a key word. With the exception of a few handful moments in history, the mainstream press interpreted race and African Americans in an extremely insensitive fashion. For some, this might suggest that the journalists working for the mainstream press tend to lean away from the racial comity end of the spectrum. That conclusion is disingenuous. Do some overtly racist journalists exist? Probably. But the key, here, is “interpret.” While journalism’s overarching goal is to mediate reality as objectively and as accurately as possible, truth is relative; two journalists can mediate the same “facts,” both truthfully, but in different ways.¹⁸⁰ Thus, while objectivity is the desired goal, interpretation is frequently the practice.¹⁸¹ Those interpretations are molded by society, norms and routines, government officials, indexing, and technology. Mainstream journalists’ interpretations traditionally focus on African Americans as violent and as criminals.¹⁸² “Blacks in the news tend to look different from and more dangerous than whites even when they commit similar crimes.”¹⁸³ With this in mind, how then would we know if the mainstream press’ coverage of the tea party during President Obama’s first term was an aberration or business as usual? That answer can be found by looking at news institutions with different rituals and missions. One such reporting organ is the black press.

The African-American Press

Black intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois wrote: “It is a peculiar sensation this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring

one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”¹⁸⁴ The double consciousness that Du Bois described intuitively helps explain a driving force of the black press. Du Bois argued that a black press was necessary because African Americans had a dual-identity that whites could not understand. Blacks were (in no intended order): (A) Americans and (B) African Americans in a white America. Mainstream media, owned and controlled by whites, are not fully equipped to interpret this reality and provide a proper perspective. Media are an important place where the elaborations and formations of racial ideology occur.¹⁸⁵ If, as Du Bois argues, the mainstream press is ill-equipped to fully understand what it is like to be black in the United States, then, if the black press didn't exist, the only elaboration on racial ideologies would contribute to white hegemony without any black perspective.

Accordingly, the black press' roles, historically, have been to advocate, to educate, to fill holes of misinformation perpetuated by the mainstream press, to provide a space for community, and to bring visibility to issues impacting the African-American community that were either entirely ignored by the mainstream press or vilified.¹⁸⁶ The first African-American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, edited by Samuel Cornish and John Russworm, concisely summarized this mission in its first issue in 1827 with the statement, “to plead our cause.”¹⁸⁷ Some historical context may be necessary here to fully explicate why African Americans felt the need to plead their cause. Nearly all in the United States are aware of the exportation of blacks from Africa during colonial times to America as slaves. That story in our modern history books, though, frequently omits the brutal, dehumanizing practices of slavery.¹⁸⁸ Modern African-Americans' ancestors were stuffed like sardines on a boat, forced to watch their relatives and friends raped,

separated from their families, forced into slavery where they were routinely beaten, starved, killed, fed rare meals, forced to smoke marijuana in an attempt to pacify them, and treated like property in every aspect of their lives.

Steven Mintz, in the very first paragraph of his historical book of primary sources, wrote:

A woman listed in the census simply as Celia was just 14 years old in 1850, when a 60-year-old Missouri farmer named Robert Newsome purchased her. A widower with two grown daughters, the 60-year-old Newsome raped Celia before he had even brought her to his farm. For five years, he kept her as his sexual slave, forcing her to bear two illegitimate children. In 1855, pregnant a third time and ill, she struck back, knocking her abuser unconscious by hitting him in the head with a club and burning his body in her fireplace. During her murder trial, Celia's attorneys argued that a woman had a right to use deadly force to prevent rape. But the court ruled that in Missouri, as in other slave states, it was not a crime to rape a slave woman. Celia was found guilty and hanged.¹⁸⁹

One of the first primary goals of the African-American press was to advocate against slavery, to gain equality, to be seen not as property but as humans with the same fundamental rights. *Freedom's Journal*, published about 130 years after *Publick Occurrences* (generally acknowledged by most historians as the first American newspaper even though it resembled more of a pamphlet due to its infrequent production) tried to dispel misperceptions that had been disseminated by mainstream newspapers for more than a century.¹⁹⁰

Freedom's Journal experienced some internal conflict that the African-American press would confront for its entire existence – how to advocate for equality and dispel misperceptions in a white-dominated culture that murdered any black who dared challenge it.¹⁹¹ *Freedom's Journal's* solution was to temper its enthusiastic condemnation of slavery and replace it with advice on how African Americans should behave, such as advice on manners and on how to dress.¹⁹² All African Americans agreed that equality and full integration into society was the ultimate goal; but they didn't agree on the means of achieving that goal.¹⁹³ One prominent

African-American leader, Booker T. Washington, espoused what would come to be known, by some scholars, as an accommodation stance. Washington believed that African Americans should seek vocational training, start from the bottom and work their way up. He believed that eventually, if they became valuable assets to society, there is no way that they would continue to be ostracized.¹⁹⁴

Another influential figure, Du Bois, disagreed and labeled this “the Atlanta Compromise.”¹⁹⁵ Du Bois recommended a more explicit protest, which was epitomized by the Niagara Movement, a group of African-American leaders who met annually in Niagara and discussed the best ways to achieve full equality and pluralistic integration.¹⁹⁶ The Niagara Movement openly challenged the U.S. government and American society in general, and promised that unless their demands for equality were met, they would continue protesting discriminatory legislation. Some scholars characterized this approach as “militant,” which shouldn’t be confused with espousing violence, but rather an explicit protest against inequality, which, given the context of the time, was a very dangerous endeavor.¹⁹⁷

Freedom’s Journal, and many other African-American newspapers like it, struggled to survive financially for extended periods; making a profit was nearly unthinkable.¹⁹⁸ Financial problems existed for the African-American press primarily because the audience that the newspapers were intended for, African Americans, were slaves, freed slaves, or free people of color; they had limited finances to purchase the newspapers.¹⁹⁹ Financial conditions did not improve much for the African-American press after emancipation because, though their audience was no longer legal slaves, their financial resources were still severely limited.²⁰⁰

Unlike *Freedom’s Journal*, some Antebellum and Civil War African-American newspapers were not mild in tone.²⁰¹ Fredrick Douglass, writing for the *North Star*, was fairly

explicit in his tenor.²⁰² He encouraged African Americans to defend themselves at all costs. For instance, he told them to sleep with a revolver under their pillow to fight off current or former slave owners who tried retaining them.²⁰³ Following the Civil War, though they were no longer “legal” slaves, African Americans still fought discrimination; little did they know, for the most part, that the battle for equality was just beginning.²⁰⁴ Especially in the south, African Americans fought legislation designed for continued oppression, known as Jim Crow laws.²⁰⁵ The convict lease system is a prime example. This legislation stated that any African American convicted of a crime could be “leased” to a farm where they were forced to work a time period equivalent to their convicted sentence.²⁰⁶ Not surprisingly, after this legislation was drafted, substantially more African Americans were convicted of crimes.²⁰⁷

As World War I approached, many whites joined the military while African Americans were denied the right to serve, forced to take the jobs, temporarily, that white males had vacated.²⁰⁸ Du Bois, initially, explicitly protested and demanded integration more quickly.²⁰⁹ However, after the NAACP criticized him, and the U.S. government threatened to prosecute him for seditious acts, Du Bois tempered his protests.²¹⁰ In the *Crisis*, he advocated for the African-American community to “close ranks.” This stance encouraged African Americans to unite with all of America to fight her enemies abroad; blacks would continue their civil rights battle once the war was won. While this might be perceived as lacking an open advocacy-oriented protest stance that Du Bois once encouraged, it served another function – a call for the African-American community to aggregate, unite, and solidify – the genesis of racial solidarity and black political empowerment.²¹¹

Between World War I and World War II, the interwar years, material conditions did not improve much, if at all, for African Americans.²¹² When World War II approached, African

Americans were again denied the right to fight.²¹³ The *Crisis* said it would never again return to its “close ranks” philosophy because blacks’ rights were not addressed effectively following World War I.²¹⁴ A letter to the editor would come to characterize the explicit protest nature of the African-American press during World War II.²¹⁵ James Thompson, an African-American cafeteria worker, wrote a letter to the editor in the black press stalwart, the *Pittsburgh Courier*. With his call for African Americans to fight for freedom at home and freedom abroad, the Double-V campaign was born. “We are Americans too...we have a stake in this fight,” frequently accompanied this pulse. This period was the pinnacle of black press protest.²¹⁶

African Americans eventually were allowed in the military, but they were frequently assigned to menial roles.²¹⁷ A few combat divisions comprised of African Americans did exist. This became a major focal point of the black press during this time,²¹⁸ covering the black soldiers that did exist and then championing them – bringing to salience their more than capable abilities in combat.

Carl Senna noted: “World War II had revitalized a major theme of the black press, the civil rights struggle.”²¹⁹ The practice of championing African Americans and African-American soldiers continued during Vietnam and civil rights. Mike Davis, one of three African-American foreign correspondents to cover the Vietnam War for the black press for an extended period of time, is an excellent example.²²⁰ He went one step further beyond covering the soldiers’ achievements, he focused on humanizing them by offering specifics, such as parents, siblings, education, and hometown. Black press journalists like Davis highlighted that while the military was integrating, something even more insidious occurred: proportionally speaking, more African Americans died in battle; more were put in harm’s way.²²¹ They had won the right to fight; now they were fighting for the right not to be sacrificed. This did not mean that the black troops were

afraid of fighting; instead, the black press hoped that by highlighting this issue it would push the United States' government and military towards more egalitarian policies. Again, the mainstream press ignored this cause.²²² During this period of Vietnam and civil rights battles, the black press aggressively challenged white hegemony.²²³ In 1964, the Civil Rights Act signaled took a major step forward eradicating the institutionalized oppression of African Americans; the black press played a pivotal role in overcoming that major hurdle toward black political empowerment by debunking justifications for maintaining the separate but equal doctrine.²²⁴

One issue that concerns journalism scholars regarding the African-American press is the perceived lack of objectivity resulting from the advocacy role.²²⁵ From its inception, regardless of the degree of protest, the language used in the African-American press was considered emotional that “bluntly and reliably ridicule[d] anyone perceived as standing in the way of black progress.”²²⁶ The emotional perception led some to argue that the black press' language could not correlate with objectivity. However, it is important to remember that mainstream newspapers didn't adopt objectivity until, relatively speaking, the emergence of radio in when authority was believed to be the savior of mainstream newspapers.²²⁷

For a large portion of mainstream newspapers' history, the tone was primarily sensational and emotional.²²⁸ In this sense, African-American newspapers and mainstream newspapers are similar – during their origins, they struggled to stay afloat financially and their content was labeled sensational and partisan.²²⁹ The practices that characterized the penny press and yellow journalism served as a blueprint for struggling black newspapers to emulate for profitability.²³⁰ They used aggressively framed stories, in part, because their audience wanted it, because the practice helped sell newspapers, and because that was the type of message needed to counter the false images perpetuated by the mainstream press.²³¹

The ultimate goal of objectivity is to report truth as accurately as possible.²³² Research has demonstrated that, regarding African Americans and issues connected to race, the mainstream press failed miserably on reporting truth.²³³ Thus, I argue, the mainstream press, with the exception of the Civil Rights era and possibly the Antebellum and Civil War eras, never objectively covered African Americans and issues related to race. The black press served to fill this void and presented race accurately; regardless of the enthusiastic sensational nature of the language the black press used, the newspapers were much more objective than the mainstream press regarding issues relating to race because they more truthfully represented the black community.

“In a variety of ways across the diversity of genres and outlets, the mass media convey impressions that blacks and whites occupy different moral universes, that blacks are somehow fundamentally different from whites.”²³⁴ Though the struggle for black political empowerment is far from complete and the mainstream press still leaves much to be desired in terms of race coverage, combatting the portrayal of African Americans as other continues to be a focus. Recent black press research examines how the African-American press covered a Supreme Court ruling, *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Federico Pena, Secretary of Transportation*, regarding employment practices.²³⁵ The case was one that challenged a construction practice that awarded contracts to certain companies that promised to use some of that money to hire smaller, African-American-owned companies for part of the work. Some whites cried fouled, labeling it reverse discrimination, and sued. The Supreme Court ruled that the practice was not unconstitutional.²³⁶ Proportionately speaking, the black press contributed more articles than did the mainstream press on this case.²³⁷ The black press also interpreted the ruling more intricately than the mainstream

press. The black press coverage included historical context pertinent to the legislation that help shape a thematic narrative; the mainstream press omitted that history and included only episodic coverage.

Black press reporting of Hurricane Katrina, compared to mainstream coverage, interpreted government response to the disaster as the continued diaspora of African Americans.²³⁸ In other words, the black press interpreted the government's response as deliberately negligible, mishandling the crisis because it affected a large swath of blacks. Covering the issue of slave reparations, the black press thematically interpreted the issue, connecting it to the historical context of the African-American community and their plight in the United States; the mainstream press interpreted it episodically, focusing only on the case and its rulings, perpetuating an interpretation of African Americans as other.²³⁹

The desire, and the stakes, for equality have not diminished since civil rights, though that battle looks fundamentally different than it once did. The African-American community isn't fighting for emancipation, for the right to fight, or for the right to vote; instead, the struggle is now to overcome the perceived other stigma, to achieve full cultural pluralistic integration through Black political empowerment, and to dispel the notion that institutional racism is a thing of the past. Historically consistent, the African-American press faces many hurdles while it continues pleading its cause. For instance, the integration of African-American journalists into the mainstream press presents a different problem; many of the best African-American journalists, who used to count on the black press as the only employment venue, now work for the mainstream press – engendering a talent drain.

This would seem to be, on the surface, a positive societal marker indicating accelerated integration. Research cautions optimism because black journalists who work in the mainstream

press are not able to offer the same racial perspective they can in the black press because of mainstream press norms and routines.²⁴⁰ White-owned mainstream newspapers regulate the black double conscience – reinforcing white hegemony. Black journalists in the mainstream press are forced to answer their white counterparts who ask whether they are a reporter first and then an African American or an African American first and then a reporter. In the “other” vein of thinking,²⁴¹ it seems that the mainstream press does not believe it can be both at the same time. Though African-American reporters are seeing success working in the mainstream press, it is clear that a black press is still needed to plead their perspective.

Due to dwindling resources, the modern African-American press continues to struggle and frequently reprints mainstream newspaper wire stories, unless a racial issue is involved.²⁴² One potential tool for the African-American press to recapture its influence in its community is the internet.²⁴³ Indeed, ethnic media editors see the internet as a space for resurgence and a renewed visibility.²⁴⁴ Because the internet is a major focus and a major goal of the black press, and because this is probably a historic transitional phase for the black press, their online content will be the focus of this dissertation.

An entire series of books could focus on emerging new media and its impact on society; that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, some points on the relatively new deliberative space deserve mention. Academics, exploring the democratizing nature of the internet, vigorously debate the relationships between new media and society.²⁴⁵ The interactions between governments, media, and public dissenting voices expressed via new media are central to these debates.²⁴⁶ If dissenting deliberation contributes to a healthy democracy²⁴⁷ and mainstream media narrowly define issues to only two polemic perspectives due to the “strategic ritual of objectivity,”²⁴⁸ then the internet should provide platforms for more diverse deliberation

– thus contributing to a more liberal society. For instance, even in one of the more closed societies, China, in terms of dissent and challenges to cultural hegemony, the internet provides a space for ideology elaborations.²⁴⁹ Thus, we can expect online content from the black press to challenge other hegemonic ideologies disseminated by the mainstream press.

For the most part, news outlets disseminate the same content via the internet as they do in their traditional spaces.²⁵⁰ The speed and scale of the content is unprecedented, but the character of the content isn't significantly different. Interactivity is the major uniqueness of the internet.²⁵¹ Because interactivity is one of the internet's major contributions to the information age, and because minority groups use social media like Facebook and Twitter more than whites,²⁵² this dissertation measures interactivity by counting a web story's reported Facebook likes and Re Tweets.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

With this literature in mind, this dissertation examines what myths the African-American press use to interpret the tea party and compare those myths to the ones used by the mainstream press. I compare the use of implicit racial frames in the two press organs. Together, I will examine how the myths progress and compare them to differing levels of racial implicitness. My hypothesis is that the African-American press will use implicit racial frames more than the mainstream press because the black press' main function is to bring salience to racial issues. Two implicit racial frames exist in this study: a tea party implicit frame and a President Obama implicit frame. Connected to racial solidarity and indexing, I expect the black press to have more President Obama implicit racial frames and more tea party implicit racial frames than the mainstream press. The black press will interpret the tea party more conclusively as a group opposing black political empowerment than the mainstream press.

Hypotheses one and two predict that the racial nature of the black press' coverage, coupled with racial solidarity, will lead to the black press using more implicit racial frames than the mainstream press.

- H1: The black press will contain more President Obama implicit racial frames than the mainstream press.
- H2: The black press will contain more tea party implicit racial frames than the mainstream press.

Hypotheses three, four and five, predict that the black press will mention both President Obama's race and the overall racial composition of the tea party. Based on the operationalization of implicit frames, the mention of race alone is not enough to be considered an implicit racial frame. However, interjecting race can affect audience perceptions. Thus, guided by racial solidarity and the nature of the black press, this dissertation will count how many stories mention President Obama's race, how many stories mention the tea party's race, and how many stories mention both President Obama's and the tea party's race.

- H3: The black press will reference President Obama's race more than the mainstream press.
- H4: The black press will reference the tea party's overall racial composition more than the mainstream press.
- H5: The black press will use a direct President Obama versus tea party racial frame more than the mainstream press.

Based on racial solidarity and black political empowerment, hypotheses six and seven predict that the black press will cover President Obama more positively than the mainstream press and cover the tea party more negatively than the mainstream press.

- H6: The black press will cover President Obama more positively than the mainstream press.
- H7: The black press will cover the tea party more negatively than the mainstream press.

Based on their different missions, different management and ownership structures, and different audiences, hypotheses eight and nine predict that the black press will explicitly say that the tea party is racist more than the mainstream press and that the mainstream press will explicitly state that the tea party is an authentic discursive voice more than the black press.

- H8: The black press will focus on the tea party as racist more than the mainstream press.
- H9: The mainstream press will focus on the tea party as an authentic dissenting voice more than the black press.

Based on its mission to increase salience of issues pertinent to nonwhites, when the black press doesn't explicitly reference the tea party as racist, hypothesis ten predicts that the black press will focus on the racial undercurrents affected by the policies proposed by the tea party more than the mainstream press.

- H10: The black press will focus on the racial undercurrents of the tea party narrative more than the white press.

Hypotheses eleven and twelve, guided by indexing and racial solidarity, predicts that the black press will use more government sources than the mainstream press and the mainstream press will use more tea party sources than the black press.

- H11: The black press will use more government sources than the white press (in what sense or in reporting).
- H12: The mainstream press will use more tea party sources than the black press.

Based on resonant myth literature, research questions one and two explore what resonant myth journalists for the black and mainstream presses used to interpret the tea party.

- RQ1: What myth[s] emerged in the black press to interpret the tea party?
- RQ2: What myth[s] emerged in the mainstream press to interpret the tea party?

Chapter Two - Method

The goal of social science research is to understand the processes and character of social life; we decipher symbols created by culture within the contexts of their time.²⁵³ To precisely understand the character of social life today, to understand why some symbols are crafted, and to disentangle their meanings, one of the more powerful research techniques in the social sciences is content analysis.²⁵⁴ Because this dissertation is interested in how resonant myths emerged in black and mainstream newspapers and testing hypotheses that attempt to examine implicit racial frames in the arc of the tea party story, I conducted a qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Some scholars²⁵⁵ argue that a distinction does not need to be made simply because I count codes, frequencies, and conduct a textual analysis; but, for the sake of parsimony, I state that I'm conducting a content analysis that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative techniques. To help incorporate both research philosophies, my research design is conceptually grounded as an ethnographic content analysis, or ECA.²⁵⁶

On ECA, David Altheide wrote:

It is suggested that an ethnographic perspective can help delineate patterns of human action when document analysis is conceptualized as fieldwork. Prior research and awareness of an activity involved in the production of documents can theoretically inform sampling procedures, whereas constant comparison and discovery may be used to further delineate specific categories, as well as narrative description. In general, this means that the situations, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances are key topics of attention. . . I suggest that several aspects of an ethnographic research approach can be applied to content analysis to produce ethnographic content analysis, which may be defined as the reflexive analysis of documents.²⁵⁷

Key to Altheide's conceptualization of an ECA is the reflexive nature of the analysis. Because a large portion of the quantitative code book in this research design was developed based on findings from my previous research on President Obama and the tea party, I think it would be disingenuous to not acknowledge the reflexive nature of this dissertation.

This research design has two umbrella components: a qualitative narrative analysis of the texts through a resonant myth framework and a quantitative content analysis theoretically-driven by implicit racial frames, racial solidarity, black press history, and indexing. Media scholars approach researching texts from two points of view: a transmission point of view and a ritualistic point of view.²⁵⁸ A transmission point of view is interested in how media messages are sent over geographic space and time and with what effect; a ritualistic point of view is interested in extracting embedded symbolic meaning created by culture. The quantitative, implicit racial frames portion of this analysis is a transmission point of view and the qualitative, resonant myth portion of this analysis is a ritualistic point of view. Before I explain how those two stages were executed, it is more intuitive to first explain how I collected my data.

Data Collection

The unit of analysis for this dissertation is each online news story about the tea party written by a sample of African-American and mainstream online newspapers. The time frame to gather the sampling units for this book is from the inception of the tea party until November 13, 2012. This encompasses available stories about the tea party during President Obama's first term. I chose November 13 because that is one week after the 2012 presidential election, allowing for discussions about the tea party's impact, if any, on President Obama's reelection.

First, I identified which African-American newspapers have viable web sites; by viable, I mean web sites that I could access, web sites that were not under construction, web sites that had searchable capabilities, and web sites that existed for a newspaper (some African-American newspapers don't have web sites). I started with a list of modern African-American newspapers that were examined in a similar study.²⁵⁹ That list contained 22 newspapers. I manually searched that list and found that 13 of those newspapers had viable web sites that authored stories about

the tea party. Then, I consulted the AANP (African-American News and Periodicals) and the NNPA (National Newspapers Publishers Association) for lists of current African-American newspapers.²⁶⁰ From that list, I manually searched which newspapers had viable web sites. I then selected newspapers based on prominence in their region in relation to circulation, advertising revenue, staff size, and viable web sites; regions included the East Coast, the Southeast, the Midwest, the Southwest, and the Northwest. The final sample of African-American newspaper web sites consists of 17 sites that are viable, with relatively decent circulation, and are geographically representative (see codebook for a list of those 17 newspaper web sites).

The next step was to organize a list of mainstream newspapers web sites that could correspond with the list of African-American newspaper web sites. I retrieved a list of the highest circulating newspapers in the country, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations, and first examined the top 50 newspapers. I then attempted to match, based from that sample, mainstream newspaper web sites, geographically, to the African-American newspaper sample so that I could have valid comparisons. That list includes 15 mainstream newspaper websites (see codebook for a list of those newspaper web sites).

After compiling my list, I visited each web site, typed in the term “tea party” in the site’s search function, and printed off hard copies of the articles. I then manually sorted which articles were relevant. By relevant, I mean articles that discussed the tea party, a dissenting group that formed weeks after President Obama’s inauguration. Some people really do organize real tea parties, with real tea, and advertise that event via newspaper articles. These, along with articles that discussed the historical tea party preceding the American Revolution, are excluded from the analysis. From the African-American newspaper sample, after sorting for relevancy and eliminating redundant articles, I found 1144 articles on the tea party. From the mainstream

newspaper sample, after sorting for relevancy and eliminating redundant articles, I found 11,363 articles. I used a systematic random sample of the articles to make the mainstream data more manageable. For the mainstream newspaper sample, I analyzed every eleventh article – reducing the dataset to 1033. I used systematic sampling, a version of random sampling, because this is the most powerful and most representative way to analyze a population and enables me to draw representative generalizations.²⁶¹ The systematic random sampling was not without limitations. Because I did not systematically random sample the black press articles, which would have made the sample too small to analyze, some inferential statistical tests for the hypotheses would have been problematic.²⁶² To compensate for the disparity in populations and sampling procedure, I used a test of two proportions for many of my hypotheses.²⁶³ A few hypotheses needed a slightly more nuanced statistical approach and for those, I used Anovas. I did not collect all of the tea party articles that all black press newspapers wrote; my list of 17 black newspapers was itself a sample. Thus, using inferential tests such as an Anova is still justified if that is the only option.²⁶⁴

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative narrative analysis is concerned with extracting meaning from the texts. Because this section of the dissertation is interested in how the tea party story is told, over time, a narrative analysis is appropriate (please see appendix B for how I defined each myth).²⁶⁵ On narrative analysis:

First, find the theme of the artifact. This involves asking, ‘what is the preferred reading of the artifact? What does the artifact ask the audience to believe, understand, feel, or think about?’...Second, find the interests expressed in the article. What voices or interests are included and/or favored in the primary themes? Third, find rhetorical strategies in the article that ‘might advance one ideology over another’... The ‘operational indicator,’ then, of journalists’ crafting of resonance, is ‘the recurrence of formal textual features.’²⁶⁶

This form of textual analysis is a valuable technique because “narrative is the best way to understand the human experience because it is the way humans understand their own lives.”²⁶⁷ I began this analysis by reading through the texts and sorting based on recurrent themes. I then conducted the quantitative data coding (which I’ll explain in a moment). While coding, I separated the stories again based on what myth I thought the story upheld and by recurrent themes. I then reread the texts and color coded the rhetorical strategies and symbols.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Overall, the quantitative analysis has 48 variables. The first section of coding is comprised of identification. Because there is a concern that a large portion of the African-American press stories might be wire stories, I’ve included that as a variable, including the type of wire, whether it was a predominantly white wire service such as the Associated Press, AP, or a predominantly black wire service such as the NNPA. This section also includes originates from a black or mainstream newspaper, the story’s identification numbers, title, date whether the story, URL, and whether the content is identified as news, commentary, or an editorial.

The second section consists of coders choosing the primary focus of the article. Thirty options exist, including tea party, President Obama, economy, unemployment, national debt, government spending, taxes, health care, Iraq, Afghanistan, foreign relations, terrorism, welfare, affirmative action, entitlement programs, crime, drugs, education, 2010 midterm elections, 2012 general election, race, gender, tea party as authentic voice, tea party as racist voice, tea party as possibly racist but not conclusive, tea party as possibly authentic but not conclusive, abortion, and other. These focus options came from previous research on the tea party, on issues salient to the black community, on coverage of black political empowerment, and on issues discussed during modern presidential elections.²⁶⁸

I used two criteria to determine a story's focus. First, because journalists are taught to put the most important information first based on the inverted pyramid, the title and first paragraph informed the focus. If the story maintained this focus throughout the story, I used these criteria to determine the focus. If the first criteria included more than one focus or if the rest of the story deviated greatly from the initial focus, I used sentence frequency to determine the story's focus. These variables are concerned with counting how many times a theme or issue is mentioned. From the list of possible foci, I added ideology and history. I added ideology because research on the mainstream press' coverage of the tea party points to ideology, and research on the black press says that historical context is a key distinguishing feature. This does not mean that I put every sentence I collected into a category, though, since my list is fairly inclusive, most of them did fit somewhere; I simply counted when a sentence focused on an issue or theme in my codebook. When a sentence focused on more than one issue or theme, I chose one focus. If two or more issues or themes were equally weighted in the sentence then I picked the one that came first. I did this because journalists are taught to use the inverted pyramid when writing – to put what they deem to be the most important information first. Thus, the first focus or issue was the one the journalist perceived to be the most salient.

The next two variables are tone variables; one is interested in tone in regards to the tea party and one is interested, if applicable, in tone towards Obama. Tone is measured as either negative, neutral, or positive. To be either negative or positive, sentences must contain explicit negative or positive language. For instance, “The tea party is a group of racists” or “President Obama is not doing a good job trying to solve issues affecting the African-American community” are examples of possible negative sentences that, if they outweigh the neutral

sentences, could make a story negative. The next three variables consist of quote frequency for government officials, tea party members, and non-official and non-tea party member individuals to examine indexing comparisons between the two presses.

Variables eight through 15 are focused on implicit racial frames. Because I analyze how journalists interpreted the tea party, a group of whites opposing a black President, I essentially have two implicit frames, an implicit racial frame regarding President Obama and a tea party implicit racial frame. A President Obama implicit racial frame is one that contains: 1) a picture of the candidate (2) a reference to the candidate's race in the text and (3) a reference to the race of his/her constituents. This definition came from Caliendo and McIlwain's recent research on President Obama's implicit racial frames in the mainstream press; a story must contain all three of these to be considered a President Obama implicit racial frame.²⁶⁹ For a tea party implicit racial frame to exist there must be a picture of the tea party and a reference to its racial composition. Because the tea party is a dissenting group and not an elected official, I felt the need to include a reference to its constituents was unnecessary. Research has also shown that media race coverage tends to be an "us versus them" frame. Thus, I included a variable where both the tea party's race was mentioned and President Obama's race was mentioned; this constitutes an implicit "us versus them" frame. Variables 16 and 17 count how many stories included a photo, and the race of the individual in the photo. If the photo included more than one person with separate races, I chose the race that was more prominent. Variables 18 and 19 counted the Facebook likes and Twitter Retweets reported on the story's page at the time.

Intercoder Reliability

One coder analyzed ten percent of the sample and the author coded the entire 100 percent. Holsti's formula is used for intercoder agreement. The overall intercoder reliability was .884; reliability for tone was .914; reliability for focus was .891; and reliability for sentence theme was .823.

Chapter Three – Quantitative Findings

Data Set Description

Overall, I collected, read, and analyzed 1144 black press and 1033 mainstream press news articles, for a total of 2177 online news stories. Table one shows how many online articles I analyzed from each newspaper and table two shows the regional breakdown.

Table 1

	Newspaper	Articles	%
<i>Black Press</i>	Arizona Informant	17	0.8
	Baltimore Afro American	119	5.5
	Bay State Banner	70	3.2
	Chicago Defender	114	5.2
	Cincinnati and Cleveland		
	Call & Post	9	0.4
	Florida Star	5	0.2
	LA Sentinel	47	2.2
	Pittsburgh Courier	140	6.4
	Norfolk Journal and Guide	20	0.9
	Philadelphia Tribune	158	7.3
	Portland Skanner	143	6.6
	Sacramento Observer	4	0.2
	Tri State Defender	61	2.8
	Washington Informer	55	2.5
	Michigan Citizen	19	0.9
	Michigan Chronicle	53	2.4
	New York Amsterdam		
	News	110	5.1
<i>Mainstream Press</i>	Arizona Republic	43	2
	Atlanta Journal Constitution	53	2.4
	Chicago Tribune	47	2.2
	Dallas Morning News	48	2.2
	Houston Chronicle	58	2.7
	LA Times	115	5.3
	New York Times	99	4.5
	Oregonian	51	2.3
	Orlando Sentinel	76	3.5
	Philadelphia Inquirer	57	2.6
	St. Petersburg Times	57	2.6

<u>“Table continued”</u>	Newspaper	Articles	%
	Times-Picayune	37	1.7
	Seattle Times	154	7.1
	Washington Post	54	2.5
	Detroit Free Press	84	3.9
	Total	2177	100

Table 2

Test of Two Proportions for Region						
Region	Black Press		White Press		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Northeast***	652	57	210	20.3	862	39.6
Southeast***	129	11.3	223	21.6	352	16.2
Midwest***	195	17	131	12.7	326	15
Southwest***	24	2.1	264	25.6	288	13.2
Pacific Northwest***	144	12.6	205	19.8	349	16
Total	1144	100	1033	100	2177	100
Two-tailed test of two proportions						
***p< .01 **p<.05 * p<.1						

A two-tailed test of two proportions illustrates significant differences in the amount of tea party coverage in the presses by region. The black press’ proportional tea party coverage in the Northeast and the Midwest was significantly more than the white press’ proportional coverage in those regions. The white press’ proportional tea party coverage in the Southeast, Southwest, and Pacific Northwest was significantly more than the black press’ proportional coverage.

Table three shows the breakdown of news, commentary and editorial stories.

Table 3

Test of Two Proportions for Story Type						
	Black Press		White Press		Total	
Story Type	n	%	N	%	n	%
News***	642	56.1	721	69.8	1363	62.6
Commentary***	469	41	295	28.6	764	35.1
Editorial*	33	2.9	17	1.6	50	2.3
Total	1144	100	1033	100	2177	100
Two-tailed test of two proportions						
***p< .01 **p<.05 * p<.1						

A two-tailed test of two proportions shows significant differences in the amount of news, commentary, and editorial stories about the tea party between the two presses. The black press published 469 commentary and 33 editorial stories. The mainstream press published 295 commentary stories and 17 editorial stories. Both of these differences were statistically significant. The mainstream press published 721 news stories and the black press published 642 news stories; this difference was statistically significant.

Table four shows the proportions of wire and non-wire stories used by the black and white presses.

Table 4

Test of Two Proportions for Wire Stories						
	Black Press		White Press		Total	
Story Type	n	%	N	%	n	%
Non Wire***	745	65.1	849	82.2	1594	73.2
White Wire	231	20.2	182	17.6	413	19
Black Wire***	168	14.7	2	0.2	170	7.8
Total	1144	100	1033	100	2177	100
Two-tailed test of two proportions						
***p< .01 **p<.05 * p<.1						

The white press used significantly more non-wire stories. The black press used significantly more black wire stories. There was no significant difference in usage of white wire stories.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis one stated that more President Obama implicit racial frames will exist in the black press than in the white press. In the black press, of the 1144 stories analyzed, 18 (1.6%) included a President Obama implicit racial frame; in the white press, of the 1033 analyzed, 4 (0.4%) included a President Obama implicit racial frame. A one-tailed test of two proportions test *supported* this hypothesis, $p < .01$. Table five shows where these implicit racial frames occurred based on region, story type, and wire type.

Table 5

Obama Implicit Racial Frames				
		Black Press	White Press	Total
Region	Northeast	11	1	12
	Southeast	1	0	1
	Midwest	6	1	7
	Southwest	0	1	1
	Pacific			
	Northwest	0	1	1
Story Type	News	12	3	15
	Commentary	5	0	5
	Editorial	1	1	2
Wire	Non-Wire	12	1	13
	White Wire	4	3	7
	Black Wire	2	0	2

Hypothesis two stated that more tea party implicit racial frames will exist in the black press than in the white press. In the black press, 14 (1.2%) stories included a tea party implicit

racial frame. In the white press, 6 (0.6%) included a tea party implicit racial frame. A one-tailed test of two proportions *supported* this hypothesis, though at a lesser level of significance, $p < .1$. Table six shows where these implicit racial frames occurred based on region, story type, and wire type.

Table 6

Tea Party Implicit Racial Frames				
		Black Press	White Press	Total
Region				
	Northeast	6	4	10
	Southeast	3	0	3
	Midwest	4	0	4
	Southwest	0	2	2
	Pacific			
	Northwest	1	0	1
Story Type				
	News	11	4	15
	Commentary	3	2	5
	Editorial	0	0	0
Wire				
	Non-Wire	7	6	13
	White Wire	7	0	7
	Black Wire	0	0	0

Hypothesis three stated that the black press would reference President Obama's race more than the white press. In the black press, 209 (18.3%) stories referenced President Obama's race. In the white press, 17 (1.6%) stories referenced President Obama's race. A one-tailed test of two proportions *supported* this hypothesis, $p < .01$. Table seven shows where these race references occurred based on region, story type, and wire type.

Table 7

Referencing President Obama's Race		Black Press	White Press	Total
Region				
	Northeast	123	6	129
	Southeast	25	2	27
	Midwest	40	3	43
	Southwest	6	4	10
	Pacific			
	Northwest	15	2	17
Story Type				
	News	89	8	97
	Commentary	112	8	120
	Editorial	8	1	9
Wire				
	Non-Wire	154	13	167
	White Wire	24	4	28
	Black Wire	31	0	31

Hypothesis four stated that the black press would reference the tea party's overall racial composition more than the white press. In the black press, 85 (7.4%) stories referenced the tea party's racial composition. In the white press, 15 (1.5%) stories reference the tea party's racial composition. A one-tailed test of two proportions *supported* this hypothesis, $p < .01$. Table eight shows where these racial references occurred based on region, story type, and wire type.

Table 8

Referencing Tea Party's Race		Black Press	White Press	Total
Region				
	Northeast	55	4	59
	Southeast	12	0	12
	Midwest	10	2	12
	Southwest	3	7	10
	Pacific	5	2	7

“Table Continued”		Black Press	White Press	Total
Story Type				
Wire	News	38	6	44
	Commentary	46	8	54
	Editorial	1	1	2
	Non-Wire	65	13	78
	White Wire	9	2	11
	Black Wire	11	0	11

Hypothesis five stated that the black press would mention both President Obama’s race and the tea party’s overall racial composition in the same story (a direct “us versus them” racial frame) more than the white press. In the black press, 37 (3.2%) stories referenced both. In the white press, 5 (0.5%) referenced both. A one-tailed test of two proportions *supported* this hypothesis, $p < .01$. Table nine shows where these direct racial contrasts occurred based on region, story type, and wire type.

Table 9

Referencing Both Races		Black Press	White Press	Total
Region				
	Northeast	22	1	23
	Southeast	7	0	7
	Midwest	5	0	5
	Southwest	0	4	4
	Pacific			
	Northwest	3	0	3
Story Type				
Wire	News	10	2	12
	Commentary	27	3	30
	Editorial	9	0	9
	Non-Wire	30	4	34
	White Wire	0	1	1
	Black Wire	7	0	7

Hypothesis six stated that the black press would cover President Obama more positively than the white press. I created a scale for tone, with 1 being positive, 0 being neutral, and -1 being negative. The overall tone towards President Obama in the black press was 0.09. The overall tone towards President Obama in the white press was -0.22. A one-way Anova comparing these two means *supported* the hypothesis, $p < .001$.

Hypothesis seven stated that the black press would cover the tea party more negatively than the white press. I used the same type of scale as I used in hypothesis six to measure tea party tone. In the black press, the overall tone towards the tea party was -0.31. In the white press, the overall tone towards the tea party was -0.01. A one-way Anova to compare these means *supported* this hypothesis, $p < .001$.

Hypothesis eight stated that the black press will focus on the tea party as racist more than the white press. In the black press 42 (3.7%) stories focused on the tea party as racist. In the white press 5 (0.5%) stories focused on the tea party as racist. A one-tailed test of two proportions *supported* this hypothesis, $p < .01$. Table ten shows where these stories occurred based on region, story type, and wire type.

Table 10

		Tea Party as Racist Focus		
		Black Press	White Press	Total
Region				
	Northeast	19	2	21
	Southeast	8	0	8
	Midwest	5	0	5
	Southwest	1	2	3
	Pacific			
	Northwest	9	1	10
Story Type				

<u>“Table continued”</u>	Black Press	White Press	Total
News	23	2	25
Commentary	17	2	19
Editorial	2	1	3
Wire			
Non-Wire	25	5	30
White Wire	5	0	5
Black Wire	12	0	12

Hypothesis nine stated that the white press will focus on the tea party as an authentic deliberating voice more than the black press. The black press contained one story (0.1%) that focused on the tea party as authentic and not at all racist. The white press contained 25 (2.4%) stories that focused on the white press as an authentic deliberating group. A one-tailed test of two proportions *supported* this hypothesis, $p < .01$. Table eleven shows the distribution of these stories based on region, story type, and wire type.

Table 11

Tea Party as Authentic Focus			
	Black Press	White Press	Total
Region			
Northeast	1	7	8
Southeast	0	3	3
Midwest	0	3	3
Southwest	0	12	12
Pacific			
Northwest	0	0	0
Story Type			
News	0	13	13
Commentary	1	11	12
Editorial	0	1	1
Wire			
Non-Wire	0	23	23
White Wire	0	2	2
Black Wire	1	0	1

Hypothesis ten stated that the black press would focus on the racial undercurrents of the tea party narrative more than the white press. The black press disseminated 247 (21.6%) stories that focused on race; the white press contained 5 (0.5%). A one-tailed test of two proportions *supported* this hypothesis, $p < .01$. Table 12 compares focus proportions between the two presses that were not hypothesized. A two-tailed test of two proportions analyzes the significance.

Table 12

Test of Two Proportions for Story Focus						
	Black Press		White Press		Total	
Focus	n	%	n	%	n	%
Tea party***	96	6.8	236	22.8	332	15.3
President Obama***	139	12.2	40	3.9	179	8.2
Economy	44	3.8	33	3.2	77	3.5
Unemployment***	35	3.1	6	0.6	41	1.9
National Debt***	2	0.2	18	1.7	20	0.9
Government Spending	66	5.8	64	6.2	130	6
Taxes**	16	1.4	27	2.6	43	2
Health Care	40	3.5	34	3.3	74	3.4
Foreign Policy*	3	0.3	8	0.8	11	0.5
Terrorism	6	0.5	3	0.3	9	0.4
Welfare*	3	0.3	0	0	3	0.1
Crime	4	0.3	8	0.8	12	0.6
Drugs	1	0.1	2	0.2	3	0.1
Education	5	0.4	10	1	15	0.7
Occupy Wall Street	21	1.8	12	1.2	33	1.5
Midterm Elections*	65	5.7	79	7.6	144	6.6
2012 General Election***	135	11.8	226	21.9	361	16.6
2012 GOP Primaries	85	7.4	86	8.3	171	7.9
Gender	6	0.5	4	0.4	10	0.5
Tea party Possibly Racist	4	0.3	9	0.5	13	0.6
Tea party Possibly Authentic*	0	0	3	0.3	3	0.1
Total	1144	100	1033	100	2177	100
Two-tailed test of two proportions						
*** $p < .01$ ** $p < .05$ * $p < .1$						

Hypothesis eleven stated that the black press would use more government sources than the white press. Overall, the black press used, on average, 2.2 government quotes per story; the white press used 1.5 government quotes per story. A one-way Anova found this difference to be significant at $p < 0.001$; the hypothesis is *supported*.

Hypothesis twelve stated that the white press would use more tea party sources than the black press. Overall, the white press used 1.77 tea party quotes per story. The black press used 1 tea party quote per story. A one-way Anova found this difference to be significant at $p < .001$; the hypothesis is *supported*.

Conclusion

All twelve hypotheses were *supported*. The black press used more implicit racial frames than the white press in coverage of the tea party. The black press referenced President Obama's race and the tea party's overall racial composition more than the white press. The black press used a direct race confrontational frame (mentioning President Obama's race and the tea party's race in the same story) more than the white press. The black press covered President Obama more positively and the tea party more negatively than the white press.

Forty two black press stories focused on the tea party as a group comprised of racists; this accounted for 3.7% of the black press sample. In contrast, five stories, 0.5%, of that nature occurred in the white press. The white press authored 25 stories that focused on the tea party as an authentic democratic deliberating voice – refuting the racist claim; this accounted for 2.4% of the white press sample. In contrast, the black press authored one story that interpreted the tea party as not racist. The largest portion of focus for the black press' tea party stories was race – 247 (21.65). These stories didn't necessarily explicitly say the tea party was racist, but did focus

on the racial undercurrents driving the tea party narrative. A key theme emerged in the black press race stories, “historically consistent.” Chapter four will examine what the emergence of this theme means and chapter five will tie the findings of chapter four with these findings together.

The white press contained five stories (0.5%) that focused on race. Instead, the white press’ two largest foci were the tea party (22.8%) and the 2012 general elections (21.9%). A key theme emerged in these stories – “ideology.” In both cases, the white press used these foci significantly more than the black press. The use of ideology as a way to interpret the tea party justified their existence as an authentic deliberating voice oblivious to their policies’ connections to race.

Clearly, different tea party narratives emerged between the black and white online newspapers. But, what do these differences mean? How exactly did the journalists interpret the group in different ways? Examining the content through a resonant myth framework in the next chapter will help answer those questions.

Chapter Four-Qualitative Findings

Chapter three reported quantitative data analysis clearly illustrating that mainstream and black newspapers' online stories constructed the tea party narrative much differently. This chapter, a report of the qualitative narrative analysis, answers two research questions that begin to explicate what those numbers and supported hypotheses mean. Through a resonant myth conceptual lens, an examination that is critically and culturally based, this chapter details the tea party newspaper articles produced by online black and mainstream newspapers.

Black Press Articulates the Tea Party Narrative

Research question one asked: what myth[s] emerged in the black press to interpret the tea party? The black press used the inverse of the hero myth, the villain, to interpret the tea party. The hero is the most used and enduring myth. The figure personifies culture's core values and beliefs, frequently in the face of overwhelming challenges that normally would cause a figure to abandon his or her values. The hero is humble, initiates a quest, wins battle decisively, and returns as triumphant.²⁷⁰ Conversely, the villain personifies fringe beliefs and values, usually the face that overwhelmingly challenges the hero. The villain attempts to rob the hero of his or her morals. The villain is arrogant, and tries to thwart the hero's quest. Typically, the villain eventually fails, though the villain can have some victories during the quest that serve as setbacks for the hero and challenges his or her courage.²⁷¹

The black press' narrative added a unique precursor to the myth – historically consistent. The black press did not interpret the tea party as a “new” conservative group but rather a group of whites that has consistently opposed equality and African Americans throughout history. The tea party was narrated as an extreme clique in a group, Republicans, that have not historically represented minorities' interests. The historically consistent villain is a divider, a hijacker of

ideology, an angry figure that demands a lower standard of discourse while promoting a retroactive culture; this figure preys on vulnerable voices, has no conscience and camouflages his or her communication through code words and actions.

2009

The tea party narrative in the black press sample for this dissertation began on April 15, 2009 with an Associated Press article appearing in the *Chicago Defender* titled “Obama: Get the dread out of tax deadline day.”²⁷² The story began, “President Obama declared on tax-filing day that he aims to ease the dread of deadline day with a simpler tax code that rewards work and the pursuit of the American dream,” adding, “his words were hardly met with universal applause.”²⁷³ The story explained that the President’s tax goals were immediately met with dissent. “Across the county, protestors met at statehouses and town squares to oppose Obama’s federal spending since he took office. Organizers said they wanted to channel the spirit of the Boston Tea Party’s rebellion.”²⁷⁴ According to the AP story selected by the *Chicago Defender*, this was the beginning of the tea party.

A week later, the *Chicago Defender* published a columnist’s analysis of the tea party’s formation. “I applaud any Americans who want to peacefully but forcefully critique their government, but these tea parties aren’t about making change as much as they are about citizen anger being used to promote a corporate agenda.”²⁷⁵ The author attended a tea party gathering and observed that the meeting “was reflective of a wide swath of America. So long as that wide swath was mostly over the age of 45 and Caucasian and didn’t vote for the sitting president.”²⁷⁶ He then commented on the group’s stated reason for forming, “this version of [their story] has a nice ‘anti-government tax’ spin to it, even though that is not the real motivation behind the tea

party.”²⁷⁷ He concluded that the group’s motivations originated from a disdain for a black president, not concerns over government taxing.

On September 4, 2009, the *Washington Informer* published an AP story that reported on the tea party’s scorn of President Obama’s health care reform efforts. The article, titled “Health care lobbyists target returning congress,” indicated that the tea party was “unleashing a torrent” of traditional lobbying techniques.²⁷⁸ The tea party, a group that insisted it was “grassroots,” had partnered with the health insurance industry to oppose reforming health care, according to the article. The *Skanner*, in Portland, published a story describing tea party healthcare reform protests in D.C., offering that the group was gaining momentum with dissent that originated with bailouts, tax policies, and the economic stimulus. It described the protest where tea partiers carried slogans “Obamacare makes me sick,” posters of President Obama dressed as Hitler and the joker. One “black republican leader denounced African-American politicians that she said had an ‘affinity’ for socialism” because they supported President Obama’s platform.²⁷⁹

The *Los Angeles Sentinel* published an opinion piece by Reverend Jesse Jackson, who wrote that federally run health care was “a proven success,” not socialism as the tea party argued.²⁸⁰ He criticized the tea party’s attacks on President Obama because its members were, he argued, unwitting pawns for corporations. “The angry tea party protestors who feel they are getting shafted by the government are aligning themselves with the very folks who are selling them out.”²⁸¹ He pointed to Medicare as an example of successful government administered health care.

An NNPA article published by the *Pittsburgh Courier* and titled, “Tea party marchers far right and white,” offered: “Comments from the crowd, and certainly their signs and t-shirts, indicated that it was more than big government being protested. There were many people

displaying signs against health care reform, President Obama's right to take office and calling his ideology and religion into question."²⁸² Representative Elijah Cummings, a Democrat from Maryland, said "when you listen to their comments, many of them didn't know what they were protesting. So it makes you wonder what it's really about," adding that the tea party "would rather kill Obama's dream than give his constituents what they need."²⁸³

On September 24, 2009, the *Skanner*, in a columnist's article titled "President carter [sic] was right to raise race issue," disputed Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele's assertion that, "this isn't about race. It's about policy."²⁸⁴ Steele was responding to former President Jimmy Carter's opinion that "an overwhelming portion of the intensely demonstrated animosity toward President Barack Obama is based on the fact that he is a black man."²⁸⁵ This came a day after South Carolina Republican Congressman Joe Wilson yelled "you lie!" while President Obama addressed Congress.²⁸⁶ The article added some historical context defending the perception that the tea party's anger was more about race than actual issues. For instance, "one of the major criticisms of civil rights leaders for years has been that too many decent whites choose to remain silent on the issue of race, ceding the spotlight to mean-spirited Caucasians who are insensitive to the suffering of African Americans."²⁸⁷ This, according to the columnist, resulted in more whites speaking out about race issues, which in turn caused more opposition by "crazy" whites who believe they are somehow more oppressed than African Americans.²⁸⁸

On September 24, 2009, the *Los Angeles Sentinel* published a columnist's article titled "Obama's agenda and rights' attacks interconnected."²⁸⁹ He wrote that tea partiers:

are attempting to annihilate president Obama who, at times, gives them additional ammunition. He is being hit from several fronts on a host of issues in addition to healthcare reform, including immigration, Iraq, Afghanistan, terrorism, missile

deployment, LGBT and the financial bailouts. The motivation for the current scurrilous campaign against Obama is, in significant measure, racially motivated.²⁹⁰

The author's evidence to back up his claim pointed to Rep. Wilson's "you lie" remark, conservative pundits denigrating President Obama's infant policies that had no time to really take effect, tea party assertions that President Obama is a Muslim and a socialist and not an American citizen. The article also listed President Obama as a culprit because he didn't confront the racial undercurrents, instead "skirting the race issue and not discernibly" representing black concerns or issues; in other words, the columnist said President Obama was allowing the villain to bully him.²⁹¹

The *Bay State Banner*, on October 1, 2009, published a commentary arguing that the United States has no desire to have a real conversation on race. The author wrote: "If we resided in a post-racial society, then the words William Faulkner wrote in the mid-20th century would not ring true today: 'The past is never dead. It's not even in the past.'"²⁹² The author pointed to the attacks on President Obama as reason to believe America is not post racial. For instance, signs of "Afro-Communist" and "Obama Ribs n Chicken" permeated tea party rallies where the members carried guns and argued that President Obama was not a true American. The author quoted former President Jimmy Carter who said racism "bubbled to the surface because of a belief among many white people – not just in the South, but around the country – that African Americans are not qualified to lead."²⁹³

As 2009 neared its end, black press newspapers reflected on President Obama's first year. The *Los Angeles Sentinel* argued that blacks' high of expectations of President Obama were unfair.²⁹⁴ While black unemployment still remained double the national average, President Obama had, it seemed, stopped the economic free fall from getting worse and had made significant gains on health care reform. A major barrier, the article argued, President Obama

faced was the tea party, and its growing influence on the Republican Party. The article also opined that those who voted for President Obama were to blame for not actively and openly disagreeing with the tea party. “The tea party crowd capitalizes on the silence of the white majority, many of whom apparently voted for Obama out of desperation and have reverted to a more comfortable, race-based reticence.”²⁹⁵

2010

In 2010, a year when the tea party posed serious threats to African-American issues, black political power, and racial solidarity during the midterms, the historically consistent villain gained traction. In an article titled, “Former congressman, Palin blast Obama at tea party gathering,” the *Baltimore Afro-American* described a tea party gathering where the primary focus was to denigrate the President and make it harder for his constituency to vote.²⁹⁶ After bashing President Obama’s policies and calling him a socialist and proposing a poll tax and literacy tests in order to vote, Congressman Tom Tancredo “claimed that there was a ‘cult of multiculturalism’ at work in the country. He told CBS news that there ‘was a devotion to a multiculturalist agenda’ which he believed could ‘divide American up into these subgroups.’”²⁹⁷

On February 11, 2010, the *Pittsburgh Courier* criticized the mainstream press for trying to “legitimize the tea party movement as a resurgent mobilization of the American people but when you listen to them say who they are, there are distinct traces of the Republican Party in their approval of limited, or small government, and national security.”²⁹⁸ The article, titled “Tea party racism,” recounted historical accounts that used the same language as the tea party. For instance, Mississippi Governor George Wallace and Republican Barry Goldwater, who “were directly opposed to blacks and their interests,” used the same platform of anti-taxes and anti-big government as a vehicle of oppression, even though their policies did not reflect their beliefs in

less taxes and smaller government.²⁹⁹ The tea party, according to this article, was using the same political devices as their predecessors because they could not stand the sight of a black president who, at that point, had not substantively governed much differently than his conservative white peers.

Early in President Obama's first term, health care reform was a major priority. This issue is especially salient to the black community because it is one of those issues where African Americans are disproportionately disfranchised. The *Baltimore Afro American*, on March 7, 2010, published a story about the National Urban League categorizing health care reform as a modern civil rights issue. The journalist noted President Obama's primary opponent to this legislation, the tea party, citing possible reasons "for the decline in faith in civil rights" issues "is the misunderstanding of what improving civil rights actually entails."³⁰⁰ This story's interpretation of the tea party's opposition to health care reform viewed them as a barrier to achieving equal opportunity, a villain trying to stop their quest.

The *Los Angeles Sentinel* published an article covering a Supreme Court case, *McDonald v. City of Chicago*, that the columnist feared would prohibit cities from regulating ownership of firearms. "We have become addicted to violence," because "at home, violence is glorified, depicted rapturously in movies and tv" and "African Americans and Latinos are constantly depicted on television shows as more violent than we are. Our news programs run on the theory that if it bleeds, it leads. Far too many of the tea party zealots flaunt their guns, threaten violence and specifically invoke the president's name in threats."³⁰¹ The image of tea parties, protesting President Obama, gathering with guns signaled not only a substantive threat to black issues, but to physical safety as well, echoing visions of the Civil War and Jim Crow; the villain threatened on more than one front.

The image of “ugly, menacing” zealots continued in a *Pittsburgh Courier* article titled, “Tea party, coffee party: Why not a black party.”³⁰² The journalist, after discussing the coffee party, a group organized to be an antithesis to the tea party, wrote, that he was horrified by the “anti-government spirit of the tea party crowd that emerged to disrupt the flow of civil discussion about important issues.”³⁰³ He suggested that “a black party could enable the discussion about accountability to focus on the cabinet agencies where the federal budget exists to achieve some of the things needed by the black community.”³⁰⁴ As tea party candidates were emerging to challenge incumbents in the midterm elections, and still vehemently protesting health care reform with violence, sometimes,³⁰⁵ the journalist offered an entirely different approach: a group of protestors that would peacefully assemble, work within the structure of the system, and advocate for the interests of the black community that, with the exception of health care, the journalist thought were still being ignored, even by a black president.³⁰⁶

A common thread emerged in the black press’ coverage that contributed to the use of the historically consistent villain myth – the Republican Party and the tea party were not viewed as separately distinct entities; instead, from the black press’ perspective, they were the same group with a distaste for diversity and minority issues. The *Chicago Defender* published an article titled, “Right-wing republicans often masquerade as tea baggers,” on March 31, 2010.³⁰⁷ The columnist wrote that the “conjunction of a black president and a female speaker of the house – topped off by a wise Latina on the supreme court and a powerful gay congressional committee chairman – would sow fears of disenfranchisement among a dwindling and threatened minority in the country no matter what policies were in play.”³⁰⁸

Another *Chicago Defender* article took it one step further, asserting that the tea party was not only racist in nature, but were essentially terrorists. The article, titled “Tea party serving terrorism,” opined:

I have always maintained that there is a grotesque racial element to many tea party rallies and that the anger directed towards the Obama administration cannot be legitimately chalked up to passionate voters. Let’s be candid: there are a lot of Americans out there that just hate the idea that there is a black man in the white house...I have been to tea party events, I have seen how these groups encourage and foment a level of antipathy and racism towards immigrants and the president that is nothing short of a soft shoe klan rally.³⁰⁹

A *Pittsburgh Courier* column titled, “Tea party terrorism” agreed, stating, “if Obama really wants to rile up the public with a strong anti-terrorism stand he can start by looking in our own backyard at the growing militancy and violence associated with the tea party patriots movement.”³¹⁰ The article, calling the tea party a “growing militancy” prone to violence, touched on a hypocritical belief that reverberates through white America - only nonwhites can be terrorists.³¹¹ This columnist highlighted that, statistically speaking, terrorist acts are committed by more whites than nonwhites. He equated the growing tea party as an emerging terrorist threat, not only in terms of physicality, but also in the policies they espoused and opposed, all policies that in one way or another were detrimental to the black community. The tea partiers were not only terrorists because they threatened physical violence, but they also threatened legislative destruction. As the tea party gained traction nationally and it was becoming apparent that they could obtain success during the midterms, this terrorist, villainous threat became more real every day for the black community in 2010.

Different than most terrorists, whose primary objective is to inflict terror and chaos, the tea party did have a goal – stop black political empowerment. The *Tri State Defender* reported on tea party platforms that opposed health care reform on the tried and true “states’ rights

argument.”³¹² The tea party argued that health care reform infringed on states’ rights, much like secessionists argued in favor of slavery during the civil war and Republican legislators argued during the civil rights movement, according to the article. The author wrote: “Segregationists used the same ideas in the 1950s to oppose the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision...In the 19th century those who believed they had a right to enslave black America advocated the same concept.”³¹³

On April 1, 2010, the *Michigan Chronicle* published an article titled, “Public radio, ethnic media sound alarm of growing right wing extremism.” It announced an initiative sponsored by Wayne State University that investigated conservative extremism.³¹⁴ The initiative was driven by the collaboration of the “region’s most-read independent newspapers, The Jewish News, The Arab American News, The Michigan Chronicle, and Latino Press.”³¹⁵ The diversity of the collaboration indicates that the tea party was a villain not only to the black community, but to a large swath of nonwhites. “The explosive growth of three distinct groups, the tea party movement, the patriot movement, with the militias as their paramilitary arms, and the nativist anti-immigration movement has been under way for the past year” and threatened minority cultures.³¹⁶

The *Los Angeles Sentinel* argued that these groups, specifically the tea party, should not be viewed as separate from the Republican Party. “The so-called tea party and Republican Party are essentially the same,” and “they differ only in style. The tea party’s big dust bowl rally last weekend...was led by Sarah Palin, who, script in hand, whipped up a cheering crowd. ‘Don’t tread on me’ signs and ugly anger set the tone of the rally in the desert.”³¹⁷ In an attempt to try and more fully understand the anger radiating from the tea party the *Pittsburgh Courier* published an article titled “Tea-ed off.”³¹⁸ The only answer the article could come up with, after

highlighting the hypocritical nature of their alleged policy platform, concluded that the only plausible reason they could attack so vehemently was race: “With so much news coverage surrounding the heated rhetoric coming from the tea party, I thought it would be instructive to dissect their anger to see if we can come away with some understanding of their issues.”³¹⁹ However, “when they say, ‘we want our country back,’ who is the ‘we?’ Are they referring to white people, since that is what their group is comprised of?...Name me one freedom that Obama or the Democrats have taken away from you.”³²⁰

The *Chicago Defender*, on April 28, 2010, echoed similar sentiments:

They have created a mythology world in their heads that has no resemblance to our actual reality. They are so unsettled by a black president of the United States, not to mention the changes that are underway in the country – demographically speaking – that they are searching for answers wherever they may be found.³²¹

The notoriously conservative broadcast station and frequent tea party champion was a target of criticism of a *Pittsburgh Courier* column titled, “Bill O’Reilly’s obsession with playing race card.”³²² The piece reported on O’Reilly’s fascination with chastising those who ever questioned the racial nature of politics; he frequently asserted that those who did raise racial concerns were “playing the race card,” in order to win an argument.³²³ When Al Sharpton suggested that some, not all, of the tea party’s members probably have some racial resentment or fear, O’Reilly attacked him. The article responded, “though calling the tea party gang and their supporters such as O’Reilly racist,” may be an overstatement, “calling them white supremacists is right on target.”³²⁴

The Republican Party, tea partiers, and conservative talk show hosts were not the only figures reported on in the black press’ tea party narrative. They also criticized President Obama. In a news article written by the NNPA and published in the *Pittsburgh Courier* on May 11, 2010, titled “Despite widespread appeals, Obama fails to nominate black woman to Supreme Court”

the reporter described President Obama's inability, or unwillingness, to increase diversity on the Supreme Court.³²⁵ "Still, the letter was strong and clear, sending an 'end-of-honeymoon' type message that President Obama must begin to listen to those he credits for having put him in office with hopes for black progress."³²⁶ The article criticized President Obama for compromising with the tea party and Republicans, urging the president to fight back against tea party and fight for African-American interests. A villain needs a hero to fight, and President Obama filled that role; however, this hero was not without faults, according to the black press – with timidity and over compromising with the villain the primary fault.

Though the tea party was/is comprised primarily of whites, some nonwhites do fill their ranks. In a column titled "Black tea party activists say don't call us traitors," the author reported on an incident when representatives were spit on and called racial slurs following passage of health care reform. Black tea partiers questioned the authenticity of the claims:

There was mild surprise when a small contingent of black tea party bloggers and writers screamed loudly that Georgia congressman John Lewis made up that he was spit on and called the n-word as he left the cannon building across from the capitol in the hours before the final vote on the health care reform bill. The black tea party activists demanded that democrats produce the tapes to prove that Lewis attacked.³²⁷

The article then went on to explain historical context concerning general discontent blacks have with the Republican Party. President Abraham Lincoln was a Republican, and it was southern democrats that primarily opposed him during the civil war. However, during the Civil Rights Movement, the two parties switched agendas and ideologies and Republicans became the party opposing equality.³²⁸ It was that version of Republicans that tried to thwart and halt civil rights; they did not want African Americans in schools with white children, they did not want African Americans in the same restaurants or same buses as whites, and they certainly did not want blacks to have the right to vote. The article explains that the black community has not forgotten

that Republican hostility.³²⁹ So, when they see tea partiers attacking a black president for policies his white predecessors pursued, while at the same time trying to dismantle programs designed to ameliorate prior institutional racism and making it harder to vote or secure education, it is clear why the black press interpreted the group as a historically consistent villain.

For example, an editorial in the *Pittsburgh Courier* on June 8, 2010 began, “Rand Paul is on the wrong side of history.”³³⁰ The author wrote:

Rand Paul, the tea party Republican Senate nominee from Kentucky, recently made it clear in a series of media interviews that he disagrees with the public accommodations provision in the Civil Rights Act on the grounds that it intrudes on the rights of private business owners. In other words, if he had been around to vote for the act, he would have joined openly racist Southern conservatives in arguing that hotel, restaurant and retail store owners should have the right to bar African Americans from their establishment. That is a bizarre and retrogressive view, more suited to a political campaign in 1910 than in 2010.³³¹

The *Skanner* published an editorial written by the NNPA Editor-in-Chief. The piece began by referencing the epithets congressman Lewis experienced following the passage of health care reform. The author then expressed that, in a society that was supposed to be moving towards post-racialism, it appeared that explicit racism was becoming more common place. These messages, he argued, were emanating primarily from the tea party: “It is the Obama factor. It is a big factor” because “having an African American as president has brought out the worst in some white Americans.”³³² While President Obama’s emergence brought out the best in some, the tea party represented the worst, “extremists who” see President “Obama as a Marxist, a socialist, they question whether he was born in the United States.”³³³ According to the author, it is nearly impossible to reason with a villain of this sort; one that will find fault in anything and everything President Obama tried to accomplish.

Well known conservative commentator and tea party champion Glenn Beck booked a rally at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 2010 – preventing black civil rights leaders from organizing a march “to commemorate the 47th anniversary of the historic march on Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King’s famed ‘I Have a Dream’ speech” at the location where it took place.³³⁴ This was interpreted as an attack on Dr. King’s legacy, and the National Urban League President vowed not to “let Glenn Beck own the symbolism.”³³⁵

On June 30, 2010, the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported that the assault on civil rights’ legacies continued. The column suggested that white tea party candidates for the midterms were making serious progress and gaining popularity by attacking Social Security and unemployment benefits, saying that the programs “have spoiled people to the point that you don’t want the jobs that are available.”³³⁶ Another column on July 7, 2010 began “there have been only six African-Americans in the United States Senate in history.”³³⁷ Black solidarity is seen as one solution to helping solve problems plaguing the black community, such as unemployment. The 2010 midterms, according to the story, posed a serious threat, primarily from the tea party, in that the Senate could be all white. With no black voices at the table, the article asked how could policies designed to protect their community be preserved, especially when the possible incoming tea party candidates believed they shouldn’t exist in the first place.³³⁸

In an editorial titled “Racism in tea party must end,” the *Amsterdam News* wrote:

Our nation is caught in the throes of a sundry of potentially divisive issues, and it would only exacerbate the problems we collectively face to entertain bitter exchanges with the tea party or any other group that would derail us from our objective of One Nation, One Dream: a nation working together, not combating those who often forget how much we have in common.³³⁹

As the elections neared, the black press focused on salient policy platforms. For instance, the *Arizona Informant*, on October 4, 2010, published an article titled “Jobs top priority for one nation marchers.”³⁴⁰ The story began by reporting on the One Nation Working Together rally that was held at the Lincoln Memorial, intended to be a protest against the tea party led rally held at the same place in August. The article then cited many protestors who expressed concern over jobs, and how the platforms proposed by the tea party could make unemployment worse. “We came to show our support for President Obama and to stand up for jobs, justice, and education.”³⁴¹ The tea party, according to this article, attacked all of those, President Obama, jobs, justice, and education. The article did not view the tea party as a grassroots movement; instead, they were interpreted as big government pawns.³⁴²

Beyond their substantive proposals, the tea partiers’ social stances were also scrutinized in the black press. “One by one, tea party challengers have veered away from the issues of taxes and spending” because, “either by the media or by the Democrats,” the tea party insurgents were portrayed “not as populist alternatives to the mainstream GOP but as Republican regulars.”³⁴³ The article cited Carl Paladino, who said “children shouldn’t be brainwashed into thinking homosexuality is acceptable,” and Ken Buck, who “tried to deflect questions about his stance against abortion,” and Christine O’Donnell, who was portrayed as a witch that preached against “the evils of masturbation,” and Sharron Angle, the “faith-based politician” who “doesn’t believe the Constitution requires separation of church and state.”³⁴⁴ “The tea party movement was born in anger over the recession and the Obama administration’s bailouts, and built largely on a platform of lower taxes and smaller government. But some of its candidates are getting tripped up on social issues.”³⁴⁵

On October 14, 2010, the *Los Angeles Sentinel* published an article titled “GOP pledges tea party lynching.”³⁴⁶ The journalist wrote:

In a stunning display of bigotry and viciousness, powerful Republicans are raising millions of dollars to support an extreme crop of GOP candidates...called ‘tea party candidates,’ and they are being funded by the Super rich who have been promised \$4 trillion in tax cuts for their support of the GOP. These tea party Republicans are directly attacking blacks, Latinos, women and gays – and they are winning votes in the process.³⁴⁷

With polling numbers suggesting incumbents were in serious trouble versus tea partiers, the *Baltimore Afro-American* cited a study that found that the black vote could be crucial to a democratic win, and that “the increasing traction of the tea party – including its racist elements” might “propel black voters to the polls and possibly deny the Republicans wins.”³⁴⁸ Black unemployment was double the national average during the recession; the black press gave President Obama credit for helping not make it worse. Losing key allies in Congress and the Senate was viewed as an attack on President Obama and the progress, though slower than hoped, he had made.³⁴⁹ The *Skanner* wrote:

In just a few weeks, we will face a critical turning point for our nation. On Tuesday, Nov. 2, your family’s future, the strength of your community, and the direction of our country will be on the ballot...So, to all my Republican colleagues and their new tea party friends...we’re not taking one step back.³⁵⁰

To avert taking steps backwards, the *Pittsburgh Courier* urged its audience to vote. In an editorial titled “We must vote” the writer offered:

Now, less than two years later, as the country gradually recovers from the reign of George Bush and Dick Cheney and a Republican Congress, the same people who put us in this predicament are masquerading as the tea party in an effort to rid the country of President Barack Obama by placing do nothing obstructionists in the Senate, House and the governor’s office throughout the country...Many of us fought hard to get the first black man elected in 2008.³⁵¹

The *Washington Informer* warned that the tea party strategy to winning elections depended on low minority turnout.³⁵² The tea party won several elections during the 2010 midterms and several Democrat incumbents lost their jobs; black politicians who survived lost key leadership roles under the tea party-infused Congress. The villain, now strengthened by victory, did not waste any time attacking black interests.³⁵³

On November 10, 2010, the *Arizona Informant* addressed the extremism of tea party members and cited whites who validated that characterization. “These boys are crazy, they’re tea party people...I’ve had white people calling me up saying these guys are extremely conservative and so far out of the mainstream. Can you see them talking with Maxine Waters? I’d like to be a fly on the wall.”³⁵⁴ The *Florida Star* reported that it took the tea party little time to fulfill campaign promises to attack minorities by cancelling unemployment extensions. According to the article, the villain had organized fairly quickly.³⁵⁵ The *Washington Informer* noted that if the tea party successfully defeated President Obama, blacks would crash with him, “the GOP and the tea party may have captured the House and much of the governorships, but they have not captured the moral high ground or the battlefield of America where our civil rights martyrs spilled their blood to advance honorable causes.”³⁵⁶

2011

After tea party success during the 2010 midterms, online black newspapers reported on the damage the villain accomplished at an institutional level in 2011. On January 22, 2011, the *Baltimore Afro-American* reported that a North Carolina “school board abolishes integration policy.”³⁵⁷ A tea party-controlled “school board in Raleigh, N.C. has abolished a school zoning policy intended to encourage racially – and economically – mixed schools.”³⁵⁸ The tea partiers said that, “diversity should no longer be a priority for public schools.”³⁵⁹ The article quoted

NAACP President Todd Jealous, “so far, for all the chatter we heard from tea partiers has not manifested in actually putting in place retrograde policies. But this is one place where they have literally attempted to turn back the clock.”³⁶⁰

Michael Williams, a retired Texas Railroad Commissioner, announced that he would run for Senate with tea party backing. The tea party favorite said that, “he wants to bring his starkly conservative views – including no preferential treatment for blacks in higher education, acceleration of oil exploration in coastal areas and a reduced role for federal government in public policy.”³⁶¹ On February 5, 2011, a Pennsylvania high school, heavily influenced by the tea party, abandoned “an education program built” to end “racial segregation” in public schools.³⁶² The proposed eradication of integration, according to the article, was similar to “one of the more prominent cases” in Raleigh North Carolina “where the tea party-backed Wake County School Board is advancing its agenda to end integration in the school system.”³⁶³

While attacking one of civil rights’ earliest issues, education, the tea party also sought to rewrite the history of race relations in America, according to a February 18, 2011, *Amsterdam News* article. The author argued that, “it is a good thing that the leaders within the tea party aren’t in charge of running the nation’s observances of Black History Month” because the tea party would tarnish and destroy the legacy of civil rights.³⁶⁴

Recently, one of the movement’s most high profile officials, Michele Bachmann, the ultra-conservative congresswoman from Minnesota, offered a total, well, whitewash, of the story of slavery...saying that the United States was founded by leaders with a tolerance for ethnic diversity and that the country’s founders were responsible for abolishing slavery.³⁶⁵

The villain, once considered only a fringe group by many white newspapers, became part of the mainstream political culture in 2011 – so much so that tea party favorites, such as Michele Bachmann and possibly Sarah Palin, eyed the oval office.³⁶⁶

On February 14, 2011, President Obama released the 2012 budget. “Perhaps in reaction to Republican and tea party voters, the budget will cut \$1.1 trillion from the federal deficit over the next ten years.”³⁶⁷ While few can argue that reducing the federal deficit is bad, the article expressed disappointment in where those cuts would occur. “Some unfortunate cuts such as the reduction for funding for Community Development Block Grants and the Low Income Energy Assistance Program” would hit African-American communities the hardest.³⁶⁸ The *Chicago Defender* asked if the African-American community should bank on the recovery.³⁶⁹ The columnist wrote:

Good news – the unemployment rate is dropping, last month from 9% to 8.9%, a scant drop. Better news – the private sector is finally generating jobs, 192,000 to be exact, last month...Even worst news is the intransigence of Washington tea party Republicans that want to cut budgets so drastically that they will minimize the future possibilities of our nation.³⁷⁰

A historically dependable tenet of the black press was reporting on issues that affected all nonwhites, not just African Americans.³⁷¹ The *Bay State Banner* noted how the tea party targeted all minority groups, not just blacks.³⁷² The news article reported on tea partiers arguing that “illegal immigrants” were taking minorities jobs. The article quoted Representative Emanuel Cleaver II, Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, who said, “I am concerned by the majority’s attempt to manufacture tension between African Americans and immigrant communities.”³⁷³

Racial tensions continued to increase according to a *Philadelphia Tribune* article titled, “Time short, tempers flare in budget showdown” on March 28 2011.³⁷⁴ Regarding budget negotiations between the tea party, the GOP, and President Obama, the journalist quoted Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid who said, “Republicans refuse to negotiate” because the tea party

kept “our negotiating partner from the negotiating table. And it’s pretty hard to negotiate with someone else on the other side of the table.”³⁷⁵ According to the article, Democrats and President Obama were not allowed to negotiate with Republicans.

Regardless of the tea party’s desire to circumvent the President, and his allies, the black press still saw him as a powerful, symbolic figure. In a column titled, “Obama matters as president and a black leader” the *Amsterdam News*, on April 7, 2011, noted that President Obama’s symbolic significance was impossible to ignore, no matter how much the tea party wanted to attack it and at the same time silent it.³⁷⁶ The commenting professor wrote:

The 2008 election of Barack Obama as president of the United States clearly represented another major step forward in the long struggle of African Americans for full equality. [Given] that the Bush administration’s policies, [and the Republican party in general] were often hostile or indifferent to the black community, African Americans had every right to expect that the new president would substantively address their concerns. Therefore, it is most ironic that, as the black community’s concerns to be largely taken for granted by the administration, those groups, [such as the tea party] who did not vote for him have used protest, media campaigns and the ballot box to compel Obama to deal with their concerns...In today’s political climate, the right wing attacks on Obama by the tea party and others have clearly resulted in the black community’s closing ranks to support the president even when they may disagree with his policies.³⁷⁷

The tea party narrative proved how strong black solidarity can be. While most black journalists or columnists were disappointed in their hero for not fully representing their interests, and at times, bowing to the interests of their villain, the tea party, the black press still supported him. The *Los Angeles Sentinel* published a column titled, “Obama’s twisting blurs his priorities” on April 21, 2011.³⁷⁸ The author wrote:

I support President Obama because he is unquestionably a positive alternative to George W. Bush. That said, however, like many others, blacks especially, I am very concerned about his propensity for accommodation and reversing himself on major issues. On certain domestic and foreign policy matters his position is indistinguishable from that of his predecessor.³⁷⁹

The author continued to argue that the black communities' hero, President Obama, compromised with their villain, the tea party, too much. President Obama compromised with the villain despite the tea party's propensity for disseminating explicit racism. For instance, on April 28, 2011, the *Skanner* published an article titled "Racism: The monkey on the tea party's back."³⁸⁰ The NNPA correspondents wrote: "Another day. Another outrageous example of how deeply the election of a black American of mixed parentage has unhinged some conservative White Americans."³⁸¹ Marilyn Davenport, a tea party member on the Republican central committee in California, sent an email with a picture of Obama as a chimpanzee, "underneath the doctored photo, Davenport, who is 74, had typed the words: 'Now you know why – no birth certificate.'"³⁸²

When tea partiers contested raising the debt ceiling, a fairly normal procedure many presidents had executed prior to President Obama without much resistance, black press newspapers questioned their true motives. The *Tri State Defender* published a column titled "Debt ceiling, what's that? And why does it need to be raised?"³⁸³ The author wrote: "But, some approach the debt ceiling with a hidden agenda."³⁸⁴ One prominent Republican, and at times tea party favorite, Newt Gingrich, criticized Ron Paul's debt ceiling stance and goal to "eviscerate the Medicare program."³⁸⁵ According to the column, the tea party's backlash against Gingrich's opinion was so intense, that he reversed his position. "Those who believe the government" should protect minorities' interests "must advocate for it and reject the tea party arguments that the best government is a small one."³⁸⁶

While the tea party was dismantling education programs designed to give all children equal opportunity, and holding the debt ceiling hostage as a negotiating tool, the GOP field for the Republican nomination for president in 2012 began to emerge. The *Skanner* noted that the GOP field, because of the tea party's influence, had shifted further to the right than it ever had in

a presidential campaign.³⁸⁷ The author wrote, “in the first presidential election since the tea party’s emergence, Republican candidates are drifting rightward on a range of issues, even though a more centrist stand might play well in the 2012 general election”³⁸⁸ One tea party figure driving the GOP platform further from the center was Michele Bachmann, the “John Wayne of political lies,” according to one editorial.³⁸⁹ “Whether making the round of Sunday morning talk shows, giving the tea party response to President Obama’s State of the Union address, or announcing her own presidential campaign, Michele Bachmann does one thing consistently – lie.”³⁹⁰ The editorial included a transcript from a CBS “Face the Nation” episode on June 26 where Bachmann, referred to as “Sarah Palin with a brain” by the editorial, was constantly questioned about “facts” that she cited. For instance, Bachmann said that “Obamacare will cost the economy 800,000 jobs.”³⁹¹ The host replied, “that is data that other people would question.”³⁹² Bachmann retorted that those numbers came from the Congressional Budget Office, not from her. The host clarified that Factcheck.org said, “the CBO didn’t say that.”³⁹³ Instead, the CBO said labor workers would have more options than they currently did, receiving subsidies for insurance, “putting more money in their pockets,” not losing money as Bachmann had implied.³⁹⁴

The disagreements on policy issues and disingenuous statements may, on the surface, appear to be politics as usual. From the black press’ perspective, however, the racial implications of the dialogue could not be ignored. For instance, the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, on July 15, 2011, published a column titled “Race matters: Post-racial society a hoax.”³⁹⁵ The author wrote: “Those with an iota of sophistication understand that race matters and that America is anything but a post-racial society. Unfortunately, that hoax, likely concocted by white-wing extremists, is embraced by a broad cross-section of the population, including so-called liberals and misguided

blacks.”³⁹⁶ Why would tea partiers “concoct” a hoax that America is post racial? According to the author, to serve as camouflage for their policies designed to place economic and educational mobility barriers in front of minorities.

In August, when the tea party and democrats avoided default by constructing a debt ceiling deal, the *Pittsburgh Courier* called it, “a sugar-coated satan sandwich.”³⁹⁷ While the deal avoided default for the time being, the author wrote: “As I write this, there may well be another monkey wrench thrown into the process of compromise, as tea party Republicans have been intransigent and completely unwilling to compromise. President Obama and some Democrats, on the other hand, have been far too willing to compromise.”³⁹⁸ President Obama and Democrats, in an effort to appease their tea party villains, were “far too willing to compromise everything sacred – social security, Medicare, educational programs.”³⁹⁹ Any efforts to solve the debt issue that may include sacrifices by wealthy white men were “off the table.”⁴⁰⁰

On August 4, 2011, the *Chicago Defender* published an editorial titled “Americans come up short in debt deal.”⁴⁰¹ The author wrote:

In a dog and pony show, you at least get to see a pony. In the political mess that unfolded in Washington, D.C. over the past few weeks regarding deficit reduction and debt ceiling, all the American public got to witness was some really mangy dogs... We saw naked and unrepentant hatred for the nation’s first black president drive all decision making, to the point that nothing else mattered.⁴⁰²

The *Los Angeles Sentinel* published an article titled, “Budget d-day avoided.”⁴⁰³ The article cited President Obama who said, “It shouldn’t take the risk of default, the risk of economic catastrophe, to get folks in this town to get together and do their jobs,” adding, “our economy didn’t need Washington to come along with a manufactured crisis to make things worse.”⁴⁰⁴

The “manufactured crisis” designed to delegitimize President Obama and hurt the economy, which would dampen his chances of reelection in 2012, did have consequences. Standard and Poor’s, a global leader of financial intelligence, removed the United States of America from a list of “risk free borrowers,” shortly after budget “D-Day” was avoided. According to the *Amsterdam News*, the firm’s decision was “rightly dubbed by many as a ‘tea party downgrade.’”⁴⁰⁵ The columnist wrote:

The tea party has always been shrouded in a subtle cloak of racial insensitivity. They don’t quite wear it on their sleeves, but they have mastered the wink-and-nod art of coded language. Their leaders and candidates regularly speak of the need to ‘take our country back,’ offering a message that is as clear as it is uncompromising. For them, it’s troublesome that a Democrat is president of the United States – but it’s horrifying that he’s black... Likewise, in the debt-ceiling debate, the tea party played its role to the hilt, blocking a comprehensive deal between Republican leaders and the president that might have prevented the downgrade... The tea party is determined that Obama be vilified, humiliated, and, above all, defeated. Their passion is so strong, so rabid that they have determined that the country’s historically stellar credit rating be damned, so long as their core objective is achieved.⁴⁰⁶

2012

In 2012, the black press’ coverage of the tea party was tied to the presidential election. Several tea party candidates emerged during the GOP primaries as potential threats to President Obama during the general election. The GOP candidate, however, ended up not being a tea party favorite. Mitt Romney was not admired by the tea party for his views, moderate compared to Bachmann, Perry, Santorum, and Cain, among others. Hoping to attract more tea party backing, he chose Wisconsin Representative Paul Ryan, a tea party champion, as his Vice Presidential running mate. This decision signaled two meanings for the tea party villain. One, the group was beginning to lose some steam in terms of their political power since they didn’t place a candidate

at the top of the ticket. Second, though they were beginning to lose some momentum, the villain's platforms had become conventional enough to be placed on a presidential ticket, possibly one unfortunate incident away from the presidency.

On January 7, 2012, the *Chicago Defender* published a column titled, "The future of black political power."⁴⁰⁷ The author recalled the Civil Rights Movement, when an "aroused, militant and insurgent black population used its political power for racial equality."⁴⁰⁸ He interpreted the tea party as a "clear counter insurgent movement" designed to cripple the progress made during civil rights, a facet of the tea party that few, if any, white newspapers covered. "It is my view that the tea party and the right wing conservative movement are working every day to cripple the efforts of President Barack Obama" and the black community.⁴⁰⁹

The *Amsterdam News* reported on tea partiers playing "the race card for votes" in Iowa.⁴¹⁰ The journalist wrote:

Santorum took great pains in the weeks leading up to the caucus to burnish in the minds of voters his staunchly conservative credentials. In doing so, he has chosen to make himself attractive to the far right, tea party-driven wing of the Republican Party. He emphasized his opposition to abortion, no matter the circumstance. He even took to making campaign appearances, rifle in hand, as Johnny-come-lately gun enthusiast, clearly pandering to the NRA vote...[He] had displayed a puzzling pattern of seeking to leverage stereotypes of African Americans and public assistance to gain advantage in the election.⁴¹¹

A *Pittsburgh Courier* article commented that Santorum's attempts at using race to gain white voters was "just what the tea party and the other conservatives were looking for."⁴¹²

On Super Bowl Sunday, former Michigan Congressman Pete Hoekstra, a "tea party darling" challenging incumbent Democrat Senator Debbie Stabenow, disseminated a "race-baiting" advertisement.⁴¹³ "Hoekstra's ad against Stabenow showing an Asian woman speaking in broken English and thanking the democratic senator for claims that she helped send jobs to China, is not only racially insensitive," but also fairly common for many republican

candidates.⁴¹⁴ The journalist wrote that “to understand the racist ad that former Michigan Congressman Pete Hoekstra” had “used against incumbent Democratic Senator Debbie Stabenow on Super Bowl day is to know that there is a long history in the GOP political playbook where the race card has always been used by extreme far right candidates as a last resort to stoke the fears of white voters.”⁴¹⁵

The *Philadelphia Tribune*, on February 12, 2012, published an article titled “Culture wars imperil Obama.”⁴¹⁶ The journalist began, “as far as conservatives are concerned, 2012 is the year of anger and authenticity.”⁴¹⁷ The article reported on the Conservative Political Action Committee, known as CPAC. The journalist wrote:

What could be emerging is a moment where any White House success on the economy could take that issue off the national plate as a matter of urgency. That gives the grassroots on the right breathing space to mobilize around what then-candidate Obama called ‘guns and religion’ in 2008. White social conservatives and their counterparts, mostly white progressives, may be preparing for a clash of the ideological titans over issues on the wedge. Where that leaves the unemployed and struggling is an open question that will find itself answered as the election approaches.⁴¹⁸

To help advance their war on President Obama, tea party-backed legislation in some battleground states tried to make voting more difficult. Black newspapers covering the assault on voting rights pointed out that laws like those cited in the article historically kept minorities from the polls. For instance, on March 18, 2012, the *Philadelphia Tribune* wrote, “while mostly Republicans and tea party members hailed Wednesday’s signage of H.B. 934 by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett, state Representative W. Curtis Thomas roundly slammed the measure as yet another attempt to stifle voter’s rights.”⁴¹⁹ The article, reflecting back to Jim Crow laws, quoted Representative Ron Waters, who said, “this is nothing more than an attempt by

Republicans to keep seniors, minorities, and low-income citizens from their constitutional right to vote.”⁴²⁰ Given the tea party’s “rabid passion” to defeat President Obama, it was not surprising that “there is a correlation between Corbett’s bill and the upcoming presidential and statewide elections.”⁴²¹

Fueled by tea party candidates, such as Michele Bachmann, the Supreme Court examined whether “Obamacare” was constitutional. In an article titled, “Justices signal deep trouble for health care law,” the *Cincinnati and Cleveland Call and Post* wrote, “the fate of President Barack Obama’s health care overhaul was cast into peril Tuesday as the Supreme Court’s conservative justices sharply and repeatedly questioned its core requirement that virtually every American carry insurance.”⁴²² A Supreme Court ruling saying that one of the President’s first major achievements was unconstitutional could provide the tea party with more momentum, ammunition, and traction as the election neared.⁴²³

Despite countless tea-party led attempts in Congress to repeal health care reform, the Supreme Court upheld the legislation’s constitutionality. The *Washington Informer*, in an article titled “Obamacare now really means Obama cares,” wrote:

Who would have thunk [sic], back when the tea party faction of the Timothy McVeigh party (Republicans) coined the expression ‘obamacare’ as a pejorative reference to the Affordable Care Act which was signed into law by President Barack Obama, who would have thunk [sic] then that the derisive term would one day be the law of the land...who would have thunk [sic] that conservative judge Chief Justice John Roberts, who was so flustered looking into the eyes of the first black president that he would stumble over the words of the oath of office...would be the decisive vote along with the court’s four liberal justices?⁴²⁴

The somewhat surprising victory encouraged the black press and signaled that maybe their villain was tiring, while their hero was just beginning to fight back. For instance, the *Philadelphia Tribune* wrote:

President Barack Obama has entered re-election mode, and after nearly three years of taking it on the chin without counterpunching, the chief executive has finally, at long last, begun taking the fight to the GOP. And boy, are they upset about it... Every one of these issues speaks to the decency, fairness, and compassion with which our government treats its most vulnerable citizens – and of the callous disregard for those citizens shown by today’s tea-bagging GOP. The president was right to call out these hateful, greedy protectors of wealth for the few, and I’m glad he finally used some forceful language for a change.⁴²⁵

The *Skanner* asked, “three years later, what’s become of the tea party?”⁴²⁶ The article listed moments of success for the tea party during its first three years, most notably “when the tea party revolution sent new conservatives” to office in 2010; “but where has the tea party been since?”⁴²⁷ According to the journalist, the lack of a tea party candidate at the top of the GOP presidential ticket reflected their diminishing influence, even though “tea party activists are still hard at work promoting” their ideology at all levels of government.⁴²⁸

The implementation of those ideologies, historically, failed blacks and other minorities.⁴²⁹ “Over the last half century, GOP moderates, such as former Secretary of State Colin Powell have either been pushed out of the party or marginalized.”⁴³⁰ Those moderate voices in a party known for representing white elites “have been replaced by rabid tea party activists who have pushed an already conservative party to the extreme right.”⁴³¹

On June 21, 2012, the *Baltimore Afro-American* again reported on legislation designed to alter voting procedures.⁴³² “Tea party-backed Congressman Joe Walsh (R-Ill.) on June 19 introduced a bill he says will prevent voter fraud, but voting rights advocates are calling it another misleading and unnecessary piece of legislation.”⁴³³ The legislation would likely dampen minority voting, according to the article, and it was “interesting the way these bills are being coordinated or focused in certain states, such as the battleground states where Obama won” in 2008.⁴³⁴

When Romney addressed an annual meeting at the NAACP, he drew countless boos after he criticized President Obama and vowed to repeal health care reform.⁴³⁵ The journalist wrote:

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney drew jeers from black voters Wednesday as he criticized President Barack Obama and pledged to repeal the Democrat's health care overhaul...He acknowledged his Republican Party doesn't have a perfect record on race relations, but pledged during a sometimes rocky speech that, if elected, he would work with black leaders to put the country back to work.⁴³⁶

In a column titled, "He's got guts, but not much heart," the *Philadelphia Tribune* opined: "I'll give Romney credit where is due. It took a lot of gumption for him to stand in front of that audience," a black audience, "and vow to repeal Obamacare, slash education, and set the cause of civil rights back 75 years."⁴³⁷ Adding to Romney's "rocky" speech, was "the fact that he knows Republican outreach in minority communities ranges from nonexistent to open hostility."⁴³⁸ For instance, "the images of watermelons, bone-through-the-nose witch doctors, and dressed up monkeys on their posters and signs at rallies tells you all you need to know about how the tea party-dominated GOP feels about black people."⁴³⁹ In a society supposedly desiring more equality for all, the tea party shed any hopes of implicitness: "Since Obama took office, the racists have shed any semblance of subtlety they may have once had, and gone into full-tilt skinhead mode" and "now that they've angered, alienated, disenfranchised and marginalized women, blacks, browns, gays, the poor, the elderly, and anyone else who isn't a Caucasian male millionaire, the GOP suddenly realizes the numbers they have left won't win a national election."⁴⁴⁰

The answer to fight such racism was voting. The *Northfolk Journal and Guide*, on July 11, 2012, urged African Americans to vote in a column titled "The necessity of the African American vote."⁴⁴¹ The author noted: "We also know that the Republican Party and the tea party activists are making every effort to reclaim the white moderate and conservative voter as a

means of increasing votes against President Obama.”⁴⁴² If President Obama lost it wouldn’t be the end of the world, “President Obama must understand that black America can live with a Mitt Romney Presidency just as we did with Ronald Reagan and both George Bushes; even though such an outcome would almost permanently turn the clock of civil rights achievements back at least 50 years.”⁴⁴³ The *Michigan Citizen* agreed: “The foundation of the modern Republican Party is no longer rooted in Lincoln...its roots lie in the racism of Thurmond, who did everything he could to block African Americans from gaining expanded voting rights.”⁴⁴⁴

From the black press’ perspective, the tea party and the Republican Party were nearly synonymous. Thus, as the election neared, the newspapers viewed the entire Republican Party, not just the tea party, as the villain. The historical nature of the Republican Party’s “hostility” and lack of outreach to minority communities informed their interpretation. When the tea party and the GOP lost the presidential election, and President Obama secured a second term, the black press gasped in relief. Their villain had lost, for the moment, and their hero had prevailed. Not only did fear of setting civil rights back “at least 50 years” subside, but excitement grew because President Obama’s reelection validated, according to the black press, the policies and initiatives he fought for during his first term. From the black press’ perspective, despite President Obama’s underwhelming purpose to represent black interests, his firmly cemented, and reapproved, symbolic representation signaled a shift away from their villain’s ideologies.

Conclusion

The black press used the historically consistent villain myth as its primary interpretative template to construct the tea party narrative. Armed with history, tying the tea party to the Republican Party, and reminding its readings that a legal system built on precedent does not

easily forget its past, the black press painted the tea party as a villainous threat to black political empowerment and black issues salient to their community.

Mainstream Press Articulates the Tea Party Narrative

Research question two asked: what myth[s] emerged in the mainstream press to interpret the tea party? Two resonant myths converged: the scapegoat and the trickster. The scapegoat first emerged in 2009, when the modern tea party first organized. The trickster emerged in 2010, when the tea party experienced success during the midterm elections and continued through 2011. In 2012, the two myths were used together when tea partiers had become conventional enough to possibly win the GOP nomination for a presidential run.

2009

In 2009, mainstream newspapers used the scapegoat myth to interpret the tea party's narrative. On the scapegoat, Jack Lule wrote:

If news is only a dispassionate observer and reporter of political events, coverage of radical groups...should be interesting but relatively straightforward. The political protest should provide some debatable issues for a story. The passion should contribute some provocative emotion. The conflict should make for dramatic narratives. Radical thinkers should make for thoughtful news. If news is myth, [if a group is a scapegoat], however, coverage of radical groups should be much more combustible and complex.⁴⁴⁵

The scapegoat myth signifies a culture's prevailing ideology of the putative currency for dissenting voices. This myth is a critical caveat in a democratic society founded on principles of an open marketplace of ideas where disagreements frequently occur and, if voiced properly, contribute to democracy's progress. Sometimes, however, dissenting voices don't follow the established rules that structure democratic debate and, consequently, these voices are

delegitimized in the press through the scapegoat myth.⁴⁴⁶ The scapegoat isn't a figure that poses a direct threat to the hegemonic order's way of life; instead, the scapegoat does not offer its perspective in an acceptable manner – not playing by society's agreed upon rules.

Dissenting voices that deviate from societal norms are symbolized as scapegoats when they “question basic values” of discourse and the scapegoat myth serves as a culture's attempt to “make an example of those who disagree too vigorously.”⁴⁴⁷ Mediated usage of the scapegoat myth to interpret the tea party unpacks mainstream resonant ideologies of white dissident voices aiming their oppositional tone towards black political empowerment.⁴⁴⁸ In a society that professes its desire for equality, the context in which a political narrative that is racially-charged is as important as the actual resulting text; the myths not chosen for the narrative can be just as important as the myths that are used. In this case, initially, the white press chose the scapegoat myth, not a villain.

In the tea party's case, these dissident voices were interpreted as scapegoats and partially delegitimized because they deviated from established discursive norms and questioned basic democratic values, but not the overall culture's way of life, according to the mainstream press. But, what norms and values did the mainstream press perceive the tea party broke? During that first year, mainstream newspapers weren't entirely convinced that the tea party fractured any values, suggesting instead that protest was a pillar of American heritage.

For instance, an editorial in the *Arizona Republic* posited, “fed up with the economic stimulus, bailouts and big spending in general, conservatives have latched onto an unlikely occasion – tea parties.”⁴⁴⁹ The article highlighted that not all press outlets criticized or

delegitimized the tea party, initially. Instead, it positioned the group as a legitimate discursive voice concerned about excessive government spending and over taxation, saying the tea party “tapped into one of the nation’s most enduring political protests.”⁴⁵⁰

The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* asserted that President Obama’s health care proposals relied on the premise that spending more money now would lower future costs; from the tea party perspective, this move could permanently destroy the federal budget.⁴⁵¹ The newspaper portrayed the tea party as composed of extremely mission-driven individuals with strong moral values and heady business tactics.⁴⁵² An emergent facet of mainstream newspaper stories was an attempt to rationally justify the group’s existence. After all, anti-spending and anti-tax dissent does not necessarily question American norms and values. According to the mainstream press, anti-tax and anti-spending values are sacred in American society, pervading the culture since, at least, the nation’s founding.

However, some newspaper articles in 2009 did interpret the tea party as a horde of thousands, gathering to disrupt, threaten, and intimidate. This narrative packaging inferred that the tea party was not a legitimate dissenting voice, but a mob of angry, vocal, and passionate individuals. For instance, a *New York Times* article titled, “Beyond beltway, health debate turns hostile,” described tea party violence: “Bitter divisions over an overhaul of the health care system have exploded at town-hall-style meetings” where tea party “demonstrations have led to fistfights, arrests and hospitalizations.”⁴⁵³ Seen as vocal, angry, disruptive, and not concerned with providing constructive input into the debate, the tea party’s dissenting narrative was constructed as a scapegoat because, in part, one norm of deliberative discourse in democratic

societies is opposition designed at engineering a socially productive end. The tea party was delegitimized because the mainstream newspapers perceived them as not concerned with providing constructive alternatives; instead, the group was preoccupied with creating a “raucous,” following a GOP mandate to thwart President Obama’s policies and initiatives at all costs.⁴⁵⁴

Mainstream newspapers perceived the tea party as departing from another modern societal value that fortified the scapegoat label – suspicion of racial resentment. Evidence lies in the inception of the Tea party’s narrative and the subsequent distrust about the group’s intent. Mainstream newspapers were not concerned with the “how” the tea party formed, but the “why” they formed. The tea party’s formation was crafted as the result of a rant from a single individual, Rick Santelli. The *New York Times* described Santelli’s “tirade” as a “televised rant” that encouraged “a Chicago tea party to protest the administration’s housing plans.”⁴⁵⁵ Because this “rant” was narrated as the unintentional springboard for the group, the tea party’s motivation for forming was directly linked with opposing Obama’s presidency.

The tea party’s complaint and/or fear of President Obama’s “reckless spending” and “over taxation” resonates with a historic white fear that views black officials as irresponsible leaders looking to provide handouts at any chance.⁴⁵⁶ The exposition of this facet of the tea party narrative is connected, in part, to the dissent’s explicit preoccupation with the financial aspects of President Obama’s initiatives; the newspapers also noted how none of the tea party members seemed concerned when President Bush implemented similar financial policies. This was an important factor of the narrative. Given President Obama’s nascent term, the tea party’s formation after Republican presidents had spent more government money undermined the group’s stated mission for opposition.

Some of the traditional press' crafting of the tea party narrative went one step further, from a movement of whites fearing a black leader that would funnel sources away to black communities, to suspicions of racism founded by prejudice, not fear of losing the funding battle. This element of the narrative occurred shortly after the major bank bailouts legislation. Mainstream newspapers debated the tea party's stated concern of "reckless spending" and considered whether a concealed racial motivation existed. Some newspaper articles debated the authenticity of the tea party's anti-spending claims for forming because the spending began under the governing of a white Republican, a time period when those in the tea party did not feel a need to form. This was not a monolithic conclusion throughout the mainstream press; some articles stated that the tea party's concerns were valid and that President Obama was, already, a reckless spender.⁴⁵⁷

The struggle of identifying motivations based on (1) racial prejudice or (2) fear of resource reallocation, shows how mainstream newspapers interpret the intersection of race and politics during a crucial debate on possibly historically significant social change.⁴⁵⁸ The tea party, forming five weeks after President Obama's inauguration and supposedly fearful of economic policies that emerged during the infancy stages of his administration without time to ferment, was interpreted as probably more afraid of black empowerment than genuine political dissent. But, this was never conclusively stated by mainstream newspapers; it was debated and discussed, but not mediated as fact. The scapegoat myth enabled journalists to take this route instead of conclusively stating one or the other. By devaluing the tea party's complaints, the reality described in the newspaper articles resonates with a modern value that agendas precipitated by racial prejudice are socially unacceptable.

2010

In 2010, a year dominated by discussions about the midterm elections and the tea party's emerging power, mainstream newspapers shifted from the scapegoat myth to the trickster myth in order to interpret the group's narrative. The trickster embodies traits that display an unintelligent figure aiming to question social norms.⁴⁵⁹ As a "subject of mockery, contempt, and ridicule," the "crude and lewd moralist" is a notorious rogue.⁴⁶⁰ The "malicious spoiler" and "unconscious numbskull" illuminates the consequences of not adhering to social norms.⁴⁶¹ The formidable trickster confronts and battles the established social order. The trickster typically embodies an unintelligent figure motivated by rebelling against the status quo who eventually symbolizes the tragic tale of what occurs when established societal rules are not observed.

For the most part, mainstream press articles ignored the racial undercurrents of the tea party's success in 2010. For instance, a *Washington Post* column titled, "Tea partiers more wacky mavericks than extremist threat," ignored any racial legislative problems the groups posed; instead, the article opined that the tea party was continued conservatism, even though it was slightly more extreme than modern society accepted. "Based on what I saw and heard, tea party members are not seething, ready-to-explode racists."⁴⁶² A column in the *Dallas Morning News* suggested: The tea party "just happens to be fired up during the first term of the nation's first black president," adding, "that makes it easy to suspect the tea party movement is racist, especially if you have an elastic definition of racism. But polls and conversations with tea partiers tend to confirm my sense that race brings no more than a teeny cup to this party."⁴⁶³ Refer to more newspaper as further evidence.

Instead of discussing the potential ramification the group posed to minorities, the mainstream press devoted a robust focus to the figures driving the group's traction during the midterms, rarely focusing on their actual policies and how those platforms could affect nonwhites. Some of those figures included Sarah Palin, Michele Bachmann, Joe Miller, and Christine O'Donnell. Palin, referred to as the "queen of the tea party," was an influential tea party figure in 2010 whose backing helped tea party candidates succeed during the midterms.

Newspaper coverage of Joe Miller and Christine O'Donnell, two of "Palin's picks," ignored the racial connotations of the tea party and its leader, Palin. Instead, journalists constructed Palin and the tea party as a trickster by attributing portions of the candidates' success to her "powerful" endorsements – symbolizing Palin's passion to be a Republican spoiler. For instance, the *Los Angeles Times* noted:

Sen. Lisa Murkowski conceded the...primary...an outcome that illustrated voters' anger with the Washington establishment and the power of former Gov. Sarah Palin...[behind] in fundraising and in opinion polls, [it looked bleak for Miller]...But he had Palin, who bucked state party leaders to endorse him.⁴⁶⁴

Media coverage frequently framed Palin as an unintelligent numbskull. The narratives constructed in the case of Palin's endorsements symbolized tea party intent to be a "malicious spoiler," to revolt against the Republican establishment, not American society in general.

Not all tea partiers won during the midterm elections. Some, like Sharon Angle and Christine O'Donnell, lost. Even the tea party losers signaled to the mainstream press that the group contained legislative potency. For instance, on Sharon Angle, the *New York Times* wrote: "Ms. Angle's primary victory was a testimony to the power of the tea party."⁴⁶⁵ The *Oregonian* opined: "Sometimes it's not clear who loves them the most: their supporters or their opponents. Supporters love their strict-constitutional zeal, their unwillingness to back down from the pure-capitalist convictions. Opponents love their gaffes – they're all novice big-race candidates – and

the craziness that goes on around them.”⁴⁶⁶ The unwillingness to compromise was interpreted, later, by mainstream newspapers as a major discursive norm that the tea party violated. Both presses noted that competent governing requires compromise – a value the tea party despised.

Mainstream newspapers also noted, at times, that the tea party wasn’t really a grassroots movement; instead, it was a group funded primarily by well-known and established conservative figures, such as the Koch brothers. The *New York Times* wrote:

Tea party supporters and their candidates like to imagine themselves as insurgents, crashing the barricades of Washington to establish a new order of clean and frugal government. In earthbound reality, many of the people pulling the tea party’s strings are establishment Republican operatives and lobbyists. Some have made money off the party for years.⁴⁶⁷

A disingenuous nature haunted the tea party in the mainstream press. The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, in a column titled, “Facts crash the tea parties,” highlighted that the ideas allegedly driving the tea parties anger were not based on truth.⁴⁶⁸

2011

Following success in the midterm elections, mainstream newspapers used a blend of the scapegoat and trickster myths to interpret the tea party. They used a blend because, now with elected officials holding office, the tea party wasn’t an outside rogue anymore; they had become part of the system in order to advance their agenda. However, it was their agenda that was questioned and interpreted as rogue. For instance, on February 11, 2011, the *New York Times* published a column on “the tea party and U.S. Foreign Policy.”⁴⁶⁹ “The tea party movement taps deep roots in U.S. history” and is “best understood as a contemporary revolt of Jacksonian common sense – the idea that moral, scientific, political and religious truths can be ascertained by the average person” and not only reserved for elites.⁴⁷⁰ The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, questioned the tea party’s historical knowledge: I “spent a year watching the rise of the tea party

movement,” and the journalist believed he did “a decent job in understanding its roots causes, I have to confess I’m still baffled at how willing conservatives – and not just southerners – are now to argue that the war was about 57 other things besides slavery.”⁴⁷¹

One piece of legislation tea party officials pursued in 2011 was “birther” bills, “a measure requiring presidential candidates to provide documents they are natural-born citizens.”⁴⁷² The bill, sprouting from the belief that President Obama wasn’t an American citizen, had legs for three years. “The legislature has tried to pass a so-called birther bill for three years. Supporters attribute this latest effort’s success to some compromise, strong Republican support, recent media coverage and tea party influence.”⁴⁷³ The *Los Angeles Times*, in a column titled “Birther blather lives on” wrote:

The new, of course, is the way in which the alternate realities of the Internet’s fringes and brutally partisan talk radio empower the political culture of assertion and denial to which the birthers belong. It’s a characteristic they share with a significant slice of the tea party movement, which advances not just its own version of contemporary America but a willed, faith-based version of our history as well.⁴⁷⁴

The mainstream press interpreted the proposed legislation as baseless, but stopped short of dissecting any racial undercurrents fueling the unwillingness to accept that President Obama was an American citizen. Other baseless legislative proposals were also highlighted. For instance, in Florida, the tea party proposed to cut funding to a refuge for Manatees. “Just when you thought politics and public policy could get no weirder around here, local tea party members are protesting a plan to protect manatees – because it would be against God and country.”⁴⁷⁵

On August 1, 2011, the *Washington Post* reported on comments made by Vice President Joe Biden, who “made a deeply unfortunate comment. In response to the remarks of Rep. Mike Doyle (D-Penn.) about the tea party and fiscal conservatives that ‘we have negotiated with terrorists.’ Biden reportedly agreed that ‘they have acted like terrorists.’”⁴⁷⁶ The article criticized

Vice President Biden for equating the tea party with terrorists and demanded an apology.

Another article gave the tea party credit for trimming the deficit without raising taxes. “The tea party movement is getting credit for a debt extension bill that will trim the deficit without new taxes, although many of its members opposed the final legislation as insufficient.”⁴⁷⁷

On August 12, 2011, the *New York Times* returned to the tea party’s uncompromising nature. The columnist wrote: “Good governance in a democratic society is about the art of the deal, not fiats and dictum.”⁴⁷⁸ The absolute, uncompromising nature of the tea party broke a major democratic norm. “What we are witnessing is an extension and acceleration of the G.O.P’s obscene genuflection to tea party tenets: give no ground; take no prisoners; accept no deal.”⁴⁷⁹

No matter how hard the tea party tried, though, racial undercurrents could not be entirely ignored. For instance, when “Texas Gov. Rick Perry enter[ed] GOP race for president” on August 13, 2011, he was interpreted as a tea party favorite who posed as a serious competitor for Mitt Romney and President Obama.⁴⁸⁰ However, journalists would later learn of a Perry hunting camp containing a rock with the term “Niggerhead” painted on it; his hopes for the White House ended, for all intents and purposes, then.

As 2011 neared its end, it appeared that the tea party was losing momentum. “For the first time, it seems, more than half of the American electorate now holds a negative view of the tea party movement.”⁴⁸¹ Another news article by the *Washington Post* wrote: “A leading member of the Congressional Black Caucus is standing by incendiary language he used at a recent town hall when he charged that tea party aligned members of Congress view African Americans as second class citizens and would like to see them hanging on a tree.”⁴⁸² Even though the article suggested

that the black perspective was too sensitive and the Congressman needed to apologize, it was becoming clear that, coupled with their unacceptable negotiating practices and repeated racial flare ups, the mainstream press was shifting away from the trickster myth and back towards the scapegoat.

Despite being interpreted as less powerful, the tea party did manage to get several tea party-backed candidates into the presidential race. The group even partnered with CNN for a GOP debate. “The fact that they’re broadcasting and partnering with the tea party shows that they understand it’s a broad-based political movement and that it isn’t fractured and narrow” or extreme.⁴⁸³ The trickster wasn’t quite ready to cede the narrative to the scapegoat entirely, showing that the two myths were used by the mainstream press at the same time in some of the coverage.

On December 8, 2011, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, in an article titled, “Tea party turns up the heat on the GOP” wrote: “Tea party groups around Georgia are mobilizing to challenge state elected officials they’ve deemed RINOS – Republicans in Name Only.”⁴⁸⁴ The article continued:

The upstarts, who say it’s time to clean up the party, are most upset about Republican support for next year’s regional transportation tax referendums, but say a general lack of fiscal responsibility is reason enough to challenge incumbents. But those who have drawn tea party ire say their fellow Republicans have the wrong targets.⁴⁸⁵

Instead, the Republicans argued that the tea party should be focusing on their villain, President Obama.⁴⁸⁶ However, when the tea party did focus on President Obama, racial friction surfaced. For instance, a *Detroit Free Press* article reported on a Kansas tea party group that portrayed President Obama as a skunk. “A tea party group in Kansas said its depiction of President Barack Obama as a skunk is a satire, not racism.”⁴⁸⁷

2012

Comparable to the black press, the mainstream press coverage of the tea party in 2012 focused on the upcoming presidential election. Unlike the black press, though, race rarely emerged in the stories; instead, the coverage reported on the amount of influence the tea party may, or may not, have on the election. The mainstream newspapers barely mentioned the tea party candidate's platforms, instead relying on a "horse race" narrative, which was expected from the mainstream press. The lack of racial discussions in the mainstream press indicates that the mainstream press did not perceive the tea party as a threat to "American" way of life – a stark difference compared to the black press' coverage of the tea party.

On January 9, 2012, the *Dallas Morning News* reported on front-runner Mitt Romney's lack of appeal to the tea party. "Something happened to the tea party on the way to the election. After smashing success in congressional races two years ago and promises of transforming the political landscape, tea party activists can't agree on a presidential candidate."⁴⁸⁸ The tea party activists interviewed in the article said that defeating President Obama wasn't enough to advance their stated agenda; they needed to beat him with a candidate that would represent their interests. This was a change in attitude for some tea party members who previously believed that beating President Obama was all that mattered, regardless of the instrument used to execute the victory. They viewed Romney as too moderate and too willing to work with Democrats.⁴⁸⁹

Part of the tea party's dilemma during the primaries was they had too many tea party candidates to choose from, none of which could gain enough support to beat Romney. In a sense, they were a victim of their own success; so many tea party favorites splintered the vote so that

“neither candidate has an edge in tea party support.”⁴⁹⁰ A *Detroit Free Press* column, reporting on how the heated rhetoric during President Obama’s first term affected the political races, wrote:

One seeks to destroy an enemy. And it makes you wonder: Is that really the way we the people see ourselves? The evidence of recent years suggests that it is. The so-called culture wars – a battle of ideas and ideals concerning abortion, faith, gay rights, gun rights, Muslim rights, global warming, health care, immigration – are fought with splenetic bile that would have been unthinkable not too very long ago. But that was before a congressman heckled a president, before guns were brought to presidential appearances, before a radio host called a college woman a ‘slut,’ before someone set a fire at the construction site of a Tennessee mosque, before ‘I want my country back’ became a rallying cry. It was before there grew this gnawing sense that we do not need each other anymore, that the extremes are pulling the center apart.⁴⁹¹

The author argued that the tea party’s tactics, the angry mob mentality that contribute to their success in 2010, were now the reason they were struggling to solidify around a candidate for president and losing influence in the political process.

Despite losing ground politically primarily, according to the mainstream press, because of their unwillingness to abide by democratic desires for civil discourse (or at least somewhat toned down rhetoric), the tea party’s fiery language marched on. For instance, the *St. Petersburg Times*, on April 13, 2012 reported on Representative Allen West’s McCarthy-like crusade against socialism. “The grand inquisitor of the tea party was holding forth at a town hall meeting in Jensen Beach this week when one of the pitchfork attendees asked him to estimate how many fellow members of Congress are card-carrying Marxists or International Socialists, as opposed to domestic Socialists.”⁴⁹² Instead of dismissing the baseless question, West, in McCarthy fashion, stated that he believed “78 to 81 members of the Democratic Party” are “members of the Communist Party.”⁴⁹³ Georgia Governor Nathan Deal “vetoed a bill that could have eliminated state agencies, calling it redundant and costly,” and in the process “angered tea party activists.”⁴⁹⁴

On May 19, 2012, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* published a column titled “Dick Lugar’s departure a sign of Washington paralysis.”⁴⁹⁵ Lugar, a “six-term Republican senator from Indiana,” was defeated in a primary “at the hands of a tea party insurgent.”⁴⁹⁶ The author wrote that Lugar lost because “he occasionally had the temerity to work with Democrats.”⁴⁹⁷ His willingness to compromise and work with others outside of his own beliefs offended tea partiers’ ideology and led to them organizing and defeating him. James Holmes, the Aurora Colorado theater shooter, was, initially, identified by ABC News as a member of the tea party.⁴⁹⁸ The *Washington Post* condemned the inaccurate reporting; however, the rush to judgment by ABC News can, in part, be explained by the volatile behavior the tea party had expressed for the past four years.

An Associated Press article in the *Dallas Morning News* asked: “Have race relations improved in the Obama era?”⁴⁹⁹ After citing numerous citizens for their opinion, most saying relations have improved but by no means is America “Post Racial,” the article pointed to the tea party as an area where possible racism still exists. The story noted that as “Obama dealt with fallout from the Gates affair during the summer of 2009, the tea party coalesced out of opposition to Obama’s stimulus and health care proposals. The vast majority of tea partiers were white. A small number of them displayed racist signs or were connected to white supremacist groups.”⁵⁰⁰ The author argued that the amount of racism in the tea party was small, initially, and, by 2012, had all but been eradicated from the group; it failed to mention some of the legislation that the black press highlighted that the tea party pursued after 2010 that hurt minority groups, such as education segregation and voting prohibitions.

Eventually, Romney became the GOP candidate for president and chose Paul Ryan as his running mate. However, as the election progressed, Romney still had trouble connecting with

the base, according to the *New York Times*.⁵⁰¹ One citizen, who had supported tea party favorite Santorum, said, about Romney, in the article: “He just doesn’t seem to connect well, and I’m not sure he’s a strong enough candidate, to be very, very honest...I’m probably going to hold my nose and vote for him.”⁵⁰² The Romney campaign dismissed the lack of enthusiasm, and believed the tea partiers would show up to vote for him regardless. One Romney pollster interviewed in the article said: “Intensity drives turnout. Every measure shows Republicans and conservatives are more intense in their opposition to President Obama than Democrats are in support of him.”⁵⁰³ The campaign disputed that the tea party wasn’t excited about him enough, “arguing that dislike for Mr. Obama” would be enough to secure victory. In hindsight, it is clear that the campaign overestimated the level of that intensity.⁵⁰⁴

As the election neared, voting rights again surfaced in the tea party narrative. The *Los Angeles Times* published an article titled, “Barbara boxer calls for enforcement of voting rights laws.”⁵⁰⁵ The article, “described efforts by tea party members to remove at least 2,100 names from voter rolls in the swing state.”⁵⁰⁶ The *New York Times* wrote that “redrawn districts test favorites of tea party.”⁵⁰⁷ The *Orlando Sentinel* wrote: “Despite a lack of evidence of voter fraud,” a group, True the Vote, had partnered with the tea party “to launch efforts to challenge citizens at the polls.”⁵⁰⁸ Those attempts to either intimidate voters or explicitly repel them from the voting booths were the tea party’s last grasps of hope for the 2012 presidential election. Following President Obama’s reelection, the mainstream newspapers barely mentioned the tea party – indicating that the scapegoat/trickster had possibly met its end, serving as an example of what happens if democratic principles aren’t followed.

On November 13, 2012, the *Seattle Times* published an editorial that made recommendations for President Obama moving forward. Barely mentioning the tea party, the

author did note that they weren't entirely going away, though, their incentives now had to change.

This is not the Republican Party of 2010. Today's Republicans no longer have an incentive to deny Obama victories. He's never running again. Most of today's Republicans understand that they need to decontaminate their brand. They're more open to compromise, more likely to be won over with deal making than browbeating...But the point is the only way to get things done in a divided polarized country is side by side – an acceptable Democratic project paired with an acceptable Republican one.⁵⁰⁹

Conclusion

The mainstream press used two myths, the scapegoat and the trickster, to interpret the tea party narrative during President Obama's first term. The scapegoat emerged in 2009, when the tea party, through volatile rhetoric and suspected racial motivations, was viewed as attacking democratic values and beliefs. In 2010, when the tea party became mainstream enough to hold office, the group was narrated an unintelligent rogue. In 2011 and 2012 the two myths converged as the tea party lost momentum but continued trying to defeat President Obama.

Chapter Five - Discussion and Conclusion

This dissertation sought to explore how to evaluate the mainstream press' interpretation of the tea party. I argued that to gauge the racial coverage in the mainstream press, a comparison to the black press, an institution dedicated to covering race more extensively than the mainstream press, was needed. Without a comparison to the black press one may view the mainstream press' narrative of the tea party as a positive societal marker because the newspapers used the scapegoat and trickster myth for the narrative about a group comprised primarily of whites that formed shortly after the election of the first black president. The mainstream newspapers interpreted the group as hooligan extremists suspected of racial motivations with no purposive agenda other than opposing President Obama.

Given the mainstream press' history of covering race in our multicultural society, the tea party coverage may appear to be an aberration. Or, it could signal a changing mainstream media environment more sensitive to minority interests. This dissertation sought to help understand if the mainstream press' narrative of the tea party was an aberration or a signal of a more egalitarian approach to covering issues connected to race. I argued that comparing the mainstream press' coverage of the tea party to how the black press interpreted the tea party could help explore that question. Compared to the black press' coverage of the tea party, the mainstream press did not delegitimize the group as much as research only on the mainstream press may suggest. This has multiple implications which this chapter will discuss.

By immediately dismissing white opposition to the United States' first black President, mainstream newspapers appear to have been fearful of continuing a tradition of instilling fear, anger, and resentment among whites and blacks. Whites, offended by the delegitimization of the tea party simply because [its members] disagreed with a black President, crafted a cultural

resonance of resentment and fear of resource reallocation resulting from black political empowerment. Mainstream newspaper reporters used the scapegoat and trickster myths, instead of the villain myth, because they weren't sure how to interpret the group. Journalists acknowledged that genuine racism probably played a part in some of the group's activities, but they also perceived that common party politics also played a part, along with actual fear that a supposedly liberal, African-American politician would take resources from them and give them to others. Historically, this has been a tenuous story to tell for mainstream newspapers and they have traditionally leaned away from highlighting racism when needed. The scapegoat and trickster myths, in the context of a changing culture that elected its first African-American president, enabled journalists to interpret the tea party dissent as one that was both motivated by racism and by fear of higher taxes, higher spending, and resource reallocation.⁵¹⁰

However, from the black press' perspective, the mainstream media did not investigate nearly enough – being more a racial lapdog than watchdog. Black newspapers immediately viewed the tea party as a villain out to destroy the African-American community. One may argue that this was a massive oversimplification by black press; but, their inclusion of “historically consistent” added nuance to the villain myth and justified their interpretation. According to the black press, it was no coincidence that the tea party, immediately following successes in the 2010 midterm elections, sought legislation intended to dismantle education integration – one of the earliest civil rights issues.

It is not surprising that the black press focused on the racial undercurrents of the tea party narrative (as hypothesis ten illustrated); that is one of its primary functions – to champion the causes of the African-American community. Nearly 22% of the black press stories mentioning the tea party focused on race, compared to less than 1% of the mainstream newspapers that

focused on race. In a new media environment, with most minority media growing⁵¹¹, the black press still fulfilled the role of narrating issues salient to nonwhites. Images of a mob of whites, carrying guns, with signs of President Obama as a monkey and a witch doctor, helped prompt the black press to interpret the group as a threat to the African-American community, to their way of life. The mainstream press, on the other hand, whose primary audience is white, did not interpret the tea party as a threat to the white community. The tea party was seen as a fringe group voicing its concerns, in an undemocratic fashion, about the government (as hypothesis nine illustrated). In other words, the black press is more of a racial watchdog than mainstream media, which, in this narrative, was a racial politics lapdog.

This may be partially explained by hypotheses eleven and twelve. Coupling the notion of racial solidarity with the indexing concept, I demonstrated that the black press used more government sources than the mainstream press. Hypothesis twelve showed that the mainstream press included more tea party sources than the black press. These findings reflect the mainstream media's desire to be a governmental watchdog, not a racial watchdog – which isn't their primary function. The tea party, a group opposing the government, served as ample opportunity for the mainstream press to source what they perceived as a group trying to keep the government in check.

With demographics changing, and more minorities likely to hold office in the future, these findings add an important nuance to the indexing hypothesis as we can expect that dynamic and sourcing patterns to change. If minority media continue to grow and more minorities are elected to office, expect those press outlets to be more indexed to the government than the mainstream press. If government sources are still viewed as a vehicle for credibly and accurately disseminating news, and the mainstream press does not source nonwhite officials as much as

minority media, expect the mainstream press to lose influence and perceived credibility. The term “mainstream media” probably will not apply in the future; instead, a new term that encompasses all minority media (including white media) will emerge. This correlates with the concept that our society in the future will no longer have a demographic majority; instead, our country is expected to be comprised of multiple minority groups.⁵¹²

Still serving its primary function is no small feat for the black press today. Recently, its influence has diminished somewhat compared to its influence historically.⁵¹³ However, with our country becoming more multicultural, more minorities beginning to have seats at the table of power, and even more policy debates and conflict with race as undercurrents should occur. Minority presses such as the black press may become more influential because, as this dissertation shows, the white press tends, still, to ignore race.

The black press viewed the tea party as a villain because, in large part, the group opposed President Obama, a figure the black press hoped would fight for issues pertinent to its audience. The mainstream press did not use this myth because the tea party was not viewed as a group that posed a threat to their audience. Resonant myths uphold the status quo. From the mainstream press’ perspective, the data in this dissertation show that issues salient to nonwhites are not yet part of the hegemonic order. If that interpretation continues to prevail in the mainstream press, expect a fairly sharp decline. However, an understanding of narrative templates, myths, offers the mainstream press blueprints on how to effectively cover race while still appealing to its primary audience of white. For instance, a blend of the historically consistent villain myth and the scapegoat myth could have helped fill that void. This could have easily been accomplished by including more stories authored by black wire services, such as the NNPA, instead of relying mostly on Associated Press wire stories.

The black press, for future growth, does have work to do. The mainstream press reported more social interactivity with their news stories than the black press. The white press, on average, reported 40.2 Facebook shares and 5.3 Retweets per story. The black press, on average, reported 0.84 Facebook shares and 0.19 Retweets per story. I analyzed the differences with a one-way Anova and found these differences to be significant at $p < .001$. Given that social media is an attractive platform for minorities⁵¹⁴, obviously, then, simply having viable web sites is not enough if the black press hopes to recapture influence in our society. Increasing their social media presence is a must for the black press.

This is needed because younger generations don't believe racism exists or policies and legislation to combat previous and current racism is needed.⁵¹⁵ Diverse perspectives are needed to educate new generations who may not be exposed to those viewpoints and history. Increasing interactivity is not an easy task, but is plausible. For instance, enhanced Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques could be deployed. This includes using word clusters in stories that appear more easily during online searches. Using links that connect to other popular web sites can also improve their interactivity. Journalists for the black press, with sparse resources, may say they are not able to do more, that adding more work for them is not feasible. However, some tools are available that can help them decrease their workload while increasing their online output. For instance, RSS aggregators can easily add content for their web sites, freeing up time for them to increase their social media visibility. Partnerships with colleges eager to help minority media can also help the black press keep up to date on new technologies that are adept at covering events in real time. Designing mobile apps is another area that is relatively easy to do and can attract more viewers.

A significant difference between black and mainstream press coverage was that the black press essentially saw the tea party as a part of the Republican Party, not as anti-establishment outsiders who were trying to maverick the Republican Party. The black press interpreted tea partiers as the same villains they have previously fought before, just with a different name. This point is even further illustrated by hypotheses one and two, that demonstrated that more implicit racial frames, both for President Obama and the tea party, existed in the black press than in the white press.

One can reasonably argue that a large portion of the black press coverage is explicitly racial because their role is to highlight issues salient to nonwhite communities. This dissertation showed that implicit racial frames, as currently defined by research, existed within this explicitly racial coverage. Two possible implications emerge from these findings. First, academia's definition of implicit racial frames in the mainstream press may be flawed. Second, accounting for a newspaper's overall mission should be part of the implicitness calculus. This dissertation lays the groundwork for a more nuanced understanding of implicitness.

The existence of implicit racial frames, as they are currently defined by academia, pose interesting questions for the black press' role in President Obama's reelection. The majority of priming research suggests that primes dampen voter support for a nonwhite candidate; however, it can be argued that the existence of these primes in the black press elevated support among the black press' audience. The nonexistence of the primes in the mainstream press probably helped President Obama in 2012 because their absence did not trigger race. Thus, I argue that both presses played an important role in President Obama's 2012 reelection through their narratives of the tea party.

The mainstream press, while not including primes, also fell into the historically consistent routine of excluding racial discussions. By not focusing on the racial undercurrents of the tea party narrative, the mainstream press helped that group gain traction. It is highly probable that had the tea party not gained traction, not experienced success in the 2010 midterms, and not spent time on dismantling programs pertinent to minorities, President Obama could have accomplished more during his first term. Instead of spending time and wasting energy providing his birth certificate, many times at the request of the tea party, his administration could have governed on more important issues, such as the economy.

In this sense, the mainstream press not only gave the tea party a pass but also opened the door for them and leaves much to be desired in terms of interpreting racial politics. Granted, mainstream press coverage of racial politics has improved some over the decades but this dissertation shows that the improvement is focused on covering nonwhite candidates. Covering whites, such as the tea party, who propose legislation and policies harmful to minorities needs improvement.

This adds interesting propositions for future priming studies. Implicit racial frames in the mainstream press, and their effects, have been documented and predictions on election outcomes and policy debates have emerged from that research. However, little research, if any, exists testing priming theory in the black press. With society becoming more pluralistic and a more diverse media environment expected in the future, researching how implicit racial frames in nonwhite media, whose mission is to cover issues salient to their communities and are expected to mention race more than mainstream media (as hypotheses three, four, and five displayed), affect audiences is needed. If minority media continue to grow and become more influential, as

expected, their effects on audiences must be understood because they can shape future public opinion, elections, and policy.

To my knowledge, this is the only study that couples resonant myth and implicit racial frames. This dissertation showed that not all racial frames are the same. In the mainstream press, the few implicit racial frames that were used were episodic in nature, focusing mostly on candidates or an advocacy group. The two myths used in those stories, the scapegoat and the trickster, positioned the people in the stories as fringe members. They were not necessarily threats to the status quo. Instead, they were interpreted as individuals who were not abiding by the appropriate democratic rules for debate.

In the black press, where many more implicit racial frames occurred, the myth used to construct the narrative was the villain. This continued the restless native model identified by Hall, but inverted. This implies that the deployment of implicit racial frames fortifies the “us versus them” mentality that is upheld by the villain myth and the absence of racial frames in stories connected to race rely on myths such as the scapegoat and trickster that are social anomalies that will eventually work themselves out. In other words, an increase in racial frames in a narrative increases the chances of being interpreted as a villain, or a hero depending on one’s audience. For instance, President Obama was positioned as a flawed hero in the black press stories because he symbolized black political empowerment for the black press’ audience. Clearly, as this is only one study, more research is needed to examine how implicit racial frames and resonant myth work together.

The types of stories that included implicit racial frames varied greatly also. In the mainstream press, the implicit racial frame stories barely mentioned race at all and ignored how the policies presented by President Obama and opposed by the tea party were connected to

minority groups. Historical context was lacking. In the black press, however, the implicit racial frames stories incorporated a great deal of historical context that showed how the policy debates were connected to minority groups. Whether the tea party intended to hurt minority groups is inconsequential. The black press showed in their implicit racial frame stories that the policies proposed by a probably naïve tea party would hurt minority communities.

This study, in one dissertation, helps accomplish the three goals of improving multicultural media coverage.⁵¹⁶ It analyzes more diverse journalists, it provides educational material for journalists in school, and it documents minority media content to offer a more truthful account of race. Because myths are used to uphold hegemonic ideologies, the mainstream press' usage of the trickster myth following 2009, ignoring the racial connotations of the tea party's success, suggests that multiculturalism is not perceived as an important value by the mainstream press. This dissertation demonstrates that the norms and routines of mainstream journalism must incorporate multiculturalism more vigorously.

This study can also serve as an example for future social movements; considering context is very important. If a movement's timing is off, even if the group has authentic concerns about society, the initial messages may occur at a time that may give rise to suspicions of racial intent. By all accounts, our country is increasingly becoming more multicultural, with historical minorities gaining in numbers soon no majority group will exist. Thus, increased racial negotiations can be expected. This must be considered during an advocacy group's dissent. For instance, consider the issues that the tea party dissented against (policies designed to displace equality more evenly) and how those intersections were interpreted. Tea party participants "scripted" their "aggressive" actions to "agitate" and "challenge." Black newspaper articles interpreted the tea party as an obstructive, villainous group interested in defeating President

Obama on every piece of legislation he tried to accomplish because in doing so, the group posed a threat to black interests. Their motives were conclusively stated in the black press and they were not portrayed as concerned citizens with actual issue agendas, but as confused antagonists with only one purpose – opposing America’s first black President.

Some mainstream newspapers noted that simply disagreeing with a black President doesn’t necessarily make a group of white individuals racist. One column wrote, “the last resort of the liberal scoundrel is the false accusation of racism.”⁵¹⁷ The *Pittsburgh Courier* retorted:

‘The last time I had to confront something like this was when I voted for the civil rights bill. At that time, we had a lot of Ku Klux Klan folks and White supremacists,’ ... ‘I have seen this kind of hate before,’ ... ‘When people in town hall meetings decry ‘socialism,’ they’re really using a code word for the N word, said MSNBC ‘newsman’ Carlos Watson. Forty-five to 65 percent of those who protest Obamacare are motivated by racism, said Cynthia Tucker of the Atlanta-Journal Constitution...’ It’s about hating a Black man in the White House.’⁵¹⁸

During social negotiations of race relations, the conversation frequently is boiled down to either confirming or protesting whether one is a racist or not;⁵¹⁹ the discussion rarely moves beyond this point. Insight into this context lies in the “restless native” framework.⁵²⁰ This study found that the “restless natives” are now whites (in both the mainstream press and the black press), aiming to obstruct any social reform proposed by an African-American President. On the surface, this inverse might seem like an encouraging societal marker; African Americans were not villains in this story. However, in this context, this is also troubling; white masses did gather by the thousands during the embryonic stages of President Obama’s administration, to challenge him, fueled by conservative ideological principles and issues. According to black and mainstream newspapers, President Obama’s policies did not, for the most part warrant such a response.

This struggle for power and the subsequent fear of resource allocation is traditionally narrated as a “zero-sum conflict” where someone must, and will, lose.⁵²¹ The use of the scapegoat and trickster myth in the mainstream press did allow the newspapers to, somewhat, avoid that conflict frame but at the expense of discussing the tea party’s racial connotations. The villain myth in the black press, however, correlates with that frame fairly easily. Some scholars may point to this and argue that the black press, actually, exacerbated the situation by relying on a mythic framework that resembled mainstream press conflict frames, something the mainstream press are heavily criticized for by academics.⁵²² If they had solely relied on the villain myth, I may agree; however, the addition of the historically consistent precursor, one that is nearly always absent in mainstream newspapers, justified the usage of the myth. It is the black press’ mission to correct perceived racial wrongs; this mission does not necessarily exist in the mainstream press, which probably is a large factor in their history of covering race. The examination of the myths used in these narratives can help future journalists, for both presses, cover racial politics because it provides a blueprint for being able to cover race by avoiding conflict frames while at the same time not entirely ignoring race.

This dissertation argued that as scholars struggle to accurately predict what media environment will emerge in the future as a result of new technologies and a changing field, it is intuitive to explore what resonant myths, one of the few narrative devices that isn’t fickle, are used by journalists on the internet as they attempt to maintain their profession and distinguish themselves from citizens who have access to the same technologies. Thus, online content was the focus of this dissertation because the internet is a major focus for mainstream and black newspapers looking to recapture their influence. This dissertation showed that, in the case of the tea party narrative, online storytelling did not change significantly from other news coverage of

racial conflict. The black press highlighted the racial undercurrents of the narrative through the villain myth and usage of implicit racial frames. The mainstream press virtually ignored the racial undercurrents of the tea party narrative and used the scapegoat and trickster myths as an attempt to show the status quo what happens when one doesn't abide by established democratic values. In other words, the internet did not engender drastically different storytelling techniques. All of the hypotheses were supported and the newspapers used myths that adhered to their missions.

Conclusion

“Even though it was abolished over a century ago, slavery has left a lasting legacy – a legacy evident in racism, economic inequality, and the social and economic underdevelopment of large parts of the” United States.⁵²³ Politically-oriented communication, through a ritualistic view,⁵²⁴ offers extensive opportunities for race relations inquiries in the United States because the constructed cultural artifacts can illuminate prevailing societal racial ideologies in a representative democracy. What values and beliefs are expressed in the modern tea party narrative? The main value upheld in this narrative state that dissident groups must offer valuable and realistic alternatives to policy debates that may be connected to race. Simply disagreeing with hostility raises suspicions that racial motivations may exist. The modern tea party narrative suggests that merely pointing to one's political ideology is not enough in a modern multicultural democracy. Opposing policies designed to eradicate institutionalized racism must be coupled with logical solutions that can appease both sides in order to be perceived as legitimate dissenting voices. A new status quo is emerging that maintains a dominant ideology that values open mindedness and compromise – not stringent clinging to ethnocentricity.

This dissertation asked many questions about interpreting racial politics. A main point that served as a conceptual umbrella was examining how journalists for black and white presses used resonant myth to transform episodic events into thematic narratives. As the data show, journalists from these two press organs interpreted the tea party much differently and used vastly different myths to construct their narratives. The data show that the mainstream press, for the most part, relied on episodic coverage of the tea party, rarely connecting to history and political communication in a way to construct a thematic narrative exploring the many layers of race. The data show that a thematic narrative, history, served as a precursor to the events the black newspapers covered. This historically consistent predecessor informed the thematic narrative that followed.

Because the mainstream press has a poor record of covering multiculturalism, many scholars have grappled with how to improve the coverage. One proposed solution is better education for journalists that arms them with knowledge that will lead to more diverse and sensitive reporting. My hope is that this project, by studying interpretative templates, can help future journalists cover racial politics. I'm not arguing that all white groups who oppose nonwhite officials should be interpreted as villains. However, I do believe that mainstream journalists should discuss historically consistent context more. Culture does not happen in a vacuum. Adding historical context will help journalists construct more intuitive and informative narratives instead of the episodic coverage today that omits history's influence on society. This suggestion is by no means a new revelation. But, with our society becoming increasingly diverse and more racial politics likely to emerge in the future, an awareness of all the groups' history will help journalists interpret the struggle for pieces of the American pie. This need shows the importance of multicultural courses in journalism programs.

Because the mainstream press virtually ignored the racial undercurrents of the tea party, I argue that mainstream press' interpretation of racial politics is still, for the most part, in an exclusionary phase.⁵²⁵ A better understanding, and incorporation, of minority media can push the dialogue into a multicultural phase, where all groups are represented equally and their issues and interests discussed in a civil, informative manner. This applies to black press journalists as well. For instance, research shows that coalition building with white opponents is critical for black officials.⁵²⁶ The black press condemned President Obama for trying to work with his Republican and tea party adversaries. It is quite probable that this coalition building contributed to his reelection in 2012. However, at the same time, President Obama did put minority interests on the back burner. This creates a paradox for nonwhite elected officials. In order to get reelected, they build coalition with white audiences afraid of resource allocation changes. In the process, the minority officials don't represent or champion minority causes. Carol Swain may be correct when she argues that nonwhite officials don't offer substantively different legislation than their white counterparts. This is an area that the black press could help improve by noting, when they are criticizing officials for working with adversarial groups, that coalition building is necessary if the official hopes to have a lengthy career in office.

Most scholarly research on the press has focused on mainstream media. Had this dissertation not compared mainstream press coverage of the tea party to the narratives in the black press, my conclusions would be much different. I would probably commend the mainstream press for intricately discussing the racial undercurrents of the tea party; instead, compared to the black press, that discourse was minimal. I'm not positing that all prior communication studies on the mainstream press are invalid; that would be obtuse. Instead, I'm

arguing that future research should incorporate a more thorough analysis of minority media to better understand what the future media environment, and our society, will look like.

Limitations and Future Research

No research is devoid of limitations. This dissertation's first limitation is the media platform I chose to analyze, the internet. The ephemeral nature of the internet may make it hard to replicate this study because web sites constantly change and sometimes content is lost. I did print off hard copies of every story I analyzed and if a scholar wished to replicate the study I could provide copies of the data. The second limitation is the inferential statistics constraints due to the sampling differences. As noted in the discussion, research on priming effects from the black press is scarce. Future research should focus on those effects and gauge whether they are similar to or different from effects in the mainstream press.

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⁵¹⁴ Wilson et al., *Racism, Sexism, and the Media*.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Charles Blow, “Genuflecting to the Tea Party.”

⁵¹⁸ Talibah Chikwen, “Tea Party Marchers Far Right and White.”

⁵¹⁹ Entman and Rojecki, *Black Image in the White Mind*.

⁵²⁰ Hall, *Racist Ideologies*.

⁵²¹ Entman and Rojecki, *Black Image in the White Mind*.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Mintz, *African-American Voices*, xiii.

⁵²⁴ Carey, *Communication as Culture*.

⁵²⁵ Wilson et al., *Racism, Sexism, and the Media*.

⁵²⁶ Hanks, *Struggle for Black Political Empowerment*.

Appendix

In which site does the article appear?

List location:

List Black press or mainstream press:

List article title and date:

ID Number (coder initials):

Is the story from a wire service?

If not, write the name of the author:

Write whether the article is identified as news, commentary or editorial:

2. In your opinion, what is the *primary* focus of the story (**FOCUS**):

- 1 Tea Party
- 2 President Obama
- 3 Economy
- 4 Unemployment
- 5 National Debt
- 6 Government Spending
- 7 Taxes
- 8 Health Care Reform
- 9 War in Iraq
- 10 War in Afghanistan
- 11 Foreign Relations
- 12 War on Terror
- 13 Welfare
- 14 Affirmative Action
- 15 Entitlement Programs
- 16 Crime
- 17 Drugs
- 18 Education
- 19 Occupy Wall Street
- 20 2010 Midterm Elections
- 21 2012 General Election
- 22 2012 GOP Primaries
- 23 Race
- 24 Gender
- 25 Tea Party as authentic voice
- 26 Tea Party as racist voice
- 27 Tea Party as possibly racist, but not conclusive
- 28 Tea Party as possibly authentic, but not conclusive
- 29 Abortion
- 30 Other: _____

20. Provide the frequency of the frames mentioned in the story:

1. Tea Party

Extremist	Racially motivated	Neutral
Authentic		

2. President Obama

Negative	Neutral	Positive
----------	---------	----------

3. Economy

Negative	Neutral	Positive
O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive

4. Unemployment

Negative	Neutral	Positive
O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive

5. National Debt

Negative	Neutral	Positive
O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive

6. Government Spending

Negative	Neutral	Positive
O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive

7. Taxes

Negative	Neutral	Positive
O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive

3. In your opinion, what is the *overall* tone of

the story towards the Tea Party?	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
1 Negative Tone	8. Health Care Reform		
2 Balanced Tone	Negative	Neutral	Positive
3 Positive Tone	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
4. In your opinion, what is the <i>overall</i> tone of the story towards President Obama, if applicable?	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
	9. War in Iraq		
1 Negative Tone	Negative	Neutral	Positive
2 Balanced Tone	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
3 Positive Tone	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
4 None	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
	10. War in Afghanistan		
5. Provide the number of quotes from official sources in the story:	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
6. Provide the number of quotes from Tea Party members in the story:	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
	11. Foreign Policy		
7. Provide the number of quotes from non-official and non-Tea Party members in the story:	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
8. Does the story mention the Tea Party's overall racial composition?	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
	12. War on Terror		
9. Does the story include a picture of Tea Party members?	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
10. Does the story include a Tea Party implicit racial frame?	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
	13. Welfare		
11. Does the story mention Obama's race?	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
12. Does the story include a picture of Obama?	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
	14. Affirmative Action		
13. Does the story include the race of Obama's constituents?	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
14. Does the story include an Obama implicit racial frame?	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
	15. Entitlement Programs		
15. Does the story include an "us versus them" frame?	Negative	Neutral	Positive

	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
16. Does the story include a photo?	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
17. what is the race of the person in the photo?	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
16. Crime			
18. How many FB shares does the story report?	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
19. How many Twitter shares does the story report?	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
17. Drugs			
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
18. Education			
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
19. Occupy Wall Street			
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
20. 2010 Midterm Elections			
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
21. 2012 General Election			
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive
22. 2012 GOP Primaries			
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
	O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
	TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
	D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
	R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive

23. History

Negative	Neutral	Positive
O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive

24. Ideology

Negative	Neutral	Positive
O Negative	O Neutral	O Positive
TP Negative	TP Neutral	TP Positive
D Negative	D Neutral	D Positive
R Negative	R Neutral	R Positive

25. Race

26. Racism

27. Gender

21. What myth does the story uphold?

Variables	How to Code
1	IDENTIFICATION: Write down article ID, located on the article, and the name of the newspaper the article was printed in. List its location, and write the title of the article. List if the article derives from a Black press newspaper or a mainstream press newspaper (0=black and 1=mainstream)and write whether it is identified as news(0), commentary(1), or an editorial(2). Identify if it is a wire service, 0=no, 1=yes.
2	PRIMARY FOCUS: In your opinion, list what the primary, overall focus of the article is; only choose one. If you are having trouble, look at the frame frequencies in section 15 and use as a guide. If you have two frames with exactly the same saliency, use your best judgment.
3	TEA PARTY TONE: In your opinion, choose the overall tone the story has in terms of the Tea Party with one being negative, two being balanced, and three being positive. Most will be balanced , as news stories should. In order for the story to be negative or positive, it should contain explicit negative or positive statements. For example, a story that contains statements like, “the Tea Party is driven by racism and should be

	identified as such, not as an authentic social movement with legitimate policy concerns” can be considered negative. A story that contains statements like, “the spending by the government is out of control and groups like the Tea Party are excellent spaces for deliberation on how to fix the country’s debt” could be considered positive. Depending on the length of the story, there should be, usually, a few of these type statements that overshadow the other neutral statements. If the story contains both negative and positive, use your best judgment based on frequency and power.
4	OBAMA TONE: In your opinion, choose the overall tone the story has towards Obama, one being negative, two being balanced, three being positive, and nine being non applicable (if Obama isn’t mentioned at all in the story). Most will be balanced , as news stories should. In order for the story to be negative or positive, it should contain explicit negative or positive statements. For example, a story that contains statements like, “Obama is the worst President ever who is ruining this country” can be considered negative. A story that contains statements like, “Obama’s health care reform proposals are a good start at providing affordable health care for everyone” could be considered positive. Depending on the length of the story, there should be, usually, a few of these type statements that overshadow the other neutral statements. If the story contains both negative and positive, use your best judgment based on frequency and power.
5	Enter frequency. Quotes are defined as sentences in quotation marks. Official sources defined as individuals identified with a government title, such as Sen. Byrd, or Secretary of Finance Bill Smith.
6	Enter frequency. Quotes are defined as sentences in quotation marks. Tea Party members are individuals who are cited who are identified as being members of the Tea Party.
7	Enter frequency. Quotes are defined as sentences in quotation marks. These individuals are essentially everyone else who is not a government official or a Tea Party member.
8	Enter 0 for no, and 1 for yes.
9	Enter 0 for no, and 1 for yes.
10	Enter 0 for no, and 1 for yes. Answer yes only if you answered yes for both 8 and 9.
11	Enter 0 for no, and 1 for yes.
12	Enter 0 for no, and 1 for yes.

13	Enter 0 for no, and 1 for yes.
14	Enter 0 for no, and 1 for yes. Answer yes only if you answered yes for 11, 12, and 13.
15	Enter 0 for no, and 1 for yes. Answer yes only in you answered yes for 8 and 11.
16	Enter 0 for no, and 1 for yes.
17	Enter 0 for none, 1 for black, 2 for white, and 9 for other.
18	Enter frequency as reported by web page.
19	Enter frequency as reported by web page.
20.1	List the frequency of assertions that mention the Tea Party. For this variable, you will be asked to code each assertion into one of three dimensions – negative, neutral, positive. Most assertions will be moderate that simply mention the Tea Party. The other two, need to explicitly state positive or negative. -1=negative, 0=neutral, 1=positive
20.2	List the frequency of assertions that mention President Obama. For this variable, you will be asked to code each assertion into one of three dimensions – negative, neutral, or positive. Most assertions will be moderate that simply mention Obama. The other two, need to explicitly be negative or positive. -1=negative, 0=neutral, 1= positive.
20.3-20.24	For these variables, you will be asked to count how many sentences in the story focus on one of the listed topics. For that sentence, you are asked to place into one of 15 dimensions – General topic negative, General topic neutral, general topic positive, Obama negative, Obama neutral, Obama positive, Tea Party negative, Tea Party neutral, Tea Party positive, Democrat negative, Democrat neutral, Democrat positive, Republican negative, Republican neutral, Republican positive. For instance, if the sentence’s focus of economy is attributed to Obama without any explicit negative language, code it as Economy – Obama neutral.
20.25	List the frequency of sentences that focus on race.
20.26	List the frequency of sentences that focus on racism.
20.27	List the frequency of sentences that focus on gender
21	0= victim, 1=hero, 2=scapegoat, 3= trickster, 4=good mother, 5= other world, 6=flood,

Step	Qualitative Coding Protocol
1	Identification: publication/article title/location/whether it is a Black press or mainstream press text/date
2	Find the emergent theme. Separate into different folders based on theme
3	What is the preferred reading
4	find rhetorical strategies in the article that might advance one ideology over another
5	Based on the following definitions, which myth best describes how the journalist who wrote this article interpreted the Tea Party and/or Obama
	Myth Definitions
Victim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figure elevated to near heroic status based on sacrifice • Rarely has say in the tragedy that befalls them • “Attempt to reconcile people to the vagaries of human existence – to cruel fate, to bizarre happenstance, to death itself” (Lule, p. 43) • Attempt to reconcile, comfort , and console in the face of great tragedy
Scapegoat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to degrade a political figure seen as radical • Combustible and complex telling of dissent • Group portrayed as deviating greatly from social norms • Allowed to dissent, as long as it is done so by not breaking any basic values • Serve as an example of what happens when basic values are severely broken
Hero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most enduring archetype • Personifies core values and ideals • Humble • Initiates a quest • Battles, and wins decisively • “Returns triumphant” (Lule, p. 82) •
Good Mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figure of virtue, kindness, and generosity • Portrayed as maternal • Represents the comfort and protection of the womb • Nurturing • “Oversees the passage from this life to the next” (Lule, p. 106)

Trickster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figure portrayed as a “crude and lewd moralist” (Lule, p. 124) • Figure is openly mocked in portrayal • “Model illustrating the necessity of societal rules” (Lule, p. 124) • Similar to Scapegoat, shows why rules are needed and what happens when those aren’t followed. Unlike scapegoat, whose fall occurs in a climatic event and fall from grace, the trickster’s “fall” is a continual life of ruin
Other World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two models here: land of honey and land of barbarians • Land of honey is portraying a separate society as some sort of utopia with little to no flaws • A land of barbarians is portraying a separate society as immensely inferior to one’s own
Flood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster • Total devastation inflicted by mother nature, out of control of humans • At universe’s mercy • Total devastation

Selected African-American Newspapers - 17

- Arizona Informant
- Baltimore Afro-American
- Bay State Banner
- Cincinnati and Cleveland Call & Post
- Chicago Defender
- Florida Star
- Los Angeles Sentinel
- Michigan Chronicle
- Michigan Citizen
- New Pittsburgh Courier
- New York Amsterdam News
- Norfolk Journal and Guide
- Philadelphia Tribune
- Portland Skanner
- Sacramento Observer
- Tri-State Defender
- Washington Informer

Selected Mainstream Newspapers - 15

- Arizona Republic
- Atlanta Journal Constitution
- Chicago Tribune

- Dallas Morning News
- Detroit Free Press
- Houston Chronicle
- Los Angeles Times
- New York Times
- Oregonian
- Orlando Sentinel
- Philadelphia Inquirer
- St. Petersburg Times
- Times-Picayune
- Seattle Times
- Washington Post

The Vita

Benjamin Rex LaPoe II, a native of Morgantown, West Virginia, received his bachelor's degree at West Virginia University in 2003. Thereafter, he received his master's degree in journalism at West Virginia University in 2008. As his interests in political communication grew, he chose the to enter the doctorate program in the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University. He will receive his doctorate in August 2013 and has accepted a position as Assistant Professor in the School of Journalism and Broadcasting at Western Kentucky University.